

MARÍA DE ZAYAS'S *NOVELAS AMOROSAS Y EJEMPLARES*  
THROUGH THE LENS OF SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR'S  
*THE SECOND SEX*

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## ABSTRACT

My research examines María de Zayas's first framed novella collection, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637), using the feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir as developed in her book *The Second Sex*. Zayas, a seventeenth-century female writer, is considered by many critics of her works to be Spain's first feminist author. Her texts speak out against the injustices early-modern women endured as a consequence of strict patriarchal rule. My dissertation reads the short-stories through the lens of Beauvoir's theories in order to offer an in-depth, gender centered approach to Zayas's works. Through an analysis of specific concepts such as immanence and transcendence, existence, and myth, I suggest a new approach to analyzing the didactic messages of female equality, the condemnation of male abuse, the questioning of gender roles, and the exaltation of convent life that can be found in the author's writings. In addition to my theoretical examination, I explore Zayas's frame narrative in order to reveal how it serves as an integral component of the seventeenth-century author's call for a patriarchal reformation that would bring an end to its unfair treatment of women.

Using her characters as the mouthpiece through which she reveals her comments on patriarchy and the challenges it presents for women, Zayas confronts proscriptive systems of control that limit female agency, education, and participation in the public spheres of seventeenth-century Spanish society.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my aunt, Eleanor Barnes, and to my mother, Terrie Tamper. Without your love and support throughout the years I would not have been able to accomplish this extraordinary task. Thank you for believing in me and being by my side every step of the way.

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## INTRODUCTION

Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-1648) is considered by many readers and critics of her works to be one of Spain's first early modern feminist writers. In even the most casual reading of her short stories, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637), *Desengaños amorosos* (1647), or her play *La traición en la amistad* (1632), there is an undeniable presence of disdain for the patriarchal structure that dominates every sphere of seventeenth-century Spanish society.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the works of María de Zayas speak to the components of patriarchy that make it difficult for women to educate themselves, have authority to make their own decisions concerning their lives, and free themselves from their subordinate status in Spanish society. As Lisa Vollendorf states in her book *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition*, "In her two-volume framed collection, María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-?) communicates an acute awareness of the difficulties faced by women in seventeenth-century Spain" (103). For the purpose of this study I will focus on Zayas's *Novelas* and not her *Desengaños* or *La traición en la amistad* because it is my belief that this first collection of short stories offers a more complete perspective of the male-female dynamic I intend to explore, not only in her frame plot but also in the stories.<sup>2</sup> Even though *Desengaños* addresses a variety of themes, the presence of the male characters is absent in the frame narrative, a component which I will analyze in conjunction with Zayas's feminist message. I also ruled out analyzing her play, as my interest here is on the prose and

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<sup>1</sup> Zayas's two short story collections and her play complete the corpus of her works.

<sup>2</sup> From this point forward I will refer to Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* as *Novelas* and I will refer to *Desengaños amorosos* as *Desengaños*.

poetic expressions found in *Novelas*. However, Zayas's *Desengaños* and *La traición* will serve as useful secondary material in this study.

Zayas's fascinating *maravillas* are preceded by stanzas and sonnets from other Golden Age authors such as Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, Ana Caro, and Doctor Juan Pérez de Montalbán that offer her personal and professional praise.<sup>3</sup> Following that section is the first of two prologues titled "Al que leyere" in which the author boldly calls for equal rights for women in education and for their better treatment by men. In regards to education, Zayas addresses the cultural traditions that create barriers to women's education such as giving women fabrics and drawings instead of books and teachers. Her words on the better treatment of women sound much like those of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz when she declares later in the first prologue, "Con mujeres no hay competencias: quien nos las estima es necio, porque las ha menester; y quien las ultraja, ingrato, pues falta al reconocimiento del hospedaje que le hicieron en la primer jornada. Y así pues, no has de querer ser descortés, necio, villano ni desagradecido" (161).<sup>4</sup> The second of Zayas's prologues in *Novelas*, "Prólogo de un desapasionado," invites the reader to enjoy a work by a female author while asking that the reader respect her "vivo ingenio" and "agudos pensamientos" (163-164). These prologues highlight Zayas as a woman who is fully aware that she is living and writing in a male dominated society, and they foreshadow the feminist discourse that saturates the pages to follow.

The Introduction is the next section in *Novelas* and it is there that the frame plot is revealed. The setting for Zayas's work is seventeenth-century Madrid in the home of Lisis, the frame protagonist, and her mother Laura. The soirée involves ten characters, five men and five

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<sup>3</sup> Such prefatory poetry by other writers praising the author is a common feature of works published in Spain at that time. Zayas herself wrote poetry praising other writers for their publications.

<sup>4</sup> Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) was a Mexican nun known for her defense of women. Her writings such as *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* and *Hombres necios* argue for women's rights to education and protests men's unfair treatment of women.

women, who come together during the Christmas season to entertain Lisis who, since she is suffering from an illness, is excused from storytelling but is charged with finding the musicians for the occasion. Her mother acts as the fifth female storyteller in her place. There is also another man present, Don Diego, who attends the *soiree* but does not narrate. Each night the women and men alternate telling their *maravillas* to the group as they enjoy the festivities of the Christmas season.<sup>5</sup> Not only will the five nights involve storytelling, the participants in the *soirée* will enjoy numerous festive activities, “además de las maravillas, las noches serán celebradas con una máscara, música, bailes y danzas, un entremés y suntuosas cenas” (Olivares 47). As becomes clear in Zayas’s Introduction, Lisis is not only suffering from a fever, she is suffering from lovesickness as her suitor Don Juan, one of the participants in the storytelling and the “querido dueño de la voluntad de Lisis” (Zayas 167), has fallen in love with her cousin Lisarda and now plans to marry her instead,

si bien don Juan, aficionado a Lisarda, prima de Lisis, a quien deseaba para dueño, negaba a Lisis la justa correspondencia de su amor, sintiendo la hermosa dama el tener a los ojos la causa de sus celos y haber de fingir agradable risa en el semblante, cuando el alma, llorando mortales sospechas, había dado motivo a su mal y ocasión a su tristeza; y más viendo que Lisarda, contenta como estimada, soberbia como querida, y falsa como competidora, en todas las ocasiones llevaba l[o] mejor de la amorosa competencia. (167-168)

By the end of the storytelling, Lisis decides to accept Don Diego as a husband but only to provoke the jealousy of Don Juan, “Lisis acabará aceptando como esposo a don Diego, si bien comienza favoreciéndole solo para dar celos a Juan, el cual, aunque quiere a Lisarda, desea ser

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<sup>5</sup> As Julián Olivares points out in his introduction to *Novelas*, Zayas uses the term *maravillas* instead of *novelas* for four principle reasons: 1) for Zayas the term *maravilla* is more appropriate for the Baroque esthetic of the age, 2) the commonly used term *novela* carries with it certain conventions previously established by patriarchy that lead to an unfavorable view of women and Zayas aims to create a feminine discourse much different from that of early modern male writers, 3) it describes the heroism of the female characters in her work, 4) to open up the consciousness of the female reader and advance her feminist message (51-55). Zayas herself briefly addresses the term in the frame narrative when she states, “con este nombre quiso desempalagar al vulgo del de novelas, título tan enfadoso que ya en todas partes le aborrecen” (Zayas 168). From here forward I will employ Zayas’s term and refer to her short stories as *maravillas*.

querido por Lisis también” (Olivares 48). However, at the conclusion of *Desengaños*- the second volume of Zayas’s collection published ten years after *Novelas*- where only women are invited to tell their stories of love and disenchantment, Lisis decides to enter a convent, Lisarda marries a wealthy merchant and Don Juan suffers an illness and dies.

As represented in the frame narrative of *Novelas*, in the male-dominated society that Zayas depicts in the short stories, the emotions, complaints, and desires of the female characters are oftentimes dismissed by their male counterparts, normally their husbands and suitors. These women are not seen as individuals capable of expressing the anguish they feel, but rather are disregarded by men as unexplainable creatures that only exist to satisfy heterosexual male desire and maintain the home. Twentieth-century feminist writer, Simone de Beauvoir, addresses the issue of woman being perceived as inferior to their male counterparts in her book *The Second Sex* (1949). According to Beauvoir, myths surrounding woman’s existence have been among the leading factors that sanction female abuse by men. She proposes that men use myths to link women to Nature, a connection that supports suffering as biologically intrinsic for women, thus, men should not occupy themselves with efforts to relieve her pain (256). Beauvoir does not regard these myths as natural, persisting that this conviction is nothing more than the result of female passivity. In order to challenge these beliefs, women must become active subjects who *make themselves* instead of living according to others assumptions about them (259). With the proper effort, Beauvoir believes that women can change her inferior position in society. Roland Barthes, another twentieth-century French theorist, shares Beauvoir’s thoughts on myths when he states that each myth has a historical base, a factor that renders it unnatural. Like Beauvoir, in *Mythologies* Barthes recognizes the power of myths and how they are maneuvered to support male dominance and female dependency (265-66).

With *Novelas*, Zayas aims to challenge such myths by calling attention to them and having her female characters disobey them. In my analysis of Zayas's work I will argue that using Beauvoir's theory of the woman as myth, her views on woman's existence for self and existence for man, and her explanation of transcendence and immanence to analyze the characters of *Novelas*, offers a profound understanding of the female characters' comportment, motives, wishes and desires in a way that has not yet been explored. I will use Beauvoir's theory as the starting point from which I will explore the text and my analysis will show that in the works of Zayas the female characters attempt to challenge the norms that bind them. This dissertation also presents an understanding of the relationships between men and women in Spain's patriarchal society, which I will analyze to reveal how any deviation from these predetermined rules on the part of the woman labels her as subversive and rebellious.

### ***Women in Golden Age Spain***

Before I begin to analyze Zayas's work and the critique of Spanish society it presents, I think it is important to provide some insight on the social and cultural context in which the author lived and wrote in regards to women. Socially, Zayas lived in a society in which women were expected to be seen and not heard and where equal rights of the sexes did not exist. As Lena E. V. Sylvania points out in her study on Zayas's writings, women were to live private, conventional lives while men gained an understanding of the world through receiving education and conducting business affairs (7). She goes on in her description and states, "Husbands who wished to keep their wives from danger and away from this pernicious influence [the influence of the outside] assumed the role of absolute tyrants, forbidding them any liberties whatsoever, and treating them sometimes as if they were slaves, servants, or mere small children" (11).

Yolanda Tusquets labels this type of treatment in seventeenth-century Spanish society as a “domestic monarchy,” explaining that, “El hombre tenía la misma autoridad sobre su familia que el monarca sobre sus súbitos, siempre que se atuviera a las prescripciones dominantes” (74).

With such powerful factors restricting women’s upward movement and freedom, it is surprising that Zayas became such a prolific and talented writer. Little is known about how Zayas learned to read and write in a society that did not promote female literacy, but it is believed that she was self-taught, gaining her first recognition as a poet (Olivares 12-13).<sup>6</sup> As a female writer in the seventeenth century, Zayas breaks the mold laid out for women of her time and enters into the literary circles dominated by well-known male authors such as Cervantes and Lope de Vega.<sup>7</sup> What is not unexpected, however, is that Zayas’s works are inundated with matters concerning the female plight. As stated above, the female had almost no authority or voice in early modern Spain. What the author does in her own unique way is give voice to the situations and injustices that plague the female existence in the Spain of her time. Through the characters in her *maravillas*, she brings these issues to the forefront and provides a strong critique of the social, economic, and religious factors that delegate women to their subordinate position in society. Because of this, numerous critics consider her to be Spain’s first early-modern feminist writer. Yet other critics of Zayas’s works consider it controversial to label her a feminist writer in the contemporary sense of the term.<sup>8</sup> This debate poses a question that perhaps

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<sup>6</sup> Julián Olivares’s introduction states that between the years of 1621 and 1639 Zayas participated in literary competitions and published preliminary poems for various authors and panegyrics for Lope de Vega and Juan Pérez de Montalban (18).

<sup>7</sup> Cervantes publishes his *Novelas ejemplares* in 1613. Lope de Vega publishes his collection of short stories, *Novelas a Maricia Leonarda* in 1621/1624.

<sup>8</sup> Critics such as Melloni and Peydro suggest that the duality of Zayas’s discourse ultimately reinforces the patriarchal traditions that she aims to protest. Likewise, Brownlee states that Zayas’s contradictory discourse makes it difficult to identify her as feminist. Later in this prospectus I will discuss the polemic regarding Zayas’s status as a feminist writer in greater detail.

cannot be answered, but is worth the exploration: Is it correct to classify Zayas as a feminist writer?

### ***Zayas and Feminism***

Since women's inferior position in Spanish society, and many other societies throughout the world, did not afford them a life outside of the home or the convent and denied them rights to education, were there any women that Zayas could look to in order to find inspiration for her writings during the time period in which she lived? In *Feminismo y forma narrativa: Estudio del tema y las técnicas de María de Zayas y Sotomayor*, Sandra M. Foa declares that it was in the works of Christine de Pisan, a late medieval female author from France, where elements of women's defense first appeared in *Querelle des Femmes*.<sup>9</sup> As previously stated, little is known about Zayas's life, but the author more than likely read, or at least knew about, the works of Pisan or other authors who shared her point of view, however few they may have been. Foa states of Pisan, "Encontramos en ella algunos de los temas que encontraremos dos siglos después en María de Zayas[...] Condena, como Zayas, los engaños de los hombres, y su rechazo y vilificación de todas las mujeres por culpa de algunas. Pide también la posibilidad de educación para la mujer" (14-15). Outside of the literary world, figures such as Queen Isabel and Antonia Nebrija could have provided the inspiration for Zayas's feminist discourse.<sup>10</sup>

While delving deeper into the question of Zayas and her relation to feminism, I have found that there is some debate amongst her critics on whether or not she can in fact be

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<sup>9</sup> According to Foa, the *Querelle des Femmes* surfaces a means of women's defense against medieval literary tradition that depicted the woman as "débil, engañosa, nunca satisfecha, y generalmente un mal necesario" but eventually, "se convirtió pronto en una glorificación tan exagerada como la vilificación anterior" (13-14).

<sup>10</sup> See *Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor* by Lena E.V. Sylvania for further analysis of writers who may have influenced Zayas.

considered a feminist writer. Since feminism is a term developed in the West in the late 1800's, authors such as Malcolm Read and Marina Brownlee affirm that her works cannot be considered feminist in the western sense of the term.<sup>11</sup> Well, to Read and Brownlee I would pose the following question: What does the term mean in its "western sense"? Through my research I have come to find that its definitions are unquantifiable. It is notable to point out that although the term has become extremely common in everyday social and political discourse, there is much controversy on what it actually purports. One of the more general, broader definitions of the term has been offered by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards in their book *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future*, "In the most basic sense, feminism is exactly what the dictionary says it is: the movement for social, political and economic equality for men and women" (56). However, when dissected, this same, very general definition of feminism reveals the complexity of its outwardly simple explanation

Breaking down that one very basic definition feminism has three components. It is a *movement*, meaning a group working to accomplish specific goals. Those goals are *social* and *political* change- implying that one must be engaged with the government and laws, as well as with social practices and beliefs. And implicit in these goals is *access* to sufficient information to enable women to make responsible choices". (56)

In *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory*, author Chris Beasley suggests that there are many elements that must be addressed when attempting to characterize the term. Some of those elements are

a critique of misogyny/sexual hierarchy; a focus on consideration of women as the subject of the analysis, which may include references to differences between them and even question the status of the group itself; an expanded account of and altered orientation to what may be discussed within analysis of social and political life compared with traditional thought. (36)

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<sup>11</sup> For more information see Read's article "María de Zayas and her critics: notes toward the history of the unconscious" or Brownlee's book *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas*.

Depending on which one of the abundant meanings that one chooses to use, Zayas may or may not fall into the category of a feminist writer. Although what the term actually signifies has yet to be agreed upon, there are some common elements in each one of the definitions that lay the foundation that some of Zayas's critics have used to classify her as a feminist writer as acknowledged by Vollendorf in *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition*, "While contemporary philosophers, scholars, writers, and activists sometimes choose different language to discuss feminism, their definitions share the basic assumption that women are subject to inequality and injustice because we live in a man's world" (1). It is clear that this train of thought is a strong presence in all of Zayas's works and provides the fuel that drives her message of equal opportunity for the female gender.

Zayas's works were generally ignored from her death until the twentieth century. The first monograph on Zayas, *Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor: A Contribution to the Study of her Works*, was published in 1922 by Lena E. V. Sylvania. In this innovative work the author offers a very brief analysis of the feminist aspects in the works of Zayas by focusing on "the tendencies of the age" (17). By addressing components such as customs, social interaction, recreation and visual details such as clothing and home décor, Sylvania shows how Zayas confronts the challenges of her time as a female author living and writing in a patriarchal society. Sylvania also discusses the general characterization on Zayas's works, the short story, in relation to other short story writers such as Cervantes and Bocaccio. Additionally, she also offers a brief analysis of two of Zayas's *maravillas* from her first collection of short stories, *El jardín engañoso* and *El castigo de la miseria*. For nearly fifty years following Sylvania's work there is a void in publications focusing on Zayas's *maravillas*. In the early 1970's, through the monographs of Irma Vasileski and Alessandra Melloni, investigations on Zayas begin to

resurface. Vasileski's study analyzes both of Zayas's short story collections, looking specifically at her "labor novelística" which includes certain literary styles such as *costumbrismo*, romanticism, realism, and the poetic elements present in the works. In *Il sistema narrativo di María de Zayas* (1976), Melloni argues that Zayas's feminism ultimately reinforces traditional patriarchal norms and only allows that women be classified in the binary categories of good or bad.

The real explosion in critical attention paid to Zayas's work begins in the late twentieth century when authors such as Stephanie Merrim, Marina Brownlee, Lisa Vollendorf, and Eavan O'Brien made outstanding contributions to the corpus dedicated to the seventeenth-century author. The focal point of Merrim's study is baroque author and nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, whom she uses as a point of reference to evaluate other early-modern female writers such as Ana Caro, Marguerite de Navarre, and Madame de Lafayette in search for similarities among the authors. In pointing out these resemblances, Merrim establishes the general concerns and issues that trouble early modern women writers. Brownlee's monograph, *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas*, spotlights the inconsistencies within Zayas's texts that lead to a "deftly contradictory and calculated paradoxical presentation of herself in terms of female authorship, the female intellect, and womankind in general" (xvi). For Brownlee, Zayas's "labyrinthine discourse" makes it difficult for her readers to be certain of her ideological point of view, leaving them without resolution and with many unanswered questions (165). Lisa Vollendorf explores the relationship between feminism and violence in her edited volume titled, *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition* and in articles such as "Fleshing out Feminism in Early Modern Spain: María de Zayas's Corporeal Politics." For Vollendorf, the best way to decipher Zayas's feminist message is by exploring how Zayas uses the body as the source through which she projects her

didacticism. In her article the author states that one cannot fully understand her feminist expression without examining the physical violence that the women of Zayas's *maravillas* suffer as well as Zayas's discourse directed towards the feminine body (87). The seventeenth-century author's corporeal feminism, as Vollendorf calls it, threatens cultural practices and beliefs that oppress women and view them only as body, a view that denies them as mind and solidifies their domination. Eavan O'Brien offers a gynocentric analysis of *Novelas* and *Desengaños* by focusing on the female relationships in Zayas's works. She looks at mother-daughter relationships, the role of Mary, the ultimate mother, sisterhood, and women's interactions in Zayas's works to reveal the feminine space that the author has created in her works (6-7). To complement the monographs on Zayas, numerous dissertations and articles have been dedicated to the study of her literature. Exceptional scholars such as Robert Bayliss, Anne Cruz, Anne-Gaëlle Costa Pascal, Joan Hoffman, and Paul Julian Smith have publications on a variety of topics ranging from feminism and subversion to Zayas's relation to the picaresque.

Feminist thought and ideas are undeniably present in Zayas's *Novelas*. For that reason, this dissertation offers an analysis of Zayas's works that has not been fully explored in the Spanish Golden Age field. This dissertation investigates the subversion of the female as well as the male characters from patriarchal norms as a new way of revealing Zayas's feminist message. Many of the aforementioned studies have been fruitful in finding innovative ways to explore Zayas's feminist discourse through the words and actions of the female characters. However, all but one has neglected the subversion of the male characters. To my knowledge, Joan Hoffman's study, "*Ruecas into Espadas, Almohadillas into Libros: Subversion in María de Zayas's 'La fuerza del amor'*", is the only one dedicated to Zayas's works that touches upon the male characters' rebellion from their traditional role laid out by patriarchy and the literary currents of

the *novela cortesana*. In order to approach patriarchal norms and beliefs, I will examine *Novelas* through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, a book that provides a complete understanding of how patriarchy has, and continues to, function. The behaviors of the male and female characters cannot be fully comprehended without an analysis of the theories of transcendence and immanence, existence, and myth that Beauvoir so thoroughly and exceptionally proposes in her work. It is my belief that analyzing Zayas's *maravillas* using Beauvoir's theories will add to our understanding of both Zayas's literary project and the Spain in which she lived and wrote. Beauvoir's theories, heretofore not applied to Zayas's writings, will give us a new way to approach the *maravillas*.

### ***The Second Sex and Novelas amorosas y ejemplares***

The first chapter of this dissertation explores three of Zayas's *maravillas*, *La fuerza del amor*, *El imposible vencido*, and *El castigo de la miseria* using Beauvoir's theories of transcendence and immanence as developed in *The Second Sex*. As property of man, woman is not to be viewed as a subject but as a thing only concerned with its own immanence, "Her body is grasped not as the emanation of a subjectivity but as a thing weighed in its own immanence, this body must not radiate to the rest of the world, it must not promise anything but itself: its desire has to be stopped" (177). This restricted belief that facilitates female oppression is prevalent in early modern Spain as evidenced by books such as Juan Vives's *La instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (1523) and Fray Luis de Leon's *La perfecta casada* (1583). The writings produced by these authors support the limitation of female existence to a life of religion, purity, obedience, and servitude, responsibilities that must be carried out under the watchful eyes of guardians such as parents, husbands, and clergy. However, Zayas's characters confront the

patriarchal institution that binds them. As Vincent Leitch explains of Beauvoir, “Thus the paternalism that claims women for hearth and home defines her as sentiment, inwardness, immanence [...] This is the lot assigned to women in the patriarchate; but it is in no way a vocation, any more than slavery is the vocation of the slave” (1268). The women of *Novelas* are defiant of socially accepted convictions and gain agency through doing so. In some cases, by exercising their voice women are able to resolve the conflicts that lead to their abuse and mistreatment and they find themselves happily reinserted into their traditional roles as wives and mothers. In other instances, women reject life in society and embrace convent life, a place that offers seclusion and protection from male deception. As stated in Beauvoir’s theory, contrary to female immanence, man is viewed as transcendence. He perceives himself in relation to the world. His subjectivity comes from interactions outside of the home, his own knowledge, and the woman that he objectifies. The male characters in *Novelas* exercise their transcendence through different behaviors, the most prevalent of which is through their relationships with, and their domination of, women. Spouses control their wives through psychological and physical abuse, demanding complete obedience and delegation to the home while they themselves travel, explore, and have extramarital relationships at their discretion. Patriarchy endows to the male certain liberties at birth that women are denied, using biological and educational factors as validation of their prejudice.

Contrarily, Zayas presents the readers with unique cases of male transcendence in which men fail at their attempts to dominate women and use them for personal gain. She reverses socially accepted gender roles as it is the female characters who scheme and use their cunning to destabilize patriarchy’s systematic oppression. Thus, man’s transcendence is prohibited by his belief in the very same system that affords it to him.

Since transcendence is limited to men of the patriarchy, the acceptable option of women is to remain in the home. Nonetheless, Zayas's characters at times attempt to exist for self by seeking to control their own sexual pleasure, undermining gender roles through cross-dressing, and entering into male dominated spheres. Chapter Two of this dissertation investigates *Al fin se paga todo*, *El jardín engañoso*, and *Aventurarse perdiendo* through the lens of Beauvoir's existentialist philosophies in order to determine how women were able to exist for self, given that female oppression was ingrained in seventeenth-century law. The limited freedom the characters achieve is not gained without resistance; indeed, the female characters are required to take great measures to obtain them. One such factor that aids in the ability to exist for self for Zayas's female characters is cross-dressing. Defining women as immanent by nature has been a useful tool of the patriarch for the limiting of female mobility. However, as Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, and as Zayas suggests in her prologues and *maravillas*, there is nothing inherent about the female gender that solidifies her subservient position in society or that naturally labels her as immanent. According to Butler, gender is performative, meaning that it is culturally constructed through certain acts and gestures that are repeated to express an identity that has been created "through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (185). Butler continues her theory declaring, "Gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (190, italics in original). For Butler, the "abiding gendered self" is an illusion sustained through enactments and bodily gestures established by dominant conventions throughout time (191). The interiorized conventions that result from public and social discourse act out on the surface of the body and produce fabricated gender identities (185). Similar to Beauvoir and Zayas, Butler recognizes that

gender difference is maintained through acts and those very acts serve to uphold male supremacy. Through their performance of male roles, many of Zayas's female protagonists find their voice and are able to play an active role in the outcome of their lives. From a close reading and examination of *Novelas* in conjunction with Beauvoir's theories, the following fundamental questions regarding Zayas's works can be answered: What options were left to women who refused to accept the vocation offered by the patriarch? What were the social consequences that came along with rejection of said vocation? Would the rejection of her immanence lead the woman to freedom or would she just find herself subject to another form of oppression? These, as well as other questions, will be explored throughout the chapter.

In *Novelas*, the idea of being for self is presented while at the same time challenged. What adds an intriguing element to these *maravillas* is the fact that although female protagonists step outside of the social constructs for their gender and display bold and daring characteristics not akin to their sex during the time in which they lived, many of them are forced to display this behavior due to the mistreatment they have suffered from men. The complexity of their circumstances proves that Zayas uses some characters not to completely reject patriarchal life but rather to exhibit the injustices that women endure. I propose that this is the author's way of calling for patriarchal reform. Even more captivantly, in *maravillas* such as *La fuerza del amor* and *Aventurarse perdiendo* the female protagonists choose convent life over everyday social life. A number of scholars of Zayas's works see the convent as a place of refuge for the women who opt to enter it. Vollendorf and Rhodes regard Zayas's use of the convent as a safe haven from male deception and societal pressures. As Vollendorf puts it, "The female characters of the *Novelas amorosas* tend to view convents as offering safety and refuge to women variously motivated by fear, religion, and desire for community" (*Reclaiming the Body* 138). Rhodes

echoes this idea when she states, “For her disillusioned female characters, she creates a convent that is an invisible place controlled by a noble, empowered male who recognizes and protects their interests” (124). Zayas presents it as a place for the cultivation of female unity, a place for education, as well as a place free from societal pressures and male violence. Not everyone shares Zayas’s moral position on the convent. The female friendships that developed in the sacred space were a threat to patriarchal rule thus making it a target of society and religious leaders (Maroto Camino 532). However, in *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*, Perry argues that it is incorrect to view the convent solely as a place of domination because many nuns in religious orders had opportunities for self-expression and empowerment (75). By having her characters enter a convent, Zayas is using the resources available to women that allow them to escape the everyday social pressures of patriarchal life. Even though some view this as further submission to the patriarchy, others argue that it is the only way for women to free themselves from socially constructed norms.

As demonstrated, existence for self is a difficult task for the seventeenth-century Spanish woman. Social convictions such as myths complicate that mission even further. As Beauvoir explains in part three of Volume I, “Myths”, according to patriarchy the woman is Other in relation to man. Through the eyes of man this other is deeply rooted in Nature, which, according to Beauvoir, is the source of ambivalent feelings found in man causing a revolt against his carnal state (166-67). Beauvoir goes on to label Woman as the absolute Other, lacking reciprocity, and constantly denied the experience of being a subject (266). “Each one is subject only for himself; each one can grasp only his own self in his immanence; from this point of view, the other is always a mystery” (269). Classifying woman as a mysterious other in relation to man does not mean that she is silent or absent, but rather implies that her language is not understood. She is a

presence that is unsuccessful in making herself apparent and manifest (269). In agreement with Beauvoir, the female characters in two of the *maravillas* to be studied in Chapter Three, *La burlada Aminta y la venganza del honor* and *El juez de su causa*, are neither physically absent nor are they silent. They oftentimes voice their opinions and try to change unfavorable, abusive, subordinate, adverse situations in which they find themselves. However, the female voice goes unheard as the male characters in the *maravillas* do not stop to contemplate how their actions have a profound effect on the lives and sufferings of their female counterparts. Patriarchal society tells them that such contemplation is unnecessary. As men, they are made to dominate, to rule, to conquer, and not to be attentive to weak feminine problems and desires. Not only that, but also the myth of the woman, her otherness, and her natural disposition to suffering as prescribed by Nature aid in dismissing such contemplation. Beauvoir also argues that women only know themselves as men perceive them and that her existence serves only to validate that perception. She states that the change in woman's opinions of herself is clearly seen during her adolescent years. At a time when young boys are learning to assert their independence, the girl is being taught to become a submissive object by relinquishing their independence and succumbing to social demands. Zayas's use of her daring women continues to challenge myths through actions that are contrary to the norms of comportment for their gender. The short stories studied in this chapter include some of the most courageous female characters of *Novelas* who make themselves subject through means normally reserved for men.

Once again, in this third chapter we will explore Zayas's emasculation of patriarchy through subversion of male characters. More so than in any of the other tales in her collection, the male protagonists in *El prevenido engañado* and *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud* are completely humiliated by the female protagonists. They are nothing like the "noble" men of

the *novela cortesana* but rather they are weak, unaware and easily manipulated. Like the woman whose feelings have been ignored in other tales, their feelings are not considered and the only purpose they serve is for the enjoyment and completion of female desire. The male protagonists suffer because of their oppressive, singular, patriarchal beliefs. Their attitudes and treatment of women is what involves them in situations where they are taken advantage of, disgraced, and swindled. Similar to the fictional Don Marcos in *El castigo de la miseria*, Zayas uses these characters to show the deficiencies of the male mind in regards to women as well as the callousness of patriarchal domination. It is her wish that men would see women as legitimate subjects who are just as intelligent, if not more, than men.

Along with analyzing the stories themselves, it is important to pay attention to the frame narrative technique present in *Novelas* as the introduction to *Novelas* sets up the female-female, male-male, and male-female rivalries that play out throughout the evenings. The fourth chapter of this dissertation offers an exploration of the frame narrative. In this section readers will observe how Zayas uses the female protagonist Lisis, along with other male and female narrators, as a mouthpiece from which to speak on the frailties of male sex. Zayas's use of the frame-narrative technique affords her readers the opportunity to gain insight on class, customs, dress, food and home decor in early modern Spain.<sup>12</sup> It is through the descriptions of these traditions and practices that Zayas begins to reveal Spanish domestic life, one in which the woman finds herself forced to adhere to the strict social norms and expectations mandated by Spanish patriarchy. Like the *maravillas* being told by the participants in the *sarao* (party), Zayas's frame plot should also be read as a denunciation of the male dominated world in which she operates. The society of narrators she uses in her novella has a double purpose. Not only are

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<sup>12</sup> Eavan O'Brien studies these cultural conventions in her article titled "Verbalizing the Visual: María de Zayas, Mariana Carvajal, and the Frame-Narrative Device".

they present to narrate *maravillas* that clearly question societal norms and carry a feminist message, the relationships that the frame characters have with one another is another resourceful tool employed by Zayas to carry out her feminist message. For this reason, I suggest that Zayas's frame-plot should not be merely viewed as a narrative device, but rather a part of the narrative as a whole. That is to say, instead of reading *Novelas* as individual narratives interrupted by a frame plot, having her feminist message in mind, the work should be read as a continuum as this will enrich the comprehension of the work. Authors such as Donovan, Foa, and O'Brien all agree that the frame narrative is an integral part of Zayas's didactic message and have produced studies dedicated to this section of the text. However, their studies do not offer a broad understanding of how Zayas's frame-plot operates within a broader view of the text, nor do they relate framing to the feminist messages present throughout *Novelas*. This goal will be achieved with by an in-depth exploration of the poetry and prose included in the frame-plot to show that it must be read in conjunction with the *maravillas* in order to understand the author's plea for literacy, equal opportunity, and free-will for the female sex, and does not serve as a mere introduction of the *maravillas* being told.

The poetic expressions delivered by Lisis in the frame narrative show a progression in the character's mental state from traditional lamentations of love melancholy due to unrequited love to the complete rejection of heterosexual love and the institution of marriage as revealed in Zayas's second framed novella collection, *Desengaños amorosos*. The main themes of her poetry are identical to those expressed in the *maravillas* themselves: love, deceit, jealousy, betrayal, and male inconstancy. Also, in the course of her poetics Zayas portrays Lisis as a lettered woman knowledgeable of literary conventions and social occurrences. The character recites a variety of ballads, sonnets and ten-line stanzas that she herself has created. Most deal with her love

melancholy while others critique Spain's inadequate noble class. The frame narrative's love triangle, poems, and cautionary evocations elaborate on, introduce, and critique the *maravillas* in *Novelas*. An analysis of the frame narrative complements the interpretation of Zayas's feminist critique of patriarchy's treatment of women in early modern Spain.

María de Zayas y Sotomayor was a remarkable seventeenth-century writer and female advocate. Her writings offer to her readers entertaining short stories that include a wide-ranging discourse concerning the injustices women suffer at the hands of men and patriarchal rule. Her sophisticated works support women's literacy and fair treatment as well as a withdrawal from the secular world and entry into the convent. The theories to be explored in my analysis of Zayas's *Novelas* provide a new perspective on the interpretation of Zayas's pro-female messages.

## CHAPTER ONE: TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

While reading María de Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, the first of two works that comprise her framed novella collection, the readers find themselves fascinated with how a female author in seventeenth-century Spain was able to publish writings that replicate traditional male and female roles that were widely practiced and performed in the society in which she lived. What is even more intriguing is how, although she reproduces these roles, her female characters, and sometimes her male characters as well, encounter difficulties in their attempts to remain inside the parameters of these roles. Exploring gender roles in early-modern Spain as depicted in Zayas's work helps lead to a better understanding of why those difficulties were encountered and what resources were available to those who wished to defy the patriarchy and live outside of those traditional roles, if only momentarily. Using Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* allows for a complete examination of patriarchy and what it means to be a woman living in a male dominated society. In this chapter I will focus on two specific concepts as elaborated by Beauvoir in her groundbreaking book that concerns itself with the treatment of women throughout history under the control of the patriarchy. Applying Beauvoir's theories of transcendence and immanence to Zayas's *Novelas* aids us in understanding the text as well as the society in which the prolific seventeenth-century writer lived. Not only that, it gives us some insight into why her female characters in particular oftentimes display rebellion against the male characters that aspire to dominate every minute detail of their lives. My analysis will focus on three *maravillas*: *La fuerza del amor*, *El imposible vencido*, and *El castigo de la miseria*. In these

*maravillas* we will see how the theories of transcendence and immanence operate within patriarchal society and the effects that these ideas have on the psyche of the characters in the short stories. Before delving into my examination of Zayas's *maravillas*, it is important to define the key terms I will be using in my analysis and to elaborate upon what these terms mean within the context of a patriarchal society. In order to do this, we must turn to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*.

