

**Female Role-Play in Golden Age Drama: The Approach of Calderón
with Comparative Perspectives on Shakespeare and Sor Juana Inés de la
Cruz**

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Abstract

This thesis examines a selection of Calderón's *comedias de capa y espada* and serves primarily to draw attention to the heroines of these plays both as individuals and as *damas tramoyeras*, artful figures in the best sense, whose various meta-dramatic capacities illustrate gender issues pertinent to Calderón and his society. My objective is to indicate why these female figures are significant in their own right, and in addition, to use their example as a means to widen an appreciation and understanding of the role of women in Calderonian drama in the broader sense. I shall demonstrate how women in his dramas function not at a secondary level, but as central figures who are uncannily modern in their outlook and behaviour. The four Calderonian *capa y espada* plays and their leading heroines chosen for analysis are (in the order in which they appear in the thesis): Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* (1634), Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar* (1629), Ángela of *La dama duende* (1629), and Laura of *El secreto a voces* (1642). My analysis of these heroines is underpinned by theories on comedy, irony and meta-theatre and draws upon perspectives on veiling (seventeenth-century and modern), the position of Golden Age actresses, cross-cultural comparative approaches to the comic heroines of the English dramatist Shakespeare and the Mexican writer Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, as well as on contemporary feminist ideas and argumentation.

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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In memory of Mr J.B. Hall.

Introduction

This thesis examines a selection of Calderón's *comedias de capa y espada* and serves primarily to draw attention to the heroines of these plays both as individuals and as *damas tramoyeras*, artful figures in the best sense, whose various meta-dramatic capacities illustrate gender issues pertinent to Calderón and his society. My objective is to indicate why these female figures are significant in their own right, and in addition, to use their example as a means to widen an appreciation and understanding of the role of women in Calderonian drama in the broader sense. I shall demonstrate how women in his dramas function not at a secondary level, but as central figures who are uncannily modern in their outlook and behaviour. Calderonian women constitute a remarkable force in the history of the representation of women on the European stage, a fact that has not been recognised fully. I hope therefore that the focus and central arguments of this thesis will complement and develop a view first formulated by McKendrick (1992) in an important study on Calderón's female characters.

In her seminal work on women and society in the *comedia*, McKendrick (1974) described Calderón's attitude to the female sex as 'orthodox', implying a standard (non-progressive) view of women in keeping with the beliefs and ideology of Catholic Counter-Reformation Spain. Yet later in her career, McKendrick modified her perspective to draw out an issue which separates Calderón from his predecessors of the Spanish Golden Age stage, and it is her secondary standpoint that has resonated far more with my own interpretation of Calderonian women. I quote the significant passage from McKendrick (1992) below:

the conviction has grown in me over the years that for all Lope's fascination with women on and off the stage, and for all Tirso's apparent tolerance of female independence and his talent for creating intelligent women, it is in Calderón that we find the most significant female roles, the most memorable female speeches, the most substantial confrontation with issues now called feminist. (p. 2)

McKendrick, ultimately argues however, that it is not only that Calderón deals significantly with proto-feminist issues in his plays, but that certain of his dramas reveal an *a priori* progressive attitude toward the female sex, unusual for a male writer of the seventeenth century; in effect that he offers an advanced or 'radical' (p. 6) representation of woman's *equal* humanity with man. She draws on the examples of Julia in *La devoción de la cruz*

(1633), cast with her twin brother Eusebio as an equal representative of humankind, linked ‘anthropologically to the divine’ (p. 1), and of Justina of *El mágico prodigiso* (1637), who is presented both as her kind and her sex. Following McKendrick’s stance, it would seem that one is a result of the other and vice versa: Calderón’s reverence for the equality of women led him to represent their experiences and predicaments significantly because he believed their experiences to be no less significant than man’s in representing *human* experience. This argument is important on two main counts. Firstly, McKendrick’s stance is antithetical to several prior opinions which not only endorse a rampant misogyny within Golden Age drama, but which cast Calderón as a major culprit of such prejudice. Alternately, her stance provides an antidote to views which claim that Calderón’s sympathy with women extended only to casting them as sufferers or victims lacking a symbolic or psychological dimension. Although views such as these may no longer be all-pervasive, remnants of misogynistic assumptions regarding Calderonian drama still exist and often go unchallenged. Secondly, her argument brings into focus a further idea, increasingly remote to modern minds: that Calderón’s religious ethics play a crucial part in his *defence* of the equal humanity of the female sex rather than a denial of it. In an ever more secular society and with the misogyny associated with attitudes of Judeo-Christian religion in the early modern period, the notion that a Counter-Reformation Catholic might offer a remarkably progressive representation of women might seem an unlikely proposition, and yet this is a stance that I will defend in this thesis. I aim to defend this notion, however, not through looking at Calderón’s celebrated religious or philosophical dramas, but through an examination of the role played by women in some of his lesser-studied comedies, roles which, I believe, supports the assertion that Calderón is committed to issues now called feminist, and roles which can be seen to supersede those of women in his serious dramas from a progressive perspective; this is because his comic heroines offer a greater challenge to tradition in both character and action.

The four Calderonian *capa y espada* plays and their leading heroines chosen for analysis are (in the order in which they appear in the thesis): Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* (1634), Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar* (1629), Ángela of *La dama duende* (1629), and Laura of *El secreto a voces* (1642) (*El secreto a voces* is technically a *comedia de palaciega*, a comic sub-genre of the *capa y espada* play). My analysis of these heroines is underpinned by theories on comedy, irony and meta-theatre and draws upon perspectives on veiling (seventeenth-century and modern), the position of Golden Age actresses, cross-cultural comparative approaches to the comic heroines of the English

dramatist Shakespeare and the Mexican writer Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, as well as on contemporary feminist ideas and argumentation.

Apart from a longstanding and recent rise in critical interest in Ángela of *La dama duende*, there has been a history of relative neglect of women of Calderonian comedy as either individuals or as a group, which is what I seek to redress in this thesis. The causes of their neglect are to be addressed with more detail in the following chapter, but I believe the principal reasons for their past disregard are related to a general stigma surrounding comedy (i.e. its value as a generic form), an ambivalence in regard to the compatibility of the comic form with the gravitas and/or moral ethos of Calderón and a set (or limited) perspective of the role that women play in his dramas as a whole. Each of these notions can be seen to have reinforced the other: for example, if comedy is considered to be of less relevance and value than tragedy or serious dramas, then it does not require equal concern. Likewise, the comic *capa y espada* play once described as ‘kitsch romance’, has gained something of a reputation for being the lesser genre of the Spanish *comedia*. And a bias against the worth of the *capa y espada* play has been further compounded with regard to Calderón. Despite forming at least a third of his output (McKendrick, 1989), Calderón’s comedies have long been overshadowed by the reverence accorded his most serious and philosophical plays, which are in turn felt to contain and reveal his most profound ideas. Thus Calderón’s reputation as an intensely moral dramatist has seemingly put him further at odds with the comic form. And if only his serious plays are considered worthy of attention, then only the women of his serious dramas are considered the definitive examples of his approach to the representation of women. It appears that his women of comedy have suffered doubly for not being taken *seriously* on both counts: as being comic and as being women. When Wilson and Wardropper began pivotal reassessment of Calderón’s *capa y espada* plays in the 1940s and 1960s respectively, for example, they raised the importance of these comedies, but as the male characters were perceived as the primary sources of the plays’ concerns, the heroines’ contributions remained overlooked despite their active roles.

Therefore, to overturn a neglect of his women’s roles in comedy, a more forceful reassessment in approach to women in Calderón in general is required. In my first chapter I begin by offering a re-interpretation of the Calderonian approach to women by drawing on the views of McKendrick (1992) and Regalado (1995) to suggest that Calderón in fact frequently positions women in roles of centrality and humanity which anticipates the

feminism of Beauvoir, and is thus indicative of a progressive stance. Calderón constantly returns to the issue of how women's self-determination and freedom of choice were constrained by contemporary views on their sex in the society of the time. Today his progressive stance would be aligned with feminist perspectives. Furthermore, his repeated focus on women's spirituality and divine rights (free will and liberty) counters much of the contemporary doctrine of his time that tended to define women by their carnality. An impressive description of Calderón's sensitivity to women's spiritual being, together with a sense of their modern outlook, is offered by Ter Horst (1982) who writes that Calderón's women 'are the Hedda Gablers of their age in that they reveal in art, with startling novelty, depths and dimensions of human nature not previously explored or shown' (p. 33) – and I shall return to the comparison to Hedda Gabler shortly. My argument is that once women are fully positioned as being of central importance to Calderón then this understanding can be (re)applied to comedy, and in turn these dramas begin to open up a different picture and a consistent pattern. My purpose is to prove not only that the comic form *is* wholly compatible with the Calderonian ethos, but that it is the role of a particular brand of *heroine* who features within these plays that reveals such congruence. I aim to restore the heroine of Calderonian comedy to her rightful place of significance in his drama and to show how she may surpass her serious sisters in her progressive impulses.

The relative past disregard for Calderón's *capa y espada* plays reveals somewhat of a gender blind-spot given that these plays in fact contain a distinct and overt contribution to the representation of women in early modern European drama. This is due to Calderón's recurrent use of a particular disguise motif: the appearance of his iconic *damas tapadas* (veiled ladies). To be sure, Calderón's adoption of the veil as the definitive disguise motif of his women characters marks a notable shift in the aesthetics of the *comedia*, and, furthermore, his use of this garment is a key sign of the type of comic heroine with which this thesis is concerned. At base, Calderón's embracing of the veil reflects a twist on a wider dramatic motif that peaked in Renaissance and Baroque drama. Although women and disguise have been linked since antiquity and are closely associated with comedy¹, disguising women first

¹ H. Grant (1973), for example, traces the origins of cross-dressing or gender-swapping in European theatrical/literary culture first to the Roman Saturnalia and then to Carnival, a festivity in which the upturning of 'normal' socio-cultural roles was part of an anarchic comic release, i.e. those considered the weaker/dominated (women/the peasant) could become the stronger (men/the King) and rule for the day. The extent to which the practice was truly subversive, however, remains debatable - Carnival still functioned on the presumption that a set of 'right rules' existed even if it could be overturned - and only temporarily. In this sense the practice could

re-emerged forcefully in the form of cross-dressers in the Italian *commedia erudita* of the Renaissance and subsequently infiltrated drama across Europe. Reasons for a renewed interest in the cross-dressing device in Italy have been attributed in part to a matter of verisimilitude, but its wider growth in popularity is considered a response to a growing debate spreading through Europe.² As a method which brings gender relations to the fore, it is not a surprise that cross-dressing climaxed within the drama of the Renaissance/Baroque period given the emergence of the *querelle des femmes* ('The Woman Question') that flourished at the time. 'The Woman Question', less a statement than a literary/philosophical debate, involved both female and male thinkers/writers of the age positing and refuting an alternative role for women. Treatises and writings from as early as Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* (circa 1400), to Agrippa's *Declamation on the Nobility and Pre-eminence of the Female Sex* (1509) for example, challenged a long established history of misogyny in order to promote a different understanding of the natural, intellectual, and physical abilities of women. Hence, a rise in literally transforming women characters for the stage appears a logical effect of such fervent debate, and drama itself was an apt art form for illustrating such issues. Indeed, use of a disguise on a female character could indicate a graphic process of change, and her customary use of male dress symbolised the testing out of her new found strength, courage or independence given that these qualities had hitherto been reserved for the male sex.³ In England there appeared the page-girls of Shakespeare's comedies for example, and in Spain there arose the prolific *La mujer vestida de hombre* (literally *The Woman Dressed as a Man*) of the *comedia*. Cross-dressing initially held sway in Spain; its first appearance is accredited to the early dramas of Lope de Rueda (1510- 1565) then followed by the many *mujeres vestidas de hombres* who feature in the *comedias* of Lope de Vega (1562- 1635) and Tirso de Molina (1579-1648) and whose popularity with the Spanish theatre going public is noted by Lope in his *El arte nuevo* (1609).

be seen as a permitted (and thus controlled) form of release by those in charge to ensure that the 'correct order' of social life be maintained at all other times. Consequently, the use of cross-dressing that re-emerged in Renaissance/Baroque drama still divides critics as to whether the motif offers conservative, liberal or anarchic implications as regards gender issues/politics of the period.

² On the matter of verisimilitude, R. Andrews (1993) observes that putting a young woman character in a man's clothing i.e. appearing *as a man*, was the only *realistic* way, (and authenticity was demanded of the new Italian *commedia erudita*), that a woman character of high social standing or 'virtuous' nature could be presented as unchaperoned in an exterior context on stage - in reality, Italian women of a certain social class were simply not expected or allowed to appear outside the home alone, and so realistically, neither could their on-stage representatives.

³ See for example C. Belsey (1985) on the *querelle des femmes* of the European Renaissance and the simultaneous appearance of Roaring Girls, Amazons and Page-girls in drama of the period. She notes that the lasting remnants of such theatrical cross-dressing may be found in modern day pantomime.

However, it is well-documented that Calderón had little interest in casting women as *La mujer vestida de hombre*, choosing only to use this form of disguise sparsely, and when he did use it, it appeared in serious dramas as opposed to comic, with the most famous example being Rosaura's bi-gendered appearance at the end of *La vida es sueño* (1635).⁴ With the advent of Calderón, the cross-dressed motif receded on the Golden Age stage and in its place materialised his *damas tapadas*, female figures who choose to obscure their identity under a veil and harness the power of anonymity rather than change sex in appearance⁵. And with this alternate choice of disguise comes new inferences. As the female is no longer compared to or judged by her relative maleness through cross-dressing, a *dama tapada* introduces a different set of disputes concerning the situation of gender relations in Counter-Reformation Spain. Indeed, I believe that the implications of this new disguise motif evidenced in Calderón's *capa y espada* plays have not yet been fully recognised, and a more detailed socio-historical interpretation of the veil will play a key part in my argument concerning both the relevance of these dramas and the role of the heroines within them.

Still, while a common feature, the presence of a veil is not an exclusive requirement of the type of comic heroine with which I am concerned, as will be demonstrated by Laura of *El secreto a voces*. Even when a Calderonian *dama* becomes a *tapada*, the veil can play a greater or lesser part in her characterisation. This disguise is one possible symptom of the overarching attitude of this type of heroine that may be best described as 'non-conformist', and which displays itself in her use of a variety of theatrical skills to elude and resist certain boundaries (usually) laid down by a male counterpart (i.e. an elder brother, father, or would-be husband). She resists any attempt to enclose her physically or restrict her choices. This recurring type of comic heroine is in a sense a 'performing escape artist', and in this distinctive capacity she has not gone entirely unnoticed. In a rare paper dedicated solely to their role, Navarro Durán (2000), arguably the first to mark these women out as members of a distinct archetype, presented *La dama tramoyera* as the definitive term for this transgressive heroine typical of the Calderonian *capa y espada* play. (However, the idea that this figure is unique to Calderón has been strongly contested by Sánchez (2012) and will be addressed

⁴ See for example C. Bravo Villasante (1976) and B.B Ashcoff (1960) on the convention of *La mujer vestida de hombre/ La mujer en habito de hombre* in the Spanish *comedia*; both observe the decline of the figure in the drama of Calderón. R. Escallonilla Lopez (2001) lists just thirteen cases of the cross-dressed woman in Calderonian drama, but, she also highlights the serious proto-feminist implications that emerge when he did choose to use it, an opinion also shared by M. McKendrick (2002) as regards his Rosaura of *La vida es sueño*.

⁵ It should be noted that veiled ladies had appeared in the *comedia* prior to Calderón but not in the manner or volume as they went on to appear with in his drama.

later). Navarro Durán observes that the title *dama tramoyera* incorporates the pseudonym *dama tapada* and thus this woman's recourse to disguise, but is also indicative of her wider theatrical talents and seventeenth-century context. Indeed, the ambivalence surrounding the meaning of this title in its original socio-cultural/historical context provides the first steps in my argument concerning the appeal and purpose of this figure in the hands of Calderón.

According to Shergold (1967) the root of the word *tramoyera* 'probably has some association with 'trama' (p. 557) and *trama* or *tramoya* is the term for the basic stage machinery of the Golden Age corral. The name thus associates the heroine with the mechanisms of her contemporary stage, likening the instinct of this archetype to that of a theatrical cog: a woman possessed with a programmed disposition to plot, scheme or design: a 'designing lady' by name and by nature. It also appears indicative of predictability and shallowness of character, but of initial concern is the ambivalence of the name heightened by the sex of the character. In the case of a female, the dramatic connotations of *dama tramoyera* blur with the misogynistic view of the period in which women, considered the weaker sex, both physically and morally, were reprimanded or warned against what was thought to be their innate tendency towards artifice and deceit. For example, Vives (2000) in his *The Education of a Christian Woman (De institutione feminae Christianae 1524)* encourages women to be exactly what they are: 'Let women do nothing that is counterfeit and feigned so that they hope to change or deceive nature [...] the young woman should be in very fact what she appears to be externally' (p. 11). Fray Luis de León's (1999) manual *La Perfecta Casada* (1583) also offers examples of the kind of vehemence that could be directed at women for indulging in anything 'unnatural' as what is feigned is evil: 'Lo con que se nasce, obra de Dios es; lo que se finge y artiza, obra será del demonio' (p. 172)⁶. On the one hand then, the name *dama tramoyera*, a lady of design, illusion or trickery, is suggestive of women's tendency and desire to deceive: a daughter of Eve prone to sin. And sometimes this idea is bolstered by the heroines' curious desire for the opposite sex and/or determination to escape from guardians of authority. Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas*, for instance, describes her interest in her brother's friend Lisardo as a natural inclination: 'que en fin la culpa primera / de la primera mujer, / esto nos dejó en herencia' (287b)⁷. But on the other hand, the name

⁶ Although Vives' and Luis de León's works are both sixteenth-century manuals they continued to be widely circulated and read throughout the seventeenth century.

⁷ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (1960). *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar*. In Á. Valbuena Briones, (Ed.), *Obras Completas: Tomo II Comedias*. Madrid: Aguilar.

also conveys how this archetype is one of theatrics, magic and the marvellous, reinforced equally by the heroines' intelligence, notable theatrical know-how or instinct for improvisation. Indeed, an understanding of the term '*tramoyera*' can be gained from its use in regard to Cosme Lotti, the famed set and stage designer of the Golden Age stage, referred to in his time as '*tramoyero*' (Shergold, 1967, p. 279), a term I should imagine not intended to question his moral character but to affirm his esteemed position as a master of stagecraft. Likewise, as Marcela also illustrates through her manipulation of a house with two doors, this type of heroine can possess a level of talent on stage which her counterparts hopelessly fail to match: the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* is an accomplished mistress of the stage.

To summarise then, the figures at hand are women of a theatrical disposition who may present themselves (and their desires/behaviours) as in keeping with a standard stereotype of female nature, while simultaneously indicating a rather different impression. And this contradictory, or better said, ironic potential of the *dama tramoyera* is one that Calderón likes to exploit. In the first two plays to be analysed (*Mañanas de abril y mayo* and *Casa con dos puertas*) the heroines (or their maids), blame their curiosity or disobedience on woman's original sin, only for this to appear either tongue in cheek, or as the plays progress, increasingly open to scepticism. The idea that a sense of contradiction underpins this archetype could be interpreted as code for woman's 'perversity', but, as I will show, any ambivalence surrounding the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* makes her not so much a figure of female inconsistency, but a true *comic* paradigm: after all, this is a figure who is resistant to definition and/or limitation (in more ways than one) and with the potential to be read from opposing extremes - paradoxical qualities which are typical, if not fundamental, to comic theory and practice. And as I will also illustrate, the manner in which her self-professed propensity to sin evokes irony, as well as her ability to become a verbal ironist herself, allows her to assume a new dimension. This is because irony, as Hutcheon (1994) claims, is not the same as paradox, contradiction or ambiguity: 'Like paradoxes [...] lies are permanently intended contradictions; ironic meanings, however, are formed through additive oscillations between different said and unsaid meanings' (p. 64). While both irony and ambiguity 'signify more than one thing [...] the ambiguous lacks the ironic's critical differential impact' (p. 64). Thus in Hutcheon's view, irony always has an *edge*; it is a relational strategy shaped through a given cultural context which brings together more than one meaning: 'to create a composite, different, interdependent one [...] and doing so with some evaluative edge' (p. 85). Hence, the two meanings that blur together in the title and the figure of the *dama*

tramoyera as a result of her context become juxtaposed on stage: an artful woman (negative) or an *artful* (artistic) woman. Calderón purposefully creates space for an evaluative edge to arise between what is claimed by the *dama tramoyera* and how she performs on stage. The presentation of the latter provides a critique of the former and a new interdependent image is formed. In effect, the heroine appears in a more complex role/image *beyond* the negative standard stereotype, which is a shift indicative of progression.

While I believe that irony inclines the figure towards the progressive pole, critical opinions of these heroines (although studies continue to be focused solely on Ángela) indicate their capacity for comic ambivalence as Calderón has been positioned alternately over the years as both a reactionary and a progressive. In the opinion of Rich Greer (1994) for example, *La dama duende* remains hyper-conservative in ethos as she believes that the women make misogynist comments as much as the men. Larson (1991) argues that Calderón's presentation of Ángela both upholds and subverts the reigning seventeenth-century view of women; Heigl (2001) believes that Calderón himself may not have realised how subversive Ángela truly is, a shapeshifting figure eluding man-made categories; for his part, Thacker (2002) offers an ambitious link between Calderón and proto-feminism via his interpretation of Ángela's meta-theatrical behaviour in the play as foreshadowing twentieth-century feminist resistance strategies to patriarchy. In keeping with the issue of irony, what is evident in the most conservative reading above is how Rich Greer takes any apparently sexist inferences within the text at face value. And so it would seem that one's belief in the presence of irony and sarcasm proves key to pushing a view one way or another. But I reiterate that while Eve-like connotations leave a progressive interpretation of this figure open to debate, they also appear necessary for the type of prejudice at hand to be suitably undermined or mocked. Furthermore, by the time of writing *El secreto a voces*, Calderón refrains from any direct with Eve in his portrayal of Laura; but modesty and reserve should not be confused with compliance. Laura decides to ignore the wishes of her father and undermine the desires of her Duchess while still *appearing* to act in accordance with their commands. Laura's behaviour continues to display the same escapist instinct and uncompromising personal spirit of Calderón's earlier *damas tramoyeras*- even if this does not *seem* to be the case. In this sense, Laura may be one of Calderón's most refined versions of the archetype. As though in keeping with their refusal to be restrained by their guardians or social superiors, it also remains unwise to limit the rules of this archetype in terms of personal temperament. Clara and Marcela are lively and headstrong for example, but Ángela is more introspective and

Laura is calm and measured. In fact the heroines' contrasting personalities serve to underline the *expansive* ethos of this female archetype who by its nature is opposed to unjustified limitation. Thus each woman appears as both an individual as well as individually resistant.

It is an irony in itself, perhaps, that the echo of Eve facilitates the emergence of what I perceive to be the basis of the counter-narrative of this figure. From Clara's aptitude for disguise, Marcela's talent for improvisation, to Ángela's casting ability and Laura's shaping of a mask of modesty, Calderonian *damas tramoyeras* are 'designing' women – a fact I think that they would have been happy to claim in their original context. This is because what emerges off the page or on stage is that these are highly sophisticated, *theatrically* designing women, an impression which skews the negative associations in another direction to imply something more forward-looking: a re-fashioning of a derogatory idea into something advantageous, i.e. a new slant on what it *really* means to be classed as a designing woman. For instance, a sense of women's innate ambiguity or deceit proves to be illusory, quite literally: it is the fantastic theatrical foresight and expertise of these women that come forth in their attempt to release themselves from initial confinement. In turn it is thus a form of undesirable or undeserved incarceration/restriction that inspires their resistance, parodying a sense of woman's natural disobedience. And in consequence, the semantic duality of the name *dama tramoyera* now appears symbolic of the women's desire for a lack of restraint rather than being indicative of suspicious ambiguity. Indeed, the idea of the female as the suspect sex appears more misplaced given that Calderón presents male counterparts in these comedies. A sense of irony derives not from the two associations of the name *dama tramoyera* but also from the idea that it is women who are in need of moral guidance rather than men. Calderón's picture of the 'superior' sex is one shot through with satire; his men are plagued by misguided self-confidence, a tendency for abusive outbursts, possessive desires or neuroses. In *Mañanas de abril y mayo* appears the confident but duplicitous Hipólito who loves and abuses the very freedoms that he enjoys denying Clara. The elder brother Don Juan in *La dama duende* is cool, arrogant, and underestimates his sister Ángela's intelligence just as Félix underestimates his younger sister Marcela in *Casa con dos puertas*. More appealing male models materialise in the cautious Lisardo in *Casa con dos puertas* and the rationally-minded Manuel in *La dama duende*. The former's naivety and the latter's predictability allow Marcela and Ángela both to enjoy and manipulate their respective love interests.

Calderón's presentation of masculinity (in contrast to femininity) also gains interest in light of Lehfelddt (2008) and Gaston's (2010) work on the role that gender played within

the efforts at reform made in Spain during the first part of seventeenth century. Lehfeldt observes how Spain's decline in financial and political power at this time was blamed on the emasculated masculinity by those in power. Seeking to remedy this, and thus reinvigorate the country's prospects 'a vigorous discourse in seventeenth-century Spain [...] tried to restore a code of proper manhood' and 'gender critique was embedded in reform' at both the beginning and throughout the 1620s (p. 464- 466). Gaston further discerns how Spanish reformers (*arbitristas*) and royal officials during the first quarter of the seventeenth century 'attempted to remedy Spain's faltering popular customs' (p. iii). Criticism was particularly angled at men of the nobility accused of having become 'effeminate' (neither male nor female but affected), idle and indulgent (the latter two qualities were associated with women) rather than robust and hardworking, and even the theatre was considered to have an effeminizing effect (p. 1-3). As an antidote to this situation, an image of aristocratic manliness of the past, based on martial prowess, decorum, chivalry and a rejection of excess was idealised by reformers; Spaniards were encouraged to work hard for the sake of the country, and signs of overzealous personal ambition were branded as symptoms of self-interest. A rise in the production of conduct books seeking to improve morals and manners of male (and female) members of society also began to appear (hence a renewed/continued interest in Vives and de León's sixteenth-century treatises for women). However, both critics suggest that the propagation of an ideal sense of manhood based on the past ultimately proved insufficient:

the seventeenth-century discourse of masculinity failed due to nostalgia and a lack of creativity [...] contributors to the debate could only imagine solutions rooted in late medieval sixteenth-century examples [this] failed to envision a new model of masculinity better suited to the circumstances of the seventeenth century (p. 466).

Calderón's comedies written in the late 1620s and early 1630s (*Casa con dos puertas* to *Mañanas de abril y mayo*) thus provide an interesting gloss on the above. Masculinity in these plays does indeed appear to be in decline (see analysis on the stilted, uninspired character of Félix in contrast to an animated Marcela in Chapter 3, for example) and precisely because of an apparent failure to adapt to the present. The men cannot keep up with the inventiveness of women who, as it also appears, are refusing to go back to the past via a re-entrenchment of traditional gender roles which might result in a curtailment of their interests: the leading *damas tramoyeras* are noticeably literate, active and ambitious. Yet, such self-

interest has not always been interpreted favourably; several scholars have routinely criticised Marcela for her apparent self-centredness (see Chapters 1 and 3). Given the reform efforts of the period noted above, there is evidence to support the view that Calderón was responding to a culture of personal interest or failing morals of both sexes, and yet I argue that there is much more to admire in Marcela's character than to censure. In addition, the contemporary idea that idleness or weakness was abhorrent in men because such undesirable qualities were associated with women is at complete odds with Calderón's presentation of headstrong, dynamic and intelligent women of comedy. It also appears that a recourse to a past ideal of manliness based on violence or dominance (a frequent option taken by male characters in the plays who are lacking in imagination), is rejected by Calderón because of its effect on women. Hence the chivalrous attitude of certain male characters may in fact mask a darker side which turns into the threat of physical violence or abusive verbal outbursts – behaviour which comes across as predictable, coercive or outmoded in comparison with the inspired actions of the women.

To be sure, the exemplary *damas tramoyeras* challenge the notion of an innately deceitful woman and question the moral, or even intellectual, inferiority of the female sex. However, when the function and forms of their sophisticated and theatrically-purposeful behaviour are related far more to the original context and the Calderonian vision, this archetype really begins to reveal their significance. At base, this brand of heroine is concerned with surmounting or circumventing literal or metaphorical borders and limitations, and these particular concerns are in accordance with three intertwined and theologically-driven issues pertinent to Calderón: his understanding of the human condition as one of suffering and imprisonment; his defence of the human, and divinely-ordained right to free will; and his acute awareness of the predicament of women living under a patriarchal system. I believe, therefore, that the *dama tramoyera* is not only important to an understanding of Calderón's comedy, but that she also helps reveal why comedy is important to *Calderón*.

As noted earlier, Sánchez (2012) argues that the *dama tramoyera* (or *La tramoyera* as she refers to her), is not exclusively a Calderonian invention but a type of resistant character who has been present in the Spanish *comedia* since Cervantes.⁸ Sánchez defines her primarily

⁸ Sánchez (2012) argues that *La tramoyera* is a neglected brand of female character (principally comic) present in the work of writers ranging from Cervantes and Lope, (e.g. Leonarda of *La viuda de valenciana*) to Tirso (Juana of *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*), Calderón (Ángela of *La dama duende*) and María de Zayas. Sánchez's use of *La tramoyera* as an all-encompassing term/figure in fact poses a challenge to McKendrick's (1974) seminal work on the categories of women of the *comedia* under the overall title of the *mujer varonil*. Sánchez

by agency, forms of masquerade and historical significance with regard to women's history and relates the figure across the *comedia*. Although this figure may not have originated in Calderón's drama, there is reason to believe that she had a particular affinity for him and consequently peaked in his work. For example, the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* not only wants 'to escape the patriarchal script' (Sánchez, 2012) but to rewrite it. When Ter Horst mentioned Hedda Gabler, it was as an aesthete out of place in her society in Ibsen's play, trying to control her own or another's destiny. Although the *dama tramoyera* is not a tragic figure, this is an apt comparison in that Calderón's comic heroines are also aesthetes with an air of dissatisfaction (a sense of angst is greater in some than others), who are trying to act in a manner by which they might regain their potential as human actors and creators in all senses of the word.

Indeed, my purpose is to extract more of what is characteristic of Calderonian *damas tramoyeras*, as opposed to versions of this archetype by different playwrights as argued by Sánchez, thereby looking beyond Ángela to bring other examples worthy of recognition to light and to indicate why Calderón's approach to this figure has an 'edge'. My aim is to identify and demonstrate, how the particular meta-dramatic capacities of his comic heroines, in both temporal and metaphysical dimensions, are shaped by or interrelate with the socio-historical context, together with Calderón's theological vision, to reveal the significance of these women. I thereby aim to extend the notion of a Calderonian *dama tramoyera* as a role-player for love (Navarro Durán, 2000), to show that she is also a role-player whose words and actions make tangible women's human rights; whose virtuosity, controversy and resilience parallel those of avant-garde women of her time, and who is thus an emblem of both real and fictional innovation in harmony, rather than discord, with the ethos of Calderón. In summary, I argue that Calderón's approach to this figure is one that is deeply concerned with the chief gender issues of his society and demonstrates a commitment to women's causes and affirms their humanity as women. In addition, I include two cross-cultural comparative perspectives to support my argument, the first being Shakespeare and the second Sor Juana.

As established in Chapter 1, the initial basis for my claim, is that it is unlikely that Calderón's concern for women's human rights in his serious dramas suddenly 'disappears' in

argues that it is *La tramoyera* who incorporates all forms of masquerade and resistance into her repertoire. In terms of Calderonian drama Sánchez only refers to Ángela of *La dama duende*, and as she offers a general survey of the figure across the *comedia* she is not concerned with marking out particular aspects that recur in Calderón's work (i.e. significance of the veil), the relevance of such differences between his approach and that of his predecessors, or how his heroine coincides with his philosophical and theological vision.

comedy. It is the combination of the spiritual and the temporal that gives the plays added depth and relevance. While the characters of these comedies are placed in local temporal settings, Calderón never forgets that the issues that arise are born out of a gender hierarchy which had a strong spiritual basis. For instance, cases of female restriction on the ‘everyday’ level which might appear trivial (e.g. Clara’s decision to go out to socialise in the Royal Park when her would-be husband Hipólito has asked her not to, as occurs in *Mañanas de abril y mayo*), are still the result of the spiritual order which positioned women under the guardianship of men: at base these are *serious* issues for the women as they remain related to her free will. In turn, we find that Calderón may directly indicate the spiritual dimension through the language he ascribes to the *dama tramoyera*, or even associate a woman held in protective confines in comedy, (e.g. Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas* is hidden by her elder brothers), with the archetype of the prisoner, a symbolic figure of the human condition who appears incarcerated against their will.⁹ This choice of symbolism offers a potential parody and yet retains the edge of a profound implication: a woman’s seclusion by a male guardian on the grounds of protection, (i.e. the risk of her honour or virtue being compromised by the arrival of a male guest) is associated with a serious dilemma concerning her right to free will. Just because this occurs in a comic context, it would be unwise to dismiss its significance given that the pattern recurs in Calderón’s later plays. The other archetype with which the *dama tramoyera* is closely associated is the actor, a figure which denotes Calderón’s understanding of life as a fleeting performance in which humans are assigned a role to be performed freely. Yet, as the heroines are often doubly denied the chance to act at will (as prisoner-actors like men, but in addition, deprived of a much greater extent of the right to act freely in ‘real life’), their desire to redefine themselves and fulfil their potential is foregrounded.

In view of a perceptible commitment to women, if we consider further now certain principles underpinning the *dama tramoyera*, Calderón’s penchant for this type of woman and the comic form as a whole becomes even more obvious. As suggested, Calderón’s *damas tramoyeras* are resistant to confinement, and in this capacity they convey aspects of incongruity; after all, they belong to an archetype (i.e. a standard category) which is distinguished by resistance to form and, as noted earlier, these heroines have been interpreted by critics as both confirming and challenging the sexist prejudices of their time. If these

⁹ See A. A. Parker (1988) and my discussion ahead concerning Calderón’s archetype of the ‘Prisoner’ in regard to his female characters (see Chapter 1).

principles are compared to a recent survey of the nature of comedy itself, a fitting parallel emerges. Romanska and Ackerman (2017) observe that ‘critics often return to the problem of pinning comedy down, as if its resistance to definition [...] is paradoxically a key characteristic’ (p. 1); i.e. comedy, is in its nature, an elusive or contrary genre as it eludes one type of form or ultimate definition – it can disrupt its own form through self-mockery and has the potential to be used or claimed for conservative or liberal purposes or both at the same time. Ambivalence is key to how comedy maintains its advantage, its resistance to stagnation or predictability and its ability to adapt and evolve – if it can never be claimed for either side or any one purpose, it retains its autonomy. Likewise, the aspects of ambivalence reflected in Calderon’s *dama tramoyera* may be perceived as the mark of an authentic comic paradigm who is independent in essence – arguably this is her edge – if she can never be claimed as any one thing, then she retains her autonomy, which, is in practice her desire on stage. But, of course, ambivalence is open for criticism as it avoids absolutes: indeed by asserting its power, I leave my own argument open to negation. Yet the issue of comic uncertainty appears to be a major reason why Calderón’s comedies have seemed unclear to some in the past, especially to those who believe him to be unequivocal in his sense of moral responsibility (e.g. Mujica, Wardropper). In contrast, however, I believe his comedy reveals Calderón to be consistent in his ethos, and the key to this consistency is his women. For example, the ambivalence of comedy has led to the further suggestion that ‘the dialectic of freedom and form, novelty and tradition, is central to comic theory and practice.’ (Romanska & Ackerman, 2017, p.1). If resistance to definition and a tension between freedom and form are understood as central to comic practice, then rather than being at odds with Calderón, the comic form is perfectly congruent with his interests, and the ironic spirit and frustrated situations of his *damas tramoyeras* demonstrate this compatibility brilliantly.

Comedy, as outlined in the terms above, appears a logical *modus operandi* for Calderón in light of his understanding of the human condition as a negotiation between free will (freedom) and imprisonment (form), and even more so once his concern for how this dynamic affected women in a male-governed society is better recognised. The aptness of the comic form in his hands also increases if other related ironies in the dissemination of Golden Age drama in its time are also acknowledged. For instance, the ideal expectations of female behaviour in Counter-Reformation culture espoused by moralists from Vives to Fray Luis de León advocated that women should be silent, inexpressive, enclosed and publically unknown, and yet this was in acute contrast to the reality of professional actresses of the age who were

famous, celebrated (while simultaneously denounced), well paid, outspoken and in the business of ‘feigning’; moreover these celebrated women were colleagues of Calderón on whom he was reliant for the successful performance of his plays. Indeed, particular titles and plots of these comedies appear to relate to passages raised by moralists concerning the situation, authenticity and propriety of women. *La dama duende* in name and content appears a parody of Luis de León’s idea of the perfect wife (or woman) as an angel in the house. Similarly, Calderón’s own position as a Christian dramatist in the business of simulation was in opposition to this deep suspicion of artifice, not only directed at women but felt in general in his society. Rather than being a trivial side of his output, the comic form, is in fact pertinent to Calderón as it *aids* his dramatization of issues and contradictory attitudes related to the rights of women and men and indeed artifice, stage and reality. I posit that a fuller appreciation of the role that women and the notion of gender plays in his comic drama may furnish an explanation as to why a dramatist renowned for his serious and philosophical dramas was also a prolific and relevant writer of comedies. In this sense I hope my concern for the value and appreciation of his *capa y espada* plays contributes to the project started by the *calderonistas* Wilson and Wardropper.

In the first instance, Calderón places his comic heroines directly within the dialectic of freedom and form created by the relevant gender (and class) hierarchy. Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas* and Ángela of *La dama duende* are hidden in the name of honour in their respective houses by their elder brothers Juan and Luis; Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* is asked to observe orders of her would-be husband which clashes with her hitherto unfettered freedom. But it is comedy’s affinity with meta-theatre that aids Calderón’s illustration of the strain of custom and the desire for novelty on the part of the heroines and which helps bring out the relevant issues/ ironies concerning the sexes. Meta-theatre is a modern term of Abel’s (2012), although it is not exclusive to comedy or modernity. It conveys a process of self-reflection, reference and introspection within a drama and may be traced back to the classical comedy of Plautus (Romanska & Ackerman, 2017). Abel originally associated the term with Renaissance/Baroque drama, not least that of Shakespeare and Calderón, in whose work he identified already theatricalised characters (from Hamlet to Basilio) who partake in their own dramatization, representing in this way a world-stage metaphor where life is a grand drama and ‘men merely players’. This theme is symptomatic of a socio-historical period and very relevant to Calderón, and has important implications in regard to his *dama tramoyeras* but this is most striking in regard to Ángela of *La dama duende* as will be observed in in Chapter

4. The main strand of thought to be pursued, however, is a link between meta-theatre and innovation. Although not new a method in itself, Beus (in Greiner, 2007) asserts that forms of self-reference and reflection in art offer a mark of modernity given that these methods oppose traditional form (p. 15): i.e. a drama that employs meta-theatrical techniques is anti-classical as it works against pure mimesis by disrupting a single plane of representation and offers a tug between illusion and reality by upholding and then resisting imitation. A good example is how self-consciousness or self-mockery on the part of actors/characters is an act of defiance given that this signifies a refusal to take the illusion seriously. For this reason, Fischer and Greiner (2007) assert that meta-theatrical methods are typically comic in nature, forming an intrinsic part of comedy's alternate outlook.

In light of the above, the aim is to forge a link between an understanding of meta-theatrical techniques as methods which promote non-conformity and the designing techniques that define Calderón's *damas tramoyeras*. At base, a meta-theatrical technique which displays dramatic defiance, e.g. 'breaking the fourth wall' works hand in hand with the *dama tramoyera* to indicate her relative modernity and display her resistance to traditional imitation, i.e. she refuses to be restrained by, or to enact, the customary rules of drama or gender on or off stage. But certain recurring *forms* of her methods display specific socio-cultural inspiration and relevance: they are connected with aspects of real 'unconventional' women who operated in this society, who pushed the boundaries of what was considered appropriate female behaviour at this time. Therefore such techniques suggest the kind of women in Golden Age society whose attitudes and behaviours really were cutting edge while identifying the particular gender conflicts at issue on stage and in reality. The heroines' methods bring to the fore anxieties concerning the presence and movement of women's bodies in public or the control of their minds in private, which contrasted starkly with the freedoms extended to men. These issues were pivotal to Counter-Reformation society and attractive to Calderón who habitually invokes a woman's right to self-determination in the face of traditional social restrictions on her development. In these comedies Calderón portrays women's free will as being jeopardised by erring behaviour of men whether in their paternal or (would-be) marital roles.

I posit that the meta-theatrical techniques which characterise Calderonian *damas tramoyeras* are: **a) disguise**, principally in the form of veiling which may play a part in **b) role-playing**, creating a plot, a scene or an alter ego; **c) a level of self-consciousness**, a recognition that she is in a play or drawing a contrast or parallel between character and

actress, and, **d) verbal irony**, this can be the direct use of verbal irony in dialogue or the effect of her witty asides. I justify verbal irony as a meta-theatrical technique in that it is often aligned with, or a sign of, her self-consciousness and this enhances her critical presence aside from the dramatic frame. From Marcela to Laura, each woman can demonstrate all or only a selection of the above techniques; in some cases one technique can dominate/define her over the others and thus acts as an organising symbol around which the play's gender issues are revealed and developed. Each technique in Calderón's hands can be seen to have an edge concerning the proto-feminist argument. That each heroine 'plays within the play' indicates an alternative approach to her situation and thus a liberating theatrical metaphor. A heroine's act of resistance may be cast in the language of will; for example Laura refers to 'mi albedrío' and 'mi voluntad' (1241a)¹⁰. Thus for Calderón's heroines, theatrical role-play is a pattern through which to convey release from their literal or spiritual restraint and a reminder of her divinely-ordained human rights. This underscores her humanity as a woman, while also drawing attention to her female vulnerability. Recognising the particular gender issues that arise implies an appreciation of the way in which some of her trademark methods have been shaped by Calderón in the light of the circumstances pertaining to his society: they are inspired by the characteristics of *real* examples of unconventional women of his time, namely *mujeres tapadas* and the figure of the Golden Age actress herself.

The socio-historical and cultural imprint is most blatant in the presence of the veil as the heroines' choice of disguise, because Calderón's *damas tapadas* on stage had a precedent in reality. Women known as *mujeres tapadas* became controversial figures in Golden Age society due to their manipulation of the veil whose original purpose of preserving female modesty became obscured by the veil's subsequent associations with female anonymity and provocation. Such manipulation enabled women the free movement amongst public spaces and peoples which it was supposed to prevent and guard against. The veil is not an arbitrary form of comic disguise to thwart or amuse: its presence on stage also traces and represents real anxieties surrounding the female body in this particular socio-historical context and brings into play free choice concerning public identity.

Yet veiling/disguising is just one facet of the love of role-play demonstrated by these figures though their intricate control and use of the stage set, or inclination for creating an alter ego. This is also not a surprising emphasis considering the rise of women as a potent

¹⁰ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (1960). *El secreto a voces*. In A. Valbuena Briones, (Ed.), *Don Pedro Calderón de la Barca: Obras Completas: Tomo II Comedias*.

theatrical force in Golden Age Spain. Arguably, the skills and instinct of a Calderonian *dama tramoyera* best resemble a seasoned actress, and actresses were controversial standout figures in Spain at this time. As publicly exposed, literate, working women, the confidence of real actresses parallels the self-assured spirit of Calderón's *dama tramoyeras*. In sum, the overall dramatic aura and transforming ability of 'real-life' *mujer tapadas* and Golden Age actresses merged easily with the established seventeenth-century conventions of female disguise or role-play in European drama, allowing Calderón's *damas tramoyeras* to emerge as distinctly Spanish and European baroque heroines who pushed the boundaries of drama, life and acceptable 'female behaviour' of their society. The ability of the heroines to cross stage and reality so as to stand out like their real life counterparts is brought out literally by the third and fourth techniques listed above: self-consciousness and irony.

In the midst of her plans, a heroine may reflect on her position breaking the immediate illusion and drawing attention to tensions or parallels between character and actress, illusion and reality. In *Casa con dos puertas*, Marcela declares an anticipation of her own performance which blends character and actress together and signifies their affinity as master performers in action. In *Mañanas de abril y mayo*, the parallel of actress and character is reversed but with equally apt effect. Clara distances herself from the drama and questions the adequacy of the veil as a disguise in contrast to her superior authenticity: Clara believes she is a *real* lady and not a comic convention. She mocks the conventions of a *capa y espada* play and by implication, herself; but this act of self-reference still enhances her non-conformist attitude as a *dama tramoyera*. Clara's breaking the mould of the dramatic frame reflects her aim to alter the rules of courtship in the play and dovetails with her belief that she is *different*. The appearance of the superficiality of the heroine is thus a shallow capacity which is far from superficial: it is part of her role as one who can stand out or aside from the drama as a potential innovator. The paradox surrounding the serious side to self-mockery is also a matter broached by Bergman (1987) but from a different angle. She notes that self-reference, although common across the *capa y espada* genre, is a distinct mark of Calderón's comedies and is a technique which he also bestows on his *graciosos*, the comic lackeys who like to 'send up' all aspects of the comic play, from scenery to versification; for example, they may predict an impending lengthy speech of their master. But Bergman suggests that there is a serious purpose to Calderón's use of self-mockery, in that it encourages his audience to 'see behind the curtain' and to recognise, or even celebrate, the unreality of the drama in order to appreciate something more substantial on the other side. In this sense,

Calderón's use of self-reference exposes the conventions and stereotypes on which a *capa y espada* play is founded, thereby exposing the assumptions, expectations and suspended belief necessary for its existence. Paradoxically, then, both the foregrounding and the mocking of performance in performance, is a means to a *release* from the illusion and has wider implications. If the technique upholds and pokes fun at accepted rules, then likewise the self-reflection typical of the heroine reinforces her role as one who probes the limitations and expectations of gender. For example, when Clara mocks the idea of herself as a veiling *dama tramoyera* she goes a step further. She implies, even in her rebellious role on stage, that this current part for women in drama is not realistic to her, or is not *appropriate* to her needs or ideals – perhaps she would prefer to be without the veil altogether, free of the need to hide or cover. Whether Clara was considered outrageous or idealistic by audiences in her original context, her stance remains important as she *anticipates* the idea of something new and what we would now understand as modernity: a role where women have equal rights and autonomy in or out of a partnership.

The moment when Clara implies that she is a 'real' lady rather than a comic character, is also an example of the last technique I associate with the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*: verbal irony. As highlighted at the beginning of this introduction, a sense of irony occurs at more than one level of these comedies: the heroines' brilliant designing antics make an irony of the suspect Eve stereotype; the celebration of female acting is ironic in a context where female artifice was held in suspicion; and the over confidence of men proves misplaced given that it is the women who have control over the scene. But use of *verbal irony* in particular is a notable feature of the heroines, and Hutcheon's (1990) theory can indicate why both are significant. Hutcheon claims that irony is 'often desperately "edged"' (p. 53) – in essence it retains a spiky effect that is rarely neutral, although its critical edge can also 'cut both ways' as irony is also 'transideological' and 'people of all political persuasions have been known both to endorse and to condemn its use' (p. 430). However, Hutcheon's vital point is in regard to context: irony is a relational and communicative *process* rooted in social and political interaction. It is not something that pre-exists a situation but something that *occurs* when a set of ideas or images are juxtaposed: 'Ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a relationship, a dynamic, performative bringing together of different meaning-makers, but also of different meanings, first, in order to create something new.' The irony that occurs in these plays is proof of their being imbued with gender issues and shared values on gender as this was necessary for irony to occur in the first place. But verbal irony is

also manifested in the sharp words of Clara, the amusing cheek of Marcela and Ángela and the double meanings of Laura and is important as it reveals a critical consciousness. The Calderonian *dama tramoyera*, in her ambivalence and defiance of dramatic and social conventions, is a brilliant comic paradigm reflecting the emergence of women in Calderón's age who defied convention. As she combines temporal substance and abstract weight, she is for me, Calderón's paradigm of a modern woman for the seventeenth century.

Chapter 1 begins with a survey of critical attitudes on Calderonian drama, women and comedy over time, including views which have restricted or dismissed the potential of Calderón's female characters by casting them as figures without psychological dimension, strength, or importance. With the help of two principal counter-views, by McKendrick and Regalado, I seek to promote an alternative interpretation, arguing that Calderón in fact demonstrates a progressive view of women, and on occasion positions women as equal representatives of humanity. In turn, this advanced view should be considered when approaching his drama and not least his comedy; in fact such a view is bolstered by his comic heroines. Although advanced readings of Calderonian women of comedy have appeared in recent years with a growing interest in role-play, studies have predominantly focused on Ángela of *La dama duende*, making her appear a lone case. While she has become the most famous Calderonian *dama tramoyera* she is not the only one of significance: there are many others who display iconic prowess on their own terms.