H.M. Parshley's introduction to Beauvoir's masterful work, *The Second Sex*, states:

The central thesis of Mlle de Beauvoir's book is that since patriarchal times women have in general been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects with that of racial minorities in spite of the fact that women constitute numerically at least half of the human race, and further that this secondary standing is not imposed of necessity by natural "feminine" characteristics but rather strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under purposeful control of men. (vii)<sup>13</sup>

Amongst the strong forces of social tradition that Beauvoir speaks of are the ideas of transcendence and immanence that have been established and sustained by patriarchal strength. In her thorough explanation of the terms, she demonstrates how they have been appropriated through various life stages, myths, history, literature, and social status. The numerous ways in which she chooses to explain and illustrate these ideas afford the readers of her work the opportunity to examine these concepts through a myriad of lenses as there is no context that Beauvoir leaves out of her explanation. She refutes biological arguments posed by famous philosophers such as Aristotle and Hegel stating that arguments suggesting the superiority of the sperm over the egg are nothing more than "vagaries of the mind" (28). She sees both as equally important in the reproduction of life but recognizes that these are the terms that man has employed to keep women in the confines of the home, "It would be rash to deduce from such an

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<sup>13</sup> Although I am referring to Parshley's Introduction of *The Second Sex* here, all quotes from Beauvoir's text come from the edition translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier unless otherwise stated.

observation that woman's place is in the home," Beauvoir states, "but there are rash people" (29). Exceeding the biological, her historical estimations of gender roles are equally as thought provoking, "The devaluation of woman represents a necessary stage in the history of humanity: for she derived her prestige not from her positive value but from man's weakness; she incarnated disturbing natural mysteries: man escapes her grasp when he frees himself from nature" (84). With statements like this, Beauvoir is explaining the reason why man feels the need to oppress woman while at the same time asserting his own individual transcendence. In what I find to be the most interesting component of her book, Book I, Part III: Myths, Beauvoir attacks the myths that man has utilized for his advantage for the assertion of superiority over the female gender. While man is able to find escape through his relationships with woman, she is kept in bondage, "he [man] hopes to accomplish himself as being through carnally possessing a being while making confirmed in his freedom by a docile freedom. No man would consent to being a woman, but all want there to be women" (161). The abundance of details and examples Beauvoir provides of these terms help the reader to understand her stance on patriarchy, gender roles, and the justices and injustices that the patriarchal system has caused over time. However thorough each individual explanation may be, they all have a common meaning: as property of man, woman is not to be viewed as a subject but as a thing only concerned with its own immanence, "Her body is grasped not as the emanation of a subjectivity but as a thing weighted in its immanence; this body must not radiate to the rest of the world, it must not promise anything but itself: its desire has to be stopped" (176-177). Man, on the contrary, is viewed as transcendence. He perceives himself in relation to the world. His subjectivity comes from interactions outside of the home, knowledge, and the woman that he objectifies. For the male, it is important to explore, to command, and to conquer. Woman, on the other hand, has been traditionally viewed as unfit

for such activities. Being *other* to man, she is to be controlled and dominated. She only does what man allows her to do. She is not situated in reference to the rest of the world, but only to the impulses of the man who controls her, “condemned to play the role of the Other, woman was thus condemned to possess no more than uncertain power; slave or idol, she was never the one who chose her lot [...] the place of woman in society is always the one they [men] assign her; at no time has she imposed her own law” (86).

There is some debate amongst critics as to whether these Beauvoirian ideas can be wholly attributed to the author herself or if she is simply mimicking the teachings of her long-time lover and close friend, Jean-Paul Sartre, an assumption that implies that her entire point of view is based on masculine ontology. To deny that there is a strong presence of Sartre’s thought in Beauvoir’s work is to misunderstand the essence of her message. Critics such as Nancy Bauer, Michèle Le Dœuff, and Åsa Moberg have rightfully acknowledged that Beauvoir’s philosophical writings have been heavily influenced by her relationship with French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>14</sup> However, in the book *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy, & Feminism*, Bauer challenges assumptions that Beauvoir is offering us nothing more than information that sounds like “warmed-over Sartre” (137). Addressing the concepts of immanence and transcendence specifically, Bauer finds Beauvoir’s perspective to be strikingly different from that of Sartre

The idea that the choice of “immanence” over “transcendence” might be *inflicted* on a person – that oppression can be, as it were, genuinely oppressive – is entirely absent in early Sartre. And yet without this idea, the very notion of a “second sex,” that is, a whole group of people who are systematically deemed inferior to another whole group simply by virtue of being female, is incomprehensible. (138)

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<sup>14</sup> In her article “Beauvoir the Mythoclast”, Le Dœuff gives an extraordinary account of the personal relationship between Beauvoir and Sartre. Åsa Moberg offers some insight on how the relationship between the two philosophers shapes Beauvoir’s view on the female sexual experience in “Sensuality and Brutality: Contradictions in Simone de Beauvoir’s Writings about Sexuality”.

The *infliction* of one state of being over another based on certain traits and characteristics, in the case of this study those characteristics are concerned with gender, is what man uses to assign to woman the position of absolute Other; a position that carries along with it a certain stagnation that denies her as subject and instead labels her as object. Though longing to be essential, she is eclipsed by male domination, thus rendering her inessential (Parshley xxix). On the differences between the two philosophers, William McBride, author of “Taking a Distance: Exploring some points of Divergence between Beauvoir and Sartre,” states “Beauvoir attributes far more importance to the polarity transcendence-immanence than Sartre ever did. It is an especially useful conceptual vehicle for her to employ in explicating men’s historical domination over women” (198). Christine Daigle also points out some disparities between the two writers explaining that unlike Sartre, for Beauvoir consciousness is gendered and that is what shapes our experiences in the world (40). Overall, Beauvoir sees transcendence as the destiny of every human being, but she argues that for woman there are many obstacles that must be overcome before she is able to enjoy that fate. Having been dominated by an extremely powerful and highly oppressive system like patriarchy that affects everyday life, it is up to women to take an active role in unblocking the roads that lead to transcendence.

Like Beauvoir, Zayas sees how immanence has been imposed upon the “second sex.” Her writings reflect how women of seventeenth-century Spain have been presented with a set of prescribed rules for their everyday comportment, and how men of her society have taken great measures to ensure that women adhere to these norms. Her writings call attention to, as well as speak out against (sometimes in the most subtle way), the female condition and the injustices of patriarchy. Actually, the very fact that Zayas herself is a published female writer during the time in which she lived is extraordinary given that there existed strong opposition against female

participation outside of the domestic realm. Evidence of such resistance can be found in Juan Vives's book *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana*, originally published in 1523. Though it is published over one hundred years before Zayas writes, attitudes towards the status of women in Spain did not change over that time. Vives states that he doesn't disagree with women reading books about the lives of saints as he believes these types of books instructed women on how to live more upright and chaste lives (21). However, he also states that honesty and the conservation of the home should be a woman's primary concern, "Aprenderá, pues, juntamente con las letras, hilar y labrar, que son ejercicios muy honestos que nos quedaron de aquel siglo dorado de nuestros pasados, y muy útiles a la conservación de la hacienda y honestidad, que debe ser el principal cuidado de las mujeres" (16). In a similar fashion, Fray Luis de Leon lays out the expectations of behavior for the married woman in his book *La perfecta casada* (1538). Fray Luis de Leon states, "[la mujer casada] tiene necesidad de guía como los demás; porque el servir al marido, el gobernar la familia, y la crianza de los hijos, y la cuenta que juntamente con esto se debe al temor de Dios, y a la guarda y la limpieza de la conciencia" (9). As has been noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, Zayas disputes the line of thinking held by Vives and Fray Luis in her famous prologue, "Al que leyere", in which she critiques how women are conditioned from birth to perform domestic tasks. She boldly calls for the equal rights for women's education and for the better treatment of women. It is as if the groundbreaking author is speaking directly to the dominating patriarchal powers when she whole heartedly exclaims, "Porque si en nuestra crianza, como nos ponen el cambray en las almohadillas y los dibujos en el bastidor, nos dieran libros y preceptores, fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y para las cátedras como los hombres, y quizás más agudas" (160). Although Zayas and Beauvoir lived in different countries during

different time periods, their works have inadvertently created a dialogue with one another that operates for the universal enlightenment of women.

### *La fuerza del amor*

The first of Zayas's *maravillas* to be studied here is *La fuerza del amor*. In this tale, narrated the third night of the *soiree* by Nise, we meet the beautiful Laura. Since her mother dies in childbirth, Laura is being raised under the watchful eye of her father, Don Antonio, and her two brothers, Don Alejandro and Don Carlos. Being a family of noble lineage, there is no doubt this watchfulness is aimed at maintaining her purity and thus the family name. Men at that time felt a personal responsibility to protect their female family members and to ensure that their women did not exhibit behavior that would tarnish the family name. Additionally, fathers, brothers, and husbands enforced rigid gender roles so that women would not have sexual affairs outside of marriage (Manuel 51). In his time as a devoted suitor, Don Diego joined in with Laura's brother and father singing her praises and admiring her beauty, behavior, and "honestidad," her virginity. Zayas describes the character of Laura in great detail, pointing out that she is well informed on how noble Spanish women of her time are expected to behave, "que las gracias de Laura, su belleza, su discreción, su recato, y sobre todo su honestidad, obligaba[n] no solo a los que tan cercano deudo tenían con ella, mas a los que más apartados estaban de su vista," and even her thoughts are described as "honestos y recatados" (Zayas 346). Her attributes are those of the typical, obedient Spanish woman of Zayas's society. As Lena E. V. Sylvania points out in her study on Zayas's writings, "Women were supposed to live secluded, protected, and conventional lives, leaving to men the knowledge of the affairs of the world, the transaction of business and the pursuit of wisdom" (7). Exhibiting the behavior of the perfect woman, it is no

surprise to anyone that there have been several suitors who have dreamed of possessing Laura's hand in marriage, but Don Diego is the lucky one who gets to make her his wife, "pues entre los muchos pretendientes de su hermosa prenda llevaba don Diego la victoria" (347). It is interesting that Zayas uses the word "victory" to illustrate the conclusion of the courting process. Once Don Diego has won first-place and physically possessed his bride, his treatment of her changes drastically. The newness of the victory has worn off and the woman who was once the apple of his eye and the keeper of his heart is now the one he loathes. All of Laura's upbringing and training in the ways of proper manners are no match for Don Diego's inconsistent affection, "pues a él no le sirvió el amor contra el olvido ni la nobleza contra el apetito; ni a ella le valió la riqueza contra la desgracia, la hermosura contra el desprecio, la discreción contra el desdén ni el amor contra la ingratitud" (353). This excerpt from *Novelas* can be compared to what Beauvoir expresses in Part I of *The Second Sex* when she talks about the invention of the bronze tool. Upon the creation of the bronze tool, new ways of survival and discovery trumped old ways of existence such as gardening. Man found a new way to exert his transcendence through the use of the new instrument, and what once served him was no longer as valuable (Beauvoir 66). Throughout the courting process, Don Diego puts all of his devotion and energy into being the victor who wins Laura's hand in marriage. Through their union he finds transcendence by solidifying her immanence. As Beauvoir writes of men:

marriage has great importance for him; this is where he attains adult dignity and receives his share of a piece of the world; [...] but in all of these secular functions-work or marriage- he aspires to escape this circle and assert transcendence against immanence, to open up a future different from the past in which he is rooted [...], man wishes to possess that which he is not; he unites himself with what appears to him to be Other than himself. (83)

Don Diego gains his wife's inheritance and soon thereafter does as he pleases. Once betrothed, Laura (the garden) is no longer as exciting and stimulating as she once was. Having conquered

her, Don Diego now possesses what he is not and is free to move on to the next occasion that will bring him excitement, freedom, and the opportunity to further explore his transcendence. Zayas uses Don Diego's sudden change of heart to demonstrate what can, and oftentimes does, happen once a woman becomes a wife. His status as a husband has not changed his transcendent spirit. In fact, he is free to find meaning in life beyond his union with Laura. He is, after all, a man and by definition free to do as he pleases. On the contrary, Laura now exists for her husband and Zayas's *maravilla* goes on to show the consequences for a wife who has the bad fortune to marry a husband like Don Diego. Unfortunately, there is no sympathy shown on Don Diego's part for the suffering that he has caused his wife. He continues to possess that which he is not, Laura, while he seeks out liaisons that feed his sense of autonomy.

He discovers the liberation he desires in his relationship with Nise, leading him to neglect his marital duties and ignore his wife's affliction: "Empezó a ser ingrato, faltando a la cama y mesa, libre en no sentir los pesares que daba a su esposa" (354). He is ignorant to her pain because, according to long established myths that accredit agony to the feminine condition, anguish is a natural part of being a woman. In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir explains that the ruling caste has used myths to sanction male privilege and female abuse. The myth supports the idea that female suffering is a part of woman's natural human condition as ordained by nature. Men employ this myth as the premise for ignoring feminine woes and increasing the melancholy of the female gendered experience (246). Contrary to the myth, Beauvoir herself sees nothing natural about female oppression; thus she believes that if woman puts forth the effort she can change her inferior position in society. She recognizes that it is because of the passivity of women that men have been able to perpetuate such oppressive, tyrannical myths through the centuries. The inactivity of women only adds to women's powerlessness and allows for their

continued subordination. Male dominated societies are aware that myth is a powerful tool that has been manipulated for the purposes of control and superiority of the male gender.<sup>15</sup> Thus, from the perspective of the patriarchate, Don Diego finding himself free of empathy and concern for his wife's grief is not unnatural according to the myth and mystery of the woman.

To add physical injury to insult, throughout the *maravilla* Laura suffers various forms of mistreatment from her husband. Laura is discontented with Don Diego's sudden change, but being a woman she is immanence, she is her husband's possession, and she is aware that it is he who has supreme control so she attempts to remain silent before him despite her sadness. However, his public affair with his lover Nise is what finally brings Laura to voice her frustrations. When she does dare to speak she is met with fierce anger, "le empezó a maltratar de manos, tanto que las perlas de sus dientes presto tomaron forma de corales, bañados en la sangre que empezó a sacar las crueles manos" (361)<sup>16</sup>. The physical abuse that Laura suffers at his hands comes along with the territory of being a wife. Just as the slave is the property of his master, the wife is the property of her husband, and, as her master, he has the authority to discipline her as he sees fit. As Beauvoir puts it, "When she is a young girl, the father has total power over her; on her marriage he transmits it entirely to her spouse. Since she is his property like the slave, the beast of burden, or the thing, it is natural for man to have as many wives as he wishes" (83). This being established as the standard for male-female relationships in patriarchal society, Don Diego's relationship with Nise is no surprise to anyone but Laura. Consequently, his violent reaction is not met with anger by Laura's brothers and father. Once they become aware of what has happened, her male family members do not come to her rescue. She is left

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<sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, another prolific twentieth-century French theorist, echoes Beauvoir's sentiments on myths when he states that each myth has a historical base, a factor that renders it unnatural.

<sup>16</sup> Zayas is using the language of male poets who often, for example, say that the woman's teeth are pearls. Zayas moves away from that beautiful image to a more shocking one by calling them *corales*, now red because they are covered in blood.

alone to further suffer her husband's abuse. As Rosalie Hernández Pecoraro states, "Laura's father and brothers cannot, or rather will not, help her, sustaining the social contract that maintains that Diego is her husband, and thus her owner, and they abandon her to further abuse and victimization" (8). Laura's father and brothers are aware of her sadness and they even get into frequent arguments with Don Diego about the horrible way he treats his wife. However, the prevalent belief in spousal ownership is enough for Laura's father and brothers to leave her to endure physical abuse, "[Don Antonio] se determinó no ver por sus ojos tratar mal una hija tan querida como Laura. Y así otro día, tomando su casa, hijos y hacienda, se fue a Piedra Blanca, dejando a la pobre Laura en su desdichada vida, tan triste y tierna de verlos ir que le faltó muy poco para perderla" (361). Unfortunately, the love that her male family members have for her is not enough to outweigh the patriarchal domination that renders her as an object to be possessed by her husband.

In an effort to put an end to her husband's cruel behavior, Laura steps outside of her womanly domain, her home, to seek the help of a witch who might be able to remedy her problems. This act shows that Zayas knows that adhering to the traditional role of the faithful and loving wife is not enough to combat the fickleness of the male heart, nor is it enough to tame his longing for transcendence. After Laura's encounter with the witch, Zayas uses her fictional character as a mouthpiece through which she expresses her thoughts on men as well as the women who put their trust in them when she states through Laura,

*¿Dónde se hallará un hombre verdadero? ¿En cuál dura la voluntad un día, y más si se ven queridos?, que parece que al p[a]so que conocen el amor, crece su libertad y aborrecimiento. ¡Malhaya la mujer que en ellos cree, pues al cabo hallará el pago de su amor, como yo le hallo! ¿Quién es la necia que desea casarse, viendo tantos y tan lastimosos ejemplos? (364)*

Zayas goes on to make more bold, challenging statements through Laura, who exclaims: "vais enflaqueciendo nuestras fuerzas con los temores de la honra, y el entendimiento con el recato de

la vergüenza, dándonos por espadas rucas, y por libros almohadillas” (364-5). The constraints that patriarchy places on women make her not only disadvantaged institutionally by denying her rights to education, political participation, and freedom over their bodies and everyday activities, but it also leaves them emotionally marked with fears of losing personal honor and bringing shame upon husband and family. It is clear the Zayas views traditional male-female love and the institution of marriage in a different light than how it was traditionally portrayed in literature. As Mary Elizabeth Perry’s article “Crisis and Disorder in the World of María de Zayas y Sotomayor” explains, men were responsible for painting the unattainable picture of the perfect, obedient woman, “Males, moreover, wrote the prescriptive literature that clearly differentiated between members of the opposite sex. Women in this patriarchal system did not even create the images that were supposed to describe them and that they were expected to emulate” (30).<sup>17</sup> Perry believes that the image of the perfect, chaste woman appears repeatedly in literature because it was so difficult to live up to these standards in real life. With her female characters, Zayas challenges the notion of the good, passive, dutiful wife servant by giving Laura voice to express her dissatisfaction with her husband’s actions. Not only does she give voice to her once silenced female characters, she gives them the opportunity to make decisions concerning their lives, as we see in the final pages of *La fuerza del amor*.

An interesting turn of events occurs when Laura decides to risk her life to go after the things the sorceress has asked her to obtain, “barbas, cabellos y dientes de un ahorcado” (362), in order to carry out the spell that would put an end to her husband’s affair and the pain that she has suffered. Sensing that she is in danger, her brother Don Carlos comes to her aid. Once her father finds out about what has happened and the extent of Don Diego’s cruelty, they take Laura to the

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<sup>17</sup> These images are described in detail in Juan Vives’s *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* and Fray Luis de Leon’s *La perfecta casada*.

viceroy and she pleads her case before him. Don Diego is ordered to come before the viceroy but instead of taking responsibility for his wrongdoings, he blames Nise for his infidelity. He asks that his lover be entered into a convent so that he may avoid any further transgression against his wife. Although her husband agrees to change his ways, Laura prefers to enter a convent rather than return home, “Antes más firme en su propósito, dijo que era cansarse en vano, que ella quería hacer por Dios, que era amante más agradecido, lo que por un ingrato había hecho. Y ese mismo día se entró en la Concepción, convento noble, rico y santo” (369). The decision that Laura makes here is no doubt a difficult one since she spends the majority of the *maravilla* thinking of how to bring her husband home. It is clear that her choice to enter the convent is a result of the pain and stress she has suffered in her marriage. As Lou Charnon-Deutsch explains in his article on Zayas’s narratives, “It is in moments of extreme stress and adversity that women are called upon to make choices, whether or not contingent upon their relationships with men. Ironically, it is often extreme victimization that opens to a heroine the realm of decision making” (125). Zayas provides the convent as the solution for the mistreatment her characters have faced. Her final act in the tale ruptures the ties she has with the men who have dominated and controlled her lives thus far. She is able to break away from the marriage institution which leaves her free from her husband’s authoritative control and physical abuse. Also, she is also able to break away from the control of her father and brothers, the men who have directed her actions over the course of her life as well as made the decision to give her to Don Diego in matrimony. Much like Zayas, Beauvoir sees how freeing one’s self from the patriarchal system can lead to an awakening of consciousness though her view is much radical than that of Zayas, Beauvoir explains, “Since the cause of women’s oppression is found in the resolve to perpetuate the family and keep the patrimony intact, if she escapes the family, she escapes total dependence as well”

(89). I will not venture to say that Zayas shares Beauvoir's sentiments on the complete escape from the family as a means of liberation since, as expressed by critics of her work, she views relationships formed in the convent as being just as intimate, if not more, than family relationships. Nevertheless, it is evident that the two agree that the emancipation of woman is not a task that should be left up to man. It is the woman who must find her voice in the face of adversity in order to transcend to a new level of consciousness that leads to an understanding of her personal value formulated through her own thoughts and actions, not those of men.

Through Laura's character, Zayas most certainly proves to her readers that she does not accept the unfairness of the patriarchal system, but what message might she be attempting to convey through Nise? Zayas's inclusion of this character in the tale further upholds the idea that, as stated by Perry, the female characters present in literature produced by men were much unlike women in actual society. Here, Zayas is more than likely offering to her readers a more precise example of the not so perfect seventeenth-century woman. Nise is well aware that Don Diego is married, but she refuses to end their sexual relationship and the narrator expresses how she is undaunted by what society thinks of her. Nise, the narrator who shares the character's name, describes the character as "rematada de todo punto como mujer que ya no estimaba su fama ni temía caer en más bajeza que en la que estaba" (355). The storyteller even goes as far to say that she has lost the respect of everyone, including God. Without a doubt, she is far from the pure, honorable woman that patriarchy aims to reproduce through its strict regulation. Since she is in direct defiance of the patriarchy, the viceroy agrees with Don Diego and forces her to enter a convent. What happens to Nise at the end of the *maravilla* has various interpretations. One understanding could be that Zayas does not completely disagree with all aspects of the male dominated society in which she lives. Adopting this idea leads us to conflicting ideas on her

views on gender roles. As Marina Brownlee explains in *The Cultural Labyrinth of Maria de Zayas*, it is challenging to say with exactitude what the author's moral intentions are because her stories denounce men as well as women, leading to a "conflicting representation of gender" (10). Perceptibly, *Zayas* is denouncing the mistreatment of women by men, but I do not believe she goes as far as to condemn the institution of marriage in its entirety as it is not the concept of marriage that is flawed, but the way that women are treated once they become wives.

Another approach attributes Nise's character to further pointing out the double standard that exists between how men and women are expected to behave, respectively. The fact that the judge grants Don Diego's request that Nise be entered into a convent further illustrates how women were held to strict obligations of chastity that men were not expected to uphold. It may seem absurd that this kind of action is taken against the woman and that the male party in the affair faces no legal consequences for his actions, but as Beauvoir explains, and as *Zayas* reveals through her fiction, the behavioral expectations for men and women were strongly fixed in male dominated societies,

Patriarchal civilization condemned woman to chastity; the right of man to relieve his sexual desires is more or less openly recognized, whereas woman is confined within marriage: for her the act of flesh, if not sanctified by the code, by a sacrament, is a fault, a fall, a defeat, a weakness; she is obliged to defend her virtue, her honor; if she "gives in" or if she "falls," she arouses disdain, whereas even the blame inflicted on her vanquisher brings him admiration. (Beauvoir 386)

Thus, Nise is the one who faces punishment while Don Diego is not reprimanded by the judge nor is he scolded any further by Laura's brothers and father. However, *Zayas* is determined not to let society have the last word. She kills him off at the end of the *maravilla*, offering to her readers a sense of poetic justice.<sup>18</sup> With Don Diego dead, Laura happily lives out the rest of her

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<sup>18</sup> "Don Diego, desesperado, se fue a su casa, y tomando las joyas y dineros que halló, se partió sin despedirse de nadie de la ciudad, donde a pocos meses se supo que en la guerra que la Majestad de Felipe III, Rey de España, tenía con el Duque de Saboya, le voló una mina" (369).

days in a convent. Laura's new life is so fulfilling to her that she shudders at the thought of her old one.<sup>19</sup> Through her newfound freedom within convent walls, Laura is able to transcend the barriers of patriarchy that once had her bound and suffering male abuse.

### ***El imposible vencido***

Like Laura, there are numerous other characters in Zayas's *Novelas* that have to deal with the injustices of being born and raised a woman in a patriarchal society. In *El imposible vencido*, narrated the fourth night by Don Lope, Doña Leonor faces challenges when her father, Don Francisco, refuses to let her marry Don Rodrigo, her childhood friend and the love of her life. Although it is evident to her father, and mother, that Don Rodrigo is the man she wishes to marry, her father rejects the idea due to economic reasons, "por tener más puesta la mira en la hacienda que en su gusto" (449). Being the second born son, Don Rodrigo is not in line to inherit the riches of his parents. Because of this, the melancholic lover informs us that Doña Leonor's father does not consider him to be the best suitor for his daughter, "Vuestro padre, hermoso dueño mío, ha negado al mío el sí que seáis mía, dando por disculpa que soy segundo en mi casa, agravio que me hizo el cielo que yo perdiese el de vuestra belleza" (449-50). As in *La fuerza del amor*, the authority of the masculine voice is exercised in this tale. Its power impedes the happiness of the two lovers and they are forced to take measures in order to rebel against this dominant force. Don Rodrigo enters himself into the service of the King in order to acquire the titles and riches that will afford him the right to his lover's hand. Doña Leonor vows not to marry for three years, the time it should take Don Rodrigo to achieve his goal, "que yo os prometo de

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<sup>19</sup> "Laura, viéndose del todo libre, tomó el hábito de religiosa, y a su tiempo profesó, donde hoy vive santísimamente, tan arrepentida de su atrevida determinación que, cuando se acuerda, tiembla, acordándose donde estuvo" (369).

no casarme en tres años, aunque aventure en ello la vida. Ésos lleváis de término para que alcancéis con vuestras valerosas hazañas, no los méritos para merecerme, que de éstos estoy pagada y contenta, sino los bienes de fortuna, que es en sólo lo que repara la codicia de mi padre” (450). By leaving his home and the woman he loves, Don Rodrigo takes advantage of the male privilege of transcendence in an attempt to change the circumstances and misfortune that he faces. He understands that because of her beauty and wealth, Doña Leonor has many men who desire to marry and possess her. He knows that he must take action so that he does not lose out to a first-born son of more affluent means, “It is the existence of other men that tears each man out of his immanence and enables him to fulfill the truth of his being, to complete himself through transcendence, through escape toward some objective, through enterprise” (Beauvoir 140).

Since he cannot rely on his family inheritance, what Don Rodrigo must do is establish himself as a sovereign, independent subject in order to triumph over the other male competitors. As a man, he has the opportunity to venture out into the unknown to learn, conquer, and experience life. Unfortunately, Doña Leonor’s only option is to be immanent as she sits home and patiently waits for the object of her affections to return. However, as expressed in the lament that ensues after being apart from her lover, Doña Leonor communicates the internal struggle she suffers caused by her love of Don Rodrigo and her obligation to be an obedient daughter, “Pues, si los obedezco te pierdo, y si los disgusto no te gano, pues aun todavía vives ausente y olvidado de mí, cuando yo estoy metida en un caos de confusión, donde amor y obediencia, ausencia y constancia, combaten, consumen, y amenazan mi vida” (468). She goes on to say that she feels as though her parents are looking out for her good and that she must obey them, “¿Pues en qué podré pagarles sino en obedecerles y darles gusto?” (469). Through these statements we can see that Doña Leonor is well educated on the ways she is expected to behave as a daughter of parents

of noble means. For now, the two lovers will have to suffer the anguish of being apart since their love isn't enough to overcome the rules of the patriarchy that give fathers the power to give their daughter's hand to the highest bidder.

In this *maravilla*, Zayas is detailing the importance of the marriage agreement and how it had the power to improve or degenerate the social and economic standing of a family in the society in which she lived. Choosing a suitor for a daughter is just as important as her upbringing since it determines the outcome of her life and that of her family. Consequently, parents, especially fathers, were extremely involved in the selection process. In her study on family economy in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Seville, Perry informs us:

The dowry system encouraged parents and other family members to regard marriage as an economic arrangement in which they should participate directly. Families of wealth could exert considerable pressure on a young woman to marry a particular propertied suitor, or, if the family lacked enough wealth to provide the dowry for a suitable match, to forgo marriage in favor of the convent, which usually required a lesser dowry. Parents played a critical role in making these arrangements. They had to consider the marriage of their sons and daughters as a strategy for safeguarding or enriching the family estate. (67, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*)

The actions of Doña Leonor's father are that of the emblematic, wealthy seventeenth-century Spanish patriarch. As the head of the household, and with the future of his wealth and reputation at stake, he promises his daughter's hand in marriage to Don Alonso, a man he feels to be a more worthy choice due to his wealth. Upon the realization that her father will not give in to her wishes, Doña Leonor falls ill. Her father has an indication that her sickness has been caused by love but he is unmoved. He does not contemplate involving his wife, Doña María, in the decision making process concerning their daughter's marriage, nor does his wife question his actions. She is behaving as the obedient wife who does not dare to question her husband. Like him, she sees marriage to a wealthy man as the more beneficial outcome for her daughter's life and the family

name. For the overruling majority of women in the patriarchy, marriage is the most honorable selection and a woman could aspire to nothing more important (Beauvoir 329).

When Doña Leonor falls ill, her mother has a suspicion that it is because of her sadness, but she does nothing. In *Women in the Prose of María de Zayas*, Eavan O'Brien explores the dynamic of the mother-daughter relationship in this *maravilla* and how patriarchy affects female relationships, "Leonor does not confide in her mother, suggesting not merely a lack of intimacy between mother and daughter but also the omnipotence of patriarchal control. Despite maternal presence, patriarchal control subsumes Leonor's household" (171). Different from *La fuerza del amor*, there is a mother included in this *maravilla*, but what is interesting to note is that the mother's presence has no positive impact on the outcome of her daughter's life. After she overhears her daughter's lament and discovering the love letters that Doña Leonor has received from Don Rodrigo, it is the mother who informs her husband that their daughter refuses to marry not because she is physically ill but because she is lovesick.<sup>20</sup> Having this new information, her father forces her to marry Don Alonso. Her mother does not act as her confidant nor does she try to console her daughter. Interfering with her husband's wishes could have major consequences for a woman in seventeenth-century Spain. In her informative book on Spanish life during that time, Perry cites a case where a woman was sentenced to life in prison for disobeying her dying husband's wish in order to help her daughter marry the man of her choosing.<sup>21</sup> Like the obedient wife that she was raised to be, Doña María goes and reports the cause of her daughter's grief directly to her husband, an act that leads to further misfortune for her daughter. Unfortunately, Doña María's presence does not help her daughter fight against Don Francisco's authority,

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<sup>20</sup> The *maravilla* tells us that Doña María, "Habló sobre el caso a su padre" (471). The mother's loyalty to her husband is stronger than that of the mother-daughter bond.

<sup>21</sup> The case of Catalina de Mesa is detailed in Perry's book *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* pages 67-68. This incident is a real life account on just how dangerous it was for a wife to defy the wishes of her husband.

“Throughout the tale, despite the mother’s sporadic activity, her capacity to affect her daughter’s fate does not extend to a direct contravention of the father’s will: in this case, the mother’s hands are tied with patriarchal bonds” (O’Brien 175).

Despite the lack of help from her mother, Doña Leonor successfully puts off marriage with Don Alonso for almost four years. However, when her mother overhears her lament and reports back to her father, Leonor is deliberately tricked into marriage by her parents who falsify a letter stating that Don Rodrigo has married someone else, “ordenaron entre los dos una carta, poniéndola en nombre de un criado que don Rodrigo había llevado y ellos conocían, en que le avisaba como su señor se había casado con una señora flamenca muy rica y hermosa, cuyo dote había venido a su propósito” (470-71). Believing that Don Rodrigo has married another, she gives her hand to Don Alonso. Nevertheless, the new marriage does not help to alleviate her extreme unhappiness, “no había nadie en casa quien la hubiese visto reír después que se casó” (473). Knowing nothing of Doña Leonor’s marriage, Don Rodrigo returns to see her after his long absence. His stunned lover faints at the sight of him, and none of the remedies that her servants and doctor try will bring her back to her senses. She is pronounced dead and the burial ceremonies are performed in preparation for her entombment. Don Rodrigo goes to the church to see her one last time. Miraculously, after hearing her lover’s voice and declaration of love, Doña Leonor regains her senses. It is only through the love of Don Rodrigo that she “comes back to life.”

In this section of the *maravilla*, Zayas is utilizing a literary theme known as *la difunta pleiteada*. Citing María de Goyri de Menéndez Pidal, Edwin S. Morby attributes this theme to a

*comedia* by Lope de Vega.<sup>22</sup> According to Morby, Goyri describes this technique as “tema novelístico muy difundido es el de una mujer que, después de sepultada, recobra la vida, y luego disputan, sobre su posesión, dos o más hombres que se creen con derecho a ella” (Morby 238). Zayas is aware of the literature being produced during her age and she capitalizes upon this theme not only sell books, but to manipulate the techniques being used by male writers in order to deliver her message and expose the difficulties of being female in a patriarchal society. In order to be able to live happily with Don Rodrigo, Doña Leonor must abandon her family and escape to another city. Like Laura, she too must leave her family in order to find the happiness that she seeks. However, contrary to Laura, she does not reject the institution of marriage. This *maravilla* is further indication that Zayas herself does not disagree with marriage, but she does disagree with the abuse that some women are destined to suffer in their subordinate roles as wives.

In contrast to Laura, Doña Leonor’s actions are more passive in nature. She only chooses to flee from her family once she “magically awakens” after her lover’s return. While he is away, she chooses a rather static role in her situation. Unlike Laura, she never ventures outside of the private sphere of her parent’s household. She fakes an illness and waits patiently for her lover to come back and rescue her from her grief. It is exactly this type of meekness that creates and sustains the myths that men use to repress female transcendence. Thus, for the female to adopt popular notions of obedience, and for men to capitalize upon such beliefs is, for Beauvoir, a double edged sword. In *Sex and Existence*, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin’s study on *The Second Sex*, the author explains, “it is morally wrong either to prevent another from fulfilling his or her transcendence, or to choose to live in immanence oneself –that is, to live only in accordance with

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<sup>22</sup> José Cano Navarro offers a thorough analysis of Lope’s *La difunta pleiteada* in his article “La fuerza del deseo: El caso de <<La difunta pleiteada>> de Lope de Vega”. His examination outlines the literary and philosophical techniques used in Lope’s plays to present love as a complicated phenomenon (251).

the immediate, given circumstances, which, according to her, has been historically characteristic of the situation of women” (Lundgren-Gothlin 233). For Doña Leonor to wait four years for Don Rodrigo to return and make her his wife shows that she has been conditioned since birth to occupy that position. She does play on the expectations that she knows are placed upon her in order to buy herself the time she needs to wait for Don Rodrigo to gain riches and return home. She tells her parents that she has not yet reached the proper age nor has she gained the discretion necessary for marriage, “si bien la dama le impedía y entretenía con decir que sus pocos años no la consentían aceptarle, hasta tener más edad y más salud, para que con más acuerdo y discreción llevase la carga del matrimonio, cuya disculpa aceptaban sus padres” (452). However, these words only serve to manipulate her parents as she is more than ready and willing to marry; she just doesn’t care for the man her parents have chosen for her. Choosing to live in immanence is what hinders women’s liberation from the patriarchal system. It is the woman’s responsibility to alter the representation of the world that has been created by men. The world in which women live is created from man’s perspective and women have accepted this worldly depiction as absolute truth (Beauvoir 162). Woman has passively accepted the position of the objective inessential in the presence of man. In order for woman to be set free from tyrannical male rule, she must decide to take an active role in making the necessary steps that will lead to her transcendence.