One such example is Doña Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* who forms the central subject of Chapter 2, in which she is discussed in regard to the authentic figure of the Golden Age *mujer tapada/cubierta*. This Calderonian comedy is based around the attitudes of two distinct women with opposing stances on current convention: the determined Clara and her milder counterpart Doña Ana, but both are heroines in their different ways. It could be argued that as Calderón draws on female stereotypes here, an image of a 'pious' woman set against a 'rebellious' one, this could be interpreted as a reactionary play. However, this would be too simplistic – neither female role is presented as a satisfactory state in the drama and a clear-cut definition of 'good' and 'bad' is averted. The strongest presence in the drama is Clara, a talented disguise artist and proud *dama tapada* who brings the issue of a woman's right to free movement and autonomy into the drama as she resists any constraints placed on her by her would-be husband. Clara, in particular, displays the influence of the *mujer tapada/cubierta* on the Calderonian *dama tramoyera/tapada*: she is a strong dramatic representative of the real veiled ladies of seventeenth-century Spain who raised concerns with

regard to female decorum in their society as they appeared to convert virtue (a modest veil), into vice (a seductive accessory). Indeed, the *mujer tapada* was a self-dramatising woman who concerned the Spanish authorities and defied convention as she moved unrecognised, or unseen, crossing boundaries of both propriety and space, and likewise, Clara is proficient in such artistry. Clara is a 'modern' woman with a desire to maintain her independence within a partnership and thus anticipates a new approach to marriage. While she may have, and may still, be seen as the anti-heroine, it is her vibrant presence and talent that carries the play.

In Chapter 3 the focus moves to Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas*, a character of dynamic and dramatic energy, and Calderón's probable first *dama tramoyera* of situation comedy. Marcela's self-conscious love of play-making and interaction with her audience are key facets of the drama. In contrast with some prior views on this play which have tended to side-line her, I aim to establish that Marcela is a major character in the play, if not its protagonist. In order to indicate her relevance, she is analysed in regard to Calderonian archetypes of the prisoner and actor, the influence of the real Golden Age actress, and also to the spirit of a Shakespearean comic heroine such as Rosalind of *As You Like It* (circa 1600). Calderón and Shakespeare, for example, both grant these heroines a sense of sovereignty by way of stage majesty, indicating that their imaginative strategies alter or expand their reality. The heroines offer a defence of the dramatist's art by revealing how their theatrical endeavour has the power to adjust reality as well as to reflect it. Furthermore, a female character is presented as the central source of creativity (i.e. as a maker of art, rather than as a figure of passivity), and this is particularly nuanced in Calderón, where the sense of a sophisticated female director and actor of the *comedia* had strong contextual resonance. Marcela, for instance, begins as a type of prisoner who, like Ángela in *La dama duende*, becomes a performer to free herself, but she also demonstrates a potent resourcefulness, literacy, and an entrepreneurial spirit - a spirit which could be seen to parallel the success of real actresses of the period, women who had some control of their own lives and opted for an unconventional career. Marcela's skill and direction is not just an artificial, self-reflective dramatic device: her control over the stage, script and other characters can also be seen as symptomatic of a rise in enterprising women best exemplified by the celebrated Golden Age actress.

In Chapter 4 Ángela of *La dama duende* is re-examined in regard to the growth of her contemporary appeal and lasting popularity. Rarely discussed in comparison to Calderón's other comic heroines or philosophic vision, I posit that Ángela's appeal is likely due to the

fact that she is bound closest to the two archetypes for humanity found in Calderonian drama: the prisoner and actor. She is the strongest example of how his *dama tramoyera* blends with his metaphysical vision as her dilemma becomes both existential and immediate, which allows her great resonance today. Her desire to escape her circumstances is considered in light of the thoughts of Ortega y Gasset on the concept of the human as actor to explicate more as to how her play-within-the play becomes symptomatic of her aspiration to find relief from her temporal state. In addition her role is discussed in regard to the qualities of Shakespeare's comic heroines Rosalind, Viola of *Twelfth Night* (1601) and Julia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1589) with a view to considering the lasting appeal of all these heroines but also to show why Calderón proves to be the greater proto-feminist.

The last chapter culminates in a comparative perspective on the colonial Mexican writer Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz via a direct comparison of the heroine Laura, of Calderón's *El secreto a voces* with Sor Juana's heroine Leonor of *Los empeños de una casa* (1683). Due to parallel events that occur in both plays, there is evidence to suggest that Sor Juana, writing in the New World, knew Calderón's play and drew on some of the qualities of Laura when she created her own heroine, Leonor. Both these heroines are cerebral, and are also instinctive *damas tramoyeras* as they wish to escape the authority of their fathers, but they make no use of literal disguise. Laura and Leonor are erudite and mirror each other in a symposium-style scene found in both Calderón's original play and Sor Juana's later composition. I suggest that Sor Juana could have appreciated the assured voice that Calderón gives Laura in regard to her free will, but she then takes this further. In light of Sor Juana's own life and the philosophical perspectives outlined in her writings, Leonor can also be interpreted as the embodiment of persecuted Reason. The evidence of Laura as a possible template for Sor Juana's characterisation of Leonor bolsters the assertion that Sor Juana may well have taken inspiration from Calderonian women for her own drama, and thus that Calderón's image of womanhood appealed to Sor Juana, herself a woman who includes blatant proto-feminist politics in her play.

1. (Re) Approaching Women in Calderón

This thesis is grounded on the idea that women must be acknowledged as having a central role in Calderonian drama in order to appreciate not only the full scope of his plays, but in particular the full scope of his comedy. A richer understanding of the role that women play in his dramas, giving equal weight to their situations, words and feelings, helps reveal why the comic form is a central matter within his work and pivotal to our understanding of Calderón's relevance as a playwright. In this respect, the importance of the *dama tramoyera* within the plays and his evident affinity with her constitute fundamental aspects of Calderonian drama. This archetype is marked by resistance to definition and boundaries, and posed especial attraction and potential for Calderón as she interlinks with some of the key tenets of his ethos: the human right to free will and the fate of women under male governance. This congruence between character and playwright allowed Calderón to elevate her into a creative force whose entertaining and inspired behaviour still negotiates the very serious matters of the limits placed on her body, mind and spirit, telling us much about attitudes to gender in his society as well as real women's resistance to constraining customs. Indeed, as will be discussed in the coming chapters, the ways in which Calderón shapes his *damas tramoyeras*' notorious meta-theatrical behaviours, reveals and bolsters the notion of the centrality of women's issues in his work while also contributing a sense of modernity: this figure can offer more assurance of Calderón's ability to present women's rights and experiences as *human* rights and encounters – a relatively radical stance for a man of his time. The basis of this chapter is to set the groundwork for this approach, to discuss how and why women are important to Calderón and, by extension, why comedy is too.

In the first part of this chapter I re-investigate the reasons behind the relative neglect of Calderonian women of comedy. Critical perceptions of Calderón's moralism sitting uneasily alongside the pervasive ambiguity of comedy; of his women as limited and stereotyped (owing largely to the legacy of his honour dramas); and of the text (rather than performance) as primary, serves to explain the relative neglect of Calderón's female characters. I then offer my challenge to the above by drawing principally on the ideas of McKendrick and Regalado, supported by the feminist argumentation of Beauvoir, in order to advance a more sophisticated approach to Calderón's presentation of women. In turn, Calderón's forward-thinking attitude to women is a constant theme of his work: not only is it present in comedy but it is actually enhanced within a comic setting.

When Wilson (1980) began his reassessment of Calderón's comedy he noted the problem of a hierarchy amongst the Calderonian oeuvre: that Calderón's religious and philosophical plays have taken 'first place' amongst the critical work of *calderonistas*, that his honour dramas are renowned and that his mythological plays 'may become a minority cult' (p. 90). In contrast, however, he writes that Calderón's *capa y espada* plays have not only been less appreciated amongst his own works, but that they also lack popularity in comparison to plays of a similar type by Lope or Tirso where 'the human interest is more obvious' (p. 90). Wilson observes, therefore, that up to the mid-twentieth century at least, Calderón's comedies had been routinely neglected or side-lined in favour of his works of perceived gravitas on the one hand, and on the other, that the interest or appeal of his comedies had been either elusive or lacking in comparison to his dramatic predecessors. In regard to the matter of hierarchy, arguably a bias against comedy has been strongest amongst British and American *calderonistas*, with of course, the notable exceptions of Wilson, Wardropper, and more recently, Bergman (2003). Views on Calderón's *capa y espada* plays, for example, have historically been more favourable in Spain, and the inception of a return to Calderonian comedy, especially via his comic heroines, can also be traced back to the Spanish critical tradition.¹¹ But in any case, Wilson infers a root bias within traditional scholarship across the board: that works of a serious nature have been elevated in importance over comedy, and in a sense, this is symptomatic of an age-old partiality within European literary/dramatic criticism in which comedy is regarded as a lesser genre. Yet this generic bias has been further compounded by the matter of strict Christian morality closely tied up with Calderón. Regarded as a strong and consistent moralist, his reputation for gravitas has bolstered the belief that he is best suited to this style, and accordingly, that he evolves his most profound ideas through his serious works. As Wilson indicates above, this belief becomes a somewhat self-fulfilling prophecy as it has channelled repeated attention to a certain number or type of his plays. Indeed, famed for dramatising theological and moral concerns through metaphysical language, structure or allegory, it would seem that Calderón's comedies, set in temporal times and places as is customary in the *capa y espada* genre, could not, on the surface at least, compete with his revered works of abstract grandeur. Moreover, seemingly lacking in depth as light romances, the *capa y espada* plays have also appeared to some as opaque in meaning or, more disconcertingly, seem to dissipate Calderón's ethical

¹¹ See for example, J. Iturralde (1982) and M.V. Morales González (1983) as examples of a renewed interest on the part of female Spanish/Spanish language scholars in Calderón's comic heroines during the eighties.

stance altogether. As De Armas (1976) remarks, Calderón's penchant for comedy has perplexed many in the past:

A question that has arisen concerning this type of play, particularly when dealing with Calderón de la Barca, is the reason why the poet of 'la responsabilidad moral' would become so involved in the production of *capa y espada* plays to the point of becoming its greatest exponent. Indeed, one-third of Calderón's production can be classified as comedy. (p. 48-49)

As the above suggests, a traditional focus on Calderón's serious works has in fact masked the truth that he was a great writer of comedy, and, it seems that any perceived inconsistency in his moral ethos between his comic and serious works has been considered a point of anomaly or confusion, thus also contributing to this group of plays being under-investigated.

A long-held preference for Calderón's serious works has been coupled with an approach in which his male characters are taken as the apex of his work whether serious or comic – and a logical conjecture considering that in the seventeenth-century hierarchy of beings, both naturally and theologically, man was before woman and mankind was universalised as male. For example, a prominent *calderonista* such as Wardropper considers the conversion of Segismundo in *La vida es sueño* as a benchmark by which the development of Calderón's characters and the ethos of his plays must be judged. In some key early reappraisals of his comedy therefore, such as Wardropper's (1967) own, characters are judged through the extent of their moral progression and/or with a focus on men. Thus prior to the advent and influence of women's studies/feminist perspectives on the *comedia* (roughly mid-seventies onwards), there is little engagement with matters relating to the women characters (e.g. how gender may affect choice and ethics), and little interest in the women's roles in the comedies despite their notable trajectories.

It appears then, that for large parts of the twentieth century, an admiration for the serious over the comic, coupled with a corresponding gender hierarchy of male over female, has either blocked engagement with Calderón's comedy on the one hand, or subordinated the role of women in his comedy on the other. Arguably women of comedy have been the lowest denominator as both genre and gender have been against them: they have been perceived to carry less authority than male characters of any generic disposition, as well as carrying less esteem than women characters that feature in plays of a serious nature. From Wilson's initial observation on the state of a Calderonian hierarchy, we can thus deduce a chicken and egg effect with some lasting ramifications: if Calderón's comedies remain of secondary

importance, then so do the women who feature within them. Alternately, if women in general are not thought to be of equal consequence to his men, then neither are the comic works in which many express and act out potent experiences - both views still have the potential to reduce the value and investigation of his *capa y espada* plays as documents of value to Calderón or to dramatic history. Sánchez (2012) argues that *comedia* scholars have neglected *capa y espada* plays across the board precisely because they are woman-centred and have therefore been perceived to lack credibility, and again, arguably this bias has been even greater with regard to Calderón in light of the esteem for his serious drama. In addition to this there is also the matter of some specific ways in which women have been characterised in Calderonian drama. Over the years, for example, labels such as ‘victim’ or ‘sufferer’ have been used to describe his women characters.¹² Such terms are in themselves indicative of a neglect of comedy, given that Calderón’s *damas tramoyeras* rarely accept or present a sense of ‘victimhood’, but more importantly, such labels, without any further exploration of nuance at least, contribute to a sense of a secondary, negative or overpowered female role in his works of any genre. The result is that such typecasting has, and may still have, the potential to skew future interpretations on this matter.

Indeed, the idea that Calderón’s comedy has been neglected is evidenced by the fact that notable views on his representation of the sexes (both prior and up to the late twentieth century) are based on either his religious/philosophical dramas, or his cycle of controversial honour-vengeance dramas, with the reception of the latter having had most effect.¹³ Although forming just three plays in his oeuvre, the impact of Calderón’s honour plays has been strong, and at times these dramatic works have been interpreted as a standard bearer for how he positions and conveys women’s roles. For example, two particular notions which have been associated with Calderonian women, that of victimhood and lamentation are often, but not exclusively, linked to his cycle of honour-vengeance dramas. Some such as Evans (1990) and Smith (1987), for example, hold that a progressive stance concerning the position of women is simply *incompatible* with the *comedia* and its underlying ideologies. Evans wonders whether certain texts of the period, if not the majority, are ‘irredeemably patriarchal, incapable of positioning women in ways other than as ideological stereotypes serving the

¹² For example, A. Wiltout (1979) includes ‘murder-victim’ as a category of Calderonian women; A.A. Parker (1988) describes Calderón’s women as ‘sufferers’ (discussed in more detail later); C. Strosetzki (1998) suggests that Calderón’s women can choose to be victims or not, as the case may be.

¹³ The plays termed Calderón’s cycle of honour-vengeance dramas are *El médico de su honra* (1635), *El secreto agravio, secreta venganza* (1635) and *El pintor de su deshonra* (circa 1644).

interests of the male?’ (p. 119). Both critics infer that Calderón’s honour plays, or as they sometimes termed, his ‘wife-murder’ trilogy, are a prime example of how Spanish Golden Age culture was one of an extreme patriarchy which endorsed women’s subordinate place in orthodox Christianity, and heightened her vulnerable position with regard to the society’s concern for honour. Indeed, the custom of the age held that a woman’s chastity needed to be safeguarded not only for her own honour (which largely equated to her maintenance of chastity throughout her life, i.e. preservation of virginity prior to marriage and subsequent fidelity within marriage) but also for the upkeep of the honour of her male relatives (which mostly equated to their social reputation and dignity). A woman, therefore, became a vassal and a mirror of men’s honour as well as her own, and while she could not easily avenge a slight on her own honour, it was expected that any insult to a man’s honour could and should be confronted by the injured party; an affront could legally even be cleansed by blood in the killing of an adulterous rival lover, guilty wife or both.¹⁴ While such murders were historically rare events, in a dramatic context an honour conflict could be taken to its most extreme outcome as demonstrated by Calderón’s trilogy.¹⁵ Just the possibility of tainted honour, for instance, is enough to create the devastating consequences of *El médico de su honra*, in which the jealous husband Gutierre becomes so convinced of his wife Mencía’s infidelity, he decides that the only cure for such an injury is to have her bled to death. Mencía, although innocent, is seemingly unable to prevent this shocking fate and is left helpless and drained of all her life’s blood at the close of the play. While the honour-vengeance trilogy is now generally considered not to be Calderón’s commendation of an inhumane code but more as his warning against its dire consequences, Evans (1990) still infers that Calderón promoted a culture which endorsed the annihilation of women, as these texts dovetail and extend a pervasive ethos ‘centred on the persecution or destruction of women’ prominent within Golden Age literature (p. 119). Smith (1987) concurs with this view, stating that the Golden Age does not appear to be ‘a promising field of study’ (p. 220) for contributors to women’s studies, and that Calderón’s wife-murder plays are again, a major culprit:

the images of women offered by male authors are rarely sympathetic and often hostile. It is not difficult to imagine a checklist of misogyny in which the burlesque

¹⁴ For a brief description of the code of honour with examples of possible affronts to male honour and subsequent retributions, see E. Wilson (1980), p. 201.

¹⁵ See M. McKendrick (2002), who discusses the pathology of honour manifested in Golden Age drama by comparing and contrasting its dramatic function(s) with events or beliefs concerning the issue in its original socio-historical context.

poetry of Quevedo and the wife murder tragedies of Calderón are only the most conspicuous examples of verbal and physical violence inflicted on women. (p. 220)

While I would never deny the violence inherent in the honour plays, neither critic raises the issue of the violence with any real regard for the women it is inflicted upon; neither the words they speak nor the feelings they express are suggested as being of any relevance to the drama and they are instead indicated as nameless victims. Closely related to this debate, is also the matter of Calderón's presentation of rape in his *comedias*. Acts of sexual violence in his dramas have also been interpreted as a means to highlight Calderón's belief in women's innate victimhood or their role as fated sufferers. Such gross acts, for example, have been viewed less as examples of human tragedy, and more as the result of Calderón's dramatization of the helpless fate of women.

In Parker's (1988) important work he writes that the role of woman in Calderonian drama is a melancholy affair: 'so often in Calderón it is woman who is the main sufferer in life [...] because she must let go what makes life most worth living. To love and to suffer is woman's 'vocation'' (p. 104). Parker suggests that Calderón characterises women's natures in relation to love (normally their love of men) and to love in situations where they frequently become the losers, their loss turns to suffering and this becomes a woman's inevitable fate or 'vocation' as he calls it. Parker conceives then that the role of 'the sufferer' is a role women continually act out in Calderón's dramas. And I agree that there can be no doubt that Calderón gives ample space to the expression of pain endured by women in his *comedias*, and it should be noted that Parker's conception is based primarily on his reading of serious plays and on his understanding of Calderonian feminism: that in giving weight to their suffering, Calderón shows an acute empathy or sympathy as regards the feelings or the situation of women. Indeed, this empathy is especially apparent in plays where moments of female suffering have been caused by unwarranted male violence over which the woman in question has had little or no control. A prime example is the crude rape of Isabel in *El alcalde de Zalamea* (1642); in the subsequent speech accorded her she expresses a painful lament of shame. Yet to label a role such as Isabel's as a female 'sufferer' in terms of love, loss, and lament risks a one dimensional interpretation as it does not develop or contrast the nature of her pain with the wider sense of human suffering that Calderón presents in his dramas. And after all, Isabel did not suffer for loss of love: she suffered the loss of her self-respect and the total violation of her body.

Calderón's suffering women have also diminished in psychological scope in the eyes of other critics. To use Isabel of *El alcalde de Zalamea* as an example again, Ruano de La Haza (2012) states in his introduction to the play, originally published in 1988, that Isabel is not a character of profundity, nor is she truly tragic in classical terms: her character is primarily a victim to be pitied:

El carácter de Isabel no es de una gran profundidad psicológica. Tampoco emerge como una gran figura trágica: su tragedia es tan inmerecida que solo puede producir la compasión del público, no el horror y la admiración que sirven para producir el verdadero efecto trágico. En su sufrimiento no contemplamos la injusticia del universo ni la sociedad, sino la maldad de un hombre. Isabel es una víctima, no una figura trágica. (p. 42)

Ruano de la Haza implies that in being such an undeserved victim, Isabel's plight lacks tragic effect and she herself lacks a psychological dimension. She cannot be both a victim *and* a convincing tragic symbol of humanity; the two are incompatible, her suffering is only at the hands of 'la maldad de un hombre' not the injustice of society or the universe. If one were to agree with Ruano de la Haza, it could be argued that Calderón reduces Isabel to a defenceless victim to evoke precisely how he felt some men treated and viewed women in the context in which he lived: as a being less than human, as no more than prey. But to take this line of thought also runs the risk of diminishing Isabel's full status when it is clear Calderón has given her one of the most unforgettable and lengthy speeches in the play, indeed amongst his *comedias*. Isabel may not just have been a character intended to inspire pity, but also the *admiration* and importance that Ruano de la Haza denies her. After Isabel is attacked, it is true that she takes a submissive stance in regard to the law of honour and fully accepts her dishonoured state, despite this having been grossly created by the act of another. Yet her later desire to be sacrificed at the hands of her father is unflinching. Subsequent to her sexual assault by the captain, she describes how she fled the scene fearing the judgement of her brother, lest he think her guilty; she stumbled blindly in confusion until she found her father and recounted her ordeal to him:

hasta que a tus pies rendida,
antes que me des la muerte
te he contado mis desdichas.
Agora que ya las sabes,
generosamente anima
contra mi vida el acero,
el valor contra mi vida;
que ya para que me mates,
aquestos lazos te quitan

mis manos; alguno dellos
mi cuello infeliz oprima.
Tu hija soy, sin honra estoy,
y tú libre; solicita
con mi muerte tu alabanza,
para que de ti se diga
que por dar vida a tu honor,
diste la muerte a tu hija. (p. 152)¹⁶

Isabel's stance may appear today as an extremely submissive reaction to the injustice of her situation, but she could also be intended to stir, especially within her original seventeenth-century audience, a more complex reaction of both compassion and *esteem*. Isabel is bravely resolute in the face of death and is prepared to be sacrificed; she could even be interpreted as a tentative Christ figure. The implications of Calderón having cast her in such a role would be profound and diverge entirely from the view of her reduced status in the play. Given the central location of her speech in the drama together with the length and weight of her words, it could be argued that Calderón has in fact made the act of sexual violence against this woman the central tragedy of the play, a perspective which would dovetail with McKendrick's (1992) assertion that Calderón often moves women's issues to centre of his dramas even if on the surface they are seemingly focused elsewhere. While the rape makes Isabel a 'sufferer', I do not believe that she is presented in her innermost being as either helpless or as a victim: rape is a human problem which society routinely fails to deal with to the present day and remains a pressing concern of feminist campaigning.

Still, it must be noted at this point where opinion has differed on this matter, as certain Calderonian women have consistently been marked out for their exemplary and strong-minded qualities, together with a great regard for their significance to theme and structure (this principally applies to women of serious drama). Sloman (1953) and Whitby (1965) for example, heralded the importance of Rosaura to an understanding of *La vida es sueño*, as did Maurin (1973) and Lavroff (1976), and for many Rosaura remains today as a bastion of early modern feminism. Other notable examples that have attracted interest include for instance, Queen Cristerna of *Afectos de odio y amor* (1658) esteemed by Ter Horst (1982)¹⁷, Julia of *La devoción de la cruz* much admired by Regalado (1995) and Justina of *El mágico*

¹⁶ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (2012). *El alcalde de Zalamea*. (Ed.). J. Ruano de la Haza. Madrid: Espasa.

¹⁷ Calderón's interest in dramatising female sovereigns is another striking aspect of his work as noted by R. Ter Horst through the example of Cristerna. This point has also been raised more recently by D. Cruickshank (2009) who remarks on Calderón's particular and favourable approach to staging Queens such as Cristerna, but also Estela of *Amor, honor y poder* (1623) and the titular ruler of *La gran Cenobia* (1625).

prodigioso championed by McKendrick (1992). De Armas (1976), on the other hand, was one of the earliest critics to suggest that Ángela of *La dama duende* is a potential exemplar of seventeenth-century feminism. Along with Rosaura, this comic heroine has attracted long-held praise but has become a particular favourite amongst modern scholars in the last ten to twenty years. By the end of this chapter, together with the chapter focused on her and the thesis as whole, I hope to explicate more why the growth of her appeal in recent times, and the likely appeal of her neglected comic sisters, is not only understandable on account of their entertaining vivacity, but is also a *highly logical* response if we revisit Calderón's approach to women from a different perspective altogether. But first we must turn to considering the history of criticism concerning Calderón's women of comedy in order to further examine issues which have prevented this group from achieving wider fame and appreciation.

A History of Reaction to Women of Comedy

As noted, Calderón's *capa y espada* play have drawn comparatively less critical attention and admiration than his works of a serious nature, hence the long-standing neglect of the genre and its heroines, and when the plays have been the focus of analysis in the past, references to the women have often been scarce or unfavourable. However, an early positive assessment of the value of these plays from the Spanish critical canon by Menéndez y Pelayo (1941) contains one of the most intriguing assessments of Calderón's women of comedy, or indeed of Calderonian women in general, offering an insight into the possible controversy of these figures which may have also led to their (and the plays) later dismissal or unpopularity. Contrary to the notion of helpless victims, Menéndez y Pelayo indicates the daring impact of Calderón's women of comedy, but deterred by what he sees as their ardent boldness, he deems their characterisation as unrealistic on the part of the playwright.

Despite being credited with damaging Calderón's reputation as a dramatist in the early twentieth century, Menéndez y Pelayo had a favourable impression of Calderón's *capa y espada* plays. Writing circa 1910, he states that although Calderón's comic pieces do not stand out in comparison to his other works, they are 'de todas las obras de Calderón las que con más deleite se leen, las que con más gusto vemos en tablas; las más amenas, graciosas e inspiradas [...] son las más perfectas del autor (p. 277). Pelayo appreciates the real-life sense of these plays and highlights their jovial nature, but his favourable impression does not extend to the women characters. He writes that Calderón did not make 'tipos femeniles tan

delicados como los de Lope, ni poner en sus damas el encanto de suavidad y ternura que en las suyas puso el Fénix de los ingenios' (p. 271). In his opinion, Calderonian women lack appropriate delicacy or realistic compassion. He concedes that the women of comedy have a certain tenderness learnt from their now-absent mothers, but they are also daring and brave to the extent that they appear half-male ('medio-varonil') and such qualities must have come from having lived alone amongst male guardians. He then reaches the heart of the matter: 'Las damas de Calderón tienen siempre algo de hombrunas. No hay jamás en Calderón esa sutilísima comprensión de la naturaleza femenil, que constituye el grande hechizo de las obras de Lope.' (p. 274). Menéndez y Pelayo's criticism of the comic heroines (although this could be extended to his women in general) is an attack on what he interpreted as their off-putting *masculinity*, and consequently, that Calderón did not delineate realistic women. This interpretation also gains greater interest given that women in Calderón's situation comedies *rarely* cross-dress as men where a link to a male role or masculine qualities is at least made explicit; such 'masculinity' therefore must have appeared elsewhere in their being or attitude. Indeed, what Menéndez y Pelayo feels betrays the women's natural sensibility is a vigour, boldness, or fierce energy which denies them their pleasing grace or appropriate feminine nature. Despite their daring, he also argues that Calderón's ladies are not passionate: 'no muy sensibles ni muy apasionados, obrando siempre en ellas más los celos, los resentimientos y el propio amor' (p. 274). However, I infer that Calderón's women do appear passionate given that Menéndez y Pelayo describes them as bold; the problem may have been that their resentments and passions (i.e. self-interests) encompassed ideals aside from romantic love as was perhaps expected or desired in his time, and consequently Menéndez y Pelayo deems their ambitions or complaints as misdirected, antagonistic or even unbelievable. And yet, as we shall see in the coming chapters, the comic heroines discussed often express their dissatisfaction or enthusiasm on a range of matters. Clara in *Mañanas de abril y mayo* voices an open attack on her partner in regard to the movement open to men in society but disallowed to women; Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas* resists her enclosure and pursues her plans to see Lisardo with an unshakable vigour, but she equally delights in her creative ability to perform an adventure before the audience; Ángela of *La dama duende* resents her position under her brothers' guard and is (arguably) concerned above all with her freedom and self-expression rather than with the arrival of Manuel; and Laura of *El secreto a voces* is resolute in following her own path with her chosen partner even though it goes against her father's and her ruler's wishes, and what is more, she encourages the audience to follow and imitate *her* particular understanding of 'discretion'. However, the qualities which Menéndez y

Pelayo felt were too masculine to denote ‘real’ women such as self-determination, energy and force are qualities which are now perceived by many as the prerogative of either sex. Calderón’s seventeenth-century heroines, therefore, appear relevant today exactly *because* they embrace traits, anxieties (mental/existential angst), ambitions, and desires beyond the stereotype of feminine limitations of the period (e.g. amenability, gentleness or submissiveness). Their inability to demonstrate a pleasing grace or calmness (at odds with the serene role model of the Madonna for example) or a desire to please, is seemingly due to an *a priori* unsettled stance regarding their personal or social position. Furthermore, a sense of angst or dissatisfaction is present across his women of all social standing and all genres, from Clara and Ángela of the *capa y espada* plays, Rosaura and Julia of philosophical and religious dramas, to the Queens Criserna or Cenobia of the historical works. In fact, the audacious qualities of Calderón’s women, which were offensive and unrealistic to Menéndez y Pelayo in 1911, are likely to constitute their principal *appeal* for later moderns: they project a radical feminine vision which would appear forward-looking in the early twentieth century, let alone the seventeenth.

A later contribution from the Spanish canon is Briones’ (1960) edition of Calderón’s *capa y espada* plays, which offers a favourable opinion on the ingenuity of the female characters and also the Cervantine influence. Briones highlights the creativity of the heroines who form ‘protagonistas de disimulo’ and notes their relevance in respect to historical reality, in that their behaviour derives from ‘la inventiva y el ingenio de estas damas de la época, para quienes la más inquisitiva vigilancia de los parientes no significaba obstáculo alguno’ (33b). In contrast to Menéndez y Pelayo, Briones suggests that Calderón’s comedies pick up on a *realistic* ethos of certain young women (and men) of the period who did not see zealous parental guardianship as a problem, but rather as something to be circumvented through imaginative strategies. This favourable strain in regard to the creative flair of the women characters is a view advanced by later Spanish scholars as noted ahead. However, the emphasis on the jovial nature of the plays from the Spanish canon contrasts with some of the first re-evaluations of Calderón’s approach to comedy in Britain and America. In significant analysis of the comedies from the British and American critical canon of a similar era, the purpose in reassessing the value of the plays is to highlight their relative value through linking theme(s) and action closely to revered serious works. This perspective suggests that in order to elevate the comedies, they need to be judged by the extent to which they display a

moral seriousness comparable to the core Christian ethos that underpins Calderón's celebrated works of gravitas.

For example, as Wilson (1980) understands them, Calderón's *capa y espada* plays present admirable characters who demonstrate the virtue of prudence and the ability to learn from error in many scenarios. The plays present a sense of justice, providence even, and at times 'success comes most readily to those who deserve it' (p. 95). The comic *capa y espada* offers a vision and a way of navigating the confusion of the world based on the Christian principles that underlie Calderón's more serious dramas. The plays therefore are of value in themselves and also relate to Calderón's core dramatic and philosophic principles (p. 95):

The characters in the plays live in a world of unfortunate coincidence and confusion. As lovers they must put their ladies' good first: *antes que todo es mi dama*; as men of honour they have certain rules of conduct to follow. (p. 99)

However, Wilson avoids discussing the female characters as full subjects: the characters or 'lovers' that he refers to are men, whilst the women are 'ladies' of male rivals or the 'daughters' of overprotective fathers. The inference is that the women remain passive figures who do not partake in wider issues in the drama: the central issues concerning personal and social conduct apply exclusively to the men. Similarly, Wardropper (1966) positions the key quest in Calderón's *capa y espada* plays as the existential anguish of baroque man who must discover his strengths and limitations. This grand theme is reduced to a simple, 'superficial', question of mistaken identity in the comedies: 'Who is [the] mysterious lady?' (p. 183). Wardropper positions a mysterious woman (or likely *dama tapada*) in a Calderonian *capa y espada* play as the object of a male conundrum, and the search for her identity functions as a reflection of man's search for self-knowledge. He also notes that in Calderón's *capa y espadas* the moral foundation is not immediately obvious: 'En la parte cómica de su producción teatral Calderón parece dejar a un lado esta cuestión.' (1967, p. 169), Christian ethics are thus seemingly lacking in these plays as the characters are not preoccupied with saving their soul nor do they fear the dictates or consequences of compromised honour. In keeping with his belief that Calderón is *the* moral poet however, Wardropper (1966) develops a view in which Calderón maintains a serious sense of life in his comedies by presenting them as always on the brink of tragedy, i.e. a guilty sister may face the threat of a brother's dagger, only for her death to be averted at the last minute: in this sense the comedies foreshadow an honour play. He concludes that the issue of moral responsibility is present in comedies but is directed on the social plane rather than the spiritual: 'la responsabilidad

recíproca o social' (Wardropper, 1967, p. 691). Wilson and Wardropper bolster the parallels between the serious and the comic, highlighting the comedies' alternate focus on the social and also the presence of a serious threat or themes. While side-lining the entertainment value of the plays, both critics do assert the important point that comedy can accommodate serious issues without losing its generic basis. Yet, with the bar set by a moral code founded on *La vida es sueño*, and with male experience taken as the central human concern, their analysis does not venture into how the women are affected by or react to their circumstances as a serious point of interest, but, as it must be noted, this was not the purpose of their criticism. As we can see, rather than exploring how the comedies' strength might in fact be in their ambiguity, and how Calderón's interest might also be in such ambiguity (especially concerning the behaviour of the women and the issue of gender), the analytical frame remained morally circumscribed. Indeed, some who do start pick up on the women's behaviour find a disconcerting or rebellious strain in certain comic heroines.

Hesse (1967), for instance, observes that some of the humour in *Casa con dos puertas* derives from 'Calderón's mild satire of such social conventions as marriage and the seclusion of women' (p. 55), but he was quick to add that any depth in regard to such problems is 'overshadowed in the play by intrigue, comic situations, the highly lyrical and baroque style and the clever interweaving of the action, all of which provide "good theater"' (p. 55). He also suggests that while forceful, the heroines are not necessarily likeable, Marcela for example is 'clever, deceitful, selfish and bold' (p. 55). While Hesse acknowledges a satirical approach concerning the isolation of women, he trivializes the issue in order to suggest that such matters are not as important as the excitement of the intrigue. And yet, of course, there would be *no* intrigue without the female characters or without their seclusion, and in turn, without the *reasons* for their seclusion and their attempts to escape. Indeed, for many women characters in these plays, social convention, seclusion, and escape *are all* serious matters.

Mujica (1986) highlights the 'spunky' rebel-with-a-cause aura of Marcela, but focuses on how such characterisation sits uncomfortably with ethics. She contends, for instance, that Calderón's comic characters learn little from their experiences:

What is so discomfiting about Calderón's comedy is that although the characters find the way out of their immediate dilemma, they gain no insight from the experience. They do not question the behaviour that brought them to a deadlock, and consequently, they do not modify their outlook. (p. 22)

Following an ethical framework, Mujica links a lack of character development to a specific lack of moral development; like Hesse, she also describes Marcela as ‘short-sighted and selfish’ (p. 13). She is discomfited that Marcela displays an unrepentant show of deceit and yet still succeeds in her aims in the play: does she triumph, then, through displaying the opposite of the prized (Christian) virtues of self-sacrifice, prudence and honesty? And how does this tally with Calderón’s alignment with such values? Mujica further bolsters the idea of a pervasive self-interest in the plays by suggesting that it is the characters’ ‘obsessiveness, short sightedness and selfishness that set the plot in motion’ (p. 22). The motives behind Marcela’s objectives thus remain linked to selfishness rather than innovation, and once again she is not credited with being an appealing character. In Mujica’s view, although there is justification for Marcela’s rebellion in the play, Calderón still uses her example as a cause for reprimand rather than admiration.

Parker (1988), who acknowledges a great sympathy on the part of Calderón in regard to women in serious drama, has strong reservations about the significance of their role in comedy. He perceives a sense of feminist protest in the *capa y espada* genre but does not see the women’s provocative behaviour as serious subject matter: ‘It would, however, be misguided to take this type of theme seriously as a form of social satire’ (p. 136). In addition, he argues that Calderonian women do not have as much impact in comedy as other dramatists such as Tirso, and that while a proto-feminist theme is present in the *capa y espada* this is because it *is* comic. Hence, female dominance in the plays’ original context was amusing because it would never be allowed in life: female rebellion is suited to comedy as it does not seriously satirise or threaten the normal social state. Plays such as *La dama duende* therefore, express the limits of female emancipation accepted in seventeenth-century Spain and no more: women ‘could be allowed good humouredly to outwit fathers and brothers, but they could not be permitted to rebel against their natures to the extent of defiantly rejecting marriage’ (p. 137).¹⁸ In light of his view, Parker suggests that there is no significant proto-feminism present in the comedies and that if there is a feminist angle in Calderón, it remains related to pity, not potency.

¹⁸ It should be noted that there are some strong exceptions to this rule on the part of Calderón which not only puts into question the wholesale view that women cannot reject marriage in the *comedia*, but also offers further examples of Calderón’s ability to deviate from the norm in his presentation of women. His Justina of *El mágico prodigioso* and Eugenia of *El José de las mujeres* (1641), for example, strongly reject marriage in favour of religious devotion or intellectual pursuit and do so with the playwright’s apparent admiration.

As we have seen, the reputation of Calderonian morality and gravitas has been the most common means to marginalise or criticise the impact of women in his *capa y espada* plays within past Anglo-American criticism. The overall stance taken above suggests that Calderón's comedy has an overriding serious tone, forms a corrective satire to improve morality on the part of men or women (and this is not without grounds given legislation in the 1620s calling for reform), or re-asserts the dominant ideology of male governance. But by and large there is no countenancing of the possibility that Calderón's use of irony or humour (particularly on the part of the women characters) and the arousal of laughter, may in fact diffuse certain gender stereotypes or biases at hand and put into question serious issues concerning the status quo. However, running parallel to the views above there emerged a counter-approach amongst female Spanish-language critics. Following in the vein of McKendrick's (1974) substantial broaching of the role of women in the *comedia*, and De Armas' (1976) general reappraisal of women in Golden Age comedy, a flurry of articles in the 1980s began to take the women's part first and readdress women of Calderonian comedy via Ángela of *La dama duende*. This batch of scholars share a common stance in that Ángela's perspective forms the focus of their analysis, revealing in turn the sense of her creativity, her role as an agent or her role as a source of renewal. These critics see more positive ambiguity in her character than negative - a notable point which differs from De Armas' opinion that Ángela possesses a disconcerting aura of a modern Eve. Iturralde (1982), for example, explores how Ángela's dilemma under her brothers' guard relates to wider ideas of freedom and love in Calderón. Schizzanzo Mandel (1983) introduces the importance of her role-playing as 'zonas que la mujer aprende a explorar para alcanzar una posición dominante y realizar una nueva dimensión de su existencia.' (p. 640-641) - in this sense the play reveals itself as a creative labyrinth in which Ángela explores her hopes, dreams and romantic/sexual expression. Morales González (1983) drew attention to the use of costume, and suggests that thanks to Calderón, the entire genre 'también pudiera llamarse con igual propiedad "comedia de manto y embozo" por la frecuencia con que aparece la mujer tapada' (p. 6). In the former cases both critics bring to light the play's attention on Ángela's concerns, along with her impact on the theme, structure and other characters. In the latter case the iconic impact of Calderón's *dama tapadas* is championed as being of equal, if not greater, importance, than the cape and sword wearing *gallanes*.

Apart from some brief references to other Calderonian comic heroines in the surveys by Morales González and later by Navarro Durán, the constant link in the chain has remained

Ángela.¹⁹ It is now time to indicate why such a growth in modern interest in her character is unsurprising if we reconsider Calderón's stance on the matter from the outset. If we upturn the sense of women as marginal victims in his work and start to consider how and why women can function in a central, or more importantly, in a paradigmatic *human* role in his dramas, then Ángela's appeal and the reasons behind the complex layers of her character discerned in recent times is more obvious. From this perspective, we can also see that it is not the case that new scholars have decided that Ángela is an innovative female character to suit their interests, but that in relative terms she always was and is. As I emphasise throughout this thesis, the matter of performance is also crucial to the impact of these dramas, above all in comedy where there is an increased potential for stage-audience interaction: there is a great immediacy and *present* feel to her and her comic sisters. Moreover, with closer consideration of the historical conditions of performance, we can bring to light the effective controversy and *topicality* of these women of comedy in their time, a fact which has likely prompted the mixed critical responses to these women over the years. While Ángela has become an icon, she is not the only important comic figure. Many of her sisters of comedy demonstrate why the comic genre enhances the forward-thinking approach to women that underpins Calderonian drama.

From the Margins to the Centre: Woman as Human in Calderón

Strosetzki (1998) suggests that there are two major options for Calderonian women: 'En Calderón, se presentan a priori dos posibilidades para la mujer: puede ser víctima o, al contrario, autora de los hechos' (p. 118). While I contest certain uses of the label victim, it is true, there is an acute awareness in the drama of Calderón that women risked being imprisoned within their femininity, within their particularity in the social and religious context in which he lived, that: 'women were victimized in [a] gendered view of God's order, for the enclosure that protects also imprisons, discrediting those who are enclosed, depriving them of autonomy and opportunities' (Perry, 1990, 178). Indeed, Calderón presents a strong awareness of the injustice that could occur on the temporal level in a gendered hierarchy

¹⁹ The interest in Ángela on the part of this group of Spanish scholars prompted wider attention which spread to the Anglo-American canon by the early 1990s (together with a growth in general volumes dedicated to women of the *comedia*, for example A. Stoll and Smith (2000)). As mentioned in the introduction, a fashion for articles on Ángela, both favourable and conservative, has continued to the present. In two significant recent studies on Golden Age comedy and role-play both Thacker (2003) and Sánchez (2012) turn to her in their respective studies; for more detail on the legacy of Ángela see Chapter 4.

where man is placed before woman; an acute risk of a woman being unjustly controlled or confined by male authority and furthermore unable to defend herself or to act on her own accord when necessary. While Calderón sides with a woman at the mercy of (unjust) male instruction which denies her divine right to free will, he does not deny outright male authority on the temporal level as in the case of Julia in *La devoción de la cruz*. Yet, the injustice a woman may experience through being imprisoned (emotionally or literally) due to her sex is not something that Calderón presents in order to diminish her, but instead to link her to his wider understanding of humanity. In this sense something more advanced is formed: a recognition of the plight of woman under male domination which still affirms her equal humanity, and this is notable given that these interlinked concerns anticipate the particular feminism of Beauvoir in the twentieth century. Beauvoir believed that sexism was grounded on denying women access to the universal (Moi, 2008, 204). Thus, my issue with the word ‘victim’ or ‘sufferer’ to describe Calderonian women is when the term is applied to diminish the relevance of women’s experience in his plays or to reinforce the stereotype that his women characters are ‘weak’. By drawing now on a combination of the thoughts of Parker, McKendrick and Regalado, I would instead like to advance a different appreciation of Calderonian women. Each of these critics has made crucial insights to suggest that Calderón did not just present his women as pitiable victims, but as members of both humankind and their sex, where one aspect does not have to be reduced at the expense of the other.

I quoted Parker as a critic who summarised the role of Calderón’s women as one of love, loss and lament. However, within Parker’s wider analysis of Calderón’s thought he implicitly develops a counter-idea; that a woman can take on a role of much wider and more universal significance. But Parker does not develop any potential significance in this and I address his thoughts shortly. Regalado and McKendrick however, are two critics who have developed the implications of the fact that, on a number of occasions, Calderón presents a symbolic figure of humankind as shared between the sexes. Regalado (1995) points out that women in fact encompass a wide range of positions in Calderonian drama from the earthly to the divine:

En su teatro el personaje femenino aparece como madre, hija, hermana, amante, santa, pecadora, intelectual, bandolera, aristocrática, burguesa, plebeya, gobernante, diosa o semidiosa; como María, la madre de Cristo, o la misma personificación de la Humana Naturaleza en los autos sacramentales. (p. 937)

Regalado makes clear that Calderón's women can embody roles from the familial and social (hija, amante) to the symbolic and theological (pecadora, santa, diosa); and that a woman can also be the personification of human nature, a point which must be of interest at a time when humanity was almost always universalised as male, that of 'mankind'. Regalado develops a view that Calderón offers a progressive stance in regard to woman in light of the dramatist's conception that: 'La integridad de la persona, su valer, posee una autonomía cuyo origen es divino y abarca a la naturaleza humana sin distinción de sexos' (p. 941). McKendrick (1992) also concludes that Calderón goes a step further than his dramatic contemporaries in portraying men and women as equal representatives of humankind, in light of a notable 'ontological engagement with women on both human and spiritual levels' (p. 2), but equally, that he does not ignore specific conditions which affect the fate of men and women differently in the temporal world. I intend to develop the implications of both critical views above but begin with a return to Parker.

Parker (1988) analyses how a specific form of Calderonian myth took shape in his dramatic career and it is one encapsulated in the role of the prisoner in the tower: 'a personal myth, one that Calderón invents for a purpose that has become, with *La vida es sueño*, very significant for him' (p. 86). Parker describes the meaning of the prison and prisoner here: 'the symbol of the prison [...] in its simplest terms, means that humanity as a whole is condemned to a life of pain, suffering being a prison into which all men are born' (p. 87). Imprisonment, then, represented by a literal form of enclosure, is the condition at the heart of human experience, a form of acute suffering or 'inexplicable guilt'. If, however, as Parker declared in a different context earlier, *woman* is the greatest sufferer in Calderón's drama, then what is the difference between female suffering and the suffering of 'mankind'? Indeed, he is well aware that Calderón's imprisoned character, an archetype of humanity or 'mankind' is frequently represented by a woman:

It is a curious fact, not previously explained satisfactorily, that Segismundo, a fatherless son brought up in a prison and alternating between imprisonment and freedom, becomes not so much a 'type character' for Calderón as a 'type figure', even an 'archetypal' one. This change is effected when a young man or woman, brought up in prison from birth for reasons of which he or she, alone in the world of nature, seems to be deprived, is suddenly given freedom and proceeds to exercise it. (p. 86)

As Parker describes, this ‘type figure’ can be a young man or woman and he further notes that: ‘Segismundo is followed by ten further dramatic characters, who reintroduce the horoscope-tower myth [...] In six of these cases the prisoner is a woman, in four a man.’ (p. 92). In fact he records that women embody the figure on two more occasions than a man. The archetype is composed of a prisoner, often a child of violent nature estranged from his/her father and ill-fated by a horoscope; but the figure *can be* of either gender. In Parker’s chapter ‘The Destiny of Man’, in which he develops his theory, man remains synonymous with humankind, but he elaborates further how the human archetype is interchangeable. This is best demonstrated in his description of *La devoción de la cruz*. Parker points out that in *La vida es sueño* the figure of the prisoner and the violent son appear as one in the form of Segismundo. In *La devoción de la cruz*, however, the prisoner and the estranged son are split into two characters, one male and one female, the separated twins: ‘with Eusebio as the ‘rebellious son’, or violent young man of unknown parentage, and with Julia as ‘the prisoner’, confined not in a jail but against her will in an enclosed convent’ (p. 349). In this case, the female Julia is made the prisoner, and it is she who must challenge the will of her father Curcio. Indeed, Curcio orders Julia to enter a convent in an attempt to separate her from Eusebio but at the same effectively imprison her against her will. To this prospect Julia outright rejects the offer and suggests to her father that if he is so keen for her to take the veil, perhaps he would like to join her: ‘Pues si tú vives por mí, / toma también el estado’ (I. 597-8)²⁰.

However, Julia’s type of imprisonment in *La devoción de la cruz* remains linked to her sex: to be ordered to a convent cell represents a particular female fate in both the social and dramatic contexts of early modern Spain. Furthermore, when Julia rebels and flees the convent, part of her rebellion involves covering her sex - in a sense locking away part of herself as she disguises as a male outlaw. Julia faces the specifically female imprisonment of the convent cell, but at the same time and in accordance with Parker’s theory of Calderón’s ‘prisoner’, it is she who takes the position of the prisoner and thus embodies the role reserved for humankind. It would seem then in the example of Julia that female experience is presented as simultaneously representative of the human condition.