Zayas shows the deviant nature of men through all of the male characters in *El imposible vencido*, including the seemingly noble and valiant Don Rodrigo. Although he is portrayed as a lovesick suitor who will do anything to be with the object of his affection, he is not as thoughtful and upstanding as he seems. While in service for the King of Flandes, Don Rodrigo is ordered to solve a mystery that has been plaguing the house of Doña Blanca, a noble widow of a Spanish

soldier. Impressed by Don Rodrigo's valor, Doña Blanca falls in love with him. When he finds out about Doña Blanca's feelings towards him, he plays on her love and uses it to trick her into a sexual transaction with Don Beltrán, a soldier of noble lineage and wealth who has been in love with Doña Blanca since the passing of her husband. Don Rodrigo does not take into account the anguish and deception that Doña Blanca will experience from the scheme that ensues. Thinking that she is going to meet Don Rodrigo in the dark of night, she is actually met by Don Beltrán and has sex with him. It is not revealed to her who she has slept with until the act is completed. This episode shows that the homosocial bonds between the two soldiers are more important than the wishes of their female victim. The two can only view this horrible act of deception from their point of view and the female *other* has no other option than to deal with the consequences. She is refused any and all subjectivity and is reduced to a desired object, "To posit Woman is to posit the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing, against experience, that she could be a subject, a peer" (Beauvoir 266).

After the scheme has been revealed and the sexual act complete with Don Beltrán, Doña Blanca is left with no other option but to marry him, "mas viendo que era sin remedio, se despidió de ellos, pidiendo a don Rodrigo que, pues había sido el tercero de aquel engaño, hablase a sus deudos y al duque para que con gusto de todos se hiciese el casamiento con don Beltrán" (467). The union between the two is the only thing that can absolve the rape that Doña Blanca suffers at the hands of Don Beltrán. The episode is not a violent rape like the ones we see in some of the *maravillas* in Zayas's *Desengaños*, but it can be considered rape due to the fact that she never consents to have sex with Don Beltrán. As a result, she is forced to marry as marriage is "the only appropriate outlet for female sexuality" (Parker-Aronson 530).<sup>23</sup> Unable to

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<sup>23</sup> In "Monstrous Metamorphoses and Rape in María de Zayas" Parker-Aronson states, "To define what constituted rape in early modern Europe threatened to lead up a rather slippery legalistic slope. It could be defined in numerous

deal with the frustration of being rejected by Doña Blanca time and time again, Don Beltrán knows that if he can physically possess her body she will be forever his or she will be faced to endure the shame of being “used goods” in the eyes of society. The rape act serves to further subordinate her while establishing his dominance over her. In Kearon and Mehrohf’s article “Rape: An Act of Terror,” the authors examine rape in a feminist context. They view the act as a tool under male control that is used to the advantage of the male and the subjugation of the female, “It is not an arbitrary device by one individual on another; it is a political act of *oppression* (never rebellion) exercised by members of a powerful class on members of the powerless class” (155). In *The Second Sex*, this is what Beauvoir refers to as the “imperialism of the human consciousness”. For her, the historical relationship between man and woman has never been one of friendship, but rather one of enslavement in which the subject, man, finds his sovereignty by objectifying woman (66). I venture to say that it is the need to establish his dominion combined with the objectification of woman that leads to deplorable instances of rape.

This occurrence is not the only one aimed at the physical ownership and psychological suppression of Doña Blanca. Another obsessed admirer of hers, Señor Arnesto, her married neighbor, conspires with a servant and devises a plan that will allow him to enter Doña Blanca’s home and sexually enjoy her against her will; he disguises himself as a ghost and enters her house every night in hopes that he will find her alone and be able to violate her. The narrator reveals that he has gone to such lengths because he cannot handle the constant rejection he has received from his uninterested victim, “enamorado de ella desde que murió su marido, la solicitaba y perseguía, al cual la hermosa doña Blanca había despedido ásperamente por ser casado y no permitir este estado de él, y la honra y nobleza de ella tan ilícita voluntad” (456).

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ways ranging from forced sexual assault, to seduction and even to abandonment after consensual sexual intercourse had already taken place due a false promise of marriage” (526).

Like Don Beltrán, Señor Arnesto is frustrated with the fact that his praises and advances have been rejected, so he aims to make Doña Blanca's body the site through which he will act out his aggravation. From Lisa Vollendorf's perspective, the study of the body and violence is the best way to demonstrate Zayas's call for gender equality. In her book *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism*, the author asserts:

As female characters fall victim to men, the texts protest the hypocrisy and proprietariness that inform dominant values about women's place in society. These representations of victimization, hypocrisy, and injustice focus our attention on the body. From this schema of representation and didactic intervention, the body emerges as the cornerstone of Zayas's feminism. (24)

Zayas's use of the body as a call for equality covers a spectrum of issues and I assert that the traditional view of woman as immanence is one that adds to the injury against the female sex. As patriarchal society accepts this view, it gives men a sense of entitlement over all that is female and all that is attributed to the female domain. Once Don Beltrán exerts his immanence over Doña Blanca's transcendence through trickery which allows him to physically possess her body, he is able to solidify his complete control over her and bring her into his household, the ultimate representation of female immanence. Similarly, Doña Leonor is deceived by her father when he devises the false letter that tells of her lover's death. This leads to the sorrowful maiden into marriage with Don Alonso. Once her husband sexually possesses her, she becomes his object and is denied all freedom.

The final point that I would like to discuss from *El imposible vencido* turns us back to the topic of the marriage agreement. As stated previously, the marriage agreement was of extreme importance to women and to their families, but it also carried a great significance for the husband as well. Marrying a noble woman could provide the husband with the opportunity to expand his estate and acquire more assets, which would allow him to further exercise his power over his wife and children. The purpose of his family would be to work under his authority figure in order

to maintain his worldly possessions. After Doña Leonor returns to Salamanca and weds Don Rodrigo, the importance of the female dowry is reflected in his concern for who is entitled to Doña Leonor's estate, "Había en este tiempo don Alonso salídose de la iglesia a llamar algunos amigos y avisar la justicia, enterado de que era su mujer la misma que había visto casar, y no porque le obligase el amor que la tenía, sino la codicia del gran dote que le habían dado con ella" (Zayas 478). Don Lope tells the participants in the soirée that only two months have passed since Doña Leonor was pronounced dead and already Don Alonso has set his sights on a new woman. For the brief time that they were married, he did not afford her any freedom but he exercised his liberties at will, enjoying all the women and games as he wished, "Era el marido celoso, y no de mejor condición que otro, y tras esto amigo de seguir sus apetitos y desconciertos, sin perdonar ni las damas ni el juego, causas para que doña Leonor le hubiese del todo aborrecimiento" (473). Due to their transcendence, men, married men included, were not expected to adhere to the same strict moral codes as women that placed tremendous significance on virtue. It was not expected for a man's body to encompass the nobility of the family, as that was considered a load that women had to carry. Through his actions, it is evident that Don Alonso was more interested in the benefits of the marriage agreement than forming a bond with his wife. Interestingly enough, due to Doña Leonor having been pronounced dead before she marries Don Rodrigo, the forced union is declared null and void and Don Alonso is denied ownership to his ex-wife's estate. Through this fictional outcome, Zayas is projecting a future of hope for real-world circumstances in regards to women. As we have seen in the cases of Don Diego and Don Alonso, it is not always the man who has the last word in Zayas's short-stories. As we will see in the next *maravilla* to be analyzed here, Zayas gives her female characters even more autonomy. Perhaps she is trying to communicate to the men of seventeenth-century Spain the importance of honesty

and acceptance of women as their equals instead of objects to be desired because of superficialities such as beauty and wealth.

### ***El castigo de la miseria***

*El castigo de la miseria* presents the reader with a unique case of transcendence that is not present in *La fuerza del amor* and *El imposible vencido*. Narrated on the second night of the *soiree* by Don Álvaro, this tale is particularly salient to this study because it allows for a distinctive view on patriarchy: the negative effects on men that stem from the acceptance of ludicrous patriarchal ideologies. In this portion of my examination, I will demonstrate how Zayas reverses the gender roles and how it is the male protagonist here who is the most gullible of all. Likewise, the female characters in the *maravilla* exercise dominance. They are the ones who command, scheme, and come out on top.

The tale opens with the life of Don Marcos, a former page who has struggled his whole life to gain riches and live as an honored, respected man in seventeenth-century Spanish society should. When he marries Doña Isidora, he only does so out of greed, “descubriendo el enamorado don Marcos, más del dinero que de la dama, el deseo que tenía de verse ya su marido” (263-64), because he is incapable of living the life he feels he deserves on his own. To his lament, the entire courtship was staged and his new bride does not have a penny to her name. After various plans to acquire riches fail, Don Marcos dies poor and alone. This *maravilla* is modeled after Cervantes’ exemplary novel *El casamiento engañoso* in which the *alférez* Campuzano is deceived by a woman he marries. Like Don Marcos, the matrimony in Cervantes’ novella is motivated by avarice. He too discovers that she doesn’t have the wealth she claimed to

have.<sup>24</sup> Zayas's imitation of Cervantes proves that she is a well-read woman who is knowledgeable of the popular literature of her time period, which includes the picaresque novel.<sup>25</sup> Critics such as Anne J. Cruz and Mireya Pérez-Erdélyi claim this novel to be Zayas's attempt at writing a picaresque novel. As said by Cruz, "*El castigo de la miseria* comes closest to the conventional picaresque genre in that its pícaro-protagonists are from the lower classes, and its ironic and often hilarious plot disguises the author's critique" (17). Cruz acknowledges that Zayas uses this literary convention, just as she uses the convention of *la difunta pleiteada*, to expose the injustices of the patriarchy. She does this by bringing her female characters to the forefront, a distinction from the traditional picaresque novels in which women are background characters, and giving them a role just as active as that of the male *pícaro* (17-18). The women are smart, witty, and just as deceitful as the male characters of the other *maravillas* in *Novelas*. They play on the weakness of Don Marcos with ease and have the last laugh.

Don Marcos is guilty of the same passion of greed as Don Alonso; however, he does not share the same noble background. Like Don Alonso, he chooses to marry because he is aware of the benefits that marriage will bring him, but he does not have enough wealth to marry a woman of Doña Leonor's prominence. The reader learns that his upbringing was everything but privileged and he has had to scrape his whole life just to get by. Don Álvaro, the narrator, points out that it was visibly obvious that in his youth Don Marcos even went as far as to deny himself basic necessities such as food in order to save money, "Era don Marcos de mediana estatura, y con la sutileza de la comida se vino a transformar de hombre en espárrago" (254). Don Marcos

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<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Cervantes' *El casamiento engañoso* and its relation to the picaresque, see "Cervantes and The Soldier's Tale: Genre and Disorder in *El Casamiento Engañoso*" by Stephen Rupp.

<sup>25</sup> As Sandra M. Foa explains in *Feminismo y forma narrativa: estudio del tema y las técnicas de María de Zayas y Sotomayor*, Zayas models *El castigo de la misera* after Cervantes' exemplary novel *El casamiento engañoso*, "María de Zayas toma de Cervantes la idea expresada en el título, y sigue en líneas generales el asunto básico de la novela Cervantina [...]" (141). Emulating the literary currents of her time, Zayas comes up with an entertaining, strongly didactic *maravilla*.

continues this way for many years and by the time he reaches the age of thirty he has acquired for himself a fortune of six thousand ducats. Irma Vasileski indicates that Don Marcos is unlike the other characters in Zayas's *Novelas*. He is the ideal representation of the miser seeing that he has such a strong love for money that it dominates every facet of his existence (91). The narrator also informs us that nothing is more important to him than his money, "A esto respondía don Marcos que su honra era su dinero" (279). He believes that his marriage to Doña Isidora will allow him to combine his small fortune with her twelve thousand ducats. Along with the residence that she claims to possess, he will have finally secured the money and honorable reputation he seeks, so he thinks. This union is supposed to be the solution to all of his problems. At last, he feels, his scraping, saving, and begging have paid off. He has reached a level of freedom that he has seen afforded to other men but that until now he has not been able to take part in. He is so excited about the money he is to gain that he begins to plan how he will spend, and save, before the marriage is finalized:

pues, con su ración y alguna cosa más habría para el gasto; y que seis mil ducados que él tenía, y otros tantos y más podría hacer de cosas excusadas que veía en casa de doña Isidora, pues bastaba para la casa de un escudero de un señor cuatro cucharas, un jarro y una salva, con una buena cama, y a este modo cosas que no se pueden excusar. Todo lo demás era cosa sin provecho y que mejor estaría en dineros, y éstos puestos en renta viviría como un príncipe. (263-64)

His manipulative deeds have been fruitful and he has now established himself as a subject of means by his believed domination of the *other*. As Parshley explains in the introduction to Beauvoir's text, "Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out toward other liberties" (xxviii). Don Marcos cannot envision liberty outside of financial gain; therefore, it isn't shocking that he seizes the opportunity to better his social status. Indisputably, the character of Don Marcos has been exaggerated to expose the society in which Zayas lives.

He is a product of his covetous environment in which men are taught that in order to be victorious they must conquer and acquire. In their efforts to do this, the subordination of the female is a required component. She, the inessential *other*, finds herself being essential to man's transcendence since without her oppression his quality is devalued.

Keeping in line with Vasileski, let us consider the fact that Don Marcos is the only character of his kind in Zayas's *Novelas* and what possible implications this may have. Zayas describes Don Marcos's character in great detail. She makes sure that the narrator not only illustrates his physical characteristics, she mentions his personality as well. He is not the most astute man that has ever lived as he is described as, "sencillo como un afetán de la China", "llaneza de su ingenio", and "hombre tan sin malicias" (270). Interestingly enough, the men in the novels analyzed so far have not been credited with having these same attributes. Don Diego is portrayed as a rich and discreet gentleman (346), Don Rodrigo is second in his household and a man of merits (447), Don Beltrán belongs to one of the noblest families in Guadalajara (462), and Don Alonso is also a man of wealth. Knowing this, why is it that the simple man who does not abuse or mistreat women nor finds interest in games or sexual affairs gets taken advantage of? What is the message that Zayas wants to convey through this character? Is that message achieved? I accept that Don Marcos's character has been exaggerated to point out the avarice that Zayas observes in the everyday operations of seventeenth-century Spanish society, and that she wants to warn against the repercussions of such greed. I also understand that she wants to reveal the cunning of the female characters in the *maravilla*, but I do think that she is unintentionally reinforcing the idea that "simple" men will fall victim to female wit. This idea has been a long existing component in patriarchal ideology. It is an idea that men have used to deny women education and equal rights. It was believed that women were to be heavily

supervised and controlled because, left to their own devices, they were susceptible to fall into a world of wickedness and temptation. We have seen this idea in male produced literature, the most famous example of such is most likely *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas in which the female protagonist Melibea commits suicide after getting involved with the evil sorceress Celestina. Melibea must kill herself in order to right the wrongs that her “devious” actions have caused. However, this element of female sacrifice and female deviance is not present in Beauvoir’s work. It is here that we arrive at a point of divergence between Zayas and Beauvoir.

The theories of transcendence and immanence of Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* resist the undertone present here. Beauvoir’s text does not explore the idea that women who are not under the control of men will automatically engage in malicious behavior. On the contrary, she asserts that female transcendence is blocked because women do nothing to confront the rules of the patriarchy. In their own way, the women in *El castigo de la miseria* have found liberation from the traditional norms and practices that define them as passive, obedient subjects. Alternatively, it cannot be ruled out that Zayas’s play upon Don Marcos’s intelligence serves principally to highlight the wit of the female characters. If Don Marcos succeeds in his plans, what we are left with is a *maravilla* like those written by her male counterparts. Instead, Doña Isidora and her two female servants, Marcela and Inés, and Doña Isidora’s two timing lover Agustin, make off with the fortune that he has held so dear. Don Marcos’s attempt to find his tricksters only leads to his further humiliation. He is no match for the clever women and he is left penniless and embarrassed. As if the humiliation he suffers at the hands of the woman he meant to take advantage of wasn’t already too much for him, he receives a letter from Doña Isidora scolding him for his foolish ways,

A don Marcos Miseria, salud: Hombre que por ahorrar no come, hurtando a su cuerpo el sustento necesario, y por interés de dineros casa, sin más información que si hay

hacienda, bien merece el castigo que vuestra merced tiene y el que se le espera andando tiempo [...], vuelva a juntar otros seis mil ducados y luego me avise, que vendré con mil amores a hacer con vuestra merced vida maridable, que bien lo merece marido tan aprovechado. –*Doña Isidora de la Venganza*. (288)

After receiving this admonishing, yet comical, letter, Don Marcos falls ill from fever and dies a few days later. Commenting on Don Marcos's death, Sandra M. Foa exclaims, "Si las astucias y picardías del joven don Marcos habían tendido éxito, ya no pueden nada chocar con la astucia de las tres mujeres. Ante ésta don Marcos tiene que rendirse y declararse por vencido, es decir, no tiene más remedio que morir" (Foa 145).<sup>26</sup> In patriarchal society, the prevalent belief is that women are mentally inferior to men. Men are taught that it is their right to control their women and assert their authority over them. When things go awry and Don Marcos loses his money (honor) at the hands of a woman, death is imminent.

Doña Isidora, Marcela, and Inés are undoubtedly skilled in the art of deception. The oldest of the women, Doña Isidora is the one most responsible for the success of the fraudulent ordeal. Being older, she is able to manipulate society's conventions of the honest, honorable, and innocent woman while using them to her advantage. She is described as a woman of honest modesty and Don Marcos is very relaxed around her due to his confidence in her decency. Ironically, the most obvious clue of the trickery that is to occur comes right after Don Marcos compliments his wife's behavior. While explaining why he wants the doors locked at night he says, "que en entrando no sólo se cierre la puerta, mas se clave; no porque soy celoso, que harto ignorante es el que lo es teniendo mujer honrada, mas porque las casa ricas nunca están seguras

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<sup>26</sup> The ending to this *maravilla* is that of the second version. In the first, less circulated version, Don Marcos falls ill but that does not lead to his death. One night while out walking he comes across Gammara, the man who arranged the marriage between Don Marcos and Doña Isidora, who tells him that he too has suffered great misfortune and as a result he is planning to hang himself. Aware of Don Marcos's situation, Gammara offers him rope with which to hang himself, and Don Marcos thankfully accepts. "Y sí vos venís con ese mismo intento, aquí hay árboles y cordel para los dos. Y diciendo esto sacó de la faltriquera el cordel. Agradecióle don Marcos el socorro y pidióle hiciese los lazos entrambos, lo cual hizo con mucho desenfado y priesa, poniéndolos en dos árboles, que estaban juntos...hallaron al miserable don Marcos colgado de un árbol, y en el otro, junto a él, un lazo, más no había nadie" (Yllera 829).

de ladrones, y no quiero que me lleve con sus manos lavadas el ladrón” (Zayas 266). Little does he know, he is sleeping with the thief he is so wary of. Her successful imitation of the courtly woman is her gateway to Don Marcos’s money.

Like her husband, Doña Isidora is a contrast from the other main characters in Zayas’s *maravillas*. She is the oldest character to play a substantial role in a tale. All of the other women are young and beautiful and we know that Doña Isidora does not share these physical traits. She disguises her old age with makeup and once that makeup is removed she is depicted in a comical, and to her husband somewhat frightful, light:

y pensando hallar en la cama a su mujer, no halló sino un fantasma, o imagen de la muerte, porque la buena señora mostró las arrugas de la cara por entero, las cuales encubría con el afeite, que tal vez suele ser encubridor de años, que a la cuenta estaban más cerca de cincuenta y cinco que de treinta y seis, como había puesto en la carta de dote, porque los cabellos eran pocos y blancos, por la nieve de los muchos inviernos pasados. (277)

It is not by coincidence that the older woman is the one who plays the crucial role in the carrying out of the scheme. In literature, it was rare for an older woman to have a main role in a short-story, novel, or play comparable to that of the young heroine. According to Luisa Cotoner Cerdó’s article, “La imagen de la mujer madura y su ingrata representación en los textos literarios,” older women in literature were secondary characters: mothers, sorceresses, hypocrites, misers, and servants (260). There are, though, instances in which the woman can exercise her knowledge in order to better her situation, “Por otra parte, a muy pocos de esos personajes femeninos les es dado aprovechar la sabiduría que han acumulado por su experiencia o se les da la oportunidad de aprovechar unas circunstancias vitales sobre cuya base podrían comenzar a ser más libres” (261). Doña Isidora’s physical appearance and old age pose obstacles to her finding a husband, so she capitalizes on what she knows and does what she has to do to get by and please her lover Agustín. Physically, men want to possess a young, beautiful body over

which they can assert their transcendence. Beauvoir states that men admire women for their health and youth. Her youth captivates him and permits him to forget the forthcoming death he faces. There is no fixed ideal on what constitutes beauty but it is necessary that a woman's body "present the inert and passive qualities of an object" (157). Zayas is aware of the idea behind this statement thus she passes this knowledge on to the character of Doña Isidora. Even though Don Marcos's marriage to her is financially motivated, he is stunned when he finds out that her beauty has been a well calculated façade. He goes as far as to compare her looks to the pits of hell, "y más no hallando consuelo en la belleza de su mujer, porque bastaba a desconsolar al mismo infierno" (278), the most despairing place in all of history. Regarding Agustín, he is only using Doña Isidora for gain. However, the relationship between the two is mutually advantageous. She employs a variety of schemes to get money and he benefits from the profits of them. In turn, she enjoys the company of, and sexual interaction with, a younger man. He does not love her, and the first chance he gets he runs away with Inés, a younger, more attractive woman. Marcela also runs off to be with her boyfriend and Doña Isidora without accomplices, however, she does have her share of Don Marcos's six thousand ducats. All of the characters in *El castigo de la miseria* aid in revealing Zayas's didactic message on the dangers of trickery and underhandedness. They are fashioned after real-life criminals who are willing to profit from the ruin of others.<sup>27</sup>

After analyzing Doña Isidora's character, I find myself asking the following question: Were Doña Isidora's actions more inclined to those of the female immanence or male transcendence? As a level of consciousness traditionally only afforded to men, transcendence for

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<sup>27</sup> In the words of Vasileski, "La persistencia del tipo rufianesco en las obras de los siglos XVI y XVII no era un fenómeno de simple imitación literaria (de *La Celestina* y de Torres Navarro), sino que obedecía a las condiciones de la vida real. Los estafadores, que con doña Isidora hacen una víctima de don Marcos, están recogidos de la muchedumbre de criminales y vividores que pululaban por la capital de España" (93).

women includes defying normalized standards of behavior, venturing outside of delegated spheres (mainly the home), and opening one's self up to new liberties and opportunities. The domination of the *other* is an integral part of achieving this goal. Immanence, on the contrary, signifies a retreat inward. An immanent being does not have the ability to find freedom through worldly exploits. Patriarchy demands that this subordinate life form remain obedient and submissive. Can the term immanence be applied with certainty to Doña Isidora's character? A comparison to the other principal female characters analyzed here is necessary in order to begin to answer this question. After being abused by her husband, Laura decides to enter a convent. However, she only chooses this due to the cruelty of her husband. Doña Leonor always longed to marry. She never considered another option for her life. She was conditioned from a young age to accept marriage as the best outcome for her life. Similarly, for Doña Blanca, marriage is the answer as well. As a widow, she no longer has a husband/master to obey, yet she is eager to wed Don Rodrigo. I venture to say that Doña Isidora's is the most complex female characters analyzed thus far. She shows no real interest in marriage and Don Álvaro, the narrator, does not give his listeners any indication that she wishes for a husband. Instead, he portrays her as a woman very skilled in the arts of trickery and deception. Although she and Agustín work together as partners and are intimate lovers, he does not control her as Don Diego controls Laura, nor is he like the controlling parents of Doña Leonor. For the most part, Doña Isidora makes her own decisions and lives as she sees fit. She belongs to the lower rungs of society but she is not under any male repressive control. In the eyes of patriarchal society she is morally corrupt. She represents what could happen if women are left to their own devices. I suggest that she has, in some ways, been able to transcend the consciousness that tells her that she has to be a docile servant, wife, and mother. She does not sit idly by as Doña Leonor does in *El imposible vencido*

nor does she escape to a convent like Laura. She confronts life head on and she survives as she sees fit. If one chooses to negate her transcendence, it is clear that her immanence goes against tradition.

Nevertheless, there are other parts of the *maravilla* that may lead to a completely different interpretation of the cunning Doña Isidora. The narrator informs us that the female con artist is involved in a romantic relationship with Agustín. However, once Don Marcos has been scammed of his money Agustín leaves her to be with Inés, the servant girl. The pair moves to Naples where he becomes a soldier and she becomes a “dama cortesana” (290). At the end of the tale, Doña Isidora returns to Madrid where she lives out the rest of her life as a beggar “pidiendo limosna” (290). Why is it that Zayas chooses this fate for this particular character? Why aren’t all punished in the end? According to Eavan O’Brien, Zayas is exposing another issue in patriarchal society that also leads to inequality in seventeenth-century Spain: classism. The socio-economic status of Inés and Marcela is lower than that of Doña Isidora. This prevents the formation of any long-standing bonds between the women, and at the first chance they get, the servant girls betray their superior in an effort to acquire riches for themselves. On the female disloyalty in the short-story O’Brien states, “The women’s cross-class collaboration is effective in terms of exploitation of the male. However, the alliance is short-lived; ultimately, these are self-serving *criadas* who willfully act to their mistress’s detriment when it is advantageous for them to do so” (131). One reason for the lack of female solidarity could be that the society in which the women live does not hold relationships among women in high esteem. In *A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection*, Janice Raymond blames patriarchal societies belief that “women are each other’s worst enemies” (151). According to Raymond, men have traditionally viewed women who are fond of other women as intolerable, thus, wanting

to make themselves tolerable to men, women resist forming connections with one another (151). Additionally, Raymond declares that it is the “rootlessness” of women that contribute to their male-centered views of the world when she states:

In contrast to other oppressed groups, women do not possess the past of a cohesive and self-conscious community with its own political traditions, philosophical vitality, and history[...]. The rootlessness of women in their own group identity as women contributes more than anything to the worldless, unrealistic, and nonpolitical perception that many women have of the world. This rootlessness is responsible also for the lack of female friendship, the friendship that is truly Gyn/affective as a political virtue. (154)

Raymond’s idea of the “rootlessness” of women can clearly be seen in *El castigo de la miseria* through the disloyalty of the female characters. The false transcendence for the servant girls not only requires them to conquer male domination, the lack of unity amongst the women makes them feel as though they must escape from their female master as well. It is only through deceit that they are able to find happiness and monetary gain, even if it brings about the misery of others, “The two maids, Inés and Marcela, profit most from the defrauding of Marcos. To some extent, they rise in the social scale, while Isidora is reduced to begging” (130). Doña Isidora must now live the life that Don Marcos worked thirty years to escape. The freedom that she once enjoyed while carrying out her schemes is gone. Now poor and alone, she must beg and live off the kindness of others to survive.

Lastly, let us examine for a moment the character of Agustín in greater detail. He is initially presented to the readers as Isidora’s cousin, but, as previously mentioned, he is actually her lover. This character is much like that of Don Marcos. He intends to better his lot by manipulating a woman. His love relationship with Isidora serves as nothing more than the means through which he will gain his transcendence. In line with dominant patriarchal belief, he reduces the woman to *other* as he gains his freedom. There is never any indication in the tale that he actually loves Isidora. What is revealed, however, is that once the scheme is complete and the

money is attained, he leaves her for Inés, moves to Naples, and starts a new life much different from the one he previously lived. Similar to Don Marcos, as a poor man, his circumstances render him incapable of living a transcendent life. For these men, women and money are liberty and they are willing to plot and conspire to have them both.

In conclusion, the characters in *La fuerza del amor*, *El imposible vencido*, and *El castigo de la miseria* adhere to, as well as defy, Beauvoir's patriarchal view of transcendence and immanence. Zayas uses them as her mouthpieces for exposing the injustices of a society that views women as the absolute *other*. Her characters are just as complex as the seventeenth-century society in which they live. Some of them use the tools available to them to navigate and make sense of a world that would rather see them controlled and mindless, while others remain controlled. The immanence of the female condition and the transcendence of the male condition are important components to understanding why Zayas so strongly protests the conventions of her time. For her, it is important that women be able to make their own choices, have equal rights to education, and evade mistreatment at the hands of men.

## CHAPTER TWO: EXISTING FOR SELF

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, the patriarchal concepts of transcendence and immanence were used to delegate men and women to separate, unequal spheres of seventeenth-century Spanish life and society. While men were granted the right to knowledge and freedom, women were denied those same liberties and expected to adopt a more submissive, child-like demeanor. These injustices were deeply rooted in the social order and it was a very problematic and complicated task to make an effort to escape them. Women who attempted to live by their own rules, take control of their own sexual pleasure, and/or gain knowledge of the world outside of the domestic realm were met with extreme adversity and sometimes harsh punishment. All of this can be seen in Zayas's *Novelas*, and an analysis of her characters will lead to a more thorough perspective of the measures that women undertook in order to rebel against patriarchal barriers. Moreover, we will see why in many cases readopting patriarchal norms was the more unproblematic choice. In three *maravillas* to be analyzed in this chapter, *Al fin se paga todo*, *El jardín engañoso*, and *Aventurarse perdiendo*, the female character's attempts to exist for self meets adversity and her being for man as defined by patriarchy eventually has the last word. It seems that although these women are rebellious and subversive, they cannot quite seem to entirely attain the fulfillment they seek without meeting constant obstruction from patriarchal forces. The intricacy of these *maravillas* makes one ponder whether or not a female in a patriarchal society will ever have the capacity to fully exist for self and gain autonomy and meaning outside of her being for man. Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist philosophy will serve

as the mirror through which we will examine Zayas's courageous female characters. Different from the female protagonists studied in Chapter 1, these women take even more daring measures that impact their fate. Some scheme, some deceive, and some even go as far as to kill. However, in the end all are reconciled and return to their immanent state. They are only able to achieve a limited freedom. Before beginning my analysis of the three *maravillas* in this chapter, it is necessary to shed light on the term *existence*, a primary term that will be used in this chapter. Also, I will explore what this term means in the Beauvoirian sense.

Existentialist thought began to rise in France after the French defeat during WWII. As a result of their loss to German armies, many citizens of France became conscious of their country's weaknesses both nationally and internationally (Kingston 3). As discussed in Chapter 1, French theorist Jean-Paul Sartre had a great influence on Beauvoir's philosophical thought and works. Along with Sartre, existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Hegel also influenced her works as is evident through the numerous references made to them throughout *The Second Sex*. According to Thomas Flynn, existentialism has "a long tradition in the history of philosophy in the West, extending back to Socrates (469-399 BC). This is the practice of philosophy as 'care of the self' (*epimeleia heautou*). Its focus is on the proper way of acting rather than on an abstract set of theoretical truths" (1). Flynn goes on to outline five major themes of existentialism and explains that each philosopher will address these premises in their own unique way, lending for flexible interpretations and a "criss-crossing and overlapping of the themes" (8).<sup>28</sup> On the subject of existentialism in regards to freedom and situation, for Sartre

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<sup>28</sup> In *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Flynn elaborates upon each of these five principal themes of existentialism: 1) existence precedes essence; 2) time is of the essence; 3) humanism; 4) freedom/responsibility; 5) ethical considerations are paramount. These themes are analyzed in greater detail in his book.

existence is a conscious, original, choice of the individual.<sup>29</sup> Lundgren-Gothlin proclaims that this choice is “a way of existing in the world, a direction in life, on the basis of which actions follow consistently. This is not a reflected choice, but a choice of which the individual is conscious in anguish. It is a choice that may, at any time, be abandoned in favour of another” (154). Beauvoir’s deliberations on existence derived from her contact with the concepts developed by male existentialists, but her view on the matter of freedom and situation differs greatly. For her, humans do not always have contact with the consciousness that would grant them freedom, as oppression can be carefully disguised as a given or a consequence of nature: “Human self-consciousness is affected by the situation, and the implications of the situation might not be comprehended” (Lundgren-Gothlin 158). This is particularly true in the case of women. The stories previously analyzed in this dissertation show that the beliefs that justify female oppression were engraved in seventeenth-century law, personal morality, and religion. In fact, Beauvoir uses the creation of man in Christian religion to show how, according to the doctrine, women were never meant to be viewed as the essential, meaning that they were not divinely designed to develop the consciousness that Sartre defends:

Eve was not formed at the same time as man; she was not made either from a different substance or from the same clay that Adam was modeled from; she was drawn from the first male’s flank. Even her birth was not autonomous; God did not spontaneously choose to create her for herself and to be directly worshipped in turn: he destines her for man; he gave her to Adam to save him from loneliness, her spouse is her origin and her finality; she is his complement in the inessential mode. (161)

Due to Spain’s rich history being rooted in Catholic teachings, many accepted this line of thinking to be the absolute truth. Men used Christian principles to their advantage and oppression against women was so cleverly disguised that many women did not understand that their lack of self-consciousness did not allow them to exist for themselves. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir

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<sup>29</sup> This philosophy is prevalent in Sartre’s early philosophical works. Later in his studies, Sartre recognizes that interaction with others play a role in the development of consciousness, which has an effect on existence.

recognizes how this attitude was maintained throughout history and appropriated by various cultures worldwide. She expresses that women must break away from their learned passivity and become active agents in their own change in order to end the perpetuation of beliefs such as these. As reflected in her writings, it is evident that like Beauvoir, Zayas did not regard the dominant beliefs that subordinated women as unqualified truth. She questioned society's treatment of women and with the strokes of her pen she exposes the injustices that the patriarchy imposes in the social order. As Nina Cox-Davis explains in her article, "Re-framing Discourse: Women Before Their Public in María de Zayas," "Her narratives question [discursive models from the masculine world], often placing them in the service of alternative, unexpected ends, and in the process they often ironize the disparity between the social principles and the practices such models support" (326). As will be demonstrated in the following *maravillas*, Zayas's stories are much like what Cox-Davis describes. Her stories don't just entertain and fascinate readers; they make them consider the effectiveness of patriarchal norms and the resultant flaws ensconced in seventeenth-century Spanish society.