Regalado (1995) suggests that the stance Calderón grants Julia in fact anticipates the future guarantee of human rights by political institutions. When Julia challenges the will of

²⁰ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (2000). *La devoción de la cruz*. (Ed.) M. Delgado. Madrid: Cátedra.

her father with the following lines: 'La autoridad / de padre, que es preferida, / imperio tiene en la vida, / pero no en la libertad' (I. 575-578) she does not deny the rule of the father 'en la vida', but she does 'en libertad'. Regalado draws on Julia's vocabulary to highlight that she is granted a diction which proves her an implicit intellectual; but also the significance of her awareness of her *libertad*. He writes:

La libertad a la que alude Julia no corresponde a una realidad social o a la libertad postulada por las ideologías y doctrinas políticas que minarán y darán al traste con el Antiguo Régimen, sino a un sentimiento religioso que funda la libertad de elección. (p. 939)

Regalado asserts that the notion of freedom that Julia broaches in response to her father is based on a new religious sentiment of free will, and a sentiment that acknowledges 'el origen divino del alma' which forms part of 'una naturaleza humana en común' (p. 940). This notion of liberty

se identifica con el fondo insobornable e inviolable de la persona, el fuero interno de la conciencia que precede a la libertad garantizada por el derecho de las constituciones burguesas, consecuencia de las transformaciones revolucionarias de fines del siglo XVII. (p. 940)

Thus, when Julia asserts her right to free choice she is at the same time asserting her divine humanity, a humanity that is not reduced in any way by her being female. This is a progressive stance which bolsters Regalado's view that in Calderón's theatre 'la mujer es un ser que también se gana la vida metafísicamente, en igualdad con el hombre' (p. 946) and in turn supports the title of Regalado's study, that roots of modernity can be traced in Calderón.

While Parker had inferred that Julia shares the role of humankind with her brother, McKendrick also made the same link but *did* develop its significance. McKendrick (1992) states that she had always regarded Julia as an individual with her brother Eusebio, that she is 'as much a representative of mankind as he is, as capable of evil and of salvation' (p. 1) and therefore 'at this level of enquiry into the human condition, gender is no longer of significance for Calderón' (p. 1). But McKendrick modified her initial opinion:

it seems to me now that the implications of Julia's role are more radical than this suggests. That Calderón should accord Julia her full place in the Christian scheme of sin and redemption is to be expected, in spite of the misogyny enshrined in the scholastic tradition, though we might want to reflect on the fact that Renaissance theologians still felt it necessary to ask themselves whether women really were human beings and whether they too were created in the image of God. More significant, I

think, is Julia's status in the play as a *representative of humankind*, a representative equal in spiritual terms with her twin brother; their very twinning, indeed, would seem to accord them inseparable status and link them anthropologically to the divine. (p. 1)

McKendrick indicates that Calderón's inclusion of Julia in the Christian scheme of sin and redemption is in itself not unusual; but the extent to which he allows her to be an equal representative of humankind as her brother *is* significant, and here is the potential for seeing Calderón as a forward thinker. Indeed, the word radical to describe the position Calderón accords Julia is not far-fetched if considered in light of the views of the leading European feminist of the twentieth century. Beauvoir believed that woman's access to the universal was the prerequisite of female emancipation from patriarchy: that only when woman is accepted as a human being beyond sexual difference will she then 'be able to make her history, her problems, her doubts and her hopes those of humanity' (de Beauvoir, 2011, p. 767). It is remarkable then that Calderón, a bachelor writing in Counter-Reformation Spain, did grant universal access to Julia.

The Importance of the Comic Perspective

In light of the above, it would seem a great oversight to assume or to consider that women in Calderón's drama function as anything less than important characters, and his revelatory stance on their position is one of the most intriguing aspects of his entire oeuvre. It is not just a fashionable choice in light of modern feminism for example, to take the 'victims' such as Isabel or Mencía as a serious focus of concern, but a fully justifiable one. Furthermore, given the topic of the present work, there is no reason to suppose that this striking stance would change in Calderón's approach to comedy; in fact quite the opposite. His heroines of comedy are important standard bearers who demonstrate how Calderón's key thematic concerns combine and advance his representation of women. As noted in the introduction, the archetype of the prisoner marks his women of comedy. They are set within conflicts of freedom and restraint in 'everyday' contexts, but in addition, Calderón combines another archetype into their roles: that of the actor. Like the prisoner, the actor functions as Calderón's complementary paradigmatic figure through which to convey the circumscribed reality of human existence: a struggle within or against a pre-given role. In his comedies there is awareness of how women function in this paradigm on at least two levels: how they are positioned as highly restrained actors and then how they challenge this situation or liberate

their potential on stage. Johnson's (1997) remark in regard to *El gran teatro del mundo* (circa 1633-1635)²¹, and Calderón's allegorical dramatic representation of the world stage metaphor, help to elucidate this idea. He notes a deviant position in this allegorical play with regard to how women are positioned in the world:

But Calderón does not merely repeat the official line. In fact... [...] With respect to the situation and social role of women. Calderón shows how they are manipulated by the world and defined either as decorative objects (*dama hermosa*) or remanded into passivity in frustration of their desire for intellectual fulfilment (*religiosa*). (p. 270)

Johnson suggests that the roles of women in Calderón's play (*hermosa, religiosa, discreción*) are passive and enforced, i.e. there is a sense of a man-made manipulation of their natural or God-given rights and abilities. Thus the frustrated tone that overhangs so many Calderonian women appears to stem from their awareness of these *a priori* restrictions placed on their potential to act as human beings (free will), and in turn that they are not intrinsically lesser humans than men. But what is liberating about comedy is how it offers a 'real' sense that limitations can be challenged. An irony bolstered by the comic heroines is that despite the official line pacifying women or curtailing their liberty in Golden Age society, they were among the most liberated of women. Actresses performing these roles gave credence to the idea that rules can be expanded: their self-conscious acting not only suggests that their character is taking their own path, but is also heightened and made real by their own acting success live on stage. Much of the controversy of these comedies, especially that concerning the self-driven women, which has eluded critics or confused them in the past or present is often the point: these heroines (and plays as a whole) engage with polemical gender issues of their time. If they are unsettling characters, it is because they are based on or respond to the influence of 'unsettling' women of the period. Actresses living outside the boundaries of convention or *mujeres tapadas* going undercover in public, were naturally comic figures if a comic ethos is taken to be that which resists or dissolves borders. But the point to reiterate is that such interest in this controversy is *not* inconsistent with Calderonian morality but in keeping with his commitment to irony and women. Ter Horst (1982) goes as far as to state that Calderonian art, although in many ways 'miraculously attuned to post-Tridentine dogma' asserts itself strongly against doctrine in its stance on women: 'The God of Calderonian secular drama is feminine, a goddess, a woman' (p. 34). The comedies do not so much dissipate his moral values but reassert woman as an equal apex of his work. In essence, it is

²¹ Calderón's allegorical drama based on the metaphor of the 'world as a stage' in which God is director and humans are actors cast in roles.

questionable to use Calderón as a bastion of a staunch patriarchal tradition of Golden Age Spain which devalued, limited, or downplayed the strength and equal humanity of women. In many ways his works form a strong stance against a (re)curtailment of women's rights or the promotion of an aggressive, outmoded masculinity in the 1620s to restore the nation's pride.

Despite the influential work on women and the *comedia* by McKendrick or De Armas in the seventies, or the Spanish critics on comedy in the 1980s as noted earlier, some still continued to write women out of Calderonian drama. Even with the challenge to traditional and often misogynist views, the influence of the past has continued to shape, at least to some extent, critical perceptions of Calderonian women. This stance has also affected comparative perspectives concerning the lauded proto-feminist Sor Juana. Significantly, Merrim (1991), for example, sees Calderón and Sor Juana as incompatible, while I see a rich vein of communality between them. For Merrim, Calderón like other male authors of the period, presents women as troublesome rather than innovative, and was 'less interested in redefining attitudes to women per se than in the essential textual function 'she' fulfilled, of problematizing and eventually reaffirming collective values' (p. 97). More recently, Friedman (in Mujica, 2013) holds that strong female characters in the *comedia* serve to reaffirm the status quo since their strength or 'aggression' is ephemeral. I reject the assumption that Calderonian women are only fleetingly strong, and that women and techniques associated with them merely represent the status quo and show no sense of advancement. With more attention placed on comedy such notions of Calderonian women as victims or lamenters can be balanced with notions of their centrality, innovative skill, eloquence and creativity.

My purpose is to demonstrate the central status of women and to reappraise the significance of comedy in the light of my arguments. This discussion continues with reference to the veil as disguise with the focus on examining women's sense of autonomy. Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* is taken as my example.

2. The Art of Veiling: Doña Clara's rebellious disguise in *Mañanas de abril y mayo*

Can a woman who dissembles, who wishes to be thought of as something other than she is, be a good woman?

Juan Luis Vives, The Education of a Christian Woman

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the outstanding character of Doña Clara of *Mañanas de abril y mayo*²², principally in regard to how her use of veiling as disguise forms a socio-historically inspired meta-theatrical technique through which to perceive issues concerning women's (and by extension men's) autonomy and decorum in Calderón's Counter-Reformation society. Chronologically speaking, Clara is not the earliest Calderonian *dama tramoyera* to be discussed in this thesis - that accolade belongs to Marcela in Chapter 3 - but she is a rich source with which to begin proceedings as she demonstrates all the meta-theatrical aspects typical of Calderón's approach to the archetype as outlined in the introduction: disguise (the veil) combined with role-play, a form of self-consciousness and verbal irony. However, as one technique often dominates over the others, the main reason that I am to begin with an analysis of Clara, is because she introduces with aplomb the most iconic attribute of Calderón's *damas tramoyeras*: the veil. My consideration of Clara's use of disguise as firmly related to her original context is not posited as a means of distancing her, leaving her bound further to her own time, but to bring her forth as an anticipatory presence on the contemporary stage and to indicate where her concerns have relevance for the present. Indeed, Clara envisages her abilities as more *realistic* than those afforded by her current stage

²² The year in which Calderón wrote *Mañanas de abril y mayo* is uncertain. Although dated 1634, the editors of the English translation assert that no manuscript of the play before 1664 remains; there is, however, evidence to suggest it was written at least twenty years earlier as the text mentions Queen Isabel who died in 1644. It also references a number of prior plays such as Calderón's own *La dama duende* composed in 1629 and makes an allusion to Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla* of 1630 (Muir and Mackenzie 1985, p. xiv). Cruickshank (2009) further highlights a reference to *Para todas* of 1632 by Pérez Montalbán (p. 142). In sum all such references are felt to locate the play's composition to within the first half of the 1630s, and there is also speculation that a first performance of the play could have happened in the early summer of 1634 as part of court festivities to celebrate the inauguration of the new palace and gardens: 'We know that Calderón wrote an auto [...] for these festivities, entitled *El Nuevo palacio del Retiro*, performed in the spring of 1634. It is possible that both the auto and Calderón's comedy *Mañanas de abril y mayo* [...] were actually performed out of doors during that spring of 1634, in the very gardens they were composed to eulogize' (Muir and Mackenzie, 1985, p. xiv). I also believe (as will be discussed in this chapter) that the play's focus on Clara's unorthodox use of veiling gives more weight to its composition being within the 1630s due to the documented disorder created by real *mujeres tapadas* in some of Spain's major cities during the decade: Clara's use of veiling therefore would have formed a live 'sign of the times' on stage.

role: her stance is thus self-confident and forward-thinking. As a strong-willed and self-appointed ‘vengadora de las mujeres’ (581a)²³, Clara is possessed with a talent for dissembling and a sharp ironic wit: I believe that her words, actions and reactions form the central prism through which to observe the topical gender issues of her day which dominate this play. In the opinion of her maid Inés, Clara likes her freedom:

tú (perdona que lo diga),
mujer, en justo o injusto
muy amiga de tu gusto,
de tu libertad amiga. (573b)

As one concerned with the state of her liberty, this already marks her as a Calderonian woman, and as a heroine of comedy she is also one of his best, and possibly his most radical, boundary-testing *damas tramoyeras*. In her rejection of conventions and desire for independence, Clara’s ambition to prove her ingenuity to her would-be husband Don Hipólito, is the central performance of the play and manifests in her acts of disguise within the drama which forms a meta-drama of attempted self-determination and individuality; but shortly after her plan has begun, things begin to go awry. By drawing an unwitting participant in the shape of the innocent and demure Doña Ana into her scheme, and with some unexpected and unpleasant consequences, Clara’s impulsive behaviour has the ability to split opinion: does she truly have the dignity to be a Calderonian heroine and did he mean her to be so?²⁴ Does he set out to humble her confidence and disobedience in the play or to elevate her ingenuity? Is she ultimately a reactionary or a progressive character? This type of debate is symptomatic of both her purposeful (and enjoyable) *unsettling* of multiple levels of the drama, and indeed, of Calderón’s approach to his *damas tramoyeras* who (paradoxically) emerge as paradigmatic comic characters through their resistance to being pigeon-holed.

Accordingly, while Clara does find herself at fault in the play, equally she *cannot* be without admiration: she is in fact a refreshingly flawed female character. And this is a point

²³ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (1960). *Mañanas de abril y mayo* in *Don Pedro Calderón de la Barca Obras completas: Tomo II Comedias*. (Ed.) Ángel Valbuena Briones. Aguilar: Madrid.

²⁴ D. Cruickshank (2009) for example, asserts that in *Mañanas de abril y mayo* ‘the strongest and most sensible character’ is Doña Ana (p. 142). He suggests that while Calderón does make the champion of the play a woman, it is Ana who forms the play’s heroine as Calderón champions principled women and Ana is ‘another Rosaura, Ángela, or Cenobia’ (p. 236). I seek to challenge this view however, by suggesting that Calderón presents Clara’s intelligent self-awareness in comparison to the stoical but unchallenging compliance of Ana, as *equally* admirable. Furthermore, although potentially controversial in her own time, Clara has contemporary appeal as she is unashamedly indecorous in the name of independence and highlights the pitfalls of conformity.

worth noting for its advancement, given that women who appear in the form of ‘anti-heroines’ within literary/dramatic representation can still have difficulty in gaining acceptance in the present day.²⁵ Arguably, the problems surrounding their (non)acceptance in art can be traced back to the ‘real’ values that Clara is tackling in her early modern fictional context: that women in Christian Europe have historically been polarized between two contradictory notions that determine their ‘worth’, judged as to whether they conform to one or the other, and then celebrated or denounced accordingly. On the one hand there is the modest, chaste saviour (represented acutely in counter-reformation Spain by the Virgin Mary) whose idealized and unattainable role they must humbly imitate; and, on the other hand, there is the fallen, weak, temptress or troublemaker (the idea of Eve/Magdalen), that flawed part of female nature that must be resisted and whose example they must avoid in order to retain value and worth. The idea that flawed women are still found objectionable in (or out of) artistic representation and a recent actress’ remark that women characters are still encouraged to be ‘amenable’²⁶, suggests that even in the twenty-first century there is still a tendency on the part of creators and spectators alike to push women figures into fulfilling one stereotype or the other, as opposed to portraying women as *beyond* such constriction. And this is where Clara proves that she is ahead of her time. As an assertive non-conformist pitted against the compliant Ana, her resistant act of veiling (a code for her defiance) causes their identities to merge together when Ana becomes mistaken for Clara under her veil and vice versa. But as the two come apart by the end of the play, neither role appears as satisfactorily better than the other; in fact one has altered the view of the other: the merger has symbolically blended rebellion with virtue to indicate that the two poles are *not* so easily divisible, and as I perceive it, that there is integrity *in* obstinacy and non-conformity. I believe that Clara’s trajectory in this play provides a serious challenge to role constriction in her time. In fact, in being neither fully upheld nor condemned she eludes the values of Counter-Reformation society that cast women as decidedly ‘good’ (submissive to male authority, quiet and hidden) or ‘bad’ (assertive, socially engaged and expressive) gaining a sense of the independence she craves but also having opened up the anticipatory role we understand today: that an autonomous woman may also *be* a reputable woman and that this is a justifiable role. This apparent revaluation of what constitutes propriety between women also applies to male-female relationships. Clara’s initial association with Eve (venal sin), and thus the suggestion that she

²⁵ See for example, E.J. Unsworth (2014).

²⁶ C. Mulligan (in Rampton, 2018).

is morally weak and in need of (male) supervision, appears ironic when set alongside the conduct of her truly deceptive partner, Hipólito, who abuses his social freedom at every turn. The idea that Clara is suspected of being a disobedient woman in need of male guidance is proved deeply ironic and opens up a further evaluation of what is conveyed by this ‘designing woman’: this is not so much a suspect woman as a creative one who is hoping to open up new horizons.

Indeed, Clara is an innovator who is quite literally pushing at the borders of social and dramatic custom in a fight to be counted as an individual and, as I hope to show in the coming analysis, this is illustrated through Calderón’s manipulation of her interlinking meta-theatrical capacities which situate her between illusion and reality or pull her between tradition and innovation. This includes her disruption of the dramatic frame to demonstrate a sophisticated self-awareness which also parallels her refusal to observe the rules of decorum and the commands of her *novio*; her ability to evoke and use irony to point out double standards; and, above all, in the manner with which she manipulates her veil. While intended to be an extended border of modesty that conceals her face from public view, Clara uses her veil to conceal and reveal herself on her own terms and eventually fashions the imaginary identity of the avenging *dama muda* (the ‘Silent Lady’) in a scene which exposes her false would-be husband. Her veil is intrinsic to the creation of her ‘show’ of independence and for a reason. On one level it brings a sense of conscious artifice to proceedings. As she puts on her disguise, she becomes a ‘performer’ in the fictional reality of the play who can self-reflect and stand out, and her veiling becomes akin to an art-form in itself; but the disguise also has strong contextual resonance. The veil is a visible boundary that conveys women’s relative freedom in Counter-Reformation context, but even more so, Clara’s behaviour *re-enacts* the resistant activities of authentic women of seventeenth-century Spain who overturned the veil’s modest purpose in order to elude patriarchal supervision by going ‘undercover’. Clara’s unsettling behaviour is not without a parallel basis in reality: she is thus an interactive polemical sign of her times - a character both inspired by her context and with the potential to inspire it. Given the focus on Clara’s strategic use of the veil, as well as what this garment represents with regard to Calderonian philosophy and aesthetics, the main issue at stake in this play concerns the fraught civil and human liberties of women that contrast with the freedoms granted men in this social context. Once again, this comedy continues to demonstrate Calderón’s significant contribution to the discussion of issues now called feminist.

Background to the Veil

Mañanas de abril y mayo has received very limited critical attention to date, but, by looking at the veiling technique in more depth, I hope to remedy, at least to some extent, this critical deficit. Calderón's *damas tramoyeras* who appear as *damas tapadas* are recognised as a convention of his comedies, but very little serious attention, either thematically or historically, has been given to the reason *why* the veiled lady is a recurring convention in his drama and hence that she may be an important factor in understanding his work. For example, why did the veiled lady come to prominence and what *was* the appeal of both the lady and her veil to Calderón? After all, his (almost) wholesale shift to this disguise motif distinguishes his plays from those of his predecessors. Clara has garnered some brief mentions in criticism as a light-hearted figure: 'la dama que se disfraza por puro pasatiempo' (Morales González, 1983, p. 11) or the lady who 'oculta su identidad solo por divertirse, por vivir gozosamente la vida' (Navarro Durán, 2000, p. 201-02). I think, however, it is time to look beneath the surface of Clara's 'pasatiempo', as this explanation for her veiling both belies the significance of the motif in general, as well as the serious reasons behind her entertaining use of this disguise. Such seriousness becomes apparent once this technique is considered in closer regard to its original socio-historical/cultural context.

To be sure, there has been relatively little interest in Calderón's predilection for the veil, yet this was not an arbitrary choice or a convention of purely fictional origin, but one that incorporated a topical activity within seventeenth-century Spain *into* his dramas, and by extension, into the Golden Age stage of his time. Heath (2008), a modern commentator on the veil, observes how this garment has been evocative of myriad associations, both sacred and secular, for different peoples across time, place and culture and once it was 'taken for granted as an essential expression of the divine mysteries' (p. 1). But in the West today the veil is interpreted almost exclusively through a political lens and by its common, if not inextricable, association with women: it thus retains a distinctly 'feminine pulse' (p. 2) and a pulse that awakens the matter of women's human rights. Female veiling was a relevant and provocative practice in early modern Spain for the same reasons that veiling *remains* one of the most contentious and polarizing issues in world feminism today. This is because the veil is more than just a piece of clothing, just as it was more than just a disguise when it appeared on the Golden Age stage: it is also a loaded vestment that 'lies at the intersection of spirituality, culture and politics' (Grace, 2004, p. 23). The veil is a contradictory garment with the power to erase individual identity while marking gender identity (almost always female), and while

western cultures tend to view it as a source of gender inequality and restriction, some who defend its use express that it offers scope for female agency. At base, the veil brings out contradictory attitudes with regard to the presence and place of woman in a given context; it is a gauge of her status in regard to public freedoms in a given time and place:

The veil acts to cover and protect, to hide and disguise, to limit agency, to obscure women's participation in society, yet makes visible and tangible women's status with regard to freedom and human rights. Through its translucency (as muslin) it simultaneously conceals and reveals. This paradox is at the root of its problematic, ambiguous and ambivalent status in women's lives and in literary representation. The veil is, and will continue to be, a central figure of debate around which issues of women's struggle for meaningful existence and renegotiation of identity revolve. (Grace, 2004, p. 215)

As Grace asserts above, the veil forms a central trope around which women's meaningful existence is still debated and, by its very nature, it is ambivalent: in its concealment of women, the veil *reveals* their relative status with regard to civil and human rights. Thus by bringing veiling into his comedies, Calderón lessens the masculine grip of male disguise (i.e. the hitherto popular *La mujer vestida de hombre*) and instead places a trope intimately concerned with women's existence into his *capa y espada* plays, awakening a new feminine pulse. Indeed, he routinely incorporates the issue of women's autonomy into his dramas because the garment *cannot be* disassociated from the values (religious and secular) that it projects with regard to the status of women in his society. The veil offers a different barometer on the state of gender relations in Counter-Reformation society as well as within the *comedia*: it does not indicate that women grow in stature by 'becoming men', for example, or that a male outfit will grant her added resistance or power. The veil is more akin to a physical barrier which demarcates the 'rules of space and sexual difference' and some modern interpreters even liken it to a 'prison' (Grace, 2004, p. 203). I believe then, that the veil was of interest to Calderón as it was another sign of women's enclosure and thus consistent with his interest in the avid protection of women in his society which risked turning them into 'prisoners' devoid of free will and human rights – but this is also his consistent affirmation that women *are* human beings and that women's rights *are human rights*. Indeed, the garment brings out with greater clarity the imbalance that resulted from an increased scrutiny of women's decorum as well as the ensuing value system that followed. The extra decorum expected of women to guard their chastity was contrasted with the greater freedoms granted and encouraged in men as 'the stronger sex', who in addition, also had authority over women given their higher place in the social and God-given order simply for

being men, regardless of their character.²⁷ As observed in Chapter 1, Calderón perceived a growing gender-inflected schism within Christianity: based upon enforced female subservience to men which endangered women's God-given human rights. The veil evokes this system which distinguished the place and worth of women from men, but also from *each other*, thereby polarizing women between two contradictory states: good or bad, revered or scorned, true or false. High praise and value would be accorded women who were compliant with advice and aimed to preserve their chastity (e.g. remaining out of view within the home or under their veil in public), whereas low value and scorn could be heaped on women who resisted such constraints but who were arguably exercising their free will. As we see in *Mañanas de abril y mayo*, this dynamic is exemplified by the dutiful 'good' Ana and the unorthodox 'unruly' Clara. But it is Clara who proves that the veil may also be a personal space rather than just a restricted one, a space with which to acquire greater self-awareness and then a means by which to start a revolt from within. There is another reason why the veil is a key attribute of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* which is unrelated to obedience: veiled ladies became renowned for being truly indecorous off stage which served, ironically, as a real-life rehearsal for their comic indecorousness on stage.