### *Al fin se paga todo*

*Al fin se paga todo*, the seventh of the ten *maravillas* that is narrated on the fourth night by Don Miguel, begins with the protagonist Doña Hipólita, a beautiful woman from a noble family, being tossed out on the street by her lover Don Gaspar. On his way home for the evening Don García, a gentleman and foreigner to Valladolid, witnesses the sad scene the narrator describes, "vio abrir una puerta de una casa, entre principal y humilde, y a empellones y porrazos arrojar por ella un bulto blanco [...] era mujer y desnuda en camisa, causa de más admiración [...] la pobre dama estaba mal tratada que casi no se podía poner en pie" (413-14). Moved by the

damsel's misfortune, Don García comes to her aid. Carrying her in his arms, he begins to inquire about the cause of her misfortune. Hipólita notices García's hesitation when contemplating what he is going to do with her. Opposite to his reluctance, the battered woman is steadfast, and she commands him to remain strong and finish the kind act he has started, "Y viendo la dama que se paraba para saber qué pensaba hacer de su persona, le dijo con lágrimas y suspiros: Señor caballero, no es tiempo de desmayar en el bien que habéis empezado a hacerme" (414). These forward words that Hipólita speaks to Don García display her valiant nature and are quite bold for a woman addressing a man. They set the tone for the behavior she will display throughout the *maravilla*. Once Hipólita starts relating her tribulations to Don García, it is revealed that she has tried to quench her sexual desires with a man other than her husband. She devises a variety of schemes in order to make the dreams of this sexual encounter a reality but, to her dismay, they all fail. Once her husband's brother, Don Luis, finds out about her dealings with Don Gaspar, he blackmails her and tricks her into having sex with him. In order to avenge herself and her honor, Doña Hipólita kills him and seeks out her lover for help. Once Don Gaspar sees that it is her knocking at his door, he beats her, strips her naked, and throws her out onto the street.

Hipólita's situation is quite interesting, and very complex, when analyzed using the concepts of female existence as developed by Beauvoir. In this tale, we have a woman who tries to take an active role when it comes to her sexual pleasure. Even though the narrator informs us that Hipólita has been happily married to her husband for eight years because, as she says, "me enseñaba a quererle en las importunaciones de mi cuñado" (417), she realizes that a learned love during a marriage is not match for a passionate love relationship, "no hay mayor desdicha para quien ama que tener dueño" (419), and she wants to experience the fervor that her marriage does not provide. Beauvoir acknowledges the traditional practice of the arranged marriage is bound to

be a disappointment for anyone who enters it with the expectation of sharing in a genuine love relationship, “Advocates of conjugal love readily admit it is not love, which is precisely what makes it marvelous. The ideal would be, on the contrary, that each human being, perfectly self-sufficient, be attached to another by the free consent of their love alone” (511). Similar to what happens to Doña Leonor in *El imposible vencido*, Hipólita’s existence has been decided by her parents and she is betrothed to the wealthiest suitor, Don Pedro, denying her hand to the one who loves her most, his brother Don Luis. However, unlike Leonor’s relationship with Rodrigo, there is no loving relationship between her and the man she marries. She obediently consents to her parents’ decision, “no me inclinaba a más de lo que mis padres quisiesen escoger; los cuales, satisfechos de lo bien que me estaba cualquiera de los dos hermanos, eligieron a don Pedro, que era el mayor, quedando don Luis, que era menor y debía ser el que me amaba más, pues fue el más desdichado” (417). Eventually, this union will produce more harm than good. Her lack of passion for her husband and her brother-in-law’s jealousy are the recipe for a world of trouble to come.

Hipólita’s appetite for a sexual relationship with Don Gaspar, and her willingness to be unfaithful to her husband, goes entirely against patriarchal ideology. Sexual relationships outside of marriage were solely the privilege of men, while women were expected to remain faithful to their husbands and act as docile subjects, even when knowledgeable of infidelity. However, as Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex*, being a submissive, obedient slave is not a natural condition of the female sex, “Thus, the passivity that essentially characterizes the ‘feminine’ woman is a trait that develops in her from her earliest years. But it is false to claim that therein lies a biological given; in fact, it is a destiny imposed on her by her teachers and by society. The great advantage for boy is that his way of existing for others leads him to posit himself for himself”

(294). Men do not carry the burden of obedience in the same way as women, thus they have more liberty to decide what course of action their lives may take. As seen in Chapter 1, there are some instances in which birth order or finances may have an effect on a man's existence, but even still he is able to change his circumstances through different types of adventures. On the contrary, women were expected to accept their lot in life, even under the most staggering conditions. Different from a great many women in seventeenth-century Spanish society, Zayas breaks the mold laid out for women and this boldness is reflected in her life as a female writer and in the characters she creates. Doña Hipólita's actions go against the destiny that has been forced upon her by those who aim to control her life and impede her happiness. It is evident that she is aware of the honor codes and the expected roles for women, but her feelings for Gaspar take precedence over social norms. After seeing Gaspar face to face and hearing his seductive words, she is enthralled, "él me robó la voluntad, la opinión y el sosiego, pues ya para mí acabó en una hora. Era su gallardía, entendimiento y donaire tanto que [...] bastaran a rendir y traer a quererle cualquiera dama que llegase a verle, cuanto y más la que se vio solicitada, pretendida y alabada". She goes on to exclaim, "cuanto más aprisa subía mi amor, bajaba mi honor y daba paso atrás" (419). The comments made about honor here show how the importance of reputation and chastity were instilled in women by the patriarchy. As expressed by Beauvoir, woman is destined to fail due to the unrealistic expectations laid out for her. No sensible person could expect to succeed in following such rigid codes:

Woman is doomed to immorality because morality for her consists in embodying an inhuman entity: the strong woman, the admirable mother, the virtuous woman, and so on. As soon as she thinks, dreams, sleeps, desires, and aspires without orders, she betrays the masculine ideal. This is why so many women do not let themselves "be themselves" except in their husband's absence. (512)

Judging by the behavior she assigns to her characters, Zayas's view of women and morality is akin to that of Beauvoir. It is in the absence of her husband that Hipólita receives Gaspar's letters

and plans their encounters. Her desire to be with him has mesmerized her and, determined to relieve his suffering through the sexual act, she devises several schemes in an effort to satisfy their longings.

With the aid of her servant Leonor, whom she describes as an “espía fiera y astuta perseguidora de mi honor” (419), Hipólita makes four unsuccessful attempts to lie with Don Gaspar in a year’s time. The first attempt occurs when her husband, Don Pedro, goes on a hunting trip with a friend. The day of the planned encounter, he returns home early ruining the plans of his wife and her servant. Their second try fails due to a house fire caused by a black servant who accidentally knocks over a candle while asleep in the kitchen, “Y fue el caso que una negra que tenía a cargo la cocina, pegó una vela a un madero junto a su cama, y quedándose dormida se cayó la vela sobre ella, y encendiéndose la ropa y madera, pagó con la vida el descuido” (427). Don Gaspar escapes from the servant’s quarters where he was waiting to be united with Doña Hipólita without being discovered by her husband or harmed by the fire. During the third attempt, Don Gaspar tries to sneak into his lover’s house through a small window and gets stuck. He is warned by Doña Hipólita’s servant that he will not fit, but his determination clouds his judgment. The window must be cut out of the wall for him to escape. When Hipólita hears of this she laughs at his misfortune, “que os doy mi palabra, señor García, que fue tanta mi risa que casi no podía oírlo” (429). In the final attempt, Don Gaspar actually makes it into his lover’s bedroom. However, when her husband returns home unexpectedly, she hides her lover in a large trunk where he stays for an hour and a half until her husband leaves for mass. Believing him to be dead, Hipólita seeks out the help of her brother-in-law Luis to get rid of the body. Luis discovers that Gaspar is not dead, but he uses this ordeal to threaten and take advantage of his sister-in-law.

What is remarkable and appealing about these failed encounters is that Gaspar isn't the one who designs the plans. Each endeavor is concocted by Hipólita and Leonor. Gaspar's letters play an important role in sustaining Hipólita's love, but it is clear that the desire and determination she carries within is the driving force. After the first failed encounter she admits that she is afraid to try to meet with him alone again but she does so anyway, "Como fue tan desgraciado mi amor en la primera ocasión, temía aventurarme en la segunda, mas eran los ruegos de mi amante tantos, y con tantas veras, que hube de determinarme" (426). After the first try, there is no more mention of fear, only her desire to be with him. In Hipólita's case, the existentialist view of Sartre cannot be applied without reservation. According to Sartre, each individual can change his/her outcome in life by making a conscious choice, regardless of how difficult that choice may be. For women in seventeenth-century Spanish society who were confined to their homes and lived under the watchful eyes of husbands, family members and servants, the liberty that this selective consciousness afforded was not an option. Much like the fictional character Hipólita, women were confined to their homes. None of Hipólita's attempts to be with her lover occur outside of the confines of her home where her husband has supreme reign. Her domicile is much like a prison that prevents her freedom outside of its walls. Since women were treated like children and slaves, it was not uncommon to restrict their movement to the home. Doing so was a means of discipline. It was believed that men could keep women under their control. In her study on marriage in early modern Seville, Perry states, "Wandering women free from enclosure in marriage or convent worried many who saw them as the most potent symbol of disorder" (69). From this observation made by Perry we see that enclosure was an important component in not only marriage but society in general. Discipline was also a key factor in maintaining order. On discipline and enclosure Foucault tells us, "Discipline sometimes

requires *enclosure*, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony” (141). Nonetheless, enclosure is no match for Hipólita’s desire. If she cannot escape the prison, she will find a way to get that which she desires inside of prison walls, thus she and her servants sneak Gaspar in through the window.<sup>30</sup> In *Desde la ventana: enfoque femenino de la literatura española*, Carmen Martín Gaité echoes Perry’s thoughts on enclosure as she explains the significance of the window in Spanish literature. According to Gaité, traditionally in classic Spanish literature it was thought that women’s movement should be restricted. Women who were not enclosed ran the risk of being viewed negatively as “ventaneras” (33-4). A proper woman only neared the window to hear the praises of a lover, “La interpretación de la conducta femenina se establecía con arreglo a cánones tan estrechos como para suponer que, cuando una mujer se asomaba a la ventana, no podía ser más por reclamo erótico, por afán de exhibir la propia imagen para encandilar a un hombre” (36). Gaité goes on to explain how the window affected female existence whose relation to the world took place through her gaze outside of the window, “La ventana es el punto de referencia de que dispone para soñar el mundo que bulle fuera, es el punto tendido entre las orillas de lo conocido y lo desconocido, la única brecha por donde puede echar a volar sus ojos, en busca de otra luz y otros perfiles que no sean los del interior” (36). Through Gaspar’s attempt to enter the window, Zayas is ridiculing male produced literature that likened woman to be a passive subject who sits around gazing through the window. When Gaspar gets stuck in the window, man is caught in the trap he laid out for woman in a funny, yet significant episode.

The affair with Don Gaspar would allow Hipólita to feel a self-chosen passion and escape the monotony of everyday married life and the limited window gaze. Since autonomy is not a

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<sup>30</sup> The window they used to sneak Don Gaspar into the house was left unprotected by the husband and did not have bars on it. The reference to bars reminds one of a prison where inmates are kept behind bars and under the watchful eyes of guards. This is much like Hipólita’s situation as a wife who is always under the supervision of her husband.

privilege afforded to women, she is enthralled with the false sense of freedom that this love relationship can grant her. Through Gaspar's seductive words and admiration of her beauty, Hipólita experiences a type of adoration not found in the arranged married process. In this instance, her objectification is welcomed with open arms, "In making herself object, suddenly she has become an idol in which she proudly recognizes herself; but she refuses the implacable dialectic that makes her return to the inessential. She wants to be a fascinating treasure, not a thing to be taken" (Beauvoir 363). Although she may not want to return to the inessential, being woman, she cannot completely escape it. This is the source of Don Gaspar's appeal. He lives a life completely opposite from that of Hipólita. He is described as a man who follows a chaotic and confused Court with no ties to one particular place. In an examination of the *maravilla*, Abigail Sotelo offers commentary on Gaspar's lack of integrity, exclaiming, "don Garcia aparece como un personaje muy desocupado debido a la mala administración existente en la corte que tenía a muchos subordinados, como soldados, sin ningún deber inmediato. A falta de responsabilidades serias, el gallardo portugués se dedica a la vida haragana" (56). Doña Hipólita tells Don García that along with gaming houses, she was just another form of entertainment for the traveler, "empezó travieso a buscar las casas de juego donde destruir su opinión y hacienda, y, ocioso, algún sujeto con entretenerse; y fuilo yo, por mi desdicha" (418-19). However, having previous knowledge of his character wasn't enough to deter her interest in him.

The desire to satisfy her lover's longings, as well as her own, is much more powerful than the obligation to be a "good wife". Throughout the *maravilla*, the women are the ones who carry out the plans for the lovers to be alone. In two of the *maravillas* analyzed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the presence of men in the home has been more of an invasion. In *El imposible vencido* Beltrán and Arnesto come up with plots to enter the home and take by force that which

they could not attain based on their merit and craftiness. Likewise, in *El castigo de la miseria*, Don Marcos's presence in Doña Isidora's "home" is a result of his lies and greed. He invades the home with the purpose of acquiring the older woman's wealth. This invasion is allowed since Isidora has plans of her own to deceive him and run off with his money. Conversely, Hipólita's lover is welcomed by her. She tries repeatedly to sneak him in so that they can be alone and have sex. Nonetheless, Hipólita never really owns up to her part in the matter. Once Gaspar is discovered, she tries to rid herself of blame by telling her brother-in-law that she never offended her husband, meaning that she never had sex with Gaspar, but she does recognize that her thoughts have been adulterous, "Caballero sois, si me quereis socorrer, obliqueos mi desdicha, suponiendo que es Dios testigo, por quien os juro que no he ofendido a mi marido y vuestro hermano de obra, si bien con el pensamiento no ha podido ser menos" (431). In her opinion, no wrong has actually been committed since the sexual act never took place. This is her way of playing upon her brother-in-law's affection for her while at the same time cleansing herself of fault as adultery in seventeenth-century society was punishable by death.<sup>31</sup> What is worthy of note is that despite her liability in the ordeal, while relating her story to Don García, Hipólita oftentimes assumes the role of the victim. As Eavan O'Brien makes clear in her study on Zayas's works, she casts much of the blame on Gaspar and her servant Leonor. Through a close study of Hipólita's vocabulary, O'Brien finds that Hipólita uses words that suggest that she was not a willing participant in Gaspar's scheme, "Her use of forceful verbs such as 'robar' and 'rendir' likens Gaspar to a wartime pillager, intimating the futility of the virtuous reluctance with which

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<sup>31</sup> Beauvoir tells us that throughout history adultery has been a crime punishable by death in various patriarchal cultures. The author explains, "All codes up to our time have perpetuated inequality in issues concerning adultery, arguing the seriousness of the fault committed by the woman who might bring an illegitimate child into the family". On the Christian religion in particular Beauvoir states, "The patriarchs are polygamous and can renounce their wives almost at whim; at the risk of harsh punishment, the young bride has to be delivered to her spouse a virgin; in the case of adultery, she is stoned" (91-2).

she was supposed to resist adultery” (110). Similarly, O’Brien’s study shows how Hipólita also finds her servant guilty for her transgressions, “Hipólita’s repeated application of ‘secretaria’ as her maid’s epithet intensifies an impression of the latter as vital and active intermediary throughout Hipólita’s dauntless stratagems to commit adultery” (111). Her existence is defined as an immanent subject and due to this patriarchy does not allow her to exhibit this type of disobedient behavior, so placing the guilt on others who were not expected to live by the same strict control is the most unproblematic choice.

Lastly, let’s take a moment to discuss the role of violence and its connection with female existence. In his study on Sartre, Gary Cox explains the French philosopher’s view on the body and the role it plays in existence, “The human body is clearly fundamental to the human condition. An account of the human condition that does not consider the body is seriously incomplete” (49). Cox details that Sartre recognizes that there is a fundamental difference between the way bodies exist for themselves and the way they exist for others. A being-for-itself, according to Sartre, must be entirely body and consciousness simultaneously. On the other hand, a being-for-others is exclusively body with “no psychic phenomena” attached to it (49). What is lacking in Sartre’s approach to the body outlined here is the effects of gender on the being and existence in regards to the physical being and consciousness. As Beauvoir and other feminist theorists have proposed, historically woman has been much more closely linked to the body than men, a conviction that justified male control. In *Volatile Bodies* by Elizabeth Grosz, the author proclaims, “Patriarchal oppression, in other words, justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women’s social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms” (14). She explains that this woman/body association has its basis in Cartesian dualism, a theory established by Descartes in

which he describes the body as a machine that functions according to the laws of nature and the mind as “the thinking substance, the soul, or consciousness” (6). Thus, connecting women to body allows for her control by the “thinking substance,” or the male sex. Viewed as non-thinking being controlled by nature, woman’s existence is viewed as naturally carnal and men believed that it was their responsibility and right to control her through violent acts.

Hipólita suffers two attacks in *Al fin se paga todo*: she is beaten by her lover and raped by her brother-in-law. As previously mentioned, after almost losing his life as a result of being locked in the trunk in Hipólita’s bedroom for an hour and a half, Gaspar vows to never see her again. When she shows up at his door after murdering her brother-in-law, her body becomes the physical site on which he will take out his frustration. Doña Hipólita describes the act to Don García recalling, “...me desnudó, hasta dejarme en camisa, y con la pretina me puso como veis (diciendo esto 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)...” (441). The hostility displayed by her once willing and gentle pursuer is a reflection of the mindset of a culture that has little regard for the women it subjugates. Her existence in a male dominated society leaves her subject to be abused at whim by her masters. Moreover, relating the beating to a religious practice (*los cardenales*) is a great example of how it was a common belief amongst society that any sort of wrong-doing, whether thought or action, could be repressed through physical pain. When contemplating pain, Elaine Scarry’s belief is that physical pain is more powerful than psychological pain. Thus, when one experiences physical pain all psychological content is erased. It has the power to end “madness” as well as all other features of the world and of the self (34). Previously overwhelmed with the psychological pain of her inability to enjoy her

lover sexually, Doña Hipólita is now consumed with corporeal pain which proves to be much more powerful than her psychological anguish.

Although men of patriarchy had the power to use the female body as they saw fit, Zayas uses this rape as an opportunity to show the brutality of men and the courage and valor of the female sex. After being raped by her brother-in-law, the victimized Doña Hipólita does not sit idly by, nor does she solicit the help of a male family member or friend to avenge her. Actually, as Eavan O'Brien points out, it is the first time the protagonist acts without an accomplice (114). It is she who kills her assailant and avenges her honor. As Jennifer Wood states in an analysis of the role of justice in the *maravilla*, having Hipólita murder her attacker herself is an inversion of the traditional example of poetic justice in which, conventionally, the restoration of female honor was a male task (671). Her experiences with spiteful and hateful men could be considered the motivation she needs to gather the courage to take her brother-in-law's life. The authorities that have always controlled her existence have indirectly given her a type of bravery that was traditionally not attributed to her sex, "The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power. It is enough to find signs of the attention paid to the body- to the body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skillful and increases its forces" (Foucault 136). The forces that have been increased in this case are of a psychological nature. By committing the act of murder, Doña Hipólita is demonstrating a type of bravery that men think that women do not possess. As Judith Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*, "Consider gender, for instance, as a *corporeal style*, an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (190). By murdering her brother-in-law, Don Luis, Doña Hipólita is breaking with the predetermined behavior for her gender. That is to say, she is defying the cultural constructs that have been

repeated to express and create her identity (185). Instead of behaving like the weak, cowardly, unintelligent female that society has made her out to be, she demonstrates that she too is capable of being just as devious and violent as her male tormentors. Commenting on Zayas's *Desengaños*, Jehenson and Wells state, "... instead of being a narrative in which the cultural production of violence is represented, each tale becomes one in which Zayas makes violence meaningful. Cruelty and violence to women are thereby displaced within a discourse where they can be mastered, controlled and directed" (184). This line of thinking is easily transferrable to *Novelas* as the female characters in these tales are undoubtedly Zayas's mouthpiece for equality and the better treatment of the female sex. The ending of the *maravilla* is Zayas's way of expressing her repulsion to injustices women endured at the hands of men. The story ends with Hipólita entering a convent. Resembling Laura in *La fuerza del amor*, Hipólita is deaf to her husband's pleas for her to return home, "Sólo doña Hipólita no quiso volver con su marido, aunque él lo pidió con hartos ruegos" (443), deciding to enter a convent instead. Once again, we have one of Zayas's female characters who chooses the solidarity of the convent. However, she chooses to leave the convent when she finds out that Don Pedro has died and willed to her all of his riches. Don Gaspar also dies at the hands of his servant who robs him of his jewels, the jewels he stole from Doña Hipólita the night he beat her and threw her onto the street. Everyone in the *maravilla* receives some form of punishment, but in the end it is Hipólita who lives contentedly with Don García and their children. As Williamsen states, "That Hipólita, after open defiance and manipulation of the honor code, lives 'happily ever after' challenges the basic premises of the established patriarchal system" (142). Wood's observation on tale's ending also recognizes Zayas's attack on patriarchy's faulty belief system, "The fact that a woman breaks the rules and yet is victorious at the end could be read as an underlying protest against the code of

honor and the masculine prescription of ethics” (669). Smith agrees that Zayas empowers her female characters to avenge themselves, but he does not see it as a rejection of the patriarchal code but rather a reproduction of male behavior since vengeance in this case involves the shedding of blood. Thus, in his view, women “cannot transgress the law of the dagger and the phallus” (235). Nevertheless, it is not specifically the law of the dagger and phallus that Zayas wants her characters to transgress. She aims to attack the laws and institutions that complicate woman’s existence and silence her voice. Although she is not able to exist for self under the terms she originally sought, Zayas resolves the character’s suffering and gives her a peaceful ending.

The analysis of *Al fin se paga todo* offered here shows exactly how complicated it was for a woman in seventeenth-century Spanish society to make an effort to alter the circumstances of her existence as defined by man. Judging by the ending of the tale, it seems that Zayas herself wants to destroy the barriers that surround female existence due to patriarchal norms and male abuse and tyranny. With the exception of Don García, all of the men in the tale end up dead or punished, but Hipólita, a murderer, ends up happily married with a family. The title of “Al fin se paga todo” suggests that everything ends up just as it should, absolving Hipólita of her wrongdoings. In *El jardín engañoso*, Teodosia also tries to exist-for-self through finding a love of her own. Like Hipólita, much adversity is to be found in the attempt. Some die, others are absolved, but all are affected. In the end, her being for man takes precedence over her existence for self.

## *El jardín engañoso*

*El jardín engañoso* is a fascinating tale of love, jealousy, betrayal, and magic. Marina Brownlee asserts that this *maravilla* shows that Zayas's was a reader of the Boccaccian tale, *Decameron X*, 5 that was, "devoted to the theme of magnanimity" (96).<sup>32</sup> Brownlee also mentions a study by Kenneth Stackhouse that classifies the magic present in Zayas's *Novelas* in four different categories: 1-"Magic is real and efficacious; 2-those who employ magic pay an extreme penalty; 3-magic occurs more abroad than in Spain due to the influence of the Church and the Inquisition; 4- when magic occurs, it does so only temporarily, seemingly only by divine dispensation" (68).<sup>33</sup> The magical element in this tale is what gives it its appeal to so many readers and critics of Zayas's work. Stackhouse's analysis of magic in Zayas helps us to understand its function in the work; however, what his study does not offer is an examination of what brings about the magic in the tale. Why is it "necessary"? I would like to explore the circumstances that bring about the magic in *El jardín engañoso* and how they relate to existence. The first theme to be explored, and perhaps the most important one, in the understanding of the presence of magic/demonic forces in the tale is jealousy. In her contribution to the study of Zayas's works, Julia Farmer explains that the envy that invades the *maravillas* stems from the frame narrative rivalry that exists between Lisis and her cousin Lisarda:

That is, the two women's views on their rivalry may be seen in large part as structuring the development of the novella collections as a whole, as the tales that Lisarda and Lisis tell during their respective turns as narrators represent a sort of dueling commentary on the state of their rivalry. Not only that, but these tales also serve as microcosms of the collections in which they are found, essentially marking the *Novelas amorosas* as

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<sup>32</sup> Brownlee explains that this theme can be found in other works such as Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, and Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* (96).

<sup>33</sup> For more about the role of magic in Zayas see Stackhouse's article, "Verisimilitude, Magic, and the Supernatural in the *Novelas* of María de Zayas y Sotomayor".

Lisarda's territory and the *Desengaños* as Lisis's response to and attempt to contain the threat represented by her rival. (248)

In *El jardín engañoso* the rivalry has a more one-sided approach than that of the frame narrative, however, and it causes a world of trouble for all involved.

*Zayas's maravilla* begins with the description of two beautiful sisters, Constanza and Teodosia, who live in Zaragoza. Although both sisters are described as physically beautiful, it is not long before *Zayas* begins to differentiate the sisters by their virtue. Constanza, the oldest of the two, is engaged to the rich, noble Don Jorge, the oldest of two sons and “único heredero en la casa de sus padres” (515). His brother, Don Federico, is in love with, and has plans to marry Teodosia. However, Teodosia is secretly in love with Don Jorge and wants him for herself. She lies to Don Jorge, telling him that her sister Constanza and his younger brother Federico are secretly in love and want to marry one another, “Pues sabed-dijo Teodosia- que vuestro hermano Federico y Constanza se aman con tanta ternera y firme voluntad que no hay para encarecerlo más que decir que tienen concertado de casarse” (518). In a rage of jealousy after being deceived by Teodosia, Don Jorge kills Federico and flees the country. When he returns four years later, he discovers that Constanza is married to Don Carlos, a man the narrator describes as “un hidalgo montañés, más rico de bienes de naturaleza que de fortuna” (520). The knowledge of her new marriage doesn't deter Jorge's will to have sex with Constanza. Tired of his open advances, Constanza comes up with a challenge she is sure he cannot complete. She tells him that if he can build her a beautiful garden in a day's time, she will lie with him. If he can't build the garden, he must marry her sister Teodosia. In his frustration caused by this impossible task, Don Jorge goes to a nearby field and cries. The devil appears to him to make a deal. If Don Jorge will sign over his soul, he will build for him the garden. Being overcome with emotion and desire, Don Jorge agrees to the deal. In the end, Constanza's virtue, and that of her husband Don Carlos, win over

the malice of Don Jorge. The devil even pardons Don Jorge and nullifies the contract guaranteeing him Jorge's soul. Jorge marries Teodosia and no one ever finds that Jorge killed his brother Federico until Teodosia tells their story of misfortune and love to the narrator Laura, Lisis's mother, after her husband's death.

Jealousy is the driving force behind much of the trouble in the tale, specifically Teodosia's jealousy. The narrator relates to us that Teodosia was "envidiosa de verla [su hermana] amada" (516), thus her sister's relationship with Don Jorge is what sets the ball in motion for a series of disastrous events. In "Love and Entitlement: Sartre and Beauvoir on the Nature of Jealousy," Irene McMullin argues that jealousy stems from a sense of entitlement and self-verification that the love relationship brings. The author view jealousy as an "outsourcing of self-esteem", and that the jealous woman finds her self-esteem and "center of value" in the other person's love (102). McMullin goes on to express:

This dependence on the other person for determining who I am is both unavoidable and a source of extreme unease, since it means that these external dimensions of who I am are never entirely available for my choice or control. Dependence on the other's evaluation means that my identity is not determined by me alone. (103)

What McMullin describes here is especially true for women in seventeenth-century Spain. Since women were under strict patriarchal rule, the most rudimentary components of their existence were defined for them. Who they were was not a choice they made. The choice was made for them, and those who did not accept that choice oftentimes met extreme criticism and lived as pariahs. Teodosia's jealousy stems from her inability to consider her value outside of Don Jorge's love. She is so consumed with him that, if he does not love her, she has no positive worth. Her sister's happiness and pending marriage with Jorge isn't enough to discourage her plan to ruin their relationship. She plots and schemes as her jealousy has only allowed her to consider her own future and not the consequences of her actions. For Beauvoir, the root of this

problem stems from childhood. According to her theory, at adolescence a boy's narcissism disappears and he is more interested in the object of his desire. The opposite is true for girls. A girl aims for adoration from outside sources. Her self-love coincides with male desire (350). Taking this into account, it can be deduced that woman's existence for self has been determined to meet tremendous obstacles. If it succeeds, it will not be without much effort and adversity. If it fails, it is because society has wanted it that way from her birth.

In addition to childhood conditioning, in *The Second Sex* Beauvoir also recognizes the associations amongst women to be a contributing factor in the formation of jealousy, "Women identify with each other: but then each one competes with her companion" (587). She goes on to proclaim, "Women are comrades for each other in captivity, they help each other endure their prison, even prepare their escape: but their liberator will come from the masculine world" (588). Both of these statements hold true when we consider Teodosia. Zayas does not give us any indication of a preexisting strife between the sisters, yet the presence of Don Jorge is enough to drive Teodosia to underhandedly compete with her sister for Jorge's love. Jorge is the "liberator" that will give meaning to Teodosia's existence. Through him she will have the adoration she seeks. Teodosia is under the impression that once she tricks Don Jorge into thinking that his brother and her sister are secretly in love, his affections will turn towards her. Unfortunately, this does not happen. This only makes Don Jorge jealous and more determined to have Constanza for himself. Right after Teodosia tells her lies Laura recounts, "defraudado don Jorge de alcanzar a su hermana, le sería a ella fácil el haberle por esposo. Mas no le sucedió así, que un celoso cuando más ofendido, entonces ama más" (519). As Zayas points out, the women in the *maravilla* are not the only ones capable of jealousy. Akin to the biblical story of Cain and Abel, Don Jorge's jealousy leads him to slay his own brother. The display of male envy in the tale is

much more dangerous than that of the female protagonist. Since a woman's virtue is a representation of her family and her husband, a female love not corresponded is a threat to male identity. Being his father's oldest child and the sole heir to his father's riches, Don Jorge must have a woman equal in prominence. The opening paragraph of the *maravilla* describes Jorge and the prize he hopes to find in Constanza: "un caballero noble y rico, él por sus partes merecedor de tener por mujer una gallarda dama, igual en todo a sus virtudes y nobleza, que éste es el más rico don que se puede alcanzar" (515). His marriage to Constanza will confirm him as a man who has it all. He will possess a woman who is as equal in virtue as he is in nobility and wealth. McMullin expresses the male tendency to find his own personal self-esteem in woman when she states:

History's ode to feminine virtue – the epitome being the Virgin Mary – take absolute constancy and devotion in love as a bedrock theme of what constitutes femininity. This constancy, when coupled with the other virtues traditionally assigned to woman – compassion, tenderness, charity – all serve to provide man with the secure source of constant validation that is jealousy's desire. As Beauvoir notes in *The Second Sex*, 'Woman awakens in man an unknown being whom he recognizes with pride as himself' (Beauvoir 1952, 199). (116)

Don Jorge's actions are initially motivated by his desire to have Constanza as his wife. Her description as an honest, virtuous, and demure woman immediately sets her apart from her sister who does not possess those qualities. The validation that Don Jorge seeks from Constanza is not deterred when he finds out, deceptively, that she is in love with his brother, nor does it waver when he discovers she is married to Don Carlos. However, upon finding out about her marriage, his validation no longer resides in his ability to marry her; rather, he now sees her as a purely sexual conquest. In this case, male existence is not hindered in the same respect as that of woman. Don Jorge is still free to be transcendent. His rights to learn, discover, travel, and consciousness have not been obstructed, but his privilege to have the woman he wants as an object in his household has been denied him. Jorge's focus shifts from marriage to sexual fulfillment and he publicly

solicits Constanza every chance he gets, “se animó a servirla y solicitarla de nuevo, ya que no para su esposa, pues era imposible, a lo menos para gozar de su hermosura, por no malograr tantos años de amor. Los paseos, los regalos, las músicas y finezas eran tantas que casi se empezó a murmurar por la ciudad” (524). His jealousy and desire are powerful factors at work that do not allow him to accept that Constanza can never be his. Nevertheless, the beautiful Constanza is unmoved by Don Jorge’s displays of affection. Her honor is more important to her than Jorge’s suffering. She tells him: “mi honra es tanta que ha sido fuerza no dejarme vencer de vuestras importunaciones” (525).

As previously stated, the preservation of honor was of extreme importance for women. The loss of honor had the ability to alter the course of existence for men as well as women in seventeenth-century Spain.<sup>34</sup> On the subject of honor in Zayas’s *Novelas* and *Desengaños* and its correlation to women, Salvador Montesa Peydro states, “Pero de todos los aspectos en que se cifre el honor, al que se le concedió más importancia en la vida real y el que, desde luego, se explotó más desde el punto de vista literario, fue el de la conducta femenina en relación al amor” (212). It is clear that Constanza is not willing to risk her honor to ease Jorge’s suffering. Her preoccupation revolves around her sister’s health as Teodosia has fallen ill due to Jorge’s lack of amorous feelings for her. Constanza plays upon his obvious jealousy and longing for her and sets before him what she thinks is an impossible challenge, the construction of the garden.

Jorge’s pact with the devil demonstrates just how impulsive a hopeless lover’s actions can be. Interestingly, when the devil appears to Don Jorge he is not some ugly, frightening, arms bearing character with horns shooting out of his head and fire spouting from his nose. He appears in the form of an ordinary man. With this depiction, Zayas is displaying that evil can be found in

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<sup>34</sup> In well-known Spanish literature such as *La Celestina* and *Lazarillo de Tormes*, this theme is central to the understanding of the works.

all forms. As proven in tales such as *La fuerza del amor*, men, in the height of their cruelty, can be just as devious and unremitting as the devil is traditionally represented. When the devil reveals his identity to Jorge, and that he wants his soul in exchange for the construction of the garden, the lovesick young man remains steadfast in his pursuit of Constanza. Jorge accepts the pact with the enemy of God and the garden is built. However, there is an unexpected turn of events in this tale. Seeing that Jorge has found a way to build the garden, Don Carlos reluctantly instructs his wife that she should fulfill her obligation just as Jorge has, stating, “Él ha buscado modo para cumplir su palabra. Aquí no hay otro remedio sino que cumpláis la vuestra, que yo, co hacer esto que ahora veréis, no os podré ser estorbo a que vos cumpláis con vuestras obligaciones, y él goce el premio de tanto amor” (531). After making this declaration, Jorge reveals his sword and prepares to take his own life, “Diciendo esto sacó la espada y fuésela a meter por los pechos” (531). Moved by Carlos’s display of nobility, Jorge frees Constanza from her sexual obligation:

No es razón que a tan noble condición como la tuya yo haga ninguna ofensa, pues solo con ver que te quitas la vida porque yo no muera (pues no hay muerte para mi más cruel que privarme de gozar lo que tanto quiero y tan caro me cuesta, pues he dado por precio el alma) [...] Tu esposa está ya libre de su obligación, que yo le alzo la palabra (532).

At first, it is very surprising that after such a long, public pursuit of his object of affection, and after the selling of his soul that Jorge would give up that which he has sought for so long.

Throughout the *maravilla*, Constanza’s pleas with him to stop his discomforting behavior go unheard and he is willing to tarnish her honor to get what he wants. Her position as object renders her complaints powerless. Being that man is an autonomous subject, Jorge is able to sympathize with male anguish. However, after pardoning Constanza, it still doesn’t seem like Jorge has learned his lesson. He doesn’t blame himself for the evil deeds he has committed; rather, he blames fate for having been born unlucky, “y muera don Jorge, pues nació tan

desdichado que no sólo ha perdido el gusto por amar, sino la joya que le costó a Dios morir en una cruz” (532). This fatalist notion as adopted by Jorge excuses him from his responsibility in death of his brother and the selling of his soul to the devil. As Montesa Peydro explains, the characters in Zayas’s works have a tendency to attribute their misfortunes to fate, “Efectivamente, sus personajes dan la impresión de estar actuando de forma fatal, como auténticas marionetas, reaccionando por reflejo antes las circunstancias sin poder dominarlas ni orientarlas” (141)<sup>35</sup>. This attitude adopted by Zayas’s characters goes against Sartre’s idea that every human being can change the order of their lives through consciousness. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre views consciousness as a factor that can surpass the circumstances of the “existent.” It has the ability to transcend a being in search for the “meaning of this being” (25). Sartre’s approach is lost on characters such as Jorge who choose to blame fate and misfortune for the woes they suffer in life.

There are many noteworthy acts in the *maravilla* that demonstrate the dignity of the characters, but the act that is viewed most gracious of them all is the devil’s pardoning of Jorge, “Y así, para que el mundo se admire de que en mí pudo haber virtud, toma don Jorge. Ves ahí tu cédula; yo te suelto la obligación, que no quiero alma quien tan bien se sabe vencer” (532). After listening to Laura’s tale, all of the participants in the *soiree* agree that the devil displayed the greatest degree of decency, “Dio fin la noble y discreta Laura a su maravilla, y todas aquellas damas y caballeros principio a disputar cuál había hecho más [...] Cada uno daba su razón: unos alegaban que el marido, y otros que el amante, y todos juntos que el demonio, por ser en él cosa

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<sup>35</sup> The female characters in Zayas’s *maravillas* also express this kind of fatalist attitude towards misfortune. In *Aventurarse perdiendo*, Jacinta is described as “una mujer desdichada, cuando su estrella la inclina a serlo” (173). In a momento of lament in *La fuerza del amor*, Laura expresses the following, “No sé para qué el cielo me crió hermosa, noble y rica, si todo había de tener tan poco valor contra la desdicha” (363). Likewise, in *Al fin se paga todo*, Doña Hipólita laments, “¿Qué es esto, cielos? ¿A mi desdicha estáis sordos y a mis quejas ingratos? ¿Y a mis lágrimas sin sentimiento?”(414).

nunca vista el hacer bien” (534). With this fictional tale Zayas establishes that all evil has the capacity to change for good. The characters in the *maravilla* and the participants in the *soiree* are not the only ones who should take heed to this didactic message. The hope is that society as a whole would understand this message and apply it to their everyday lives. Particularly, if oppressive patriarchal figures would receive this message, the campaign for women’s equality would have much more support. In the next *maravilla* to be discussed, women’s existence for self remains in question. Similar to the protagonists of Zayas’s other tales, the beautiful Jacinta will discover for herself the troubles encountered by a woman who dares to play an active role in the outcome of her own life.

### *Aventurarse perdiendo*

*Aventurarse perdiendo* is the opening *maravilla* of the lovesick Lisis’s *soiree*<sup>36</sup>. The narrator, Lisarda, Lisis’s cousin and rival, relates to us the story of Jacinta, an unfortunate lover whose woes have caused her to flee her hometown in Andalucía in search of refuge and solitude after an affair that causes scandal and death to many. Jacinta falls in love with Don Félix, a man she has adored ever since she saw his face in a dream. Years later the two fall in love and want to be together. However, Félix’s engagement to his cousin poses an obstacle to their happiness. The two decide to have sex and run away together in secret. Adriana, Félix’s cousin, is extremely saddened by her rebellious lover’s behavior and reveals the lover’s plans in a note she writes before committing suicide. Outraged, Jacinta’s father and brother search for the lovers. Félix murders Jacinta’s brother in a duel and flees the country to escape punishment, leaving Jacinta in

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<sup>36</sup> Both male and female narrators are present at the *soiree* but Zayas gives her female participants the privilege of narrating the first and last *maravillas*. In doing this, she is giving authority to the female voice.

the care of his aunt. Unfortunately, Félix dies in battle before he can return to Spain. After months of grief, Jacinta meets a man by the name of Celio. This relationship ends poorly as well and is what drives the unlucky Jacinta to retreat to isolation.

The readers enter the story in *media res*, when Jacinta has already disguised herself as a man. She is overheard recounting her adversity through song by Fabio, a noble traveler from Madrid. Intrigued by the story of sadness he hears off in the distance, Fabio follows the voice. Once he discovers that it is in fact a woman singing, he is determined to get to the root of her sadness and to save her, “que sentiré mucho hallar una mujer en tal parte y con ese traje y no saber la causa de su destierro, y así mismo no procurarle remedio” (178). Jacinta agrees to tell him her story but she warns him of its dishonorable content stating, “supuesto que de saber quién soy, corre peligro la opinión de muchos deudos nobles que tengo, y mi vida con ellos, pues es fuerza que por vengarse me la quiten” (179). Before even beginning to tell her story the readers can deduce that Jacinta has behaved in a manner that goes against the grain as far as female behavior is concerned as determined by seventeenth-century Spain’s patriarchal ideology. Although we do not yet know what she has done, we do know that whatever transgression she has committed has led her to opt for a self-imposed exile as she fears for her life. This demonstrates just how dire the consequences can be for a woman who disobeys the patriarchal order.

Zayas’s voice is ever present at the commencement of Jacinta’s tale. The opening to Jacinta’s tale sounds much like words from Zayas’s prologue “Al que leyere.” Telling Fabio about her upbringing in the house of her father she exclaims, “tal es la flaqueza en que las mujeres somos criadas, pues no se puede fiar de nuestro valor nada, porque tenemos ojos, que, a nacer ciegas, menos sucesos hubiera visto el mundo, que al fin viviéramos seguras de engaños”

(179). Asserting that it is better to be born blind than to be a woman, this statement echoes the sentiment of Zayas's prologue that addresses the conditioning of women from birth to be weak and closed off from the world. To keep women fragile and controlled is the goal of the patriarchal conviction of women as immanence. In *Aventurarse perdiendo*, an interesting dimension to the patriarchal institution is introduced when Jacinta begins to narrate her life to Fabio: the role of the mother. In the only *maravilla* in Zayas's *Novelas* where the mother is present, *El imposible vencido*, the mother/daughter bond suffers due to the mother's loyalty to her husband and to her role as defined by the male dominated Spanish society in which she lives. In *La fuerza del amor*, the narrator mentions that Laura's mother died in childbirth and there is no further reference to the deceased mother.<sup>37</sup> Unlike Leonor and Laura, Jacinta takes a brief moment to express the detriment her mother's death has caused her in life when she explains,

Faltó mi madre al mejor tiempo, que no fue pequeña falta, pues su compañía, gobierno, y vigilancia fuera más importante a mi honestidad que no los descuidos de mi padre [...] Quería el mío a mi hermano tiernísimamente, y esto era sólo su desvelo, sin que se le diese yo en cosa ninguna, no sé qué era su pensamiento [...]. (179-80)

It is evident that Jacinta feels that the absence of her mother has had a negative effect on her life as far as being trained in the proper customs for women as determined by the society in which she lives. As Olivares states in his Introduction to Zayas's work, "La ausencia de la madre, elemento constante en toda la literatura de la época, es altamente significativa en las novelas zayescas. Por una parte, la ausencia de la madre representa un vacío afectivo en sus heroínas, y por otra, representa aquello que rechazan en su atracción por lo masculino" (62-3). Is the emptiness Jacinta suffers the cause of her misfortune? Is the absent mother to blame or could the present, yet inattentive father who occupies his time with the upbringing of his male offspring be

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<sup>37</sup> On Laura's deceased mother, Nise, the narrator, states, "Murió su madre del parto de Laura, quedando su padre por gobierno y amparo de los tres gallardos hijos, que si bien sin madre, la discreción del padre suplió medianamente esta falta" (345).

accused? In an article focused on the pastoral discourse in this *maravilla*, Deborah Compte identifies two principal reasons for Jacinta's moral decline, "Lacking the protective and emotional guidance of a cherished female figure, and abandoned emotionally by her father, Jacinta begins her initiation into an alternate realm" (248). In agreement with Compte, the absence of a female figure and her father's neglect lead Jacinta to exhibit what patriarchy deems as unacceptable female behavior. Following, the effects of parental involvement in child-rearing will be discussed.

Placing the blame on her mother's absence for her misfortunes reflects patriarchy's belief that the mother is the sole caregiver and teacher of her children. Specifically with female children, it is the mother who is responsible for instructing her and making sure she adheres to culturally constructed gender norms. As previously stated, Judith Butler views gender as a cultural construction maintained through repetitive acts and gestures. These gender specific "performances" are mandated by patriarchy and intended to keep the woman in a position inferior to men. As Josephine Donovan states in *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions*, "Patriarchal ideology is that of male supremacy, which conditions women to exhibit male-serving behavior and to accept male-serving roles" (143). As prescribed by patriarchy in seventeenth-century Spain, women were to adhere to the functions particular to her sex. Outside of being mother, wife, or religious devotee, there were very few options left for women. Any deviation from these preexisting, socially accepted roles was viewed as direct defiance. According to Donovan, the home is where ideological socialization is takes place. Since women are the caregivers of children, it is women who introduce children to cultural beliefs. Therefore, children learn gender identity and gender ideology from women (81).

Considering that Jacinta faults her absent mother for her bad luck in life, and that patriarchy deems the mother responsible for the ideological training of her children, Jacinta's statement can be seen as both a submission to, as well as a critique of, patriarchy. On the one hand, we can view her statement as submissive because she feels that her mother is to blame for not being around to guide and instruct her on how a woman living in seventeenth-century Spain should behave. Knowing that women's existence is encoded in them by their mothers and society from birth, one can argue that Sartre's assertion that every individual's existence is a conscious, original choice of the individual is problematic. Based on Beauvoir's theories of immanence and transcendence, I argue that this cognizant choice is more readily available to males as they are afforded certain liberties throughout life that allow them to shape their own beings. Although men go through a period of socialization during childhood, there is rarely a long-term effect on their psyche.<sup>38</sup> For women, choosing an existence of their own carries consequences that can lead to a life of scrutiny and devastation. Thus, many women submit to patriarchy to avoid such woes. Those who don't find themselves like Jacinta, outcast and downtrodden. As maintained by our protagonist, her mother's watchful eye, company, and governing were the missing factors in her upbringing. Like Donovan, in *The Second Sex* Beauvoir also notes that the mother is responsible for her daughter's proper assimilation into society. She views the mother/daughter relationship as complex in nature with conflicting emotions from mothers and daughters alike; however, the ultimate goal is to produce an obedient, honorable daughter,

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<sup>38</sup> In Chapter One of Volume II "Childhood", Beauvoir explains how little boys and little girls develop opposing views of self during childhood that carry over into adult life. On little boys she states, "The great advantage for the boy is that his way of existing for others leads him to posit himself for himself. He carries out the apprenticeship of his existence as free movement toward the world; he rivals other boys in toughness and independence; he looks down on girls. [...] Granted, he also experiences himself as if "for-others"; he tests his own virility, and consequently, trouble ensues with adults and friends. But what is very important is that there is no fundamental opposition between this objective figure that is his and his will for self-affirmation in concrete projects. It is by doing that he makes himself be, in one single movement" (294).

Thus, women given the care of a little girl are bent on transforming her into women like themselves with zeal and arrogance mixed with resentment. And even a generous mother who sincerely wants the best for her child will, as a rule, think it wiser to make a “true woman” of her, as that is the way she will be accepted by society. (296)

Critics such as Joseph Mahon and Yolanda Astarita Patterson speak on Beauvoir’s breakdown of the mother’s function in child-rearing, both agreeing that she presents the task as a social duty. In his book *Existentialism, Feminism and Simone de Beauvoir*, Mahon explains that child rearing is “the existence for which she [the married woman] is made responsible.” She is not only trapped by the demands of society, but she is also occupied with those of her husband (145). In *Simone de Beauvoir and the Demystification of Motherhood*, Patterson talks about how Beauvoir considers marriage and motherhood to be “an acceptance of passivity” when she states, “For Beauvoir, a willingness to take on the expected traditional female role is thus interpreted as a rejection of vitality, as a reluctance to commit oneself to meaningful participation in the real world” (118). Although Patterson feels that Beauvoir takes on this position, it is important to note that it is controversial to apply a similar conclusion to Jacinta in *Zayas’s Aventurarse perdiendo*. When analyzing Jacinta’s character, it is clear that though she is more than willing to take on the traditional female role; in fact, she seeks vitality through love. She wants to feel the passion that being possessed by Don Félix, the object of her affection, will bring. At sixteen years old she has a dream in which a man takes out a dagger and stabs her in the heart, “sacando una daga me dio un golpe tan cruel por el corazón que me obligó el dolor a dar voces” (180). Although she has such a horrible dream, she tells Fabio that it did not deter her from wanting to marry a man like the one who stabs her in the dream: “Desaba yo, noble Fabio, hallar para dueño un hombre de su talle y gallardía, y traíame tan fuera de mí esta imaginación que le pintaba en ella, y después razonaba con él; de suerte que a pocos lances me hallé enamorada sin saber de qué” (180). Greer’s examination of Jacinta’s dream signals the absence of the mother as the force

behind her the young girl's longing, "Zayas narrates the birth of feminine desire in a first-person retrospective account by Jacinta that paints maternal absence as the emotional setting for the generation of desire" (101). In addition to its emotional impact, foreshadowing the events to come, Zayas uses the dream to inform the readers of the heartache and misfortune that Jacinta will experience as a result of her pursuit of this love affair with Don Félix. Jacinta's emotions overpower her rationale and she is consumed with the thought of finding the man in the dream. Her longing for him as a lover and husband is not so much a rejection of vitality as it is recognition of her own desire, which patriarchal society tried to control through harsh rule and punishment. It is also essential to note that in several of the *maravillas* that comprise *Novelas*, Zayas's character do take on male roles. Through actions that challenge traditional gender roles, Zayas is challenging the myth that women's existence was to be defined in the limited vocations of wife, mother, and religious devotee.

As demonstrated, the absence of the mother in *Aventurarse perdiendo* shines light on the role of the mother in child-rearing and the socialization of women in society. Yet, what does the missing mother say about the position of the father? Are Jacinta's hardships a critique of the role mother or could Zayas be alluding to a disapproval of the role of the present, yet absent, father? As has been previously stated, Jacinta reveals to Fabio that her father's top priority is the upbringing of his son. This calls into question the responsibility of the father in female child-rearing. Chapter 1 of this dissertation talks about how the father has complete control over his daughter and how that control is turned over to the husband upon marriage. His jobs are to provide for her a dowry in order to obtain the best marriage/economic arrangement possible, and to ferociously monitor her comportment so that she doesn't bring shame upon his name or household. With the exception of these two factors, female children are the responsibility of the

mother. Knowing this, it is not at all surprising that Jacinta's father springs into action when the honor of his home is jeopardized after his daughter runs away with Don Félix in secret, "ofendido de acción tan escandalosa de como era haberme salido de su casa [...] remitió su venganza a sus manos, acción noble, sin querer por la justicia hacer ninguna diligencia, ni más alboroto ni más sentimiento" (191-192). She goes on to describe herself as "la mejor joya de su casa y la mejor prenda de su honra" (192). The importance of honor as a literary phenomenon can be found in plays and literature both before and during Zayas's time.<sup>39</sup> In the book, *Honor and Violence in Golden Age Spain*, Scott Taylor labels Lope de Vega and Calderón as the "spearheads" of the honor plays, specifically the wife-murder plays (2). In such plays, the offended husband often killed his wife in order to avenge his honor.

Gustavo Correa's article, "*El doble aspecto de la honra en el teatro del siglo XVII*" provides perspective on the aspects of honor and their significance in society. He defines honor in two planes: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal honor concerns itself with the one's position in society in relation to other members of the community. People in the upper class were expected to uphold a higher degree of honor than those of the lower classes, with the King being the ultimate example (99-100). Correa explains, "Tal concepto de honra puede ser definido como la fama o la reputación y descansaba por entero en la opinión que los demás tuvieron de la persona" (101). In slight contrast, vertical honor implies an "honra inmanente" that has its interest in a person's birth or merit (100-101). Correa goes on to explain that both concepts of honor were firmly rooted in the virtue of the woman and the masculinity of the male, "En el caso de un padre o de un hermano la infidelidad de la mujer atenta directamente contra la pureza de su casta y la integridad moral de su propio hogar" (104). These definitions of honor make one ponder where

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<sup>39</sup> It is known that the author was an avid reader of well-known authors and playwrights such as Lope de Vega and Miguel de Cervantes. Zayas herself even wrote a play, *La traición en la amistad* (1632).

such rigid social codes derived from. Taylor cites several possible reasons for the popularity of honor in Golden Age Spain such as chivalric values, the influence of the noble classes and the military aristocracy. He concludes that the most widely accepted belief amongst scholars is the value placed upon purity of blood, “As the Christians gained control over all of Spain during the Middle Ages, the more or less tolerant attitudes that had prevailed toward Jews and Muslims during the centuries of Islamic ascendancy disappeared” (3). Thus, a pure blood-line was one free from Muslim and Jewish lineage.

Keeping in mind what has just been presented on the subject of honor, it comes as no surprise that once Jacinta, the involuntary keeper of her family’s honor, goes astray, her present, yet absent father, takes matters into his own hands. This further reveals how woman’s existence was not her own. From birth, she is obligatorily destined to think and behave in a certain way due to her sex. Her life and choices are not her own, rather they are those determined by society and family to avoid bringing shame to the family name. As Taylor puts it:

Honor was a burdensome social code that victimized women, placing constraints on their behavior, especially their sexual behavior. Insofar as honor determined women’s identity, it did so in a negative sense, providing a variety of ways that women could bring shame to herself and her family. (158)

Similar to Taylor, author Renato Barahona also offers an insightful explanation of honor in his book on early modern Spain. Barahona opens the fifth chapter of his book using the metaphor of honor as a glass. He states, “Presented as such, honour -perhaps especially that of females- is a priceless possession and quality, one that when damaged is beyond repair. At the other end of the spectrum, however, honour is a tangible commodity that can be quantified, repaired, and partially restored” (119). Consequently, what Jacinta’s father is attempting to do is obtain a “tangible commodity” through his pursuit of Don Félix. Due to the irreversible offense committed by his daughter, his honor is only partially salvageable through an act of violence

directed toward her lover. Nevertheless, the father never gets the vengeance he seeks.

Conversely, his insatiable need to restore his honor brings about the murder of his cherished son when a plan to murder Félix goes awry, “Era mi hermano atrevido cuanto don Félix prudente, causa para que la primera ida y venida de espadas, le atravesó don Félix la suya por el pecho, y sin tener lugar ni aun de llamar a Dios, cayó en el suelo de todo punto muerto” (192). Ironically, the father loses much more than he could have hoped to restore. This ironic representation of seventeenth-century Spain’s preoccupation with honor details the important, and unreasonable, components of early modern society and culture.

Regardless of whom one chooses to fault, it is clear the Jacinta has been victimized by the patriarchal system. She suffers because her mother is absent. She also suffers because her father is present, yet detached. Both of these factors play a role in Jacinta’s defiance of the culturally constructed gender norms attributed to her sex. In addition to her parental troubles that cause her difficulties, Jacinta is unable to sustain a relationship with Celio, a love interest that comes along after Félix’s death. Though rich and handsome, Celio is depicted as “tan cuerdo como falso, pues sabía amar cuando quería y olvidar cuando le daba gusto” (201). As to be expected, Jacinta informs Fabio that her relationship with Celio ends just as unhappily as the one before. During their courtship, Celio’s feelings for her vacillate. Occasionally, he shows her adoration and compassion. Other times, she receives nothing but disdain. While narrating her story to Fabio, Jacinta lamentably states, “¡Ay de mí!, que cuando considero las estratagemas y ardidés con que los hombres rinden las mujeres y combaten su flaqueza, digo que todos son traidores, y el amor guerra y batalla campal, donde el amor combate a sangre y fuego al honor, alcalde de la fortaleza del alma” (203). Jacinta knows of men’s tricks and schemes, and she knows that love is anything but simple. However, to her the possibility of finding a true love

validated through the marriage act is worth the risk. Revisiting Sartre's theories on existence, there are apparent signs of a being-for-itself that reasons and imagines, as opposed to a being-for-others that is entirely body and incapable of exercising thought (characteristic female behavior according to patriarchy). Endeavoring to take control of her future, Jacinta makes the decision to continue her courtship with Celio in hopes of gaining that which she was denied in her previous relationship with Don Félix. Unfortunately, Celio remains true to his cunning ways. He travels to Salamanca where he enjoys the company of another woman. In Margot Brink's examination of the concepts of love and abandonment in *Zayas*, she points out that from the beginning Celio has been an "amante seductor y completamente astuto y falso" (234). However, this is not enough to deter Jacinta's plans to get him back. Determined to win his affection, she gets a family friend to take her from Andalucía to Salamanca. On the road she is tricked, robbed, and left stranded. On foot, she gets to Barcelona, sells her remaining possessions, buys some men's clothing, and retreats to Montserrat where Fabio finds her.

Moved by her beauty as well as her heartbreaking tale, Fabio proposes to Jacinta that she enter a convent to which she responds, "Iré contigo más contenta de lo que piensas y te obedeceré en todo lo que de mí quisieres ordenar, y no haré mucho, pues todo es tan a provecho mío. La entrada en el monasterio acepto..." (209). Once again, *Zayas* has her character choose convent life over love relationships with men. Brink views the disillusionment and deceit that *Zayas*'s female characters endure as their reasons for self-reformation and eventual retreat from society, exclaiming, "Enfermedad, melancolía y revestimiento son indicadores de los procesos transformadores, de las etapas finales, en el camino de autoformación. Llevan a la ruptura con los así designados roles femeninos tradicionales y con esto a la decisión de retirarse de la sociedad al convento" (235). As discussed in Chapter 1, *Zayas*'s sees the convent as a place for

women's liberation. It is a place where they are afforded many of the privileges that they are denied in the patriarchal social system. In "Volume I, Part II: History" of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir's discussion on women in the Middle Ages leads her to make the following statement concerning convent life, "Convent life makes woman independent of man... In the mystical, thus autonomous, relation that binds them to God, feminine souls draw their inspiration and force from a virile soul; and the respect society grants them enables them to undertake difficult projects" (115).<sup>40</sup> Beauvoir uses Joan of Arc and Saint Catherine of Siena as examples of women who took on difficult projects while in the convent. Equally, the choice made by Zayas's characters to enter the convent shows how their existence for self takes precedence over what manmade laws would have them to be, think, and act.

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<sup>40</sup> Although Zayas and Beauvoir offer a positive take on the convent, there are some critics that disagree with the belief of life in the cloister as a place of freedom and female solidarity. For an opposing view, see *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* by Constance Jordan.

### CHAPTER THREE: CHALLENGING THE MYTH

As represented in the frame narrative of *Novelas*, in the male-dominated society depicted in Zayas's *maravillas*, the emotions, complaints, and desires of the female characters are oftentimes dismissed by their male counterparts, normally their husbands, male family members, and other authority figures. The male perspective does not view these women as individuals capable of expressing the anguish they feel, but rather men insist on seeing women as unexplainable creatures that exist only to satisfy heterosexual male desire and maintain the home. The widespread prevalence of myths surrounding women in patriarchal society have allowed for continued cruelty and subordination of women. By using myths as a pretext, men have been able to carry out such treatment for centuries, free from blame, and maintaining a sense of validation in their wrong-doing. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir goes into great detail in her analysis of myths and their function throughout history, so much so that Volume I, Part III of her text is dedicated in its entirety to its examination. Her fundamental point is that by attributing woman to Nature, man is able to conquer, control, violate, and ignore her, just as he would any other entity pertaining to it. When he is not able to achieve his goals, he attributes his misfortune to an inexplicable mystery hemmed in Nature. Beauvoir sees this as the general reason for the origin and survival of the myths surrounding woman's existence. Beauvoir states:

Few myths have been more advantageous to the ruling master caste than this one: it justifies all its privileges and even authorizes taking advantage of them. Men do not have to care about alleviating the suffering and burdens that are physiologically women's lot since they are "intended by Nature"; they take this as a pretext to increase the misery of the woman's condition.... (268)

Let us take a moment to further discuss the phrase “intended by Nature.” Since woman is closely linked to Nature through myth, Beauvoir asserts that man has inconsistent sentiments towards her:

Man seeks the Other in woman as Nature and as his peer. But Nature inspires ambivalent feelings in man, as has been seen. He exploits it, but it crushes him; he is born from and he dies in it; it is the source of his being and the kingdom he bends to his will; it is a material envelope in which his soul is held prisoner, and it is the supreme reality; it is contingency and Idea, finitude and totality; it is that which opposes Spirit and himself. Both ally and enemy, it appears as the dark chaos from which life springs forth, at this very life, and as the beyond it reaches for: woman embodies nature as Mother, Spouse, and Idea; these figures are sometimes confounded and sometimes in opposition, and each has a double face. (163)

As the author reveals, Nature is both praised and feared; however, it is fear that reigns supreme. Nature has always evoked a curiosity in man that has led him to risk his life to explore her most dangerous terrains, harsh climates, and outermost regions. However, in that exploration, man realizes that Nature is greater and more powerful than him. Through contact with Nature man becomes aware of his finite human condition. To calm his fears he subjugates her and makes her an object. In doing this, he feels as though he has gained control of the supposed dark side of the believed duality that exists in woman. Nature no longer has a grasp on him; he believes himself to be in command. Linking women so closely to Nature has created a longstanding myth that patriarchal society has used to male advantage. Myth is man’s way of dealing with his fears and inadequacies in the face of woman, the ambivalent Other he yearns to control. However, Beauvoir makes it clear that she sees nothing natural about these myths. That is to say, there is no characteristic of the female condition that supports such falsehood. The author asserts that such myths exist because of man’s own subjective viewpoint, “Each one is subject only for himself; each one can grasp only his own self in his immanence, from this point of view, the other is always a mystery” (269). Classifying woman as a mysterious Other in relation to man

does not mean that she is silent or absent, but rather implies that her language is not understood. She is a presence that is oftentimes unsuccessful in making herself apparent (260).

In agreement with Beauvoir, the female characters in Zayas's *maravillas* to be studied in this chapter are neither physically absent nor are they silent. They voice their opinions and try to change the unfavorable situations in which they find themselves. However, the female voice goes unheard as the male characters in the *maravillas* do not stop to contemplate how their actions have a profound effect on the lives and sufferings of their female counterparts. As has been explained, patriarchal society tells them that such contemplation is unnecessary. As men, they are made to dominate, to rule, and to conquer. Attentiveness to 'weak' feminine problems and desires is superfluous. Not only that, the myth of the woman, her otherness, and her 'natural' disposition to suffering as prescribed by Nature all aid in the dismissal of such contemplation.

Impartially, Beauvoir does not cast the blame for the creation and sustainability of the myth of the woman entirely on men. She goes on to assert that certain negative convictions towards women can be greatly attributed to female passivity, "For many women, the roads to transcendence are blocked: because they *do* nothing, they do not make themselves *be* anything; they wonder indefinitely what they *could have* become, which leads them to wonder what they *are*..." (271). Seeing nothing natural about female oppression, she concludes that if women put forth the effort, they can change her inferior position in society. She argues that, in most cases, women only know themselves as men perceive them and they serve only to validate that perception (280). Similarly, prolific twentieth-century French cultural studies theorist Roland Barthes echoes Beauvoir's sentiments on myths when he states that each myth has a historical base, a factor that renders it unnatural. In *Mythologies*, Barthes defines myth as a type of speech. He suggests that anything expressed discursively can be considered a myth because it is not the

object itself that determines the myth but rather the way the message is delivered (217). The author declares “Ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things” (218). Linda Åhäll explains Barthes’s idea, stating that it is transformation of cultural and ideological concepts into natural and universal notions that construct myth. She continues her explanation by saying, “Myth makes meanings into common sense; it makes ‘facts’ out of interpretations, it is ‘depoliticized’ speech, in essence something we do not question. Myth is really about making something cultural seem natural” (109). Historically, patriarchal society has succeeded in making the cultural, man’s longing for control which leads to the oppression of women, seem natural, attributing woman to nature in order to justify his power.

With *Novelas*, Zayas aims to challenge patriarchal myths by highlighting them and having her female characters prove them false. The fascinating ways in which Zayas chooses to use her characters to combat the myths that suppress them will be discussed in detail in this chapter. The four *maravillas* to be analyzed in this chapter, *El prevenido engañado*, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, *La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor*, and *El juez de su causa*, are all compelling examples of how Zayas exploits patriarchal norms in hopes of pointing out their absurdity while at the same time appealing for their reformation. In these tales, Zayas uses both her male and female characters to reveal the bias that is the myth of the woman. In a clever, entertaining, and informative way, the seventeenth-century author gives her readers further insight on just what it was like to live in the male dominated country of Spain.

As has been shown, Zayas’s *maravillas* represent the different facets that comprise the temperaments of her male and female characters. In all of the tales analyzed thus far, the author has demonstrated the valor and courageousness of the female gender, attributes that are negated

by the dominant system of patriarchal control. Also, we have seen how her male characters diverge from that of the noble, chivalrous, valiant gentleman previously denoted in literature that served a model of male behavior. Don Marcos's tale in *El castigo de la miseria* is only the tip of the iceberg in Zayas's endeavor to show both male cowardice and female strength. *El prevenido engañado*, the story directly following that of Don Marcos, shows just how fickle the male heart and mind can be while elevating the wit and astuteness of women. Zayas's character representations and her didactic message of retribution expose the flaws of patriarchy's myth of the woman.

### ***El prevenido engañado and El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud***

*El prevenido engañado* is the fourth of Zayas's ten *maravillas* that make up *Novelas*. The analysis to be offered here concentrates on the myth of the woman as it relates to male ambivalence towards women and prejudiced patriarchal considerations on female sexuality. In addition to this approach, the entertaining and perplexing *maravilla*, *El prevenido engañado*, has warranted the attention of many distinguished scholars in the Golden Age field such as Marina Brownlee, Nancy Lagreca, Eavan O'Brien, and Stephan Leopold. Brownlee's explores the baroque subject's negotiation of the division between sex and gender. She argues that Zayas uses her characters in this tale to show the failure of prescriptive norms of female, as well as male, behavior. Brownlee states, "Like current feminist thought, Zayas seeks to demythologize impoverishing depictions of women according to the limited categories operative in fairy tales-as either exclusively good or bad, or as virtuous or depraved" (36). Also concentrating on the baroque, Nancy Lagreca states that the baroque variations such as striking mental images, plot twists, and the decline of character morality aid in revealing Zayas's feminist message that exalts

female intelligence and questions male authority (571). Female friendships and the mother roles are the center of Eavan O'Brien's gynocentric study on the novella. She observes the relationships between men and women to be superior to same sex friendships among women (14). Her examination of the mother-daughter bond between Serafina and Gracia illustrates the complex psychology of Zayas's characters that exceed the limited parameters placed on women of the age. Stephan Leopold agrees that Zayas's writings defend women while adding that they also demonstrate Zayas's achievements as Spain's first female novelist. Through a comparison of Zayas's *El prevenido* with Cervantes's *El amante liberal*, he demonstrates how Zayas's inversion of Cervantes's novella shows the faults of men.<sup>41</sup> Each of these scholars offers unique perspectives and interpretations that aid in the study of Zayas's *maravilla*.

Narrated on the fourth night of the *soiree* by Don Alonso, *El prevenido* reveals to us the humorous, sometimes gloomy, misfortunes of Don Fadrique, a rich man of noble lineage from Granada. Early on, the narrator tells us that Fadrique's parents are dead, but that their death had no effect on his knowledge of the world, "Murieron sus padres, quedando este caballero muy mozo, mas él se gobernaba con tanto acuerdo que todos se admiraban de su entendimiento, porque no parecía de tan pocos años como tenía" (295). However intelligent Fadrique is perceived to be by others, it is soon revealed that his intelligence is no match for the astuteness of the women he meets throughout the *maravilla*. Each of the women he meets poses a challenge for Fadrique, as he is in pursuit of the typical, socialized, submissive, seventeenth-century woman. To his dismay, the women all mislead, trick, and mock the male protagonist as they see fit.

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<sup>41</sup> For more on Leopold's analysis of Zayas and Cervantes, see the article "El aplazamiento de la mujer: la escritura femenina de María de Zayas" in Albers and Felten.

Shortly after the *maravilla* begins, Don Fadrique meets Serafina in the beautiful city of Granada. He is so captivated by her beauty that he intends to marry her. After spying on her to find out why she keeps delaying their marriage, he finds out that she is pregnant. As a result of her relationship with Don Vicente, she has the baby in secret and leaves it for dead. Feeling that he can't trust her after this ordeal, Don Fadrique flees to another Spanish city where he is once again captivated, this time by the beauty of Doña Beatriz. After being betrayed by his new object of desire in Seville, he discovers that she is having a secret relationship with her black slave, Fadrique escapes to Madrid where he is humiliated by Doña Ana and Doña Violante. He eventually finds what he has decided he needs: a woman who to marry who "naturalmente era boba" (334), thinking that his wife's simple nature would keep him safe from female dishonesty. Nevertheless, she ends up having an extramarital affair, continuing the cycle of deception that Don Fadrique has suffered as a consequence of his preconceived notions about women. In this analysis, each of the five female encounters Fadrique has will be examined in order to reveal how the male character's acceptance of patriarchal ideology had negative effects on men as well as women. That is to say, Zayas uses the male character to call attention to the absurdity of patriarchal rules and cultural norms, demonstrating that an ideology founded on the basis of male domination and female inferiority has negative effects on both sexes. Beauvoir's theory on myth will provide the basis for the discussion of patriarchal considerations on women.

The first of Fadrique's failed relationship attempts involves the young and beautiful Serafina. Given that Fadrique is wealthy and of noble lineage, once he expresses his plans for marriage, Serafina's parents eagerly agree. However, once he sees Serafina secretly giving birth to her daughter and how she leaves her for dead, he is astonished. He takes off for Seville but not before arranging to have Gracia, Serafina's abandoned daughter, cared for, baptized, and entered

into a convent when she turns three years old. Before leaving, Fadrique writes a letter to Serafina in which he scolds her for the way she treated him and accuses her of wrongdoing. The narrator tells us that this ordeal taught Fadrique a valuable lesson. He is convinced that women are not to be trusted, “él decía que no había de fiar de ellas, más de las discretas, porque de muy sabias y entendidas daban en traviesas y viciosas, y que con sus astucias engañaban a los hombres” (300-01). He goes on to express his feelings about women’s roles in society. It is evident that his thoughts have been fashioned after patriarchal norms, “pues una mujer no había de saber más de hacer su labor y rezar, gobernar su casa y criar sus hijos; y lo demás eran bachillerías y sutilezas que no servían sino para perderse más presto” (301). These words resemble those of Fray Luis de León in *La perfecta casada* that claim that women are best fit to carry out domestic tasks.<sup>42</sup> As previously discussed, female education was viewed as a direct threat to male power, thus traditionally women were only taught skills that would help them fulfill their domestic duties. It is clear that Serafina has been trained in the ways of the obedient woman because the narrator tells us that she agrees to marry Fadrique in order to please her parents. Evidently, she strays from the perfect daughter role when she clandestinely has sex with, and is impregnated by, Vicente. However, what is worthy of further examination are Fadrique’s thoughts and feelings towards Serafina once he finds out what she done.