The veil is the dominant feature of Clara, not because she is concerned with preserving her reputation but because she wishes to maintain active participation in society, and we see through her example why the veil remains hotly debated as 'neither linear nor conformist' (Koslin in Heath, 2008, p. 168). Clara uses her veil in the play as a source of *resistance* rather than conformity, thus recalling the presence of authentic *mujeres tapadas* and the lesser known *mujeres cubiertas* of the time. Historical evidence suggests that these were reactionary women who not only accepted but welcomed the imperious advice of moralists. Storr (1896)

²⁷ For example, Luis de León (1999) advocated the covering of women in the Golden Age: 'even in church [...] St Paul wants them to be covered up so that men will hardly see them, will he allow them to rush through the squares out of their own whims and fancies displaying themselves?' (p. 219). Vives (2000) defended the freedom and authority of men: 'Above all, a woman should bear in mind that her husband is master of the household, and not all things permitted to him are permitted to her; human laws do not require the same chastity of the man as they do of the woman. In all aspects of life, the man is freer than the woman' (p. 232). And such beliefs resulted in the following variation on chastity: 'a noblewoman's chastity was thought to be threatened by her presence in the public square. Male aristocrats, on the other hand, could move freely outside the home - indeed, the performance of other components of their masculinity required they do so - without contemporaries questioning their ability to guard their sexuality' (Lehfeldt, 2008, p. 468).

observes that *mujeres tapadas* had been troubling the Spanish authorities and even the King for years: ‘el abuso del tapado llegó a ser tan grande que contra el se conjuraron teólogos, moralistas y jurisconsultos (p. 322). According to Perry (1991) ‘inappropriate’ use of the veil was rife in early modern Seville and repeated reinforcement and legislation was brought in to *ban* the veil throughout 1630s: ‘In 1639 [...] the city council of Seville approved for the fourth time regulations prohibiting women from going about with their faces covered’ (p. 139-140). *Mujeres tapadas* were scandalous because they had developed from within a covert and anonymous space an unsuspected and dangerous power that allowed them to go unpoliced and to provoke allure. In effect they overturned the veil from an intended garment of modesty into a garment of sexual allure which aided free movement. It is León León (1993) who offers a distinction between a *mujer tapada* and a *mujer cubierta*²⁸ as notions for a free loving or a free moving woman - Clara generally resembles the latter, but with some additional irony, she unwittingly experiences the power of the former in the play. A *mujer tapada* came to be regarded as sexually suspect because a woman’s love and sexuality was to be kept confined to marriage or, if not, dedicated to God, but under a veil she could in fact attract or entice attention in public by the mystery of her concealed presence: ‘La tapada, juega con su sensualidad y presentación en los espacios públicos’ (p. 274) and which could result in illicit affairs. In slight contrast, the title *mujer cubierta* was related to a woman’s clandestine movement out of the confinement of domestic spaces: ‘la cubierta, si bien no infringe directamente la moralidad presente, muestra la opción de escapar del espacio privado de su hogar’ (p. 274). Thus, under her veil, a woman could also escape the private realm of the home without being recognised, and cross spaces and places without authorisation, all under the cover of ‘modesty’. In both cases this behaviour defied the accepted codes and boundaries of a woman’s expected place: in effect, she defied the controls put on her own body. The ultimate scandal, however, is that these women tested the possibility of control. If women were to be restricted and lumped together as ‘women’ under veils then they reversed this power: those in authority will not be able to distinguish who we are, where we are going or our intentions, and this is exactly what happens in the play when Ana, a woman of repute, is confused with a ‘suspect’ woman, Clara. Rightly or wrongly, such defiance is an attempted freeing of the female body and mind which seemingly appealed to the Calderonian spirit. On the evidence of this play (and many others), it appears that Calderón enjoyed much of the irony in this situation and even endorsed some of the rebellion. Clara certainly gives short

²⁸ The closest translation of *mujer cubierta* is likely ‘covered lady’.

shrift to any misconception that veiled ladies are innately repressed: in Calderonian drama they represent some of his most dynamic, intelligent, and vivacious women.

The disorder created by *mujeres tapadas* in Seville throughout the 1630s could well have occurred in other parts of Spain and was likely news of repute, and so would make Clara and the happenings in this play highly topical on stage in circa 1634. While the veil is pivotal to her resistance, it is also the symbol around which the other characters and their views on gendered chastity and autonomy are delineated. Clara's unorthodox veiling is accentuated by Ana's conformity but, when the pair become blurred, some telling male responses ensue. Hipólito and Juan fail to recognise their partners throughout the play and their confusion at the expense of the veil comes across as a metaphor for their mutual inability to understand or appreciate these women as distinct persons - and, by extension, society's custom of limiting women's ability to operate as independent individuals. Both men are regularly parodied as they confuse one woman with the other and fail to really see or know the women they 'love'. While Clara's veiled scheme offers the ambivalence typical of Calderón's *dama tramoyera* (a figure poised between the mischievous and miraculous), any inference of wrong-doing would be wholly inappropriate: in fact, she remains loyal to one man. In my opinion her desire for spontaneity is not code for immorality but her desire to preserve autonomy in marriage, making her a forward-thinking individual.

Doña Clara and The Art of Veiling

As *Mañanas de abril mayo* is not commonly analysed, I offer a brief summary to give context to the coming analysis. The play begins at the front door of Don Pedro's house in Madrid, where a disguised and mysterious man demands of the servant that he be allowed entry. The disguised character reveals himself to be Don Juan, Pedro's old friend, who has returned to Madrid incognito in order to seek shelter at his friend's house. Juan's motive in staying with Pedro is to watch Pedro's neighbour and Juan's former love interest, Doña Ana. Juan explains to Pedro that he believed she deceived him during their initial courtship; one night he thought he saw a rival lover at her house; an honour duel ensued after which he fled. However, Juan has returned in the hope he was wrong, and he seems open to an explanation from her; but he also appears intent on believing the worst of Ana - his personality throughout the play is deeply pessimistic. We are next introduced to another house whose resident is Doña Clara. Free from an overbearing father or brother, Clara savours her liberty

but she has agreed to marriage and is engaged to Don Hipólito, a man who claims to have the sweetest tongue in Madrid and a way with the ladies, claims which prove to be wholly without foundation. Inés queries the authenticity of the match in Act 1, when she questions the integrity of Hipólito in front of Clara: ‘es un hombre, / por loco y por maldiciente / conocido de la gente / más que por su propio nombre;’ (573b). Clara does not see these concerns as problems and replies: ‘gran gusto me has dado, / porque no hay para mí cosa / como hombres de extraños modos’ (573b). However, in the course of the drama, Clara is devastated to discover that Hipólito is not the man she thought him to be, but in truth, a wholly deceptive personality. Clara wishes to continue her independence and decides to disobey her husband-to-be who has told her not to leave the house; she defies him and goes to the Royal Park to enjoy herself. Once at the park, Clara and Inés spot Hipólito and his friend Don Luis. To conceal her identity, Clara disguises herself but to no avail; Hipólito is attracted by her figure and approaches her unaware of her identity, thereby demonstrating his disloyalty. Clara does not speak to him so as not to reveal her voice but he is intrigued. Drawn by a ‘designing’ woman he follows her. Clara flees before she is forced to reveal herself, turns into a street and stumbles into Ana whom she asks for shelter. Ana’s attire is similar to Clara’s and the latter leaves her distinctive hat in Ana’s hands before hiding in a room in her house. The exchange of the hat is key as when Hipólito arrives shortly after, he thinks the mystery woman he met in the park is Ana, since she stands before him holding the hat in her hands. Hipólito is instantly infatuated by her, while Clara, hiding in a next door room, is shocked and horrified to hear Hipólito express his instant rapture with Ana. Clara’s defiance has turned sour and she is filled with jealousy; Ana is left totally bewildered as to who Hipólito thinks she is.

The romantic partnerships are now tested to the limit for the rest of the play. Hipólito is intent on courting Ana and believes that he has Clara deceived, but Clara feels she has the upper hand: ‘[*Aparte.*] ¿Qué sea bobo el más bellaco / de los hombres?’ (582b). But, as Ana has now been confused with Clara, this causes problems for her precarious relationship with Juan: when he overhears Hipólito name Ana as his new romantic interest in front of Pedro, Juan’s distrust of Ana increases. The play culminates at the Royal Park where both women, now intent on ending the deceptions, appear veiled, but Hipólito and Juan cannot tell the difference between the two, addressing Clara as Ana and vice versa each time the women swap places. Eventually, however, the truth is told and identities are revealed; Hipólito and Clara decide not to marry but, rather unconvincingly, Juan and Ana decide to do so. It is an

uncomfortable ending with one unsettling match between Juan and Ana and one broken one between Hipólito and Clara.

From the start of the play Clara is presented as an unusual woman; she has been living independently with her maid, Inés, and is under no guardianship of father or elder brother: in effect she is master-less. Clara is already a sort of anomaly, and from this perspective we can say that the play also examines the stigma and wonder of a young, single, independent woman in early modern Spanish society. Clara cherishes her position but, by the same token, she has agreed to marry Hipólito, which will turn out to be the source of her problems. If Clara were alive today she would be able to remain single or have an equal partnership, but what soon becomes apparent is that the limitations of the customs of her day cannot easily contain her. Now that she is engaged to Hipólito, she finds herself under his authority: he asks her to remain at home but she bristles at this idea. Her first decision is to defy his orders, cross boundaries and leave her 'proper' space. Clara declares to Inés that she expressly wants to do what her future husband has asked her not to do, and she determines to make the trip to the Royal Park:

¿Quieres saber
si puedo dejar de ser,
Inés? Pues has de advertir
que me ha dicho que no vaya
a él don Hipólito; y creo
que fue alentar mi deseo
para que más presto le haya;
pues si ayer, cuando me habló,
que viniera me dijera,
presumo que no viniera;
y sólo porque llegó
a persuadirse que había
de obedecerle, me ha dado
tal gana, que he madrugado
dos horas antes del día. (573b)

Incidentally, immediately after Clara's speech, Inés credits her disobedience to women's veniality:

No es en nosotras hoy nueva
esa culpa, ese pecado;
que pecar en lo vedado

es el patrimonio de Eva. (573b)

But Inés's remark here gains wry humour as Clara has just made it clear that her desire for rebellion was fuelled by her resentment of Hipólito's orders and of the arrogance implicit in his assumption that he will be obeyed. Clara's instinct is to show to her future husband that she will not be a slave to his demands because this is not the basis of love: 'porque no se ha de admitir / al amante más fiel' (574a). The importance of these early scenes and dialogue lies in their portrayal of Clara's optimistic aura as an early riser who is not stagnant but alive. In keeping with the play's title, she heralds the spring and ends her first scene in song. She is the expectant character and arguably her freshness is due to the lack of authority smothering her. The initial impression of her positive personality is important because it contrasts with our first view of Doña Ana. Unlike Clara, Ana is of a sorrowful, passive disposition and is beholden to a man's accusation of infidelity; her melancholy is quite excessive: 'No hay consuelo para mí, / ni me has de ver en tu vida / sino triste y afligida' (576b). Ever since her mishap with Don Juan, Ana has been a miserable shadow of her former self:

Desde el día que a Don Juan
en mi casa sucedió
aquella desdicha (y yo
veo que todos me dan
la culpa sin merecilla),
tan muerta y tan otra estoy,
que aun sombra mía no soy (577a)

Ana's reaction to adversity is to hide away in the shadows of her home and to lament her fate. As Pedro informs Juan, she has barely been seen out of the house in Madrid since that day: 'ni en ventana / ni en iglesia, ni en paseo / de Prado, y calle Mayor' (572b). Ana has hidden from view in a self-enforced chastisement and, to avoid risking further shame, remains within her home. Yet, despite her best intentions and efforts, Juan never really trusts her:

Fineza es, don Pedro. Pero
¿quién puede a mí asegurarme
que es por mí, y no por el muerto
ese luto que ha vestido
su hermosura? (572b)

Ana's situation appears to be the negative circular existence that Clara wishes to avoid in the first place when she refuses to submit to Hipólito's will. Indeed, Clara barely mentions the word honour in the entire play, refusing even to acknowledge this code of reputation that advocates the monitoring of women's behaviour. Her stance is provocative but, given her association with the spring and new life, the spectator is encouraged to see the positive in Clara as well as to be wary of her. The language associated with Clara indicates that she represents the new order and Ana the old, and that is in a state of decline and stasis - whether this is a positive or negative change of circumstance is open to reflection. Ana's stoical stance is respectable up to a point but it does not get her anywhere as we see she needs Clara to push her into action and shake things up. Clara, on the other hand, is always proactive and is trying to force a change in the rules of courtship.

Indeed, where Clara truly takes a stance different from the norm is found in her second speech in which she stands by her decision and further displays her lively character:

¿Quisieras que estuviera
muy firme yo y muy constante,
sujeta solo a un amante,
que mil desaires me hiciera
porque se viera querido?
Eso no: el que he de querer
con sobresalto ha de ser,
mientras que no es mi marido.
Y así, por dársele hoy
a don Hipólito, quiero
ir al parque, donde espero,
porque disfrazada voy,
pasear, hablar, reír,
preguntar y responder,
ser vista en efecto y ver; (573b - 574a)

As she declares, Clara wants to go out and move freely regardless of her new position as an engaged woman and regardless of Hipólito's orders to stay within. Her desire to remain uncontained by 'one man' is ambiguous, and it is this comment which has likely garnered her the descriptions 'fickle and deceitful' (Cruickshank, 2009, p. 142), although by the end of the play she does not appear truly to manifest either of these qualities. However, in light of the advice given to women on the matter of decorum, all of her desires are provocative as women were encouraged to take pride in being silent and homebound. As Luis de León (1999) wrote:

‘Su natural propio pervierte la mujer callejera’ and ‘se entienda que su andar ha de ser en su casa, y que ha de estar presente siempre en todos los rincones della’ (p. 217). This notion had also been previously endorsed by Vives (2000): ‘If she is a good woman, it is best that she stay at home and be unknown to others’ (p. 72). Evidently moralists warned women against all forms of openness, even expressive speech amongst friends, as this was a sign of unguarded chastity or worse, acts that could lead to the loss of chastity – and chastity was regarded as the ‘most beautiful and valuable possession’ (Vives, 2000, p. 65). Thus Clara’s desire to ‘pasear’, ‘hablar’, ‘reir’, ‘preguntar’ and ‘responder’ are all purposefully chosen verbs to indicate that she is prepared to do all that is considered unbecoming in woman in order to preserve her self-expression. Each verb is linked to the expression of body and mind: to speak, move and socially interact; to join in with others and to offer her opinion in conversation: in effect to be heard and seen as a living, thinking presence. In order to remain anonymous so that she can defy Hipólito and then later inform him of her defiance, she is going to take advantage of her veil. This is the first sense then of her desire to overturn a source of enclosure into an act of free will which is also a creative act: the manipulative use of the veil. Clara’s desires are not just in conflict with the rules of daily decorum for a woman, but are also indicative of her wider aim against custom: she has opted to be both an engaged woman *and* one who is independent. Aside from moving out of her demarcated domestic space, the other socio-cultural boundary that she is pushing here has a modern character because she is attempting to extend the rights of women within an impending relationship: she wants a marriage but on condition of preserving her independence within it. Clara’s dilemma - whether she can freely go out to the Royal park or not - does not appear in the form of a grand metaphysical dilemma, but neither is it a trivial problem even if it might appear so within the comic genre. For her this is an authentic problem: freedom of choice is still related to the matter of a woman’s free will. But the added controversy of Clara is that she is not, at the outset, shackled by a male guardian as in the cases of Marcela and Ángela who are treated in the coming chapters. Instead, she is making her own choice to maintain her unusual situation of autonomy. If a woman is unjustly incarcerated then Calderón’s Christian ethics certainly support her rebellion, but Clara poses the greater challenge. Her trajectory in this play raises issues which link ethics and gender in this context: is a free-thinking and moving woman decorous and acceptable? Can a ‘principled’ woman be combined with an autonomous woman, or must such a woman have her comeuppance?

While Clara is in the wings preparing to act, in the next scene we are offered a view from the male perspective. With no such issues concerning his free movement, Hipólito is carefree and already at the park enjoying his morning with his friend Don Luis. They survey the scene before them and gossip about local figures at the park, for example, a man who is befriendng the wife of a lawyer to gain his services and a Lady Flora who likes to go out and use her personal coach. Luis remarks that Flora reminds him of Clara, and Hipólito agrees, recalling that once Clara bemoaned having to pay rent for her whole house as she only uses the part which grants her outside access: ‘no vivo sino el balcón’ (574b). Hipólito’s recollection strengthens the idea of Clara’s exhibitionist behaviour, but, while both men seem to find her unconventional behaviour amusing, Hipólito’s main concern is his sense of achievement in having control over her. Luis wonders what Clara would give to hear their discussion but Hipólito remains arrogant, saying that she will not because he commanded otherwise: ‘porque anoche la dije yo / que de casa no saliera’ (574b). However, Calderón intentionally builds a sense of his delusion here, as not only do the audience know that Clara is not going to remain at home, but she and Inés arrive at the park just at the moment when he flaunts his authority over her. And this is the significant point in the play: Clara’s defiance sets off a series of entanglements amongst the principal characters, and when she puts on her veil she emerges as the amalgamation of both the theatrical and the real notorious veiled lady.

As Clara dons her veil she insists to Inés that they do not speak in case they are recognised:

Si le respondo, en la habla;
que persuadirse que puede
estar segura una dama
solamente con taparse,
es buena para la farsa,
mas no para sucedido. (575a)

At this point Clara displays an amusing form of self-awareness. While she has now become an iconic veiled lady of Calderón’s comedy, she indicates to the audience that she considers herself to be an *authentic* person. As she observes in her lines above to Inés, a veil might work as a convincing disguise for a lady in a farce but may not prove fool-proof for someone as sophisticated as herself in a real life situation. Clara is speaking as if she exists outside the play rather than within its illusory world, and there are several effects of her incursion onto the dramatic frame. First is the comical irony of her suggestion as she challenges the rules of

the illusion: she is encouraging the audience to recognise her as being akin to one of them - a real woman of experience rather than a mere character. As she breaks the play's frame she accentuates her power as a mould-breaker: she does not perceive herself as merely a theatrical convention but as something more advanced, and so she moves into a position that is between illusion and reality. Clara is posing a meta-theatrical challenge to parallel her social revolt and she draws the audience in to recognise that both realms (the play and society) are governed by conventions which she is putting to the test. One facet of disguise is that it can bring out the conscious performer in the heroine, and as Clara dons her veil and steps outside her role, she enhances her familiarity with her audience. However, I think her self-reflection at this moment also indicates that her decision to enact autonomy (the manipulation of her veil) is *connected* to her possession of self-knowledge. As we see ahead, Clara is able to employ a refined use of irony to point out double standards, and like all the other heroines addressed in this thesis, she is creatively literate (Calderón's *dama tramoyeras* and the representation of women's literacy is a point taken up further in the following chapter). Her self-awareness is not only for playful effect but registers a level of understanding also that is not without a realistic basis. Prior to the seventeenth century, humanists had advocated a limited education of elite women in Spain, although by the time of the Counter-Reformation this was already being curtailed (Smith, 2006, p. 25-6). But, even with some access to learning, a woman is unlikely to remain a passive recipient of protocol but becomes a conscious thinker who can challenge accepted knowledge and then choose to act differently. Clara's self-conscious choices are important because they suggest a refusal to return to ignorance. Indeed, Smith (2006) notes that women at this time were beginning to speak out against patriarchy rather than yield; Spain's most outspoken women critic on the matter was Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor²⁹ who also anticipates the proto-feminism of Sor Juana in the New World (to be addressed in Chapter 5).

Here, Calderón is giving Clara the opportunity to be an advisory spokesperson on the relative pros and cons of veiling with a joyous sense of revolt. As she implies to her audience, and thereby gaining rapport with them on the topic, if a lady does choose to escape under her veil, then she should be careful to conceal all aspects of herself that might give her identity away. Implicit in her advice is that a veil is only a flawless disguise on stage due to the

²⁹ Maria de Zayas y Sotomayor (b.1590) was an exceptional woman writer of the age best known for her two novella collections: *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) and *Desengaños amorosos* (1647). T. A Smith (2006) describes her as: 'An elite woman whose presence in Madrid's literary circles between 1621 and 1647 earned her the respect of first-class playwrights like Lope de Vega [...] de Zayas devoted much of her writing to exposing the flaws inherent in Spain's gender system' (p. 25).

necessary conventions of the *capa y espada* play. She offers them a conservative suggestion: unfortunately, life is less forgiving than art, but is also more subversive. Her implication that a veil is not a fully realistic disguise is tinged with a revolutionary tone: that her role as a non-conforming *dama tapada* and *tramoyera* is still lagging behind her own approach to life. For Clara the veil may be unconvincing because it is also unnecessary - in an ideal world on and off stage she would like to be trusted to be herself, but, for now, rebellion is the best use she has for it. I think Clara's attitude here bolsters Thacker's (2002) assertion that Golden Age dramatists used instances of role-playing within *comedias* to challenge the existent social roles of their society by presenting them 'as worn out' (p. 18) and indeed, Clara appears already unconvinced by aspects of the veiling motif and hence this social custom. Also, Clara's particular form of self-reflection when she resists her theatrical role differs from other comic heroines such as Marcela, treated in the next chapter, because she is robustly concerned with autonomy. Her resistance to theatrical type is a way of intensifying Clara as an individual with aspirations for 'real' status: that her distinctiveness emerges from her independent decision-making which she refuses to give up. And we see why this is a valid cause: her veiling reveals that her own *novio* tends to treat women as hollow images rather than as individual persons.

Having gained some rapport with Clara, the audience's growing connection to her allows them to identify more closely with her coming experiences. While attempting to conceal herself from Hipólito, she has now encountered him in the park and is pushed into a passive position. As the audience know, Clara is trapped under her disguise in front of her *novio* which creates an amusing dynamic in the ensuing scene. Hipólito and his friend Luis are instantly attracted by the presence of Clara and Inés and do not hesitate to take the opportunity to court the new mystery women. Clara's veil proves to be an immediate allure, indicating that a modest cover is not, in fact, a deterrent to male advances and, equally, how the veil's mystery could be manipulated by women for clandestine affairs. Hipólito is taken by her silhouette and smart clothes yet fails to recognise any sign that this is his own partner. Foolishly in front of the audience, he is then seen to flatter his own *novia* as another woman and proves his disloyalty to her face. Clara has mocked the notion that a veil may not be a fool-proof disguise among people who know each other well, and so, while its realism at this point is debatable, the garment takes on another dimension. It represents a barrier of mutual misunderstanding and, in particular, Hipólito's surface-deep interest in women. He is interested in the vague shape of a woman rather than the individual beneath, and this attitude

culminates in his failure to comprehend the depth of the individual personalities of either Clara or Ana. Indeed, the obscuring of women's identities has encouraged an unpleasant attitude in Hipólito. As Clara is refusing to speak to him, she mimes her responses with hand signals but, rather than being bemused, he is rather aroused by her refusal to speak: 'No me respondéis? Por señas / me habláis! No me desagrada.' (575a) as her silence is a relief:

Pues sois la mejor dama
que he visto en toda mi vida.
Albricias me pide el alma
de que me ha deparado una
mujer que no pide, y calla (575a).

His joke however proves to be accurate in the case of his ideal woman: a mute canvas. Clara's veiling has given her some power of anonymity but, to her distress, it also reveals how it has made women interchangeable 'things' to Hipólito. Before she is forced to reveal herself, Clara runs out of the park and into the path of Ana. At this point she admits that things are not going to plan: '¿Faltará a una mujer una mentira / que la saque de otra?' (577a) and, in order to secure Ana's help, she lies, telling her that she is running away from her husband. She leaves the large distinctive hat she was wearing in the park in Ana's hands and hides in a room in Ana's house. Although unplanned, Clara has now placed her awkward situation on Ana's shoulders, as on reaching the house shortly after and seeing Ana holding the hat, Hipólito assumes that Ana is the veiled woman he met in the park and is smitten with her unveiled beauty and apparent wealth. Clara has thus brought Ana into her scheme with some unpleasant results: to her horror and Ana's dismay, Hipólito will now try to pursue Ana while lying to Clara for the rest of the play, but the extent to which Clara is now culpable for the results of her actions is up for debate.

Hipólito, however, is further parodied. His instant infatuation with Ana is another sign of his superficiality and ignorance. He begins to flatter her even though Ana rejects him outright: 'No entiendo, caballero, / estilo tan lisonjero' (577b) but he will not give up his suit because he refuses to understand Ana just as he does not know Clara. The women merge into one veiled lady but this is a non-identity and personality: a blank page onto which he projects his fantasies. This is made explicit when he goes to her neighbour, Don Pedro, to inquire about Ana. The veiled lady is like a blank sheet on which he can write what he wishes:

Bajaba por una cuesta
una mujer (¡qué mal digo!),

un encanto, sí embozado,
disfrazado, sí, un hechizo.
El sutil manto en celajes,
ya oscuros y ya distintos,
o negaba o concedía
el rostro. (579b)

Hipólito's dream figure whom he believes to be Ana, the audience know was literally Clara, but it is also neither of them, it is instead just a reflection of his desires. He insists to Ana that it was her to whom he spoke - but she insists it was not as she has been staying at home proving her honesty to Juan. Clara has indeed put Ana in an unpleasant situation. Not only has she to endure Hipólito's unwanted attention, but Juan, who overhears Hipólito's rapturous description of the veiled lady (who he claims is Ana) starts to doubt Ana's virtue and he proves to be little better than Hipólito. He claims to admire the 'divine' Ana but once the pair are entangled with Clara and Hipólito, he easily persuades himself that Ana's outward show of virtue is false: '¡Ah ingrata! ¡Ah cruel! Qué pronto vive a mentir el ingenio en la mujer!' (587a). Despite her acting in accordance with an ideal sense of seventeenth-century femininity, Ana is abused by the man who claims to love her throughout the play, and this is why I believe Ana's inertia is positively tested by Clara's actions.