It is interesting that at no point in the *maravilla* does anyone sympathize with Serafina after Vicente leaves her with child. She is depicted by Fadrique as a malevolent force that changes his entire outlook on women. This story’s narrator, Don Alonso, says of the character’s irrational feelings, “Llegó don Fadrique a Sevilla tan escarmentado en Serafina que por ella ultrajaba a todas las demás mujeres, no haciendo excepción de ninguna, cosa contraria a su entendimiento, pues para una mala hay ciento buenas, y no todas lo son, ni es justo, mezclando

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<sup>42</sup> See Chapter I, p. 6.

unas con otras, culparlas a todas” (300). Alonso’s words uphold Zayas’s positive opinion of women in spite of their inappropriate behavior. As Brownlee points out, the male narrator’s defense of a female character is Zayas’s way of showing the complexity of the sexes. Both characters find themselves in situations that affect their behavior and confront static gender roles, “Thus just as we detect a number of unanticipated and conflicting subject positions in Serafina, ... we witness the idealist turned misogynist, who is admonished by another male... Zayas thus resists gender typecasting- in this case on the level of her assembled narrators” (37). Such contradictory sentiments towards women as demonstrated by Fadrique are what Simone de Beauvoir attributes to the myth of the woman. The theorist supposes that the disparate labels men in patriarchal societies have assigned to woman have created myths that surround her existence and how she is perceived. Both regarded as both saint and sinner, woman is the object on which man projects his desires and rests his fears, which creates a contradictory representation of her. Beauvoir states, “She [woman] is an idol, a servant, source of life, power of darkness; she is the medicine woman and witch; she is man’s prey; she is his downfall, she is everything he is not and wants to have, his negation and his *raison d’être*” (162). Once Serafina’s lack of sexual purity is discovered, she is no fit to occupy the saintly role of Fadrique’s wife. She is attributed to the dark forces associated with the myth. Hence, Fadrique loses interest in her and goes elsewhere in search of a wife.

As previously discussed in this dissertation, female sexual activity was under the control of male family members and husbands. A man’s inability to control a woman’s sexuality was seen as a deficiency in male authority and a threat to honor. As evident in the final episode with Gracia, the child abandoned by Serafina whom Fadrique rescues and leaves in the care of nuns, Fadrique strives to marry a woman whose sexuality he can personally shape to assure her fidelity

to him. He is operating according to patriarchal ideology that views female sexual control as part of the dominant role of the male. In “Morality and Feminism in Zayas’s *El prevenido engañado*,” Daniel Alsop elaborates upon this issue. The author states, “Don Fadrique’s discovery of Serafina’s sexual activity, by spying on the birth of Gracia, overturns all his expectations of her based on his moral conception of women and their conduct...” (364). The honesty/purity of a woman rested in her virginity. Beauvoir proclaims that female virginity is an integral factor in man’s wavering feelings toward women. It creates yet another seemingly unexplainable enigma, “Dreaded or desired or even demanded by the male, virginity is the highest form of the feminine mystery; the aspect is simultaneously the most troubling and the most fascinating” (172). In order to ensure female purity, women were kept under close watch and supervision. Upon its loss, the mystery is extinguished and the threat to male honor ensues.

Citing Yarbro-Bejarano’s study on feminism and the *comedia*, Alsop continues by stating, “...the key strategy in the control of women was enclosure, which extends from physical confinement to the enclosure of its orifices’ (Yarbro-Bejarano 14). Witnessing the scene of Serafina’s secret birth and abandonment of her child confirms Don Fadrique’s suspicions about her lack of confinement, her sexual activity, and his honor” (364). Serafina’s immense threat to her suitor’s honor and her lack of purity are unacceptable. Since patriarchy demands female obedience and chastity, Fadrique cannot marry the former object of his affection given her transgressions. Shocked at Fadrique’s abrupt departure, Serafina’s parents begin to question why their plans went awry. To avoid exposure and family shame, Serafina decides to enter a convent, a decision to which her parents happily oblige. Drawing from Leon’s *La perfecta casada*, in “Good Sex, Bad Sex: Women and Intimacy in Early Modern Spain”, Vollendorf states, “The only acceptable alternative to the life path of an obedient daughter becoming an

obedient wife was religious life, where women –safely enclosed in convents –were protected and guided by male clerics and a paternalistic church” (3). Still seen as the obedient daughter by her parents, Serafina enters the convent full of worry for her abandoned child and seeking pardon for her actions, “Y así se entró en un monasterio harto confusa y cuidadosa de lo que había sucedido,... que cargaba su conciencia tal delito, motivo para que procurarse con su vida y penitencia no sólo alcanzar perdón de su pecado, sino nombre de santa, y así era tenida por tal en Granada” (300). Similar to Laura in *La fuerza del amor* and Jacinta in *Aventurarse perdiendo*, Serafina’s new religious devotion isn’t entirely due to her yearning to uphold Catholic principles. In a study on Spanish women writers, Ruth El Saffar cites the cases of nuns that did not choose the convent for religious reasons. El Saffar identifies nuns such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, María de Agreda and Madre Isabel de Jesús to demonstrate how women chose the convent over the adverse circumstances of daily secular life (“Breaking Silences” 5). For Matos-Nin, in Zayas’s novellas the convent is the social equalizer between men and women, “detrás de las paredes del claustro, la mujer puede guardar su honor y cultivar su alma sin que el hombre tenga derecho a decidir por ellas. El convento, entonces sirve para colocar a la mujer en la misma categoría social que el hombre, pues, entre sus muros, aquélla puede controlar su destino” (“Lisis” 111). The security of the convent provides for Serafina an escape from all of her secrets. This solution is Zayas’s method of giving her female characters freedom from the abuses of men and the opportunity to educate themselves.

Fadrique’s stay in Seville brings about the most shocking of his female encounters. There he meets Doña Beatriz, a beautiful widow in mourning. The mere sight of her incites deep adoration and desire in Fadrique. Revealing his thoughts to his friend Don Mateo he states, “Mas si he de morir, sin que ella lo sepa, a manos de mis deseos, muera a manos de sus desengaños y

desdenes. Habladla, amigo, y demás de decirle mi nobleza y hacienda, le podréis decir que muero por ella” (302). Ironically, Fadrique’s will once again experience an internal, emotional “death” when he finds out that, like Serafina, Beatriz also has a deep secret.

Following the death of her husband, Beatriz vows to endure three years of mourning in order to show her love and devotion to her deceased husband. When Fadrique meets her, one year of mourning still remains before Beatriz will marry again. Mateo acts on Fadrique’s behalf and informs Beatriz of his friend’s admiration of her. Impressed by what she has heard from Mateo, she consents to wed Fadrique if he will wait until her final year of mourning has ended. During their six months of courtship, Beatriz will not allow Fadrique to see her alone. His only pleasure comes from catching a view of her on her balcony, singing *romances* outside her window, and occasionally hearing her voice. One night when he sneaks into Beatriz’s house to catch a glimpse of her, he is accidentally locked inside. While spying on her in secret, he sees her leave with a basket full of food and medicinal remedies. It is then he discovers his esteemed fiancée is sexually active with one of her black slaves. He hears the dying slave complain that his condition is a result of his female master’s sexual appetite, “No basta que tu viciosa condición me tiene como estoy, sino que quieres que, cuando ya estoy en el fin de mi vida, acuda a cumplir tus viciosos apetitos. Cásate, señora, cástate, y déjame ya a mí, que ni te quiero ver ni comer lo que me das; morir quiero, pues ya no estoy para otra cosa” (310). With this female character, Zayas continues to remove the veil of mystery that creates gender bias. Brownlee suggests that Zayas is disproving patriarchy’s proscriptive female behavior. The relationship between Beatriz and her slave is not based on love nor is it going to be sanctioned through marriage; moreover it is the woman who is in a position of power in this relationship. Brownlee views this affair to be much like the ones men have with female servants in their households. Like men, the women in

*El prevenido* take the reins and seek out sexual fulfillment, “By this disclosure, Zayas indicates that the desire for sexual domination over another individual based on economic superiority, of lasciviousness even over a sick partner, and of interracial liaisons is potentially as compelling for a woman as it is for a man” (39). Myths about gender that deem certain characteristics to be exclusively male or female are debunked in Zayas’s writings.

In addition to exposing illogical myths about female sexual desire and activity, with the inclusion of a black slave she is also confronting male concerns of inadequacy regarding their own sexuality. Beatriz’s sexual involvement with Antonio, the black slave the narrator describes using callous adjectives such as “feo”, abominable”, y “demonio” (309), stimulates thought about male sexual activity and performance. That a black slave is engaging in sexual activity with a European woman is a major insult to white male dominance. Summarizing Fra Molinero, Yolanda Tusquets speaks on the subject of sexual relations between blacks and whites and its challenge to white male authority, “Tratándose de una sociedad en la que las relaciones sexuales entre una mujer blanca y un hombre negro se percibían como grotescas o hasta monstruosas pues atentaban contra el derecho de propiedad sexual y física del esposo o amo” (123).<sup>43</sup> The transcendence that sexual activity provides to the white male was never meant to be impeded by the “other.” The freedom that his biological sex affords him has been hindered, and, according to Beauvoir, makes him an inactive subject, “Man exalts the phallus in that he grasps it as transcendence and activity, as a means of appropriation of the other; but he is ashamed when he sees in it only passive flesh through which he is the plaything of Life’s obscure forces” (Beauvoir 181). Once again, Fadrique is fooled by the other he is supposed to control. Unable to subdue the other, his sexual organ, which brings man pride and liberty, is useless. He once again

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<sup>43</sup> Baltasar Fra Molinero’s study, *La imagen de los negros en el teatro del Siglo de Oro*, elaborates on the presence of blacks in Spanish baroque theater. Fra Molinero explains that the attitudes reflected on stage were representative of how Spanish society perceived the blacks that arrived to Spain from the New World.

decides to flee to another city, this time Madrid, with his fear of women reignited, “se puso de camino; y saliendo de Sevilla, tomó el de Madrid, con su antiguo tema de abominar de las mujeres discretas, que fiadas en su saber procuraban engañar a los hombres” (312). Before leaving, he writes a letter to Beatriz informing her that he knows of her indiscretion. Frantic from this revelation, “Pensó doña Beatriz perder con este papel su juicio” (312), she marries the next suitor that comes along. Her entrance into the domestic realm as a wife is what offers her an escape from her past. It is interesting to note that although Zayas challenges traditional gender roles, the female character’s problems are always resolved in traditional ways. Through this, it can be deduced that Zayas is not against conventional female roles, she is against the injustices and inequality that surround them.

The characters of Doña Ana and Doña Violante, women that Fadrique meet in Madrid, also exhibit characteristics that challenge the patriarchal myth of female sexuality. Much like Serafina and Beatriz, these women’s sexual activity does not adhere to patriarchy’s beliefs about female sexual activity. The dominant system of control supposes that sexual fulfillment is exclusively male, and woman, the other, is merely the source through which man achieves satisfaction. Female sexual pleasure is not taken into consideration because the role of pleasing men sexually is her lot, supported by biblical teachings (Beauvoir 450). As a woman living and writing in seventeenth-century Spain, Zayas is well aware of the constraints placed on female sexuality by the church, men, and society. However, contrary to established gendered prejudices about sex, the author grants the women in her *maravillas* the liberty to express their erotic desires. In the most humorous, and most humiliating, of Fadrique’s five encounters, Ana and Violante enjoy the sexual liberties of men and have fun while doing it, at Fadrique’s expense, of course.

In Madrid, Fadrique lodges at the home of his uncle. There, he finds out that his cousin Don Juan is enamored with Ana, a woman betrothed to a cousin who is in away in India. Because she is promised to another, Ana will not have sex with Juan until her marriage is consummated. Ana is the reflection of the seventeenth-century Spanish woman who knows the importance place upon female virginity so she saves herself for her husband. On the other hand, the narrator describes her husband as a jealous man of forty years old “experimentado en cosas” (322). Presumably, he has had experience with women before his marriage to Ana which have led him to enforce strict rules that require her complete enclosure. Her status as the female other denies her the same worldly, sexual involvements as men, “First, she has no right to sexual activity outside of marriage... [but man] can savor contingent pleasures prior to married life: in any case, he finds satisfaction in other ways, but in a world where woman is essentially defined as female, she must be wholly as female” (Beauvoir 450). It is exactly these types of prejudices that lead to the separation of love and marriage. Juan tells us that Ana is marrying her cousin out of obligation to her deceased parents, but it is he who is the true object of her affection. Once again, Zayas demonstrates how marriages were arranged for socio-economic benefit. The husband and the loved man are not one in the same, and the collective interest of the marriage takes precedence over the happiness of those joining themselves in union (Beauvoir 448). Ana is only partially defined by the patriarchal norms that aim to control her. Though she is married, she still seeks to fulfill her sexual desires with Juan. While Ana is with Juan, Violante, her unmarried cousin, agrees to spend time with Fadrique while he is in Madrid. However, at the unexpected arrival of Ana’s husband, their plans to be together are put on hold. Fadrique and Juan impatiently wait on the departure of Ana’s husband while their melancholy increases with each passing day.

After a month of waiting, Juan receives a letter from Ana in which she suggests that he persuade Fadrique to take her place in bed next to her husband so that she can spend the night with him. After much persuasion on the part of his cousin, Fadrique consents to the ordeal. When they arrive at Ana's home, she instructs Fadrique on how to prepare himself for bed, "mandó doña Ana desnudar a don Fadrique; y obedecida de mal talante, descalzo y en camisa, estando todo sin luz, le entró en la cuadra, y poniéndole junto a la cama, le dijo paso que se acostase, y en dejándole allí, muy alegre se fue con su amante a otra cuadra" (325). Fadrique lies in bed all night next to who he thinks is Ana's husband, not knowing that he has really spent the night in bed with Violante. El Saffar, offers astute commentary on this incident in her article "Ana/Lisis/Zayas: Reflections on Courtship and Literary Women in María de Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*." On the inversion of gender she states:

The trick Doña Ana works of Fadrique is one that has the effect of putting him in the place of an adulterous woman, exposing him to the terror of spending the night in bed with a jealous man. Doña Ana and Violante have forced him by trickery into a reversal of sex roles that demonstrates the humiliation that attends powerlessness, and the phallic control that women of intelligence can exercise over men who presume them to be their masters. (210)

Different from what patriarchy tells us, women have sexual desires just like men. These two intelligent, sexually active women further demonstrate that erotic yearnings are not exclusively male. Similar to men, women will undertake schemes to ensure they receive pleasure.

The duchess is the last "intelligent" woman Fadrique meets. She warns Fadrique of his erroneous thoughts on women. She tries to have him consider that the foolishness of women could be the result of men's confusing and unfair expectations of them, "¿Y cómo-dijo la duquesa-sabrà ser honrada la que no sabe en qué consiste serlo? ¿No advertís que el necio peca y no sabe en qué? ¿Y siendo discreta sabrà guardarse de las ocasiones. Mala opinión es la

vuestra...” (330). Fadrique pays no mind to her words. He continues with his usual pattern. He has sex with her and finds himself in another humiliating situation.

Interestingly, Fadrique repeatedly makes statements throughout the *maravilla* that reveal his position on women who are learned in affairs outside of the home, information seventeenth-century women were presumed to have no understanding of whatsoever. After his encounters with Serafina, Beatriz, and the duchess, he makes scornful comments about the intelligence of women: “[...] temo a las mujeres que son tan sabias más que la muerte, [...] más ya son todas tan agudas que no hay quien las alcance (318); “Bien digo yo que las mujeres el saber las hace que se pierdan.” (333); and “[...] que el mucho saber hacía caer a las mujeres en mil cosas” (335). The word *saber*, meaning to know, is present in each one of the examples provided here. It is not by chance that Zayas repeats this word time and time again in this *maravilla*. The author is speaking directly to the components of patriarchy that deny women the rights to education and knowledge. Beauvoir sees this as the patriarch’s best weapon against the development of female intellect, thus she rightfully shifts the blame to dominant cultural beliefs and not women themselves,

Women should be given exactly as much education as boys. Antifeminists object that cultured and intelligent women are monsters: but the whole problem comes from the fact that they are still exceptional; if all women had access to culture as naturally as men, they would just as naturally take advantage of it. [...] They are not angels, nor demons, nor sphinx: merely human beings reduced to semi-slavery by idiotic customs. (254)

Like many men in patriarchal societies, Fadrique remains firm in his belief of female ignorance.

Fearful and skeptical of women, Fadrique returns to Granada in search of Gracia, Serafina’s daughter. He finds her in the convent where he instructed his aunt to leave her years ago. Impressed by her beauty and even more by her simplicity, he asks his aunt to arrange their marriage. The narrator states that Gracia, ignorant to the ways of the world, obliges, “Tomó Gracia esta ventura como quien no sabía qué era gusto ni disgusto, bien ni mal, porque

naturalmente era boba, agravio de su mucha belleza, siendo esto lo mismo que deseaba su esposo” (334). Once married, Fadrique wants to ensure his relationship with Gracia won’t end like the others so he teaches her all about “la vida de los casados” (335). He informs her that she must dress in full armor and carry a lance so that she can keep watch while he sleeps.

Unwittingly, Gracia does as she is told, an act in which Fadrique finds great pleasure. He finally gets what he wants: a simple woman who will not deceive him due to her unintelligence. Of course, the result is exactly the opposite. Fadrique’s dishonesty backfires and he is deceived one last time.

While her husband is away on business, Gracia meets a man who reveals her husband’s deception and they enjoy each other sexually. When Fadrique returns and learns of what has happened, he only has himself to blame. He tells no one of his sadness and lives out the rest of his days with his wife, “Y viendo que ya no había remedio, disimuló su desdicha, pues por su culpa le sucedió, que si en las discretas son malas las pruebas, ¿qué pensaba sacar de las necias? Y procurando no dejar de la mano a su mujer, porque no tornarse a ofenderle, vivió algunos años” (340). He reaches a partial resolution that allows him to remain with Gracia, but he remains partial in his views of women outside of their usefulness to men. For him, they do not come to be human beings capable of acting freely on their desires and motivations. Instead, he praises women for discretion, “Y todo el tiempo que vivió, alababa las discretas que son virtuosas, porque no hay comparación ni estimación para ellas; y si no lo son, hacen sus cosas con recato y prudencia” (340). Fadrique’s limited perception of women is shaped by the unrealistic expectations placed upon them by patriarchy. Beauvoir attributes this way of thinking to the myth of the woman, “Thus we can see that myths are explained in large part by the use man makes of them. The myth of woman is a luxury. It can appear only if man escapes from the

imperious influence of his needs; the more relationships are lived concretely, the less idealized they are” (272). Contrary to what Beauvoir hopes for, Don Fadrique never stops idealizing his relationships with women. He simply accepts that “no había remedio” to his misfortune.

In *El prevenido engañado*, Fadrique suffers because of his oppressive, singular, patriarchal beliefs. His attitude and treatment of women is what involves him in situations where he is used and humiliated. Zayas uses Fadrique’s character to show the deficiencies of the male mind in regards to women and their sexual desires, as well as to expose the callousness of patriarchal domination. It is her wish that men would see women as legitimate subjects who are just as intelligent and erotic in nature as men.

The sixth *maravilla* of the collection, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, is another example of how men’s treatment of women leads them to self-destruction and humiliation. Continuing with the same analysis offered in *El prevenido engañado*, myth and female sexual activity will be examined. Yet, there are other interesting components of the tale that have intrigued scholars. For example, the focal point of the story for Brownlee is the presence of magic and witchcraft. She suggests that implementing controversial topics as these shows Zayas’s “narratological abilities” and “irreducible axiological complexity” (110-111). Likewise, Ingrid Matos-Nin finds Zayas’s use of supernatural forces to confront Christian teachings to be a catalyst for revealing female oppression.<sup>44</sup> In her comparative study on laughter in Zayas and Castellanos, Amy Williamsen views Fernando, along with Fadrique, as a comical representation of the “manipulated man” captured by women (53-55). Furthermore, O’Brien’s study of this *maravilla* shows how the mothers, birth and spiritual, collaborate so as to “prevent other women from becoming martyrs” (205).

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<sup>44</sup> For more on Matos-Nin’s examination of witchcraft in Zayas see “La importancia de la verosimilitud en *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, de María de Zayas y Sotomayor”.

In this tale, Don Fernando is a nobleman with disreputable tendencies. Filis, the narrator, describes him as a man “mucho más inclinado a travesuras y vicios que a virtudes” (373). Filis attributes his behavior to his father’s death and his mother’s neglect. Fernando freely, and frequently, enjoys “vicios y travesuras, pendencias, juegos y damas” (374). For the purposes of entertainment, he sets his sights on Doña Juana. It is not long before his amusement turns to adoration and he finds himself infatuated with her and in love with her wealth. Out of jealousy, Lucrecia, an older woman and friend of Juana, casts a spell upon him that initiates the abandonment of his lover. Along with the witchcraft she uses to procure his love, Lucrecia plays upon Fernando’s weaknesses, promising him the control of her estate and her being in a letter she writes to him, “Hacienda tengo con que regalaros; de está y de mi seréis dueño, con que os digo cuanto sé y quiero” (381). For a while, Fernando goes to and fro, alternating between the home of Juana and that of Lucrecia. However, after six months of enjoying Juana sexually, his adoration turns to contempt and his visits eventually stop.

After the relationship with Juana, Fernando meets Clara, a woman he has set his sights upon for financial gain. Her father presents her as a very wealthy woman but she doesn’t have as much money as he says. Once they are married off, her father flees the country and she becomes a victim of Fernando’s malevolence as he quickly squanders away her dowry. As Fernando’s money declines, his disdain for his wife grows. Having no further use for Clara, he abandons her along with their children and moves away to live with Lucrecia. While working for Fernando and Lucrecia as a servant they do not recognize, Clara discovers that Lucrecia has been keeping Fernando under her spell by keeping a blindfolded rooster chained in an attic, “vio un gallo con una cadena asida al arcaz asimismo preso, y a los pies unos grillos, y luego tenía puestos unos anteojos, a modo de los de caballo que le tenían privada la vista” (403). Seeing that her secret has

been discovered, Lucrecia commits suicide by stabbing herself in the chest. Once he is freed from the spell, Fernando apologizes for his wrongdoings. Shortly after, he falls ill, returns to his birthplace of Toledo, and dies. Clara has a happier ending: she marries Don Sancho, has more children, and enjoys the reputation of a virtuous woman.

Like Don Fadrique and Don Marcos, Fernando's negative relationships with women are what bring about the manipulation and disgrace he endures. As a product of patriarchy, he is free to choose the types of relationships he will have with women. He elects to treat women as a means to an end. His interest in them is sexual and financial. Filis states that money is his motivation for marrying Clara, "...don Fernando se había casado con ella por sólo interés" (392). With all the debt he has amassed over the years, the dowry he gets from the marriage provides a partial solution to the financial problems he has as a result of his vices. Throughout the novella, it is clear that it is possession and not relationship that drives Fernando, the same forces that drive Don Marcos. Ironically, Fernando cares nothing of his good family name and endangers it by his avaricious behavior, while Marcos spends his entire life trying to reverse his standing as a lower class peasant in an attempt to possess the wealth that Fernando so ungraciously has handed to him by birth. Brownlee perceives Fernando's negligent conduct as a critique of the noble class,

The ignoble behavior of this titular noble is reiterated for the reader with a clear double focus – to discredit this individual offender, but also to underscore the problematic perception of nobility in the seventeenth century, the often tremendous gap separating the nobility of inherent worth to the often considerable ignobility, even infamy, of the titular nobles (102).

Neither Fernando nor Marcos would fall into the category of inherent nobility as there is nothing noble about the way they conduct their transactions and their treatment of women. However, although these men stem from different backgrounds, they both treat women with their shared understanding of women as objects of sexual and financial economy reveals patriarchy's strength

in creating myths that have complicated female existence for centuries. Zayas uses humiliation as a means of punishment for her male characters that show bigotry towards women. In Fernando's case, it is symbolic that he is controlled by witchcraft involving a blindfolded rooster as he was blinded by his greed and could not recognize the damage he caused by manipulating women.

Juana and Clara are susceptible to Fernando's schemes because they too have been conditioned by patriarchy. They believe that through the sexual act man will surrender his heart and will prove his love and loyalty to them. Though, as Beauvoir states, this can never be certain, "... the idea of possession is always impossible to realize positively; the truth is that one never has anything or anyone; one attempts to accomplish it in a negative way; the surest way to assert that a good is mine is to prevent another from using it" (173). None of the women in the *maravilla* succeed at capturing Fernando's heart because he is a transcendent being who does not want to be possessed. The only way he is able to be controlled and his movement restricted is through the use of supernatural forces. This highlights the stark contrast between male and female mobility.

Throughout *El desengaño amando*, Fernando easily navigates the domestic sphere of the women he is involved with along with that of his mother, and is a fixture at gaming houses throughout the city. Other than the powerful forces of Lucrecia's witchcraft, there are no obstacles that inhibit his movement between spaces. He passes from one house to another while the women he leaves behind are left to tolerate the anguish of his absence. Free to move about the city of Toledo with no negative social significance, his multiple female relationships are luxuries to him granted by the freedom of mobility obtained in transcendence. On the contrary, when Juana and Clara venture outside of their homes they encounter trouble and find themselves in fearful, destitute situations. Juana leaves her home fueled by her efforts to regain the love of

Fernando. She finds a student/sorcerer from Alcalá who instructs her on what she needs to do in order to achieve her goal. Things don't go as planned: the student ends up badly beaten and Juana is visited by a ghost from hell. Similarly, when Clara departs from her home, only three months pass before she is penniless and takes a job as a servant. Because of one man's unfaithfulness, neither of these women are able to delight in what Beauvoir calls the "bourgeois values" of the home (469). She paints the home as a prison that the woman, through marriage, tries to turn into a kingdom (470). Both women meet adversity during their undertakings outside of the home, however they eventually find the redemption they seek.

The ghost that visits Juana is that of Octavio, a former suitor of hers that is murdered after leaving a gaming house. He advises Juana against her immoral ways, explaining to her that her soul is the most precious thing she has, "Cánsate ya de la mala vida en que estás y teme a Dios y la cuenta que le ha de dar de tus pecados y destraimientos... Y mira por tu alma, que es lo que te importa, que una vez perdida no hay otra pérdida mayor ni ganancia que supla su falta" (387). After her supernatural encounter, Juana's fascination for her lover subsides and she decides to enter a convent to devote her life to God, saying to Fernando, "desde el punto que Otavio me dijo que mirase por mi alma, propuse ser esposa de Dios y no vuestra, y así lo he prometido" (389). Thus, once she enters the convent, a decision that puts an end to her mobility, Juana experiences peace and happiness. Clara also finds relief when Lucrecia's secret is discovered and Fernando recognizes her once again. He recognizes his wrongdoing and admits to being a "desordenado y mal cristiano" (404). Clara forgives him and they spend two months together before he falls ill and dies. The restoration of her honor continues when she marries Don Sancho. Zayas allows this character to enjoy the happy marriage she was denied by Fernando. Zayas's female characters find peace through their disobedience of patriarchal norms. They do

not fall into the stereotypical dichotomy that represents women as angels or demons, saints or sinners, virgins or whores. They are psychologically developed characters whose motivations are driven by their circumstances. The unmarried woman gives in to sexual temptation after being persuaded by the promises of an unfaithful suitor. Patriarchy would argue that had she remained a virgin until marriage she wouldn't have endured such trials. However, that argument is proven invalid as evidenced by Clara's adversities. She remains a virgin until marriage but that is not enough to combat the wickedness of a man who is inclined to exercise freedom and indulge in the vices of gambling and women. By challenging the myths that male dominated societies use to control women and disregard them as thinking and feeling subjects, Zayas proves that there is nothing natural about female suffering or male dominance.

Myths concerning women in patriarchal societies have operated as natural components of the feminine condition in order to ensure male domination. Man's mythical view of women and their sexual behavior, and their contradictory sentiments towards her that affect her daily existence, render it challenging for women to express, and act upon, their sexual desires. Not only that, myths surrounding female behavior were so limiting that Zayas has her protagonists take measures to avenge themselves after having been victims of male deception. In the next two *maravillas* to be analyzed we will see how men trick women and continue on with their everyday lives while the women they deceive are left to deal with the emotional and psychological consequences. However, these women do not sit around to suffer in silence. They take on male disguises and enter the male realm of transcendence. In doing so, they challenge the myths surrounding gender norms and male/female behavior.

### ***La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor and El juez de su causa***

Whether it is for the purpose of regaining lost honor or obtaining forbidden love, Zayas's female protagonists often step outside of the social constructs placed upon their gender.

Although her characters display bold and daring characteristics not akin to their sex during their time, it is important to acknowledge that many of them are forced to display this behavior due to the mistreatment they have suffered. The analysis offered in the first chapter of this dissertation reveals how Zayas's protagonists confronted patriarchal injustice as related to female immanence. Zayas takes that confrontation to this next level with the characters of Aminta and Estela as they completely transcend their female roles as a result of harsh circumstances they face. Through cross-dressing, the women's male disguises change misfortune into favor.

Cross-dressing was a popular element in Golden Age dramas. In her article about cross dressing in early modern Spanish theater, Rosie Seagraves explains that famous playwrights such as Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina all employed this convention to entertain audiences as well as allure the male audience members by the use of male costumes that make the female silhouette more visible than traditional female garments (13). However, as Seagraves explains, male inducement was not the sole function of the female transvestite, "It is helpful from the outset to consider the figure less as representative of a formal type that makes up the *comedia*, and more as a force introduced into plays in order to defy types. The female cross-dresser, rather than fitting classificatory marks, evades them" (14). Following the literary conventions of her time, Zayas uses female cross-dressers in her *maravillas*. Though as Seagraves explains, its inclusion is not meant to attract male attention but rather to empower her characters with the courage necessary to regain lost honor. Lou Charnon Deutsch echoes the sentiments of Seagraves, though expressed with specific reference to Zayas's works:

Zayas's use of cross-dressing females, though a common device, transcends literary convention by underscoring that a simple disguise can transform a weak-willed woman into the bravest of men. That is, sexuality is more cultural than biological, constructed by a set of expectations that have little to do with actual capacity. (122)

Margo Glantz, author of "Androginia y travestismo en la obra de María de Zayas" also agrees that Zayas's works confront "pre-established hierarchies of generic identity" (44). Glantz's study finds androgyny to be a necessary factor for the early modern woman who wishes to escape the limits placed upon her sex. Without male assistance, some women are capable of avenging their honor, but they can only do so through the reproduction of male gender norms, that is to say, they *perform* according to the standards, customs, and expectations of the male sex. In *La burlada Aminta*, the retaliation sought can only be fulfilled through murder; in *El juez* performance brings prestige.<sup>45</sup> Before beginning an examination of the *maravillas* to be explored in this section, it is necessary to take into account Judith Butler's theory of performativity as it will give support to the gendered analysis of the text.<sup>46</sup>

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that gender is performative, meaning that it is culturally constructed through certain acts and gestures that are repeated to express an identity that has been created "through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (185). For Butler, the "abiding gendered self" is an illusion sustained through enactments and bodily gestures established by dominant conventions throughout time (191). These interiorized conventions that result from public and social discourse act out on the surface of the body and produce fabricated

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<sup>45</sup> Though I focus on cross-dressing in *Novelas*, authors such as Lisa Vollendorf and Deborah Compte examine cross-dressing in real-life situations, as well as in Zayas's *Desengaños*. In *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain*, Vollendorf gives actual accounts of cross-dressers in early modern Spain, as well as an analysis of Zayas's *Desengaños*. Compte offers an innovative look at the effects of disguise in the article "Zoraida and Zelima: Cultural Cross-Dressing in Cervantes and Zayas." She offers an exploration of not only male-female cross-dressing, but also using dress to transcend religious and social barriers.

<sup>46</sup> Beauvoir does not specifically address the matter of cross-dressing in *The Second Sex*, but she does talk about the effects of clothing and female mobility and idolization (177). She also discusses male and female clothing in the context of transcendence and immanence (572).

gender identities (185). The author goes on to explain that parody is a functional tool in revealing the stylized repetition of gender:

[...] parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. Although gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of the hegemonic, misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of the original itself. (188)

Similar to Beauvoir, Butler sees nothing natural about the myths that surround gendered behavior. However, Butler goes a step further than the twentieth-century feminist author when she suggests that through parody the meaning of the original, man, is displaced which exposes that the comportment of man himself is a myth. Zayas's writings do not go far enough to suggest the mythical nature of men's behavior; however, there is evidence in the *maravillas* that indicate she disagrees with "hegemonic, misogynist culture." This is displayed very early on in the text in the prologue "Al que leyere." This then carries over into the first of her ten short stories, *Aventurarse perdiendo*, in which Jacinta dresses up in a male disguise and becomes a shepherd. However, in the second story of the collection, *La burlada Aminta*, the parodic element intensifies. Unlike Hipólita, Aminta's is not found out by anyone. She carries out vengeance on her swindler and his accomplice, relinquishes her male clothes, and, after succeeding in what she set out to do, reinserts herself in patriarchy's gender order.

Narrated by Matilda on the first night of the *soiree*, *La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor* tells the story of the title character who is deceived by her lover, Don Jacinto, and his female accomplice, Doña Flora. They work together to conquer her through promises of marriage and displays of love. However, once the sexual act is completed, Aminta is abandoned and the two accomplices flee to another city. Although Don Martín, the man Aminta marries after being deceived and abandoned, offers to kill Don Jacinto to restore his beloved wife's

honor, she feels that it is her personal responsibility to carry out the act that will lead to her reinsertion in Spanish society, “supuesto que yo he sido la ofendida, y no vos, yo sola he de vengarme, pues no quedaré contenta si mis manos no restauran lo que perdió mi locura” (236), and that reinsertion can only come through blood, “Yo soy –decía Aminta –la que siendo fácil la perdí [la honra], y así he de ser la que con su sangre la he de cobrar” (238). Her need for vengeance leads to a remarkable display of bravery. In a quest to avenge her lost honor, Aminta disguises herself as a male servant and obtains a job working for her former lover. She recognizes that the revenge she seeks can only be achieved through the appropriation of a male masquerade, “Aminta changes clothes to present herself in circumstances where a woman could not be found and she therefore demonstrates that, for a woman to move freely, it was necessary to defy the rigid dressing codes of that time” (Camino 529). It is interesting that she chooses the name Jacinto to accompany her male disguise. The cruelty required to bring about the restoration of her honor will be much like Jacinto’s cruelty toward her when he enjoys her sexually and shortly after escapes with Flora, content with never seeing Aminta again. Beauvoir addresses this issue in Vol. I of *The Second Sex*, Facts and Myths. Virginity myths captivate men and create in him a desire to possess what no other man has (174). However, once their schemes have succeeded and they have enjoyed the mythical treasure of the virgin body, woman is rejected. Once this happens, the victim realizes the virtue she has lost, “In the darkness of night, man invites woman to sin. But in the light of day, he rejects sin and her, the sinner. And women, sinners themselves in the mysteries of the bed, show all the more passion for the public worship of virtue” (206). For Aminta, her marriage to Martín isn’t enough to right the wrongs done to her by Jacinto. Her virtue will be restored only through vengeance. Traditionally, the task of

restoring one's honor is normally left up to male family members, but *Zayas* has her female character complete the duty herself.<sup>47</sup>

Aminta plays the part of Jacinto with such facility and ease due to the fact that, as Butler explains, gender roles are performative in nature and culturally constructed. Aminta serves, entertains, and lies to her new masters so convincingly that their suspicions about who she really is are put to rest. When Flora sees her for the first time dressed as Jacinto, she suspects that it is Aminta in disguise, “Mirábale Flora, y tornábale a mirar, sintiendo cada vez una alteración y desmayo que parecía acabársele la vida; mas no se atrevía a decir lo que sentía, aunque siempre le parecía que veía a la engañada Aminta” (240). Nevertheless, Aminta is so good at a putting on the male disguise that Flora loses all doubt and longs to be in her company. *Zayas* uses the title character herself as a mouthpiece to reveal the stylized nature of gender models. In a conversation with Jacinto, Aminta/Jacinto states, “pues cree que he sabido querer y aborrecer, y que también sé dar disgustos y fingir cuidados, porque soy más hombre de lo que mis barbas dan muestra” (241). This statement proves that *Zayas* questions the belief that certain characteristics are exclusively delegated to men. Yet, her characters do go as far as to exceed gendered norms. They continue to operate within the gendered binaries in order to achieve their goals.