In Act 2, Ana finally leaves her house under her veil to seek out Juan and defend herself. We know that this is an unusual move as her maid, Lucía, questions her decision: '¿En este traje, de casa sales?' (584b). Lucia warns Ana that if she chooses to don her veil she could be confused with the suspect veiled lady. Ana *is* worried about being confused with Clara, but since the pair became tangled with one another, it seems, symbolically so to speak, that some of Clara's assertive stance has rubbed off on Ana and there is a positive outcome: Ana confronts the unjust treatment she has received at the hands of Juan. Overall, the confusion of the two women modifies an impression of what constitutes self-respect. In seventeenth-century terms Ana is the respectable woman, yet it seems that the greater sense of self-respect belongs to Clara. Ana's self-denying situation is stagnant; if a woman holds to a convention of self-chastisement without question she diminishes herself and wastes away unjustly at the hands of a man. While Clara risks public scorn, she is at least prepared to question the status quo and seemingly anticipates the modern slogan 'better to be a rebel than a slave'; and it is her act that has moved things forward. However uncomfortable it has been for the two women, she has 'unveiled' the unsavoury attitudes of the men. Hipólito exploits his freedom to pursue other women behind his betrothed's back and yet freedom of

movement is exactly what he tries to deny Clara. Juan cannot see an individual in Ana only a deceptive 'woman' first, and Hipólito also insults Ana by believing her fidelity is just an obstacle to be overcome: 'esa hoy la más me anima' (583a). The arena of gender relations is now fraught with tension and irony: there is a suspect masculinity at work here and the role of a demure woman appears a questionable ideal if not an outmoded one.

In the meantime Clara has lost her verve. Her pride has been dented by Hipólito's interest in another woman: '¿Quién creará de mí (¡ay de mí!) / que yo llore y que yo sienta / desaires de un hombre?' (581a) and we are led to believe at this moment that she has been deceived in her own confidence. It cannot be denied that there is a suggestion that her impudence is being punished with a coded message: her boundary crossing has had negative consequences. Indeed, the image of woman humbled is relevant here. De Armas (1976) observes that Lope liked to use a strongly adverse *mujer esquiva* (a woman aloof to love and marriage) in order to gain greater dramatic impact when undermining this type of woman at the denouement as she bends to love: a 'misogynous Lope expresses a savage satisfaction at having conquered the female character' (p. 89). However, where Clara is concerned, this is not so simple; she had agreed to a marriage so she did not reject love and as we will see shortly, Calderón appears to approve her independence in the face of a man such as Hipólito. My feeling is that if she has a fault it is more to do with her dishonesty in involving Ana rather than with sexual impropriety (she has in fact been proved constant to one man) or even her desire to gain autonomy from Hipólito. The idea that she is to be held up as an example to be shamed is too simplistic an assessment because this is undercut by her intelligent awareness of the injustice of her situation. She demonstrates a spirited challenge to her society's insistence on a particular concept of female decorum, and this is admirable in comparison with Ana, who accepts and lives by this code without question.

For example, in a following scene Calderón gives Clara some incisive lines which indicate the fine line between indecorum and independence for a woman. After the events at Ana's house, Hipólito has returned to check on Clara to maintain her favour, but remains oblivious to the fact that she caught him out with her disguise in the park. Clara indicates to Inés not to give away the fact 'que fuimos las tapadas' (582a) and she retains the upper hand in their conversation, manipulating the dialogue with irony. As noted in the introduction, verbal irony is a common feature of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* ranging from the playful (such as Marcela) to the more caustic use of Clara, but in all cases it heightens her self-awareness over other characters and offers a form of commentary on the action for the

audience. Hutcheon (1994) asserts that ‘irony is simultaneously disguise and communication’ (p. 91) and as Clara is a prime disguiser it is fitting that she is the sharpest ironist of all the *damas tramoyeras* featured in this thesis. In her subsequent utterances, she hides her real meanings, which suggests her disguised judgement on inequality and thus a critical (proto-feminist) consciousness. First she asks Hipólito if he went to the park in the morning which he denies: how could he without her? Knowing this to be a blatant lie, she uses an analogy to illuminate his dishonesty while making a play on her disguise-at the park for the audience:

Pues si en tu pecho vivo,
y tú en el pecho me llevas,
contigo yo hubiera estado
disfrazada y encubierta. (582a)

As Clara suggests, if he truly cared for her then she would always be with him hidden close by, and indeed she was with him but hidden in a disguise, a witness to his disloyalty. Insulted at his lies, she finally makes her most relevant remark. She encourages him to leave her and makes a covert but potent statement about the open access her would-be husband enjoys but which is denied to her:

Id, don Hipólito, adiós;
que esta casa es siempre vuestra
para iros y para estaros,
pues siempre de la manera
que abierta para que entréis,
para que os vais está abierta. (582b)

The irony of her words hits home through the hypocrisy that has been played out on stage: he can come and go as he pleases whereas she has had to strive for some independence at the expense of his fraudulence. I think it becomes clear that the trick she played on Hipólito (to go out undercover and then reveal her disobedience later) was intended to prove her spontaneity. Clara is one of the most modern of Calderón’s heroines in that she wanted to marry *and* to preserve her independence within it. The freedom that she wants to retain is not code for promiscuity but the desire to choose her routine rather than have her actions predicted and dictated to her by her would-be husband. Her ironic discourse at this point functions as covert communication with the audience, enhancing the communal atmosphere. Spurred by audience awareness of her disguised identity, she is inviting them to recognise her assessment of inequality through the double meanings in her words which only they will

understand (stage-spectator intimacy which develops from the heroine's self-consciousness is a quality of Calderón's *damas tramoyeras*, and is even stronger in the case of Marcela who is the focus of the next chapter). Her position as an ironist at this point is entirely apt: Clara, the literal and verbal disguiser, has revealed the true fraud, Hipólito.

In her final act of revenge, Clara shows her highest level of her artistry: the silent veiled lady she was forced into playing in the park will now come back to Hipólito. Clara decides to activate this role into a temporary alter-ego who invites Hipólito for a secret rendezvous. She writes him a note inviting him to meet her and signs it '*La dama muda*'; to make sure that he does not become aware of its authorship through recognizing the handwriting, she asks Inés to write it. This act is now a mini drama which she hopes will make a splendid scene or a denouement for the play, fashioned by her. Hipólito still believes the mystery veiled lady is Ana and happily arrives at the meeting spot with his friend Luis in anticipation, but once more he is thwarted by Clara. Clara reveals herself as the mystery *dama tapada*, accuses him and his friend of disloyalty and ends their relationship; but it is the second half of Clara's speech which is important. Before she leaves, she declares:

Con esto adiós, y ninguno
me siga; que si echo el manto,
si vuelvo el calle, si otro
embeleco desenvaino,
les haré creer que soy
otra dama, aunque al estrado
me entré de una mesurada,
como esta mañana, cuando
le hizo creer que era otra
sólo un sombrero blanco. (590a)

This speech makes the most explicit analogy between Clara and a *mujer tapada* in the play. She asserts her role as a proud and powerful mistress of disguise who can make Hipólito believe that she is anyone she wants: she is an 'artist of identity' and the veil together with her other dress accessories are her tools. As Bass and Wunder (2008) argue, the real *mujer tapada* was a *self-fashioning* figure: 'The *tapada* created herself at will, and she could uncover herself with equal ease, which, of course, made her quite difficult to catch' (p. 112). It is evident then that the power of this type of woman lay in her being a creator rather than a figure of passivity who receives definition from exterior powers or received convention. The *mujer tapada* redrew the rules of the veil just as Clara has attempted to redraw the rules of a

relationship. Notably, Clara does not declare the typical refrain of convention and order in the *comedia* of ‘soy quien soy’ in the play, although this is voiced by the more conservative Ana. The implicit refrain in Clara’s speech is not ‘I am who I am’ but ‘*I can be who I want to be*’, which conveys an emancipatory idea and one even anticipatory of Deleuze’s notion of ‘becoming woman’: ‘Becoming woman is a way of understanding transformative possibilities - the ways in which identity might escape from the codes which constitute the subject’ (Driscoll in Buchanan and Colebrook, 2000, p. 75). Also, Clara’s mini performance of *La dama muda*, which she dismantles in front of her *novio*, appears as a symbolic (and dramatic) way of proving to him that this mute woman does not exist – which points to another possible analogy in reality: the number of mute, passive women was decreasing as women became less silent, more vocal and hence more resistant. Not only were *mujeres tapadas* challenging existing gender boundaries, but so were professional actresses (as addressed in the following chapter), as well as the exceptional woman writer Maria de Zayas who was questioning patriarchal authority in her fiction. Furthermore all these women were in some way creators or producers - qualities of which Calderón was well aware. The message of his drama is that imagination, self-awareness and education are the ways in which women can challenge and overcome traditional social constraints upon their freedom.

In the final scenes of Act 3 the play reaches a dizzying finale. All the characters go to the Royal Park to end their current deceptions, but both women are now veiled, which causes a great blur of confusion for the men who are still unable to distinguish one from the other. Juan rudely addresses Clara believing she is Ana: ‘Engañosa arpia, esfinge mentirosa’ (598a), upon which Clara undeceives him: ‘Caballero vos venía engañado’ while noting his ignorance: ‘tan necio y atrevido/ me habléis’ [...] ‘sin conocerme’ (598a). Hipólito, now akin to a fool in the middle, is unable to keep up with the pace ‘una mano a otra / así una mujer se trueque’ (597b). In effect the men show little change in their attitudes, and remain unreflective and lacking in awareness. Clara, on the other hand, does appear to have grown through experience and has benefitted from her self-reflection; Ana is left to enter into a relationship with Juan with trepidation. Instead of a double marriage as is custom at the end of a *capa y espada* play which has featured two couples, there is a parting of the ways. Clara will not marry Hipólito: they admit they do not love each other. The finale implies that both Clara’s rebellious behaviour and Hipólito’s false conduct have altered convention, and makes a possibly sceptical comment on the state of matrimony off stage. With modern eyes, Clara appears to triumph in freedom but by the standards of her own time, her failure to marry

could equally have been seen as punishment for her behaviour. Indeed she was likely perceived as an anti-heroine, and yet today she appears heroic precisely because of her misdemeanours. In some respects, however, the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* is always an anti-heroine of sorts, because her purpose is to test the limits of convention and acceptability.

As a final reflection on Calderón's approach to the veil, what appears to be significant in his drama is his focus on women's motivations behind their use of the veil as much as the veil itself. In light of Grace's (2004) assessment, this would situate him closer to the tradition of women's writing on the garment rather than men's. Grace observes that male authors who have confronted the topic of the veil (such as Oscar Wilde and Salman Rushdie) tend to emphasise its revealing and concealing purposes, whereas the approach of women writers (theoretical or fictional) is more multifaceted:

women writers prioritise concerns of the woman behind the veil, rather than privileging the veil itself. Such fictional works attempt perhaps to illuminate women's strategic uses of the veil and what goes on under the veil. (p. 211)

Calderón's *capa y espada* plays which feature his *damas tapadas* can thus also be considered in regard to the history of the representation of the veil in art, and, in my opinion, his concern is to illuminate the woman behind the veil. The advantage of the medium of drama is that the veil retains its three-dimensional presence, and functions as both a cultural sign and a disguise which opens up the inner viewpoint of the heroine underneath for her audience – her spectators can then share her perspective and consider her motivations and desires more intimately. In summary, the contemporary appeal of Clara is that we can recognise her: she is in the early stages of becoming an autonomous woman and as she steps outside the traditional female role and looks ahead, her meta-dramatic power gives her a live and familiar presence every time she is performed. Ahead of her time, out of her place and neither fully vindicated on the one hand, nor condemned on the other, Clara sees herself as situated beyond the current social and dramatic conventions of her age.

I have sought to show that Clara's pioneering and controversial spirit is heavily influenced by the rise of *mujeres tapadas* in early modern Spain and, in the next chapter, I aim to show the key influence of another group of innovative women on the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* through the example of Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas*.

3. The Character-Actress: Stage Majesty, Marcela and the Rise of the Golden Age Actress in *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar*

But in a woman, no one requires eloquence or talent ... or professional skills ... no one asks anything of her but chastity.

Juan Luis Vives, The Education of a Christian Woman

I considered in the previous chapter the role of Clara in *Mañanas de abril y mayo* and how her use of the veil as a disguise operates in the play, and I discussed how this iconic feature of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* is worthy of more consideration and recognition than I believe it has hitherto been given in the context of his comedies (or indeed in his work as whole). In using the example of Clara I sought to demonstrate the multifaceted purpose and significance that this disguise can take on: in the particular hands of Clara, veiling becomes an art form within the play itself which moves her between illusion and reality on multiple fronts. I argued that this disguise helps Clara to pose a strong meta-theatrical and social challenge to the status quo, which ultimately allows her to emerge as a character (and a woman) who is, quite literally, out of place in her time. But in moving on from Clara and her veil, and yet in going slightly back to an earlier play, in this chapter I will focus on further trademark meta-dramatic capacities of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* through the example of the exuberant Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas*. It must be noted that Marcela is of added importance in her own right for the fact that she is likely to be Calderón's first heroine of this type, and thus, of all his innovative *damas tramoyeras*, it is she who assumes the role of the actual frontrunner.³⁰ Yet despite this accolade, and for reasons discussed briefly below, Marcela has fallen into the shadow of another Calderonian heroine closely associated with her: the ever popular Ángela of *La dama duende* (who is to be addressed in the following chapter). The main aim is to draw attention to how and why Marcela stands out as a young pioneer of her age by means of her distinct meta-dramatic power as a conscious and resourceful play-maker, whose powers outmatch all her counterparts on stage, to such an extent that her brother, who initially assumes control of her, ends up at her feet seeking her help and guidance; even Marcela herself enjoys the amusing irony in this reversal of fortunes. But there are also some additional objectives in the following analysis: to rescue Marcela

³⁰ My belief that Marcela is likely to be Calderón's first heroine of situation comedy is a notion indebted to J.E. Varey's (1985) and (1989) pioneering research with regard to the dating of *Casa con dos puertas*.

from the shadow of Ángela and to bring her back into the ‘limelight’ of this *comedia* where she belongs, in order to redress the marked tendency of some critics to sideline her significance. My aim is to restore Marcela as a precedent on three counts. In the last chapter I discussed how veiling draws attention to women’s human rights, but in Marcela we have an early ‘joven pasional’ (Morón Arroyo, 1982, p. 10), the young vigorous but repressed (imprisoned) figure often found in Calderonian drama. She foreshadows then not only her fellow *dama tramoyeras* but later prisoners such as Ángela or Segismundo and thus reveals initial shoots of the proto-feminism implicit in Calderón’s decision to include women among the universal human archetypes across his works. In a more visceral sense, Marcela also demonstrates a further advance in being the first marker of not only fictional, but *real* female virtuosity and collaboration in Calderonian situation comedy, so bringing additional gender-related social preoccupations to the stage. As Calderón’s probable first heroine of this type, her ambitious spirit complements his first attempts at situation comedy as a young playwright, and as they collaborate to construct the play Calderón, Marcela and the actress(es) who played her, (or who will play her) are linked by notions of aspiration and recognition.

With regard to Marcela’s close bond with Ángela, the basis for this interrelation is due to a number of similarities that exist between their respective roles. For example, due to the pair’s mutual creative flair, their enclosed positions in their brothers’ houses and Calderón’s use of parallel devices (a tapestry which covers Marcela’s room corresponds to a glass panel which conceals a door to Ángela’s apartment. *Casa con dos puertas* and *La dama duende* are considered partner dramas written in the same year, and for some they remain Calderón’s first and ‘best attempts at situation comedy’ (Cruikshank, 2009, p. 106). However, because of *Casa con dos puertas*’ textual reference to *La dama duende*, it is the former play that has been considered a copy which Calderón made in haste given the *La dama duende*’s popularity; the question of which of the two is truly the earlier *comedia* has remained a matter of dispute.³¹ It is thanks to Varey’s research that it now seems that *Casa con dos puertas* is the earlier *comedia* and *La dama duende* the later manifestation³², and in

³¹ The *gracioso* Calabazas remarks that Marcela reminds him of Ángela: ‘¡Vive Dios! Que me has cogido; / La Dama Duende habrá sido, / Que volver a vivir quiere’ (I. 184-186).

³² The date of composition of *Casa con dos puertas* has been addressed for example by F. de Armas (1976), J.E. Varey (1985) and (1989) and D. Cruikshank (2009). *Casa con dos puertas* was initially felt to be the later of the two plays as *La dama duende* is advertised in its text, but de Armas asserts that a mention of Queen Isabela’s pregnancy in the former indicates that it must be the earlier *comedia* since the latter cites the later christening of Baltasar Carlos. Varey sought to clear the dispute and argues that *Casa con dos puertas* is indeed the prior play

some respects commentary on Marcela's character has implied as much: for instance, some critics have inferred that how she is a type of maverick with an 'adventuresome' spirit (Muir and Mackenzie, 1985, p. xxvii) - an observation that certainly evokes the sense of a trendsetter. But nevertheless, of the two women concerned, it is Ángela who has gone on to attract the greater attention and become (arguably) the current bastion of Calderonian feminism with something of a celebrity status, whereas the fate of Marcela has been rather less glamorous. Overshadowed by the fantastic spectre of the *duende*, she has not garnered anywhere near the amount of critical and individual consideration as Ángela, and yet she is as good a charismatic performer and may even have been, if by only a matter of months, the *original* go-getting Calderonian *dama tramoyera*. Still the notion of both women as 'star performers' hints at what or *who* is the added influence on Calderón's 'theatrical' comic heroines and indeed, what inspires Marcela's particular dynamic. Her neglect may owe something to Mujica's (1986) remark that she lacks the 'philosophical dimension' (p. 11) of other Calderonian comic creations - and again this is likely to be a comparison to Ángela who conveys an existential angst that clearly links her to Calderón's metaphysical archetypes of the prisoner-actor. Yet, while this philosophical dimension is not as strong in Marcela, it is still present (as addressed below), and does not diminish as Marcela's association with the 'actor' is built in the most immediate sense and for good reason and effect.

Unlike Clara, Marcela does not adopt disguise as her principal technique, although the veil still has a key role to play in her endeavours. Marcela is Calderón's first *dama tramoyera* then she is also his debutante *dama tapada* and indeed, the presence of her veil calls attention to the issue of restricted female autonomy as discussed in the last chapter and which also underpins this comedy. In *Casa con dos puertas* (as its title implies), the matter of movement in and out of the interior space of two houses is the basis for the play, and the issue of gaining autonomous movement around these spaces principally concerns the female lead. In the name of honour (a combination of her virtue and her brother's reputation), Marcela has been hidden in an internal room within her brother's house and thus away from the eyes of his visiting friend Lisardo. But, in refusing to conform to this imposition of control, Marcela decides to manipulate the entrances and exits of both her room and her friend Laura's house so as to shift the balance of control from her brother to herself and pursue a relationship with his

which was likely written for performance earlier in the same year as *La dama duende*, but Calderón then re-wrote parts or added to it at a later date. This is evidenced by a reference to the actress Catalina de Acosta (a point addressed ahead in this chapter). Varey suggests that later amendments made by Calderón to his initial text of *Casa con dos puertas* would thus account for both the play's earlier reference and its later ones.

friend. And we see that the veil aids Marcela's cause in ways that foreshadow the activities of Clara: she harnesses the power of its anonymity to help her cross the boundaries of her designated space undetected and thus make clandestine escapes from the house or her rooms. It allows her to create other 'roles' as decoys, and she capitalises on its allure by using it to attract and arouse the curiosity of Lisardo. But rather than appearing as a proud disguise artist, Marcela is cast as Calderón's debutante *dama tramoyera* with meta-dramatic capacities which give her the aura of an *actress/stage-manager* who is stepping out for the first time. Marcela possesses a level of self-consciousness which is connected to a talent for creative role-play: her talent lies in her direction of other characters, the play's events and her inspired improvisational acting. Her awareness of her own artifice means then that she can move into that liminal position between stage and audience - the linking role which keeps both realms apparently distinct and yet overlapping - and which also grants her the type of power which can resist authority, as authority is 'always complicit with the theory of decorum, whether that be social or literary' (Gay, 2008, p. 12). As Calderón's inaugural *dama tramoyera*, Marcela is the first to be comically *indecorous*: like Clara she does not fully conform to the rules of traditional mimesis as she peeks out of the dramatic frame, which mirrors her refusal to obey the commands (and thus social expectations) of her elder brother. But unlike Clara, Marcela does not use her self-awareness to mock or pass scepticism on the limitations of her role so as to anticipate another one; instead, and as I am to develop, Marcela's progressive essence comes from her self-aware affinity *for* her role as an actor and play-maker.

In effect, Marcela doubles as a romantically-inclined young woman *and* a youthful impresario of the stage whose self-expressed love of drama and suspense drives her to plan, activate and star in her own self-conceived, if somewhat risky, production before the audience's eyes. And her show turns out to be the seduction of Lisardo which doubles as her self-enforced release from the constraints imposed upon her by Félix. Marcela hijacks the plot of *Casa con dos puertas* from her brother (and to an extent Calderón), bending it to her will, and fittingly Calderón indicates that her plight is not just one of romantic fulfilment. Félix has tried to keep her hidden from his friend because he does not want society to think that he is contriving to secure a husband for his sister in an inappropriate manner; however, by effectively incarcerating her he has ended up repressing her free will and natural instincts. His actions are about a zealous concern for his own reputation at the expense of his sister's human rights. Marcela may be interpreted then as the initial *joven pasional* who is Parker's 'prisoner' of Calderonian drama; a young person whose potential has been repressed by a

parent, or as is frequently the case for a woman, a male guardian, and who is found ‘striving for recognition, whether their names are Segismundo or Semiramís’ (Cruickshank, 2009, p. 324). Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 1, Calderón’s prisoner may be of either gender and as such serves as an advanced archetype for humanity. The metaphysical imprint left on Marcela still binds *her* experience to that of humanity, making her a composite human being. On one level her ‘acting’ points to the realization of her rightful potential as a human actor on the world-stage, but more importantly, her assumption of the control of her own destiny and freedom from domination by an erring male who threatens her God-given human rights. In a sense she is to recapture what is being separated from her: as she crosses these bounds her mind, body and spirit all regain their freedom. However, her association with an actor has another purpose which, I believe, allowed the metaphor ‘to come to life’ in the original performance context.