Surpassing the performance of cross-dressing, Aminta goes as far as to murder her betrayers. While Jacinto is sleeping, she sneaks into his room and stabs him in the heart. Her vengeance then turns to Flora. She first slits her throat, wounding the device Flora used to carry out her deception. She then reveals her identity and stabs her repeatedly in the chest saying, “¡Traidora, Aminta te castiga y venga su deshonra! Y volviéndola a dar otras tres o cuatro

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<sup>47</sup> For more on vengeance and honor in *Zayas*'s works see *Texto y contexto en la narrativa de María de Zayas* by Salvador Montesa Peydro.

puñaladas por los pechos, envió su alma a acompañar la de su amante...” (245).<sup>48</sup> It is interesting that Aminta murders them while still disguised as a man since she has a key that allows her to enter into their bedroom while they are sleeping. Zayas does not choose to have Aminta dressed in her feminine garments when she commits murder because she wants to show that the courage it takes to kill is not considered by society to be a natural female characteristic. However, as we saw in *Aventurarse perdiendo*, Zayas’s female protagonists are more than capable of committing murder, with or without their manly clothing.

It is not until the daggers are driven into the hearts of Don Jacinto and Doña Flora that Aminta puts on her womanly clothing. She and her husband decide to leave Segovia and set up their home in Madrid. En route, they are stopped by clerks of the court who are in search of those responsible for killing Jacinto and Flora. Due to their appearance, the clerks never suspect that Aminta and Martín know of, or had anything to do with the murders. Once again, the performance prevails and Aminta is never punished for her actions.

In *El juez de su causa*, there are two female characters that, through their successful imitation of men, clearly prove gender to be a social constructed based on the repetition of acts. Disguised as a male page by the name of Claudio, the female Claudia is able to gain the trust of Don Carlos, her love interest. She plays this role so well that Don Carlos never has the slightest inclination that she is in fact a woman and gains his complete trust, “en pocos días se halló Claudia paje de su amante, granjeando su voluntad de suerte que ya era archivo de los más escondidos pensamientos de don Carlos, y tan valido con él que sólo a él le encomendaba la solicitud de sus deseos [...]” (489). Likewise, Estela, who takes on the name of Don Fernando, finds herself in the service of the king and is described by the narrator as “nuestra valiente dama,

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<sup>48</sup> O’Brien states this episode “bears the imprint of female perfidy” (64). She views the violence executed against Flora as more vengeful than that of Jacinto because of her betrayal of the female bond.

que con nombre de Don Fernando era tenuta en diferente opinión” (502). Through constant exposure to males in society, Claudia and Estela are able to successfully imitate them. Melveena McKendrick would classify a woman who acts in this manner as the *mujer varonil*, the manly woman. In the preface to her book, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer Varonil*, McKendrick’s thorough definition of the term demonstrates the varied situations in which women could fall into such a category:

For by *mujer varonil* is meant here any woman who departs in any significant way from the feminine norm of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She can take the form of the *mujer esquiva* who shuns love and marriage, the learned woman, the career woman, the female bandit, the female leader and warrior, the usurper of man’s social role, the woman who wears masculine dress or the woman who indulges in masculine pursuits.  
(ix)

To describe a woman as *varonil* or manly implies that she is exhibiting attributes traditionally designated to men. This signifies, as Butler asserts, that it is performance that constitutes gender, not sex. As gender is learned behavior, it is easily replicated. As Tracy Morison and Catriona Macleod suggest, “Certain deployments of gender (such as parodic or incorrect enactments) trouble gender by highlighting the disjunction between the sexed body and the performance, and thereby revealing the imitative nature of all gender identities and undermining their presumed metaphysical reality” (566).<sup>49</sup> In these cases, the performance here is more powerful than the sexed body and it is through such performance that the women of Zayas’s texts are able to become bold, daring, subjects, characteristics not afforded to them through their roles as women. Regarding Estela, dressed in masculine disguise she exceeds her love interest in valor and gains royal prestige.

When Estela’s parents deny her marriage to Carlos, the man she loves, in order to marry her off to a rich count, the two decide to escape together. While Carlos is planning the escape,

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<sup>49</sup> For more information see “A Performative-Performance Analytical Approach: Infusing Butlerian Theory into the Narrative Discourse Method”.

Estela is tricked by Claudio/Claudia who is secretly in love with Carlos. Claudio tricks her into believing she will be taken to Barcelona where she will later reunite with her love interest.

Lamentably, Estela instead finds herself in the service of an abusive Moor, Amete. Claudia's evil plan does not pay off and, instead of calming her jealousy in the arms of Carlos, she too is taken captive by Amete. In captivity, Estela suffers fierce violence. Frustrated by Estela's lack of interest in him and rejection of his displays of affection, Amete even tries to rape her. Even after the horrible experiences Estela has suffered, her captor cannot understand why she will not give herself over to him sexually. He never shows remorse for kidnapping her or his abusive ways. Beauvoir explains that men attribute female rejection to female "mystery" rooted in myths. In doing so, men do not have to face their own faults. They can ascribe any and all negative relations regarding women to the mystery (269).

Highlighting Estela's affliction, the narrator Don Juan frequently describes Estela's extreme sadness, as evidenced by her tears, and her fear, heard through her screams. Vollendorf considers the occurrence of the distressing incidents in *El juez* to be a perfect example of the restriction placed on female social power and mobility. Yet, she recognizes a change in Estela's character later on in the novella when she takes on a male disguise and enters into the service of the king. Her female identity and the adverse situations she faces are directly linked to women's lack of authority in their lives. In Zayas's tales where cross-dressing is present, it provides the solution to many woes, "Whereas Estela previously had no input into her parent's choice of spouse for her, no access to arms to defend herself, and no freedom of movement in the public sphere, she enjoys all of these privileges when dressed like a man" (*Reclaiming* 178). Not only that, her skills as a soldier surpass those of Carlos. She eventually becomes the Viceroy of Valencia and employs Carlos to work as her secretary.

Zayas's aversion to gender norms is further demonstrated in the climactic moment of the *maravilla*. In an effort to free himself from persecution surrounding Estela's disappearance, Carlos goes before the Viceroy without knowing that it is Estela in disguise. In his appeal, he implies that Estela and Claudio could have run away together, "El paje era galán y Estela hermosa. Ella mujer y él hombre. Quizá..." (509). Estela immediately rebukes him for assuming the worst of the two because of gender. She urges him to consider the two in terms of character instead of biology and physical features, "Ni Estela era mujer ni Claudio hombre; porque Estela es noble y virtuosa, y Claudio un hombre vil... Y digo segunda vez que Estela no era mujer, porque la que es honesta, recatada y virtuosa, no es mujer sino ángel..." (510). Character proves to be more powerful than gender in this *maravilla*, as both Estela and Carlos serve as proof of that idea.

Once honor is regained and justice restored, like Aminta, Estela trades in her male disguise, accepts the traditional female role of wife, and turns over the titles she won in battle to her husband. Because of this, I do not think that Zayas goes as far as to question the male/female gender binary to the same extent that Butler does. It is clear that Zayas questions culturally constructed gender norms in some instances, but even though her female characters step outside of these norms, they almost always end up reinserting themselves in male/female patriarchal binary. Nevertheless, by temporarily appropriating the traditional male gender performance, the women of *La burlada Aminta y la venganza del honor* and *El juez de su causa* are introduced to a new realm of decision making and are able to have some authority in the outcome of their lives. Their actions expose myths that subjugate women and posit them as beings that belong to fixed categories. As Beauvoir states, "The myth must not be confused with the grasp of signification; signification is immanent in the object; it is revealed to consciousness in a living

experience, whereas the myth is a transcendent Idea that escapes any act of consciousness” (268). It is living experience that reveals to men the prejudice of their judgments concerning women.

Through the analysis of María de Zayas’s works provided in this dissertation, it is evident that there is nothing biologically inherent about gender as behavior can be easily replicated by members of the opposite sex. For centuries, patriarchy has used gender norms to subjugate women and label them as the inferior sex. As María de Zayas does in *Novelas*, women must call attention to as well as challenge these norms if they are ever to achieve autonomy and equality.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE FRAME NARRATIVE

This chapter shifts its attention to an aspect of Zayas's *Novelas* that has not received the same critical attention as the *maravillas* themselves, the frame narrative. As can be noted in the previous chapters of this dissertation, many Golden Age scholars have made significant contributions to the field with their examinations of Zayas's short stories. However, the number of contributors begins to dwindle when considering the function of Zayas's frame narrative device. Equal to the *maravillas* being narrated by the participants in the *soiree*, Zayas's frame plot should also be read as a denunciation of the male dominated world in which she operates. The society of narrators she uses in her novella has a double purpose. Not only are they present to narrate *maravillas* that clearly question societal norms and carry a feminist message, the relationships that the frame characters have with one another is an additional tool employed by Zayas to carry out her feminist message. For this reason, it is important that readers of *Novelas* not view the frame narrative as a casual narrative device, but rather an integral component of the narrative as a whole. That is to say, instead of reading *Novelas* as individual narratives interrupted by a framing story, having her feminist message in mind, the work should be read as a continuum as this will enrich the comprehension of the work. On Zayas's frame narrative Foa comments, "Pero el marco no es puramente decorativo (como tampoco lo es el de Boccaccio), y la preocupación feminista de la autora aparece en la complicación del marco con la intriga amorosa entre Lisis, Lisarda, don Juan y don Diego" (119). Nina Cox Davis assesses the relationship between María de Zayas and the female protagonist of *Novelas*, Lisis, in order to reveal the

author's "mimetic bid for discursive authority before an academy-like public whose male members are empowered to judge and to respond to her communications" (326). Ruth El Saffar's contribution to the study of Zayas's frame narrative centers on the female writer's agency. She views the tale as one of the narrative levels that contributes to Zayas's authority and confronts conventional women's roles in seventeenth-century Spain. O'Brien's examination of the frame narrative tackles both *Novelas* and *Desengaños*, focusing on its effects on sisterhood. She ultimately concludes that the female relationships in *Desengaños* are stronger than those found in *Novelas*, however they provide no protection from the spitefulness of men. Many scholars have made mention of Zayas's frame narrative device in their contributions to the study of her works. However, to my knowledge the critics mentioned above are the only ones who have studied Zayas's frame narrative in detail.

In this chapter, I will provide an in-depth exploration of the frame to show that, like the *maravillas*, it merits its own critical analysis in order to further understand the author's cry for female literacy, equal opportunity, and free-will, and does not serve as a mere introduction to the short-stories being told. Before delving into an examination of Zayas's frame narrative and its function in the comprehension of the didactic message of *Novelas*, let us briefly explore the origins and purpose of the frame narrative tradition. This will allow us to gain a better understanding of Zayas's prowess and awareness of the popular literary techniques of her time and how she used them to her advantage.

W.H. Clawson, author of "The Framework of *The Canterbury Tales*", defines a frame narrative as follows, "a framework or framing story is to be understood as a narrative which, however interesting in itself, was composed for the primary purpose of introducing and connecting a series of tales, which are the *raison d'être* of the whole work" (187). The frame

narrative has its roots in Eastern or Arabic literature and most likely reached the West when Petri Alfonsi wrote *Disciplina Clericalis* in the twelfth century (Gittes 2). Clements and Gibaldi report that by the late Middle Ages a novella, a story, could be transmitted through both written and oral means. In a frame narrative, the oral and written methods are combined. Zayas is recognized as an employer of the frame narrative device in the early modern period. According to the authors:

it is in the frame-tale or cornice that holds together the typical novella collection of the age that the two faces of the genre are fused, for the tales framed by the various novellistic cornices employed from Boccaccio down through Giraldi and Marguerite de Navarre to Basile and María de Zayas are simultaneously printed on paper to read as well as fictively recited by a storyteller to a usually most receptive audience. (5-6)

Although the novella was widely popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many literary critics of the time period did not view it a legitimate literary form due to its “recreational nature” (10). However, authors that make use of the form view it as an important constituent in the enrichment of daily life. For example, Bonciani, an Aristotelian theorist of the sixteenth century, explained its usefulness to “relieve the ills of human existence”, and that they “have as their end the purgation of troubles and annoyances from man’s life and the substitution of joy for these sorrows” (10). Similarly, Miguel de Cervantes’ stance on the novella also brings to light its function in human entertainment while remaining free from immorality and vice.<sup>50</sup> These attributes, along with his personal adaptation of the novella tradition, makes Cervantes’s *Novelas ejemplares* one of the most popular of its style.

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<sup>50</sup> In the Prologue to *Novelas ejemplares*, Cervantes establishes the innocence of his short stories by stating, “Quiero decir que los requiebros amorosos que en algunas hallarás son tan honestos y tan medidos con la razón y discurso cristiano, que no podrán mover a mal pensamiento al descuidado o cuidadoso que las leyere” (18).

In the Prologue to *Novelas ejemplares*, Cervantes establishes himself to be the first Spanish writer to embrace the short story style.<sup>51</sup> As Joseph Ricipito points out in *Formalistic Aspects of Cervantes's* *Novelas ejemplares*, Cervantes innovatively manipulates many of the literary genres of and before his time while using the Italian model of the short story.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Anne Cruz asserts that in his novellas Cervantes creates new exciting, controversial characters that test the protagonist's moral character, "While his novels adhere to the realism typical of the Italian *novella*, they showcase his creativity in his invention of burlesque, monstrous, and even demonic characters. Yet they also examine the psychological force of his protagonists' volition, narrating their moral fall and redemption..." (60). Cruz goes on to acknowledge Cervantes's style as the model from which Zayas molded her novellas and created her authorial stance (61). Not only did Zayas mimic Cervantes's character development, she also incorporated other genres, such as the picaresque novel in *El castigo de la miseria*, into her *maravillas*. Such imitation exhibits her knowledge of the male dominated literary genres that she expertly maneuvers to transmit her message of liberty for the female gender. Furthermore, the writings of Cervantes and Zayas share a common purpose, to communicate a message of ethical nature with their reading audience.<sup>53</sup> On Cervantes's novellas, Ricipito indicates the existence of a "didactic moral purpose" and that the readers of the work should be prepared to bear this intention in mind (15-16). While Zayas uses the literary conventions of the age to gain agency as a female writer, her purpose is to educate her readers about the treatment of women in seventeenth-century Spanish society and call for its reformation. Such a message prominently

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<sup>51</sup> "...yo soy el primero que ha novelado en lengua castellana, que las muchas que en ella andan impresas, todas son traducidas de lenguas extranjeras, y éstas son más propias, no imitadas ni hurtadas; mi ingenio las engendró, y las parió mi pluma, y van creciendo en los brazos de la estampa" (19).

<sup>52</sup> In Chapter 1, Ricipito cites the *novela sentimental*, the picaresque novel, and *novelas de caballerías* as literary genres found throughout Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*.

<sup>53</sup> Cervantes himself highlights the exemplary nature of his stories in the Prologue to his collection, where he writes "si por algún modo alcanzara que la lección destas *Novelas* pudiera inducer a quien las leyera a algún mal deseo o pensamiento, antes me cortara la mano con que las escribe que sacarlas en público" (Cervantes 19).

distinguishes her from the male writers of her time and belongs to what some authors label as a feminist frame narrative tradition.

In the article “Women and the Framed-Novelle: A Tradition of their Own,” Josephine Donovan identifies a feminist frame-narrative tradition that began in France as a result “quasi misogynist parodies” such as *Les Évangiles des quenouilles* (ca 1466-74). With the publication of the *L’Heptaméron* (1558) by Marguerite de Navarre, this convention eventually spread to Spain and other parts of Europe (948).<sup>54</sup> Donovan brands the critique of marriage as the dominant theme in the frame tales produced by female authors since it is within the parameters of the marriage institution that women are “commodified as exchange objects whose opinion counts for nothing” (954). Moreover, issues such as women’s education, oppressive ideologies, and the rejection of male violence were addressed in their writings (954). Although Donovan recognizes many authors of the feminist frame narrative tradition such as Cristine de Pizan and Jeanne Flore, she acknowledges that Zayas’s novellas played a major role in its fulfillment:

Probably the most successful realization of the feminist potential of the framed-novelle genre was accomplished by Spanish writer María de Zayas. Her two collections, the *Novelas amorosas* and its sequel, popularly called *Desengaños amorosos*, remain-together with the Heptaméron, which was one of Zayas’ sources- the finest example of the genre, masterpieces in their own right (966).<sup>55</sup>

Identical to the characters in the *maravillas*, Zayas uses the characters of the frame tale as representatives of her own personal concerns with various issues surrounding women and their treatment in seventeenth-century Spain. The complexity of Zayas’s female characters, their motivations, their disillusionment, and their disruption of or adherence to the rules of patriarchy can all be seen not only in the *maravillas* themselves, but in the frame-narrative as well.

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<sup>54</sup> Written by Marguerite de Navarre in 1558, *L’ Heptaméron* was also modeled after the Boccaccian style. In the novella, five men and five women pass the time during a natural disaster by exchanging stories. As Clements and Gibaldi explain, the “disaster cornice” was a popular topic in frame narratives of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>55</sup> Despite Donovan’s reference to Zayas’s use of framed stories, the critic does not go into detail analyzing how Zayas makes use of the frame narrative.

## *The Society of Narrators*

When describing the characters of the *Decameron*, Clawson states, “The social background [...] helps to give the framework unity. The tale-tellers are all of one social class, members of a small circle, intimate friends. The manners and ideals are those of gentlefolk; there is an inherent graciousness and courtesy in speech and action” (143). The same can be said for Zayas’s society of narrators. Her use of the frame narrative technique affords her readers the opportunity to gain some insight on class, customs, dress, food and home décor in early modern Spain. It is through the descriptions of these traditions and practices that Zayas begins to reveal Spanish life, more specifically, the life of the upper-class.

The Introduction to *Novelas* sets up the female-female, male-male, and male-female rivalries and interactions that are to be seen in the pages of the *maravillas* as well as in the frame narrative. The interpersonal relationships between the narrators, such as the conflict between the beautiful cousins Lisis and Lisarda, the jealousy and hatred that Don Juan displays once he finds out that Don Diego wants to marry Lisis, and Lisis’s attempts to get back at Don Juan by accepting Don Diego’s hand in marriage even though she doesn’t love him, are all themes carried out throughout *Novelas*. Within the frame narrative, it is interesting how Zayas uses the character of Lisis as an agent through which to speak on the frailties of male sex, such as weakness and dishonesty, in the same way she uses the characters of her *maravillas*.

The home of Lisis is the setting for the *soiree* that will occur over five nights during the Christmas season. Since women were limited to domestic spaces, it was a trend among female writers of the early modern period to use the home as the location where their stories would take place (Greer 325). Lisis’s room, the setting for the storytelling, is depicted as, “una sala aderezada de unos costosos paños flamencos, cuyos boscajes, flores y arboledas parecían las

selvas de Arcadia o los pensiles huertos de Babilonia” (Zayas 169). As O’Brien notes in her study on the frame narratives of Zayas and Mariana de Carvajal, this type of extravagant ambience was the standard for Madrid’s upper class. Such spatial representations denote the pretentious inactivity of Spain’s nobility, a factor in Spain’s decline (“Verbalizing...” 125). The omniscient narrator in the Introduction, presumably Zayas, situates the chamber’s sophisticated, beautiful exterior in contrast with Lisis’ internal feelings of grief.<sup>56</sup> Outwardly, Lisis does her best to feign happiness even though she is suffering deeply in the presence of her wayward suitor, “... sintiendo la hermosa dama el tener a los ojos la causa de sus celos y haber de fingir agradable risa en el semblante, cuando el alma, llorando mortales sospechas, había dado motivo a su mal ocasión a su tristeza...” (168). Due to her illness, Lisis is excused from narrating. Instead, she is responsible for assembling the musicians that will assist in providing entertainment for the occasion. Not only does she find musicians, the narrator states that she finds, “los más diestros que pudieron hallarse” (169). For Beauvoir, this type of behavior is typical of the *Decameron* style. Though *The Second Sex* does not offer much input on the Boccaccian style and its influence as a narrative device, it does briefly comment on women’s function in this literary style, “...she [woman] personifies Society as well as Nature; through her the civilization of a period and its culture is summed up, as can be seen in courtly poetry, in the *Decameron*, and in *L’Astrée*; she launches fashions, presides over salons, directs and redirects opinion” (200). Even though limited in observation, what Beauvoir explains here is exactly what is represented through Lisis in *Novelas*. Her home tells us of the trends in seventeenth century home décor, her clothing informs the ages fashion, she plays a role in presiding over the soirée,

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<sup>56</sup> Zayas role as the omniscient narrator becomes evident after the final *maravilla* where she inserts herself by the use of the first person “yo”. Promising to continue her tale in a second volume, Zayas states, “dando fin a la quinta noche, y yo a mi honesto y entretenido sarao, prometiendo, si es admitido con el favor y gusto que espero, segunda parte...” (534).

and her poetry and song will influence the opinions of the other participants in regards to placing blame in her failed relationship with Don Juan.

Though Lisis's upper-class status affords luxuries that people belonging to lower-classes do not enjoy, it is still founded upon strict social norms and expectations mandated by Spanish patriarchy that affect the daily lives of women. The great care that Lisis takes to prepare for the *soiree* proves that she, like many of the female characters of the *maravillas*, has been educated according to what patriarchy views as the appropriate roles for women in early modern society. She is well experienced in the domestic domain, and can perform the tasks that Zayas says women should not be limited to as expressed in the prologue "Al que leyere." However, Zayas does not hesitate to inform her readers of the distinctive qualities of her female narrators. The adjectives used in the first paragraph of the Introduction to describe the female story tellers inform readers that these women are more than vessels that have been trained to carry out patriarchy's agenda. The women are not only labeled as beautiful, but Lisis as a "milagro de naturaleza y prodigioso asombro de esta Corte," Matilde as "discrete," Nise as "graciosa," and Filis as "sabia," (167). Right away, the frame narrative gives the readers a clue that they will not be reading traditional tales in which women fall into line without contest. Lisis's former relationship with Don Juan, and her budding relationship with Don Diego, set the stage for the questions of love, jealousy, conflict, and melancholy that what readers will encounter in the *maravillas*.

The male participants in the *soiree* are just as fortified in looks and intelligence as the women present. In the depiction of Don Juan, Zayas paints him as a, "caballero mozo, galán, rico, y bien entendido..." (167). She continues by saying that the remaining men, all friends of Don Juan, rival him in positive qualities "por ser todos en nobleza, gala y bienes de fortuna

iguales y conformes, y todos aficionados a entretener el tiempo discreto y regocijadamente” (168). Like the female storytellers, these men will break social conventions through their story telling, illustrating women who are courageous and rebellious in nature. As concluded by Greer in her study containing perspectives on Zayas’s male narrators, the tales related by men depict the most daring female characters in *Novelas*, “In the first volume, several stories show aggressive, desiring and clever women who, for good or ill, control the males in their lives. All of these stories are narrated by men, roughly in alternation with female-narrated stories of male abuse of women” (162). Moreover, Zayas has some of her male narrators introduce their *maravillas* with cautionary advice for males that venture to deceive women. Before Don Alonso’s tale, *El prevenido engañado*, he warns men to be watchful of their schemes, “...para que ninguno se confie de su entendimiento ni se atreva a probar a las mujeres, sino que teman lo que les puede suceder, estimando y poniendo en su lugar a cada una; pues, al fin, una mujer discreta no es manjar de un necio, ni una necia empleo de un discreto...” (293). Likewise, while introducing the seventh *maravilla*, *Al fin se paga todo*, Don Miguel declares, “Que nadie haga tanto cuanto pague es cosa averiguada, porque el mal jamás deja de tener castigo ni el bien premio, pues cuando el mundo no le dé, le da el Cielo” (411). The warnings these men offer to the readers are a direct reflection of Zayas’s thoughts in regards to the deception of women, as can be read in “Al que leyere.”

A further noteworthy element present amongst the male narrators in the frame-narrative is the competitive jealousy that exists between Don Juan and Don Diego. In the previous chapters, I have exposed different situations of jealousy as developed within the *maravillas* (such as the jealousy Teodosia displays of her sister Constaza in *El jardín engañoso*, that of Claudia/Claudio in *El juez de su causa*, etc...). Equal to the rivalry between Lisis and Lisarda

that sets the stage for the feuding and envy witnessed between the female characters in *Novelas*, Juan and Diego set the precedence for that of the male characters. Even though Juan chooses not to marry Lisis, he is not pleased with Diego's request to marry her and the narrator describes Juan as "enfadado de su atrevimiento" (212). Juan explains that the arousal of his anger is not a result of the new courtship between Diego and Lisis, nevertheless, his actions during the soirée are in stark contrast to his words. Oftentimes, his intention is to increase Lisis's misery by showing outward signs of affection for Lisarda. By the end of the second night, Juan's jealousy and pride eventually lead him to challenge Diego to a duel, "Soy contento-replicó don Juan-, ya no por Lisis, que pues ella quiere ser vuestra, yo no quiero que sea mía; acabada es sobre esto la cuestión, sino porque sepáis que si soy poeta con la pluma, soy caballero con la espada" (342). This fight never takes place during the frame-narrative of *Novelas*, but it establishes the expectation for physical violence driven by envy and pride within the *maravillas*. The tale most illustrative of the male ego clash is *El jardín engañoso* in which Don Jorge's jealousy leads him to murder his brother Federico.<sup>57</sup> The consuming pride these characters experience must be resolved in order for man to declare himself in the rightful place of power that patriarchy affords him. "Fame and glory are women," exclaims Beauvoir (200). This statement is confirmed through the actions of Diego and Juan, as well as many of the male characters of the *maravillas* as their need for fame and glory, the possession and subjugation of woman, is more powerful than maintaining heterosexual male relationships.

Lisis's mental progression throughout the frame narrative eventually lands her a place in the category of bold women portrayed in *Novelas*, yet, the behavior she initially displays shows

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<sup>57</sup> Ingrid E. Matos-Nin compares the jealousy of Federico that leads him to slay his brother to the biblical story of Cain and Abel in order to show that men are just as fickle as vulnerable as women when it comes to experiencing the trials of love, "La novelista pretende demostrar, desde el comienzo de esta narración, que el hombre también es capaz de pecar a causa de los celos y la envidia" (106-7).

her weakness of heart in the face of the disappointments of love. Don Juan, once Lisis's suitor, has a change of heart and decides to marry Lisarda, Lisis's cousin. The illness Lisis suffers as a result of this is the reason for the *soiree* as her friends, aware of the love triangle, are there to cheer her up. Since she is not required to narrate, she offers her talents in the form of poetry and song. In between several of the *maravillas*, Lisis sings a poem or sonnet, the majority of which are related to her situation with Don Juan, Don Diego, and Lisarda. Moreover, these poetic expressions serve as a reflection of the themes seen in the *maravillas* themselves.<sup>58</sup> In the following section, I will consider how Lisis's poems function to create an additional narrative that supports Zayas's message of female independence.

### ***Poetry in the Frame Narrative and the Maravillas***

On the topic of seventeenth-century poetry, Arthur Terry explains that during Spain's Golden Age there was a wide range of poetic styles due to traditions that survived for many years. In particular, Baroque poetry embodied different forms such as *culteranismo* and *conceptismo*. *Culteranismo* is known as the Latin style which preferred the use of enriched language in order to distinguish it from "ordinary discourse" (52). Moreover, it prefers the use of metaphor and an "intensification of classical allusions" (55).<sup>59</sup> *Conceptismo*, derived from the term *concepto* (*conceit*), is a European style that uses the "violent metaphor" to establish a connection between

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<sup>58</sup> In his study on the poetry in Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos*, Benito Quintana asserts that it creates an additional narrative that reinforces the message of tales, "Esta técnica narrativa demuestra que a nivel estilístico los poemas de Zayas no son una adición caprichosa, sino que cumplen una función narrativa que enriquece el texto. A través de la lectura de los poemas y su consideración narratológica en función del marco principal de la obra, encontramos que los personajes cobran aún más complejidad, lo que nos permite observar con mayor detenimiento sus más profundos sentimientos en torno al deseo" (106). Similar to Quintana, my study offers an exploration of Zayas's poetics. However, my focus centers on *Novelas* and its author's call for a patriarchal reformation.

<sup>59</sup> Terry recognizes Góngora to be one of Spain's principal masters of *culteranismo*. The author goes on to credit Quevedo for the creation of *conceptismo*, a style in opposition to that of Góngora. For more detailed information on these forms, refer to Chapter 2 of Terry's study.

dissimilar terms (56). Many poetic styles are present in Zayas's writings, most likely due to her involvement in the literary circles of her time and her desire to establish herself as a legitimate force in a male dominated profession. However, for the purpose of this study, the importance lies not in Zayas's poetic style but rather in the messages that lie within the poems themselves. The majority of them are somber in tone, a reflection of Lisis's internal state. This brings us to the subject of love melancholy and how its presence in the frame narrative serves to defend Zayas's denunciation of male abuse and her promotion of female agency.

Infirmity due to love hardship was a diagnosed condition among sixteenth and seventeenth century writers and doctors. According to Teresa Soufas' study *Melancholy and the Secular Mind in Spanish Golden Age Literature*, love melancholy had substantial effects on a subject's physical and emotional states, including "fluctuations of pulse, temperature, alternations from warm, moist stages and feelings of joy to cold, dry stages of despondency, fearful reactions, or violent destructiveness" (64). Due to its dramatic consequences, love melancholy and the "counterfeit lover provides a useful set of conventions that flourish in dramatic and poetic expression in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe" (64). Zayas skillfully incorporates this convention in *Novelas*. Before the first tale is narrated by Lisarda, the forlorn Lisis gives the first of seven *romances*, poems she will sing throughout the tale.

Accompanied by the musicians, she begins her poem by calling on the *selva* to hear her cries,

Escuchad, selvas, mi llanto,  
oíd, que a quejarme vuelvo,  
que nunca a los desdichados,  
les dura más el contento. (1-4, 171)

By petitioning the jungle to hear her cries, she is evoking the imagery of a wild, untamed, mysterious place. It is, in fact, an environment much like the raw emotion and aching heart she is

experiencing at the moment of her appeal. It is also not an environment where women would traditionally be found due to patriarchy's demand that they be delegated to the home. It is no coincidence that in the story immediately following, *Aventurarse perdiendo*, the female protagonist Jacinta is discovered alone in the countryside, singing her laments. Zayas is establishing a relationship between women, emotion, and escape. The fact that these women can only express their pain in this atmosphere further signals the strict rules that patriarchy places upon them and their behavior. In Volume II of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir comments on this idea when she states,

Slave to her husband, children, and home, she [woman] finds it intoxicating to be alone, sovereign on the hillside; ... In front of the mystery of water and the mountain summit's thrust, male supremacy is abolished; walking through the heather, dipping her hand in the river, she lives not for others but for herself. (657)

As explained in Chapter 4, for centuries men have created myths that link women to Nature as a means of control and validation for the dismissal of female emotions and suffering. Both Beauvoir and Zayas are challenging that myth by viewing Nature as the source through which women are able to gain agency. Continuing her inaugural poem, Lisis carries on with her expression of unrequited love,

¡Quién pensara, dueño ingrato,  
que estas cosas que refiero  
aumentaran de tu olvido  
el apresurado intento!  
Bien haces de ser cruel,  
injustamente me quejo,  
pues siempre son los dichosos  
aquellos que quieren menos. (29-36, 171-72)

The love, anger, and regret present in these stanzas expose the fickleness of the male heart in an attempt to discourage such behavior. The words “ingrato” and “cruel” are words that describe the behavior of male characters such as Carlos, the husband who beats his wife; Don Fernando, the lover who deceives Doña Juana and Doña Clara after having sex with them; and the faithful, yet

devious Don Rodrigo who helps set up Doña Blanca's rape at the hands of Don Beltrán.

Furthermore, the line "injustamente me quejo" (34) exposes patriarchy's absurd conviction that suffering is a natural component of the feminine condition.

The relationship established between Lisis's first poem and the first *maravilla* persists when Jacinta sings her song to Fabio. She passionately scolds those who consider inconsistency to be a uniquely female trait,

¡Malhaya de mis finezas  
tan descubiertas verdades,  
y malhaya quien llamó  
a las mujeres mudables! (9-12, 175)

Zayas is leveling the playing field by having the men in *Novelas* display this same characteristic. Jacinta's obstructions in love are very similar to that of the frame character Lisis. She is in love with Don Felix and wishes to marry him. However, he has promised to marry his cousin, Adriana. Once he discovers Jacinta's love for him, he turns his attention to her, leaving Adriana to suffer the effects of love melancholy. Unable to cope with Félix's change of heart, Adrian commits suicide, "ella propia se había quitado la vida con solimán que había echado en el jarabe, porque más quería morir que ver a su ingrato primo en brazos de otra" (189). Reminiscent of Don Juan, it is Felix's unfaithfulness that causes the heartbreak that steers Adriana to her death. It also starts a series of events that eventually cause Jacinta to seek refuge in a convent and lead to the murder of her brother. As Matos-Nin proclaims, "La inconstancia del hombre en cuanto al cumplimiento de su palabra es otro de los elementos negativos que Zayas denuncia de la personalidad masculina, especialmente en lo que a la mujer se refiere" (108). I agree with this statement in that it recognizes inconstancy to be a male fault. However, I argue that this statement extends to female characters as well since they also have feeling that are subject to change. Thus, by having both sexes display what patriarchy believes to be an innate, weak,

female behavior, Zayas reveals that there are no traits that are inherently male nor female. Her writings show that all human beings are susceptible to prove inadequate when faced with the complexities of love.

At the end of the first *maravilla*, everyone praises Lisarda for narrating such an entertaining tale.<sup>60</sup> Of course, Don Juan takes the most pleasure in Lisarda's tale and offers up so many praises to his lover that it makes Lisis even more pitiful, "Y así conformes y de un parecer, comenzaron a alabarla y a darle las gracias de favor tan señalado, y más don Juan, que como amante se despeñaba en sus alabanzas, dándole a Lisis con cada una la muerte" (210-11). While Juan's public display of praise saddens her, Lisis delivers a sonnet with a message somewhat dissimilar from the poem she delivers prior to her cousin's tale.<sup>61</sup> Her words are much more confident than those previously expressed. Instead of placing the blame upon Juan as she did in her first poem, her sonnet discloses a woman who is self-assured in her abilities to love and be loved. In the first quatrain, Lisis sings the following,

No desmaya mi amor con vuestro olvido,  
porque es gigante armado de firmeza;  
no os canséis en tratarle con tibieza,  
pues no le habéis de ver jamás vencido (1-4, 211)

Through this poetic expression, it is apparent she is gaining confidence in her own abilities to love as well as in love itself. As Elias Rivers astutely observes in his study on poetry and jealousy in Zayas, in courtly love traditions, such as those found in the pastoral novel, men are the only ones who have the privilege to sing the woes of love (326). Greer and Rhodes agree that women were to be nothing more than intended objects of male poetic expression, "Neither

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<sup>60</sup> "Con tanto donaire y agrado contó la hermosa Lisarda esta maravilla que, colgados los oyentes de sus dulces razones y prodigiosa historia, quisieran que durara toda la noche" (210).

<sup>61</sup> D. Gareth Walters, author of *The Cambridge Introduction to Spanish Poetry*, recognizes Boscán and Garcilaso as the first Spanish poets to embrace the sonnet. He also identifies poets such as Góngora and Villena to be employers of the Italian poetic style. For more information on the sonnet, see Walters's book.

courtly nor Petrarchan discourse of love easily accommodated women as speaking or writing subjects given that both emerged from an ideology that considered expression of independent feminine desire immodest, sinful, and culturally destabilizing” (*Exemplary* 21). Zayas gives her women the agency to express themselves when faced with the trials of love, “En otras palabras, en esta poesía, la mujer es a menudo el sujeto, y no solo el objeto, del deseo...” (Rivers 326). Hence, as demonstrated in the second quatrain and the two tercets of her sonnet, Lisis is able to declare her strength and her will to affirm her determination to love in spite of Juan’s provocation of jealousy,

Sois mientras más ingrato, más querido,  
que amar por sólo amar es gran fineza;  
sin premio sirvo, y tengo por riqueza  
lo que suelen llamar tiempo perdido.  
Si mis ojos, en lágrimas bañados,  
quizá viendo otros más queridos,  
se niegan a sí mismos el reposo,  
Les digo: <<Amigos, fuistes desdichados;  
y pues no sois llamados ni escogidos,  
amar por solo amar es premio honroso>> (5-14, 210-11)

Here, Lisis is showing resistance to the jealousy Juan tries to incite. She understands that she has been betrayed by her lover yet she remains dedicated to love without receiving it in return. Most of the participants in the soirée are aware that her words are directed towards Don Juan, and they are dismayed by her suffering. It is after this sonnet that Don Diego feels moved to ask for her hand in marriage. It is not only Lisis’s beauty that moves him, but the honesty in her words, “por haberle contado la dama sus deseos; y viendo ser tan honestos que no pasaban los límites de la vergüenza, propuso, sintiendo ocupado el alma con la bella imagen de Lisis, pedirle a don Juan licencia para servirla y tratar su casamiento” (211-12). In this instance, woman’s voice is just as a powerful a tool as her beauty.

The following story is introduced with cautionary words for women. Matilda, the narrator, warns, “no dejarnos engañar de las invenciones de los hombres, o ya que como flacas mal entendidas caigamos en sus engaños” (212). After her warning she tells a remarkable story, *La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor*, in which the swindler Jacinto sings a sonnet estrambote about Dido and Aeneas, characters in Virgil’s epic poem *The Aeneid*.<sup>62</sup> Dido, unable to cope with her lover Aeneas’s departure, suffers great sorrow and resorts to suicide to relieve her anguish,

Del fugitivo Eneas llora Dido  
el desprecio cruel de su partida,  
de rabia ciega, en cólera encendida,  
maltrata el rostro por vengar su olvido.  
Llama a su amante, sin razón querido,  
la mano al pomo de una espada asida,  
con que cortando en flor su triste vida,  
ganó el laurel a su lealtad debido. (1-8, 217)

Critics of Virgil’s poem view Dido as a “tragic heroine.” As Wendell Clausen vividly observes, her character is viewed as tragic in the unliterary sense due to her terrible death. Additionally, in the literary sense she “conforms to patterns discernable in Greek, and especially Sophoclean, tragedy” (53). Dido’s story serves as an example of the fate that awaits the woman who does not remain strong when faced with male abandonment. It appears that Lisis takes heed to Matilda’s poetic warning. Shortly thereafter, and throughout the remainder of the nights, her melancholy becomes less prevalent.

By the second night of the gathering there is a notable change in Lisis’s emotional state as evidenced by her clothing (“Verbalizing” 127). On the first night, she is dressed in green, the color of jealousy. In contrast, the next night she is dressed in “lana de plata morada, y al cuello

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<sup>62</sup> The title of an opera composed by Henry Parcell’s in 1689 also bears the name of these two characters. See Book IV of Virgil’s *The Aeneid* for the complete story of Dido and Aeneas.

una firmeza de diamantes, con una cifra del nombre de Diego, joya que aquel mismo día le envió a su nuevo amante, en cambio de una banda morada que ella le dio para que prendiese la verde cruz que traía” (249). Mimicking the lovers on the first night who wore matching colors as an outward display of their amorous relationships, Lisis and Diego now both wear the color purple in acknowledgement of their commitment to one another. The heartbroken protagonist is resolving her inner turmoil and on the exterior it seems that she is coming to terms with her unfortunate circumstance. The *maravillas* told this night replicate the change seen in the female protagonist’s mental state. The women present in these stories are not sad, nor are they hopeless in the face of love. They are quite different from the other female characters of *Novelas* in that they decide their amorous affiliations for themselves and then actively seek out the fulfillment of sexual pleasure. Lisis does not go as far as to trick or humiliate Juan to the extent that women like Isidora, Beatriz, and Ana do in the men in their stories; however, resembling those women, she is beginning to somewhat relinquish the role as victim to man’s recreational deception.

On the third night, Lisis continues to express her feeling through dress, this time donning a black dress with diamond buttons that shine like the sun, “Salió este día la dama de negro, con muchos botones de diamantes, que en medio de tantas estrellas parecía sol; tanta era su extremada belleza” (343). The ornate black dress she wears this night is symbolic of the death of the desire she held for Don Juan. Similar to mourners dressed in black at a funeral service to bid farewell to a deceased loved one, Lisis is saying goodbye to her love for Juan and coming to terms with her impending marriage to Diego. Nonetheless, there is a sense of optimism as represented by the sparkling diamonds that adorn her garment. Their appearance is like the sun, a source of life and a light that eliminates the darkness. Like the precious and expensive diamond

that can only form under pressure, Lisis herself has been able to transform and gain agency due to the immense sadness she suffers due to Juan's fickleness of heart.

The sonnet Lisis sings on the third night is the first poem she delivers that makes no mention of love and betrayal. She intentionally avoids the topic of love since she is now uninhibited by Juan's deceit and she doesn't want to fuel the dispute between her former suitor and her new mate, "De industria la hermosa Lisis quiso, como ya desengañada de don Juan y agradecida a don Diego, mudar el estilo en sus versos, porque no causase el tratar de amor ni desamor más disgusto en los dos competidores" (344). Her sonnet that night is directed to King Phillip IV. Although it does not directly reference love, Ruth El Saffar offers an astute interpretation of its clandestine meaning,

Given Phillip's reputation as a womanizer, and Zayas's tendency to turn literary and patriarchal conventions against themselves, Lisis's opening poem of the third night can hardly be seen as neutral. The Phillip whom Lisis lauds in the quartets as "sun" and "phoenix" [sol; fénix] is transformed in the tercets into first Jupiter with his nymphs, and then the youthful Cupid (157-58). If a monarch well known for his mistresses sets the moral tone for the whole court, what, we may well be encouraged by Zayas to ask, are we to expect from the lesser nobility from whom the likes of such fickle suitors as Don Juan are drawn? (193)

Saffar adds that this poem contextualizes what is happening inside of Lisis's apartment as well as in society (194). If the goal of Spain's nobility is to emulate the king, it is not surprising that characters like Don Juan embrace the love politics at play. El Saffar's masterful analysis of this poem offer an understanding that contextualizes it both inside and outside of the narrative. Let us consider for a moment the poem in relation to the *maravilla* it precedes as it could offer and alternative perspective on why Lisis chooses not to express her troubles in love.

In *La fuerza del amor*, the night's first *maravilla*, Laura complains of her husband's abuse and infidelity to everyone around her (her husband, father, brothers, her husband's mistress, and a sorceress). However, her pleas for help go ignored by all. It is not until she takes

desperate measures that put her life in jeopardy that someone pays attention to her cries. Even then, her father must go before the judge on her behalf before she is able to tell of the injustices she has suffered at the hands of her husband. The disregard shown to Laura's cries reveals the ineffectiveness of the female voice in the male dominated society of seventeenth-century Spain. Through the voice exercised through Lisis's poetic articulation, Zayas is combatting stereotypes that portray women in a negative light and she gives them the authority to choose and negotiate means that would end their sufferings. On the embedded level, Laura opts to enter the convent and cut all ties with her abusive husband. On the narrative level of the frame, instead of dwelling upon the unlucky relationship with Juan that night, in which, like Laura, the expression of Lisis's sentiments will hardly change the outcome of her situation, the hostess demonstrates that her poetic genius is not limited to the expression of feminine woes. Through her characters, Zayas supports a life for women that liberates her from the perils of the traditional love relationship and promotes female literacy.

The participants in the *soirée* all seem to be in good spirits as they gather for a banquet hosted by Don Juan on the fourth night. After enjoying the feast, in friendly competition each couple dances to demonstrate their courtly skills and love for one another, "Gastóse la tarde en danzar y bailar con mucha destreza y gracia, mostrando cada uno, en competencia con los otros, sus galas, su talle, su bizarría y amor, porque en este sarao se conoció a quién se inclinaban sus pensamientos" (409). As El Saffar views it, the dancing and pairing of the lovers disrupts the "apparent resolution of conflict" that was displayed by Lisis when she recites what the frame narrator considered to be a neutral poem (194). Thus, before the storytelling begins, Lisis opens with a *décima*, a poem consisting of ten-line stanzas, and returns to the subject of the fickle, thankless lover in lines 21-30 of her recitation,

Quien oye a un hombre decir  
a una mujer que es mudable,  
siendo su amor variable,  
¿podrá dejar de reír?  
Lealtad quieren presumir,  
sin ver que a perder se viene,  
porque mirar le conviene,  
que, si fingen firme trato,  
serán como estelionato  
que vende lo que no tiene (410).

The narrator informs us that these words “wound” Don Juan and bring sadness to Don Diego; however, Lisis eliminates the sting by telling Diego the verses were borrowed from a friend since she didn’t have time to compose her own, “mas Lisis con mil discretas palabras le aseguró, dándole a entender no ser suyos los versos sino ajenos, y que por no ponerse a hacerlos se había aprovechado de ellos, con lo que el amante quedó contento” (410). Diego is pleased with the explanation offered up by Lisis, possibly because it avoids any examination on his part as to why she would still be upset over Juan when she has officially accepted his hand in marriage.

The male narrators of that night tell the seventh and eighth tales of *Novelas*, *Al fin se paga todo* and *El imposible vencido*, offering stories that deliver the themes of justice and perseverance. As Miguel warns, “Que nadie haga tanto cuanto pague es cosa averiguada, porque el mal jamás deja de tener castigo ni el bien premio, pues cuando el mundo no le dé, le da el Cielo” (411). *Al fin se paga todo* investigates the theme of justice in relation to clandestine affairs and deception. The poetry sung throughout is dissimilar from the previous six stories and the frame narrative in that they are being sung by a female character, but they are the words sung to her by her lover. Thus, the poetic voice is female but she is merely the transmitter of male discourse of lust, desire, and sexual frustration. In contrast to the subject matter of the poetic expressions discussed thus far, we see how man views the object of his sexual desire when unattainable. His words, typical of the “suffering” courtly lover,

Un imposible adoro,  
por éste me atormento,  
por él doy mil suspiros,  
por él lágrimas vierto; (1-4, 420)

On the surface, Gaspar's lyrics are similar to those sung by Lisis and other female protagonists. Zayas gives authority to express their sentiments. However, although he sings of his torment and sadness, it is all an act. Unlike Lisis, his declarations of love are false. His words, motivated by a desire for sex, expose the extent he is willing to go to in order to possess the object of his lust. Consumed with emotion, man's fickleness has no limits as made evident through Gaspar's character. After several failed attempts at satisfying his sexual desire, his yearning for her turns to a hate that leads to physical abuse. Though violence against women is not as prevalent in *Novelas* as in *Desengaños*, the cases of brutality that do appear make known the unfortunate consequences that come along with woman's disappointment of man. With sex no longer an option, Gaspar leaves Hipólita beaten and naked in the street. This episode shows how the frivolity of men leave women physically and emotionally abused. However, though Hipólita herself takes an active role in pursuing an adulterous relationship, Zayas allows her character to travel along the *camino de perfección*, offering to Hipólita the security of the convent. Unlike Gaspar who is murdered at the end of the tale, the female protagonist escapes punishment for her wrongs. Conceivably, the anguish she has already endured due to the schemes of men has been the ultimate punishment.

While not explicitly stated by Don Lope, the narrator, *El imposible vencido* correspondingly includes an example of justice through the resolve of the protagonist Leonor. She refuses to obey her parent's wishes and holds out until the very end so that she can marry her childhood love. After many trials, the two are eventually reunited and wed. Some transgressors are punished while some conspirators go unscathed. Nevertheless, the female protagonist lives a

life of happiness. These tales narrated by men show that Zayas is diverse in her view of what exactly is an acceptable outcome for women. Be it the secluded life of the convent or the domestic life of marriage, what the author wants is for women to be treated with kindness by men.

Moreover, the fourth night offers to the readers the only two *maravillas* that include incidents of female rape. Like Gaspar who sings of his love for Hipólita and leaves her naked and beaten in the street, Don Beltrán sings a *romance* about his frustration over being denied the love of Doña Blanca. Perhaps the most attention worthy verse of his poem, “Bien sé que gana amor por atrevido” (12, 466), is an indication of the length he is willing to go so as to label her as his. He does not show the love he sings of when he conspires with Rodrigo to rape the woman he fantasizes over. Willfully, he is consumed with satisfying his own desires. Blanca is then left with no choice but to marry him in order to recuperate her lost honor. Thus, no woman in this *maravilla* is safe from man’s manipulative nature.

On the final night of the *soirée*, the narrator describes the day as one more characteristic of spring than winter. All of the ladies are beautifully impressive in their best garments and jewelry, but none outshine Lisis. Her depiction on this final night is in great contrast from that of the first night. This night, her physical appearance is angelic as she is dressed in the colors white, gold, and silver, adorned with diamonds. Her beauty stirs up feelings in both her betrayer and her betrothed, “Estaba Lisis tan hermosa y bien aderezada que pudiera desearla por su prenda el rey de la tierra, y pudieran ser buenos testigos la tristeza de don Juan y el contento de don Diego” (483). Before commencing the storytelling, the couples spend time dancing, they play games, and they enjoy a bountiful feast. Lisis picks up her instrument and sings the first half of what will be her final song. She once again prefaces her song by saying the lyrics are not her own because

she doesn't want anyone to think that they are in reference to her misfortunate past. As before, Diego is pleased with this explanation and Lisis begins to sing her *romance*. The lyrics begin by painting an idyllic picture of a *locus amoenus* abundant with beautiful landscapes, radiant sunshine, flowery fields, and singing birds. Nevertheless, the cheeriness of the stanza is overshadowed by the solemnity of the refrain, "Solo llora Marfisa/cuando los campos vierten alegría" (21-22, 484). These verses, as well as the stanzas that follow, invite readers to question whether or not Lisis is truly happy with her decision to marry Diego. On the outside, it seems that all previous conflict roused by the love triangle has been subdued. However, this final song indicates that there may still exist an internal struggle within the frame protagonist. It cannot be said with complete certainty that Juan is the reason the gloomy lyrics surface at the culmination of the festivities. Nonetheless, the content of the song suggests that Lisis is not confident in man's ability to love a woman without inconstancy or prejudice. As will be discussed later, at the end of *Desengaños amorosos* Lisis chooses life in the convent over marriage. This demonstrates her lack of confidence in man and further supports Zayas's view of the convent as a safe haven for women.

Don Juan and Laura, Lisis's mother, are responsible for presenting the *maravillas* that will close out the soirée. Juan narrates *El juez de su causa*, a tale that he himself claims to have written after being ordered to do so, "mas anoche que el presidente hermoso de esta bellissima escuadra me mandó que lo hiciese, tomé la pluma y escribí unos borriones. Ellos son parto de mi poco entendimiento; mas, supliendo los vuestros mis faltas, digo así:" (485). Juan's pen produces Estela, one of the most heroic female characters to be seen in all of *Novelas*. She goes from being a wealthy woman to a slave. Once she is freed, she enters into the service of the king and is the only woman who fights in battle, gains the confidence of the king, and receives titles as reward

for her bravery. As Catherine Larson argues in her comparative study on *El Burlador de Sevilla* and Zayas's *La traición en la amistad*, "To accomplish their goals, the women metamorphose from passive objects to active subjects; they begin to act with authority, and they consequently assume greater control and power over the male suitors of the play" (132). Likewise, Estela exemplifies these same qualities in Don Juan's tale. Considering that Zayas's ambition for writing is to defy patriarchy and its established stereotypes, it is not surprising that she appoints Juan, the literary prototype of the womanizer popularized throughout Spain in Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla*, to narrate a story containing a protagonist who exhibits some of the strongest, unconventional female characteristics as mandated by seventeenth-century Spanish society.<sup>63</sup> Once again, Zayas turns social norms upside down in order to show the heroism and intelligence of women.

After Juan's *maravilla*, Lisis performs the second half of her *romance* and Laura begins the tenth and final story. Intriguingly, Laura, a widowed woman and mother is granted the privilege of closing out the narration. The voice of a woman, a member of a male-dominated society where she is denied the authority to speak, will leave the last impression on the participants of the *soirée* and the readers of the text.

The tenth story, *El jardín engañoso*, is fashioned after Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the fifth novel of the tenth day, and *Filocolo* (Sylvania 26). Zayas's adaptation of the tale modified it from the original by changing the setting, characters, and introducing Spanish customs and behaviors (27). Also differing from the original is Zayas's pardon of Constanza and Teodosia:

Unlike his usual attitude, Boccaccio depicts his heroine with an inclination to be virtuous and to fulfill her agreement, but Doña María de Zayas, with her characteristic loyalty to

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<sup>63</sup> In a study on Zayas's treatment of the Don Juan character in *La traición en la amistad*, Trambaioli denotes two principal elements to characters "donjuanescos", "olvido de los antiguos amantes y la traición en la amistad" (518). The Don Juan of *Novelas* conforms to these characteristics as can be seen through his interactions with Lisis and Don Diego.

the feminine sex, goes much farther, portraying her sympathetically as inherently good, loyal to her husband, a devout Catholic and ready to die for the sake of her honor and that of her family. She is given an exalted position, clothed in garb of idealism and presented as devoid of unworthy impulses. (32)

By assigning to Constanza the attributes representative of those that society deems appropriate for women, Zayas is making evident that women are concerned with morality and conservation of their honor, but the pressures of man and society pose obstacles to its preservation. Although Constanza shows exemplary resilience and fidelity to her husband, at the end of the tale she is not credited as the most discreet. As O'Brien states in an essay dedicated to this novella, Teodosia engages the reader in an "intratextual game" by asking them to choose which of the male characters was most virtuous. "The frame protagonists thus misguidedly cede primacy to male roles; ... An ironic detail is Teodosia's omission of Constanza from the contest; she is the only person to show virtue throughout" ("Games" 1012). O'Brien also points out that Laura's objective for narrating the tale, to set an example and to warn everyone to be careful, is not received as the "immoral protagonists are rewarded and praised (Teodosia, Jorge, and even the Devil), while virtuous Constanza remains blissfully ignorant of her sister's treachery" (1012). Immoral protagonists are also rewarded on the frame narrative level since Juan receives a jewel, which he immediately gives to Lisarda, for making the most convincing argument of all for the integrity of the devil. This brings jealousy to Diego and annoys Lisis, "Esta opinion sustentó divinamente don Juan, llevando la joya prometida, no con pocos celos de don Diego y Gloria de Lisarda, a quien la rindió al punto, dando a Lisis no pequeño pesar" (534). Lisis's disappointment at Juan's winning of the prize perhaps implies that even the most fickle men will prevail over honest, honorable, and sincere women, given the privileges society affords them.

When the storytelling concludes, the narrator promises a second part to *Novelas* in which the reader can expect to see some punished, others changed, and a uniting of others in

matrimony, “y yo a mi honesto y entretenido sarao, prometiendo, si es admitido con el favor y gusto que espero, segunda parte, y en ella el castigo de don Juan, mudanza de Lisarda y bodas de Lisis” (534). However, things don’t exactly go as promised in *Desengaños amorosos*. Lisis’s final words as well as her sentiments at the conclusion of *Novelas* do not resemble those of the doting bride-to-be. As stated earlier, her final poem is far from cheery and she is bothered by Juan’s gifting of his prize to Lisarda. Her comportment is an indication that circumstances may not be as they appear and there could be a possible disruption to the love triangle’s resolution.

At the end of *Desengaños*, the lingering suspicion from *Novelas* is confirmed as Lisis decides to enter a convent rather than become a wife. Her choice gives primacy to sisterhood and a life free from the injustices imposed upon her by men, “me acojo a sagrado y tomo por amparo el retiro de un convento...Y así, con mi querida doña Isabel, a quien pienso acompañar mientras viviere, me voy a salvar de los engaños de los hombres” (509). She does not intend to confess and become a nun, and instead remains a secular member. Similar to O’Brien, Rhodes relates the frame narrative conflict back to the failure of the country’s nobility. She proposes that Lisis’s decision not to become a nun suggests that there is a chance that it is not too late for changes to be made among Spain’s noble class that would bring moral values into the forefront, making it easier for women to live in society (124), “Zayas constructs flight to the convent in the *Desengaños* as the need of the virtuous to flee the world gone wild outside its walls, constructing a relationship between that space and the missing functional nobility, itself affiliated with God” (Rhodes 125). The fictional Lisis is the exemplification of the noble class, early modern Spanish woman who wants to remain virtuous but is surrounded by people who pose challenges to that goal. At the end of both framed novella collections, twenty stories have been narrated that demonstrate the difficulties women face in male-dominated societies. Disillusioned by the

psychological and physical abuse and prejudice the women of the *maravillas* suffer, the frame protagonist, like many others, enters into the convent “con mucho gusto” (510). After Zayas leads many of her female characters to embrace life in the cloister, that is where their story ends. Rhodes interprets this as Zayas’s last result to keep her characters free from the pernicious influence of the outside, “Zayas really does not want us, or her virtuous characters, in the convent, for she cloaks her fictional retreat to God in invisibility and keeps it at a far remove from her reader. As Merrim says, it is an ‘elsewhere’ (136)” (128). Rhodes goes on to proclaim that Zayas makes no connection between the convent and education, as none of her characters receive instruction there. I agree with Rhodes that Zayas does not necessarily *want* her characters to enter the convent considering they go to extremes and put their honor on the line to find love; however, I believe she presents it as more than just a place of invisibility. For Zayas, the convent provides for women a place of protection and female solidarity. Also, as evidenced by the lives of nuns such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Santa Teresa de Jesús, the convent was in fact a place where women could educate themselves.

Zayas’s use of the frame narrative device is part of a literary tradition developed by Boccaccio and employed by many famous novelists throughout Europe and the world. Her use of the technique helps to shape what is known as a “feminist frame narrative tradition” that centers on a multiplicity of issues surrounding the daily lives of women living in seventeenth-century Spanish society. The different narrative levels provide an enjoyable text through which the author reveals the extravagant lifestyles of the Spanish nobility while at the same time exposing the shortcomings of the nobles and the society in which they lived.

This chapter has shown how an analysis of the frame narrative enriches a reading of Zayas’s text. Her careful choice of narrators, her cautionary warnings that precede the tales, and

her use of poetic styles such as sonnets, *romances*, and *décimas*, are essential elements in understanding how she moralistically denounces male abuse and injustices ingrained in patriarchal society that lead to female abuses such as physical violence, rape, and degradation.

## CONCLUSION

The study of Zayas's *Novelas* has offered insight to early modern as well as modern day readers on the lives of women in seventeenth-century Spain. Many Golden Age scholars have approached her works from various angles with most concluding that her writings incorporate a message that denounces the unfair treatment of women in male dominated societies. The ten *maravillas* that comprise *Novelas* cite the restrictions placed upon female education, male fickleness, physical and mental abuse, and jealousy as the issues that plague female existence. These obstructions to female agency are presented by Zayas as impositions initiated at birth and intensified in marriage. In her first prologue, "Al que leyere," she expresses her sentiments on the way women are conditioned at birth to perform domestic tasks and do not have the same opportunities for education as men. She also scorns men who take advantage of women, calling them foolish and referring to them as villains. In "Prólogo de un desapasionado," her second prologue, she conveys her preoccupation as a female author producing literature in male dominated literary circles. Zayas's attitude towards female education, agency, and existence in the society in which she lives are reflected in each of the ten short stories in the framed novella collection studied here and in the framing itself that serves as the device that connects the *maravillas*. The analysis presented in the dissertation provides a unique exploration of Zayas's *Novelas* using Simone de Beauvoir's theories as explained in *The Second Sex*. The exploration of the concepts of transcendence and immanence, existence, myth, and the frame narrative device reveal a new perspective on the investigation of the early modern author's feminist message.

As presented in the *maravillas*, agency is not readily available to women in patriarchal societies that view them solely as objects of male desire. As Beauvoir explains, women were expected to serve in the traditional roles of wife, mother, or religious devotee. Their immanence was firmly rooted in social conventions and false beliefs founded in female biology. Beauvoir refutes biological claims of female inferiority that had been long supported by well-known philosophers and accepted by the masses. She supports that this line of thinking is necessary for men to assert his dominance over woman. Having established woman as the *other*, he can establish himself as subject, a transcendent being whose actions lead towards liberties that women are denied. He explores, conquers, and acquires knowledge, all the while requiring that women remain a submissive being. In the first chapter I show how Zayas exposes the complexities of conforming to gender roles and how the female characters must defy them in order to live happy lives.

The first chapter of this dissertation examines three *maravillas* in which the concepts of immanence and transcendence are most clearly demonstrated through the interactions between the characters. In the first two tales, *La fuerza del amor* and *El imposible vencido*, the readers encounter female characters that welcome traditional gender roles but encounter adversity in their fulfillment. The married wife and the daughter promised to a man she doesn't love both take measures to confront the structures of male dominance in their lives in order to find happiness. Their status as immanent beings allows their pleas to go unheard by the men that surround them. In one tale, Zayas shows us how mothers, conditioned to function within the patriarchal norms laid out for their sex, also disregarded the petitions of their daughters. Zayas demonstrates her varied perspectives on the position of women in seventeenth-century society in these tales. Evidently, she does not completely reject the institution of marriage, as the

protagonists in *El imposible vencido* wed at the end of the tale. However, as a protest against female abuse, she has the protagonist in *La fuerza de amor* enter into a convent, a place where she will forever be free from male cruelty.

The third *maravilla* discussed in Chapter One presents the readers with an interesting account of a man who becomes victim of predatory women as a result of his chauvinist beliefs in male superiority. Don Marcos, the male character who has been granted by birth the right to transcend and reach towards worldly achievements, is limited by his social status and lack of finances. He attempts to take advantage of a woman's riches and estate in order to have the prestige he feels he deserves by affirming woman as the *other*, highlighting her immanence and asserting his power over her. Woman's value as subject is never recognized by Marcos; to him she is nothing more than a commodity that will better his position in society. Nevertheless, his intended victim is able to outsmart him. She defies models of female compliance and she makes a fool out of her controller. She, in some ways, exceeds the limits placed upon her sex. Her schemes, combined with Don Marcos's greed, leave the male protagonist destitute and hopeless.

Chapter Two of this dissertation sets out to explore whether a woman living in early modern Spain can ever be an autonomous subject and find an existence outside of her usefulness to man given the multitude of factors that contribute to her subordination and status as *other*. Differing theories of existence are presented in this chapter. Some theorists assert that, when addressing the issue of freedom, existence is a conscious choice that rests with the individual. Others, like Beauvoir, argue that unconscious factors prohibit freedom, especially in the case of the female gender due to historical and religious factors that have established woman as inessential. The three *maravillas* analyzed in this chapter show how Zayas questions masculine models of female existence while the female protagonists engage in behavior alternate to the

standards of their sex as supported by patriarchy. Female honor, sexuality, and love are the principal concepts explored in this chapter. The analysis in this chapter discusses how for the seventeenth-century woman, existence for self often leads to a conflict between subjectivity and honor. In two of the three *maravillas*, *Al fin se paga todo* and *Aventurarse perdiendo*, once female, and thus familial, honor is lost, the women relinquish certain conventional womanly attributes in order to recuperate it. They kill, cross-dress, and enter lives of solitude in order to avenge their honor and escape patriarchal control. Their existence for self is a temporary one that leads them to live secluded lives. Nonetheless, these women are not punished for their malevolent actions. Instead, I explained how *Zayas* challenges patriarchal norms by allowing her characters to live happy lives in spite of the wrongs they have committed. She sorts out their suffering by giving them peaceful resolutions.

The remaining *maravilla* in this section is analyzed to explore the effects of jealousy on existence, both male and female. This tale offers us a case of female jealousy that results in sisterly betrayal and a brotherly feud that ends in homicide. Theorists view jealousy as an issue with self-esteem that leads one to establish a self-worth solely through the love and affection of another. Teodosia, the spiteful sister who stirs up trouble, cannot find an existence that will bring meaning to her life outside of having a relationship with a man that does not love her. Likewise, Don Jorge is so consumed with possessing Constanza that he too is unable to control his jealousy. He murders his own brother due to jealousy and rage, and he finds himself in a pact with the devil with the intention of physically enjoying the woman he loves. The pleas of the already betrothed protagonist, Constanza, go unheard as her status as *other* renders her voice ineffective. In fact, *Zayas* does much with the female voice throughout the collection. On the one hand, this voice is most often unheard within the tales by the male characters. On the other hand,

the female voices tend to be the ones readers of the *maravillas* pay most attention to. Thus, it is Zayas's objective to have the readers become the listening ear for the women in the tale who suffer injustices in hopes that it will affect change in society.

Furthermore, I demonstrate that the misfortunes in this tale are attributed to fate, magic, and bad luck. This is opposite the idea supported by existentialist theorists that states that through consciousness, human beings can alter the course of their lives. Situations such as the ones encountered in this tale evidence that there are emotional factors such as jealousy and lust that are so powerful that they have a negative effect on gaining and maintaining a healthy and productive existence.

Myth proves to be another important component in my examination of Zayas's *Novelas*, considering that it provides an understanding of the basis for female subjugation in patriarchal societies. One widely accepted myth surrounding women links her to Nature, a relation that men use to validate her seemingly natural disposition to suffering. Men used myths to their advantage, treating them as an excuse to ignore the female voice, and disregard her unhappiness as they feel that female misery is intended by Nature. Beauvoir, along with other philosophers, sees nothing natural about myths as patriarchy would have us believe. Barthes defines myth as simply a type of speech that makes cultural beliefs seem like natural occurrences. The systematic oppression of women and male desire for control are factors in male dominated societies that maintain female subjugation. In Chapter Three, I investigate the myth of the woman in relation to four of Zayas's *maravillas*, *El prevenido engañado*, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, *La burlada Aminta y la venganza del honor* and *El juez de su causa*. I demonstrate how Zayas confronts myth about women by highlighting them and having her female characters prove them false.

Female astuteness and sexual desire are emphasized in *El prevenido engañado*. In a society that holds firm in the belief of woman being unintelligent, the women in this *maravilla* show that they are smarter and wittier than men. They also disprove the myth that the female body exists solely for male pleasure and childrearing. On his quest to find the perfect woman, the male protagonist, Fadrique, is humiliated time and time again by the women he meets. Sadly, he does not come to see women outside of the mythical beliefs he has internalized through his participation as a man in patriarchal society until it is too late. He recognizes that the final act of betrayal committed by his wife comes as a result of his own deceptive ways. Zayas uses her characters in this story to expose myths about gender as social conventions that must be contested. Like *El prevenido*, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud* is another tale that exhibits how man's conduct towards woman leads him on a destructive path. The male protagonist only has selfish relationships with women, ones established simply so he can take advantage of them. Fadrique exploits them, treating them as nothing more than beings that serve to quench his financial and sexual desires, and never contemplates the emotional destruction he leaves behind. He acts in this way because myths rooted in patriarchy tell him that female suffering is natural and there is no need to contemplate its alleviation. Once again, Zayas resolves the injustices her female characters endure due to man's one-sided beliefs. She punishes the evildoers and inverts the social hierarchy, elevating her female characters and having them overcome adversity. For example, Doña Clara in *El desengaño*, who is deceived by Fernando and, as a result, ends up in a life of poverty and servitude, is given a happy resolution that counters the hardships she experiences throughout the tale, "Doña Clara vivió muchos años con su don Sancho, de quien tuvo hermosos hijos que sucedieron en el estado de su padre, siendo por

la virtud la más querida y regalada que se puede imaginar, porque de esta suerte premia el cielo la virtud” (408).

In the final two *maravillas* I discuss, gender codes established through myths are blurred and reconstructed by way of cross-dressing. Through performativity, women carry out the acts traditionally characterized as those belonging to men in order to avenge their honor and reinsert themselves into society. The women take on the male disguise with ease and are so convincing that no one ever finds them out. They enter into the male world of transcendence with such ease that prescribed gender roles are exposed as false. Dressed as a man, Aminta murders her trickster and his accomplice, acts society does not expect from women. Similarly, through cross-dressing Estela enters into the service of the king and becomes one of his most valiant soldiers. Aminta and Estela succeed in what they set out to do aided greatly by the male clothing they wear. They are intelligent throughout the stories, but are only seen in that light by others when wearing male clothes. The inherent characteristics the women possess cannot be recognized without being disguised under the performance of socially constructed male roles. However, both women give up their male attire and reinsert themselves into the traditional order of early modern Spain. Zayas’s questioning of socially accepted gender norms shows her disdain for myths that limit female mobility and promote male supremacy.

Lastly, in Chapter Four I explore how Zayas uses the frame narrative as an integral component in her feminist message. The analysis offers a historical background on the literary origins of the frame narrative technique and how the convention was adopted through time. Next, the society of narrators is examined in order to demonstrate how the relationships between the frame characters are a precursor to the challenges in love, honor, friendship, education, and loyalty, amongst other challenges, that will be recycled throughout the *maravillas*.

A substantial portion of this chapter focuses on the poetry included in the frame narrative as well as the short stories, and how its inclusion produces an added account of Zayas's denouncement of male inconstancy. Love melancholy is the central theme of in Zayas's poetic expression as it is explicitly prevalent throughout the first half of the frame narrative and even more so in the *maravillas* themselves. Even after Lisis accepts Diego's hand in marriage and has seemingly recovered from Juan's deception, love melancholy is still present under careful disguise. Its presence helps to point out the harsh effects that deception has on women and offers a strong critique of the scrutiny women endure once they fall victim to false promises offered to them by men. The poetry exposes how women are deceived and left to bear the consequences alone. With their honor and reputation jeopardized, like Lisis, women sing their laments to the heavens in hopes that they will find relief from suffering caused by the men they so naively adore. Time and again Zayas's *maravillas* show us the fickle, inconstant male character, rather than the capricious ever-changing female so common in the literature of her time.

In summary, this dissertation has offered an exhaustive analysis of Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* using the feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir in order to explore how Zayas uses her characters as the agents through which she protests the encircling and complicating of the lives of women in early modern Spain. Using Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* as the groundwork for the historical context from which I explore the foundations of patriarchy spanning from ancient societies to modern day Europe, I have been able to demonstrate how Zayas addresses and subverts the dominant system in her works. In fact, her writings still speak to us, almost four centuries after their initial publication.

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