While Marcela is resisting and crossing a number of literal and abstract gender-related boundaries in the play (i.e. the tapestry, her veil, submission to male authority or her designated space in the home), the stand-out boundary she crosses is that of character *and* actress, as one becomes increasingly synonymous with the other throughout the play. What I shall argue for the remainder of this chapter, is that it is this analogy, the aligning of character and actress, which gave Marcela a resonant and controversial presence on the Golden Age stage, and furthermore is the direct evidence of the influence of that other group of unconventional women of the time on the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*: that of the real Golden Age actresses. Actresses in early modern Spain *really were* stretching the panorama of the way women could live their lives at this time; hence they were changing their lives *through* acting. Thus Marcela’s love of drama and her constant association with an actress (i.e. the real woman who plays her) *blurs* the two together and draws attention to the fact that both are expanding their horizons live on stage by performing and influencing the structure of the play. In the past the self-conscious elements of this comedy (and others) have not been considered to have any basis in reality or realistic implications. Varey (1972) observes for instance ‘how often the dramatist insists that his play is artifice’ (p. 84) thus ‘Calderón does not wish the audience to believe that the activities of his characters are a true reflection of what happens in this world’ (p. 92): what occurs is ‘no more than a game’ (p. 93). Neumeister (1989) also argues that the Calderonian approach to the *capa y espada* play is to create a ‘sistema cerrada, una cárcel artificial’ (p. 328-329). However, these views take the ‘real’ so much out of the plays that any potential real influences on the character’s self-consciousness

are subsumed. I want to argue the exact opposite - that the levels of conscious artifice, especially that of the heroine, have the reverse effect. For one, Marcela's conscious theatricality (more pervasive and built more on her direct association with theatrical terms/associations than Clara's for example) *increases* the 'reality' of the play for the audience, as she can invite them into closer dialogue with the spectacle. Indeed, her role creates an immediacy to proceedings comparable to that achieved by Shakespeare's comic heroines who, similarly to Calderón's, thrive on their relation to the world-stage metaphor – Marcela, for example, has much in common with Shakespeare's Rosalind of *As You Like It*, a fellow 'deviser and maker'. Shakespeare also likes to enhance the 'actorly' qualities of his comic heroines, and while they are most famous for the gender-fluidity awakened by their male disguises, his use of masquerade had another equally important function aside from the presentation of a virago: to split the heroines in such a way as to enable them to communicate both within the illusion *and* with their spectators, and according to Hyland (1978) 'only with his girl-pages did Shakespeare use disguise to draw the audience into the play' (p. 38). Stage-spectator intimacy is a particular feature of Shakespearean comic heroines and also of Calderón's, as their disguising or performing awakens them to the fact that they are part of a play, which aligns them more with the audience - they may become both witnesses and participants in the action. As their meta-dramatic power allows them to extend both ways, they can reach out so as to bring *in* the audience and encourage them to draw parallels between illusion and reality as well as differences. Also, it is not a coincidence that Marcela's awareness comes to the fore as she senses and resists the 'box' she is being forced into by her brother. Thus the artificial cage-like aura of the *capa y espada* play alluded to by Neumeister does appear to be a hyper-real analogy on the part of Calderón for a society which had increased its customary protection of women only to make this indistinguishable from their unnatural imprisonment. As the heroine becomes more self-aware and vivid, the cage of the play and the social customs it reflects (hence all-round conventions) appear more artificial and contrived. But in the Spanish context there was also that immediate basis for the woman's self-awareness and resistance: as Marcela becomes a vivacious actor, the actress who carries off this demanding role also grows in stature with her character, and both appear somewhat liberated on a public stage.

The idea of Marcela as an emerging force is supplemented by her excellent counterpart (and would-be lead *dama tramoyera*) Laura, and their vivacious maids Silvia and Celia, but it is also enhanced through their contrast with the men. If the women are live wires

then the men are cast as stiff or loitering (Félix), often confused or meek (Lisardo), authoritative and frequently given to acts of violence - for the most part the men become foils and pawns in Marcela and Laura's plots. There is a sense of a strengthening womanhood and a declining masculinity and, as I believe is a constant in Calderón, the sense of masculinity in decline is accompanied by coercive tendencies often leading to violence or that stifle the life-force of women. However, Marcela has not always been positively received, and reasons for this will be addressed at the end of the chapter. Yet, just as Clara leaves the imprint of the *mujer tapada/cubierta* in her wake, in my opinion, the sort of controversies aroused by Marcela are her strength and they reveal her topicality. Although there is clear proto-feminism inherent in Marcela taking the role of Calderón's prisoner, basic Christian ethics on the part of Calderón (and likely his audience) would promote rather than seek to suppress her rebellion against her brother's oppressive actions. But whether her method of revolt, which involves an almost ruthless self-drive, sensual imagination, self-confidence and eloquence, would have been considered admirable in a woman is not so easy to evaluate; and yet these are exactly the type of polemical qualities which were associated with and displayed by the actress who played her in performance. Indeed, with reference to the epigraph of Vives at the opening of this chapter, moralists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were averse to the idea of 'showy' or expressive women, as this went against female modesty and women's 'natural' role inside a home with emotions withheld and stultified – indeed forms of openness in women were stigmatised by being equated with unchasteness. Actresses of the age then, those public and professional mistresses of artifice, appear as a great paradox of this period in Spain. In a society obsessed with the decorum of its members, especially women, these women were outspoken and on show and, arguably, would have been a moralist's worst idea of womanhood. Dramatists, however, not least the great 'moral' poet Calderón *liked* if not thrived on writing for women. And so through a discussion of Marcela and her counterparts I want to suggest how this *dama tramoyera* in particular draws out a sense of the challenge, irony and progression posed by actresses in Calderón's society, and in turn reveals their influence on the playful spirit of Marcela (and indeed all his *damas tramoyeras*), as characters who live both in and outside of the play and the norm: women who are on the verge of becoming something more than their present status allows.

Out of the Dark: the Emergence of Marcela

Casa con dos puertas is set in Ocaña, in particular in the houses of the principal characters. One of the houses belongs to the gentleman Félix and his sister Marcela, and here Félix has been accommodating his friend Lisardo. However, for the sake of honour, Félix felt he could not allow his friend to know that he has an unmarried sister in residence and so decided to confine Marcela to her room and to keep her presence hidden from his guest. To keep her secret he has had the door to her apartment concealed with a tapestry; thus Félix's house has a *room* with two doors, one acknowledged and one concealed, that leads to Marcela. This stifling precaution has aroused a response in Marcela, who decides to escape her confines and seek Lisardo out herself; she has secretly been meeting him outside the town in disguise. To both protect her identity and keep her suspicious brother at bay, she has acted as a *dama tapada* and is engaged in plotting an alternative to the script planned by her brother. To continue her plans, however, Marcela requests the help of her friend Laura in a nearby house. Laura also happens to be Félix's love interest.

To enable her to continue to see Lisardo, Marcela asks Laura if she can use her house as a base to meet him and, though reluctant, Laura agrees to it in the name of friendship. In contrast to Marcela's burgeoning relationship with Lisardo, Laura has been at odds with Félix and is convinced he is still involved with a previous love interest called Nise. Although angry, Laura has asked her maid, Celia, to pretend she is working independently of her mistress and to bring Félix to her house to hear an explanation from him; it is this decision of Laura's that then coincides and clashes with Marcela's plans. On Marcela's first attempt to meet Lisardo, things go awry: Laura's father appears at the house at the same time. The women must prevent him from seeing Lisardo and now the two doors of Laura's house come into play. Laura's house has a door that exits on to the street and an alternate exit via another room. The women hide Lisardo in the room with the alternative exit but, before he can get away, Félix also arrives to see Laura. While Lisardo manages to escape, the women are not able to prevent Félix seeing a shadow of a man leaving the house; thus Félix turns the tables on Laura and accuses her of being unfaithful and dishonourable. The play develops through a series of scenes of this kind: attempted meetings, unexpected arrivals and protestations of innocence at the expense of deceptive appearance. However, identities are eventually revealed and the couples decide to marry.

Having indicated above that Marcela is a character of precedence, my first point concerns rebalancing the protagonists of the play. Brother and sister are struggling for control of the plot and hence each other, and while Félix has more lines, Marcela has the leading touch and omnipresence. For example, despite Félix having attempted to put her out of view in the house (or the stage set), Marcela makes sure she is ‘on stage’ appearing from the side-lines or from behind her tapestry ‘*Asoma Marcela*’ (297a), and on another occasion she will intrude on a scene to change the course of events; but Marcela is not always considered the main player. In an important study dedicated solely to this play, Varey (1972) describes *Casa con dos puertas* as a comedy of errors in which Félix is the main player, as his lack of faith in his sister and his fear of gossip (‘que dirán’) leads him to imprison his sister and create the entanglements that follow: ‘The characters in this play are lost in a world of dark confusion which they themselves have created’, a world in which ‘man does not know what to do’ (p. 84). Yet, this statement only seems valid if taken literally rather universally (i.e. applicable to men only), because, far from being lost, Marcela is the *least* confused character in the play, as exemplified in this aside made when her brother is not present: ‘[Ap.] Disimular importa, pues informada estoy de todo’ (307b). It is true that Marcela does lose some control in the final act when the threat of male violence intrudes on her romance, but overall it is more apt to say that it is the men who are lost and frustrated in her play-within-the play: Félix repeatedly complains of ‘*tantas confusiones*’ and ‘*ilusiones*’ and Lisardo expresses disorientation. Thus while man may not know what to do, woman, at least as represented by Marcela, *does* know what to do, or at least what she intends to do. From the first scene of the play when she meets Lisardo outside of the town, Marcela has resisted the dark and sought out the light through her secret escape. So just as she pushes him aside, we also need to avoid giving Felix prime importance since it is Marcela who leads this play in two senses: it is her voice that opens proceedings and she is the first to be seen, literally leading Lisardo and his companion-lackey Calabazas, the *gracioso*. Her opening line to her maid Silvia is indicative of a guiding position: ‘¿Vienen tras nosotras?’ (276a) and once she has confirmed that the men are following her she orders them to halt:

Pues párate. Caballeros,
 desde aquí habéis de volveros,
 no habéis de pasar de aquí;
 porque si intentáis así
 saber quién soy, intentáis
 que no vuelva donde estáis

The first sight of Marcela is one that sees her putting limits on the men's movements as she commands them to stop and start. She is already reversing her situation by controlling their access to her rather than remaining bound by the confines Félix has imposed, and is also using her veil, that additional boundary of modesty, offensively rather than passively: it is also helping her to control their access to her body. We also have a first impression of Lisardo as a worthy but innocent puppy-dog like young man in comparison to the impressive presence of Marcela. We discover that Lisardo has met her a few times under her disguise and remains haplessly drawn to her. He compares her to a magnet: 'Como quedarme espero, / cuando veo que se van / mi sol, mi norte y mi imán' (276a). While this is not an atypical compliment of a *galán*, it is an apt description here as Marcela will become the lodestar of her play within Calderón's play so to speak. And this pattern of woman leading man is continued throughout by the notes Marcela sends to Lisardo to draw him to Laura's house for example, and also within the sub-plot concerning Félix and Laura. In the next scene, for instance, Laura's maid Celia lures Félix by feigning that she is helping him make amends with his love: he thinks he is going to Laura's house under genuine circumstances but it is part of a plot created by Laura and Celia. Laura is only feigning her annoyance and has asked Celia to invite him on her behalf. Celia notes the leading pattern: 'Ay bobillos, y que fácil, / a la casa de su dama, / es de llevar un amante!' (283a) and afterwards she assures her mistress that she played her part well. Laura is thus also directing and contributing to the script.

Marcela and her women counterparts appear to have command but also an overall presence, a point to which Varey alludes but which he did not develop. Yet it forms a telling comment on the rival centre of the play:

The impact of the play is considerably strengthened by the speed and urgency of the construction: the reckless impetuosity of the lover gives an impression of tremendous vitality - one of the principal reasons, no doubt, for the popularity of the genre [...] Marcela throughout insists on the need for quick decisions and instant action. (p. 83)

As Varey infers, the source of the play's immense vitality does not emerge from the male lovers but from a female one: Marcela. I think we can conclude then that Marcela is the drama's alternate central force and that events have been constructed around her response to *her* dilemma as much as they are built around the decisions of Félix. Furthermore, as Marcela bears the mark of the *joven pasional* then Calderón suggests that we *should* equally focus on

her actions in the play, as her dilemma involves the matter of free will then, on Calderonian terms, she is crucial to its interpretation. But the perspective of who is driving this play also changes when we bring the matter of live performance to bear on interpretation. Given the vibrancy of Marcela (and all the women) which still emerges off the page today, one can deduce that a corresponding energy on the part of the actresses who played these roles was also necessary to determine a successful performance and thus contribute to the ‘popularity of the genre’. Indeed, just like Lisardo who is magnetised by Marcela, Félix who is eventually drawn to her for guidance, and an audience whose eyes are often encouraged to focus on her, all become dependent on Marcela, and this focus is not created coincidentally. It is not for nothing that prior to Calderón, Lope de Vega alluded to the fact that without the actresses of the *comedia* ‘todo es nada’ (Shergold, 1967, p. 217) - hence actresses were a life force guaranteeing the survival of the *comedia*, and Marcela embodies this force. But, before continuing this main line of analysis, I want to contrast her with the impression of Félix which helps put her stand-out performance into relief.

If Marcela offers a positive presence then Félix has a melancholy air. He admits to Lisardo that he is distracted by a personal matter: ‘Un cuidado, que me trae / desvelado, no permite / que sosigue ni descanse’ (278b). Both men exchange long expositional speeches on their present circumstance in Act 1 and as noted later, their indulgent speeches contrast with the more concise words of Marcela. But contained in his speech is a notable description of the first time he saw his love, Laura, standing by the side of a pool in gardens outside Ocaña – and he recalls that he was not sure if she was true or imaginary: ‘si es mujer o imagen’ because ‘ella miraba tan muerta, / que no pudo esperar nadie / que se pudiese mover’ (279b). Laura seemed to him so perfect and immobile that she was indistinguishable from a nymph-like statue and his description of her aloof beauty recalls the image of an unattainable Petrarchan lady. But he also saw embodied in her a rival dialogue between art and nature. While an artist can boast the ability to make a realistic woman out of stone, nature replies with its ability to make a woman so beautiful as to be a piece of art: ‘sé hacer una estatua yo, / si hacer tu una mujer sabes, / o mira un alma sin vida, / donde esta con vida jaspe’ (279b). Félix’s comparison then is on the theme of deciphering illusion from reality but as concerns a woman. Within his comparison is an allusion to an artist’s (or man’s) desire to recreate or manipulate woman’s beauty so that it becomes her defining attribute, thus fixing her as a moulded object: she is both fashioned and perceived as something attractive but static, and her inner potential remains hidden and controlled. Yet his contrast of woman as ‘statue’ and

man as 'creator' is not re-presented in the play but is, ironically, reversed. Marcela and Laura are not cast as inert objects but have broken out of this illusory mould to become makers, whereas Félix's language betrays him as being more akin to a passive statuette. There is a recurring pattern in his words and that of the women which conveys the latter to be life-bringers and the former to be somewhat deadened. For example, when Celia arrives to take him to Laura he will act as cool marble: 'Ay Celia, no habrá mármol que así calle!' (283a) and her news gives him new life: 'Dasme nuevo aliento, dasme nueva vida' (283a); in Act 2 he repeats a similar expression when he says to Marcela: 'La vida me das, hermana; / tuya desde hoy habrá sido' (299a). On each occasion he declares that either the presence or the ideas brought to him by the female cast animates him, with the suggestion then that he is lacking in energy and enterprise. The aura of Félix evokes the fossilized or the inflexible on several counts: in the language which conveys his cold emotional states, his strict adherence to the honour code and also his movements and positions on stage. For instance, on two occasions he decides to be an outpost outside Laura's house waiting to see her or zealously guarding for male intruders: he is happy to take the position of a fixed rigid object or one contorted with jealousy. The sense of him being left out of the heat of the action is also summed up by the fact that he is eventually locked out of Laura's house by the women. In the final Act, he attempts to follow Lisardo into the house, but the door is slammed in his face: 'Y en la cara con la puerta me dió Celia!' (304a). Félix's defining moment then is to be left in the middle of the stage with a sore nose. But, with little answer to the women's plot, his only resort is violence. When Calabazas is mistaken as a danger, Félix threatens to kill him: 'Darte muerte' (305a), a warning repeated again by him and Lisardo, and eventually he will threaten to kill Marcela as a dishonoured sister. If the women have the ability to awaken life, then Félix's skill appears to be in taking it away. His all-round stiffness and sinister inclinations evoke a stagnating masculinity linked to eager violence, which contrasts with the positive ascendancy of the women. In particular, he is always inferior to Marcela in speed and ingenuity, a situation that also recalls the generational conflict conveyed by Calderón's young prisoners and older jailors: by having repressed Marcela's energy, he increases the audacious power of youth. While Félix is thwarted, his threat of violence is real and remains a lurking darkness in an otherwise fantastical play. Still, although honour remains of real concern to Marcela, it does not overrule her adherence to love and freedom or the realisation of her potential and ability to act.

My principal discussion now is to illuminate how the actress/director starts to blend and peek through the character of Marcela just as she peeks round and pushes through the barriers put in front of her - including the play's frame. Indeed, Marcela's theatrical skills are displayed in three key aspects: (self- appointed) directing, plotting/creating, and improvising. In Act 1, after Marcela has met Lisardo and returned home, he also returned to the house to speak to Félix, as alluded to above. While the men are in conversation, and it seems are distracted by their own voices, Marcela appears with her maid Silvia, emerging from the door to her room which has been covered with the tapestry: 'Salen Marcela y Silvia, abriendo una puerta, que estará tapada con una antepuerta, y detiéndose detrás de ella (p. 89). Marcela thus invites the audience's gaze away from the men and toward her, and stands between the tapestry and the door to overhear Lisardo's attempt to tell Félix his story. As he begins to speak of his meetings with the unknown *dama tapada* (Marcela), from her hiding place, she announces to Silvia and the audience her entry into the scene: '[Aparte.] Aquí entro yo agora' (282a). Thus, like an actor making an entrance, Marcela asserts her place not only in the retrospective story which Lisardo is presently relating, but also in the here and now as she draws the audience's eyes to her. As Lisardo begins to tell Félix more of his curious unknown veiled lady, she fears her disobedience will be uncovered, but her luck holds as the arrival of Laura's maid to call on Félix prevents Lisardo from continuing the story. Marcela expresses her relief - having used the tapestry to her advantage, she has secretly heard their conversation and is now prepared to avert subsequent danger:

MARCELA: ¡Yo salí de lindo susto!

SILVIA: Pues ¿cómo afirmas que sales,
 si luego han de verse, luego
 proseguirá el cuento?

MARCELA: Antes lo habré remediado. (283a)

Marcela decides she will remedy her situation by writing to Lisardo and asking him not to tell more of their secret meetings until he has seen her (the high level of female literacy demonstrated by these heroines is a theme to be treated later) and as she decides she will continue to pursue Lisardo, she declares this in dramatic terms:

 hoy has de ver,
 Silvia, el más extraño lance
 de amor; porque yo fingida...

pero no quiero contarle;
que no tendrá después gusto
el paso, contado antes. (283a)

At this point Marcela offers a connection to her spectators. As she says to Silva, but also implicitly to them, she has a liking for dramatic suspense and seeks not to disappoint with her endeavour, and one might imagine a wink or direct acknowledgement of the audience as she finishes her last line. Here Calderón brings the conscious director in Marcela to the fore making her somewhat comparable to Shakespeare's Rosalind. Both dramatists like to enhance the playmaker in their heroines, and not just through them 'performing' within the play but through their choice of language: they have a mutual interest in using theatrical terms in their own words or in others' descriptions of them³³. Marcela for instance, has already been admired by Calabazas for her stage-like qualities: '¡Linda tramoya, señor!' making her 'una mujer tan embustera' (277a). Lisardo described his meetings with her as more exciting than fiction: 'la más extraña novela/ de amor, que escribió Cervantes' (282a), and her own line that begins 'hoy has de ver' even foreshadows the *autor* of Calderón's *El gran teatro del mundo*, where God as director advises the world that his play is to begin: 'pues soy tu autor, y tu mi hechura eres, / hoy, de un concepto mío, / la ejecución a tus aplausos fio' (p. 36-38)³⁴. This is not to suggest that Marcela resembles God, but that Calderón grants her a type of sovereignty through *stage majesty*, a quality shared by Rosalind. Rosalind also draws attention to her acting within her play: 'Bring us to this sight, and you shall say / I'll prove a busy actor in their play' (3.4.54-5). She is a self-confessed illusionist whose job is to rouse and draw in an audience: 'My way is to conjure you'³⁵ (10, Epilogue). She also expresses that: 'I can do strange things. I have since I was three year old conversed with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable' (5.2. 58-60). Rosalind infers to those on- and off-stage that she has been schooled by a benign illusionist (Shakespeare himself) and has become proficient in the arts of deception. In a sense both dramatists bind themselves to their heroine so that she becomes their representative on stage, giving her power over the other players, but what separates her from her onstage counterparts only draws her closer to her audience as she may ask them to identify with her instead. As Marcela asks during the play: '¿En qué ha de parar aqueste trueco?' (301a). She thus invites the audience to consider how this will all end: she is aware then that this is a play and

³³ See Chapter 4 for more details on the use of theatrical language by Shakespeare's heroines.

³⁴ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (2012). *El gran teatro del mundo. El gran mercado del mundo*. (Ed.) E. Frutos Cortés. Cátedra: Madrid.

³⁵ All references are to Shakespeare. (2016). *As You Like It*. (Ed.) J. Dusinberre. Bloomsbury: London.

encourages all present to acknowledge the conventions of the *capa y espada* play. Rather than Rosalind, this rhetorical feature perhaps recalls more graphically Shakespeare's most self-aware heroine Viola who, once disguised as Cesario, also wonders with her audience in *Twelfth Night* what will become of her: 'How will this fadge? (II.II.30)³⁶. The self-conscious artifice of the heroines of both dramatists increases the women's sovereignty while creating solidarity with their spectators, and it complicates their relation to the illusion. Despite the artifice implied in the name *dama tramoyera* or the deceptive disguise of Shakespeare's page-girls, they are the most undeceived characters on stage and the most present and authentic to the audience. Both figures defend the dramatists' power of illusion as a positive force rather than a negative one and their self-reflexive capacity enables the drama to reveal the relative 'fiction' of reality. The heroines' permeable roles and the method of using theatrical terms to describe their actions increases a sense that: 'between the world and the stage there exists a complicated interplay of resemblance that is part of the perfection and nobility of the drama itself as a form' (Righter, 1962, p. 86). Furthermore, if the heroines' theatrical endeavours help them to alter their immediate situations, then this provides some optimism as regards the beneficial effects of theatre and shows that aspects of reality may be less fixed and more malleable than they appear. To be sure, as the heroines' interactive quality is angled toward stage-spectator discussion rather than straight (undisputable) representation, they therefore break down the barriers between illusion and reality and 'the rules' so to speak.

The audience, now in her confidence, have the pleasure of sharing Marcela's feat along with her. Her next step is to visit her friend Laura, and it is here that she really begins to show her powers of plotting, forethought and creativity. To get Laura onside she tells her of her enclosure by her brother, how she found 'la prevención ofensa' (287a) and that it was either his measures or her natural curiosity that encouraged her to seek out Lisardo. Thus the Eve comparison is raised, but his young woman will prove herself to be far more than an archetype of womanly sin. She then pushes aside Félix's plan to keep her hidden and is prepared to impose her own plot over his. As she explains to Laura below, and in a manner akin to an audience member who has heard enough from their opening speeches, she has had enough of the men:

Dejemos, pues, a Lisardo,
que, sin que jamás entienda

³⁶ All references are to Shakespeare. (2003). *Twelfth Night*. (Ed.) Keir Elam. Bloomsbury: London.

que hay mujer en casa, vive
 con este descuido en ella;
 dejemos también a Félix,
 que con esto solo piensa
 que curó en salud el daño
 de que me hable y que me vea;
 y vamos a mí (287a)

When Marcela asserts ‘vamos a mí’ she puts to Laura an idea that will allow her to continue to see Lisardo without her brother knowing, but this will involve using Laura’s house, which is fitted with two doors. In technical terms this is Calderón’s decision to make best use of the corral: ‘the physical fact of the two doors at the rear stage in the commercial theatres’ (Varey, 1972, p. 83), but it is also a technical challenge that he puts into the hands of Marcela and the female cast. As a more cautious personality, Laura is not keen on the idea and points out the drawbacks to Marcela straightaway, but Marcela says she has already foreseen such possibilities and reassures her:

MARCELA: Ya, Laura, los he mirado,
 sin que corran por tu cuenta.

LAURA: ¿De qué manera? Si yo...

MARCELA: Escucha de qué manera.
 Tu casa tiene dos cuartos,
 y del uno cae la puerta
 a otra calle, a Silvia dije
 que le trajese por ella;
 de suerte que entrando, Laura,
 por donde saber no pueda,
 en fin, como foresterero,
 es casa tuya, ¿qué arriesgas? (288a)

As she explains to Laura, Lisardo is a stranger in the town so he will not know or recognise Laura’s house. Marcela can thus masquerade as its owner and use it as a base to meet him - Lisardo, in turn, will not suspect that she is in fact living in the same house as him and will not alert her brother to their would-be relationship. Marcela’s blind optimism at this point is apt given that she is young and unhampered by previous disappointment, but her lack of self-doubt also bolsters the idea that she is Calderón’s first comic heroine to try out her novel and untested plotting abilities. But despite her blind faith in her strategy, things do not go according to plan. Assuming that Laura would accept her idea, Marcela had already sent Silvia to find Lisardo and invite him to Laura’s house, and right on cue he appears at the door

while the women are finishing their discussion. Laura reluctantly makes way for them and Marcela is able to greet Lisardo but, half-way through their initial conversation, Calderón inserts another obstacle: Laura's father arrives and the women must improvise to prevent him from discovering a man in the house. They manage to conceal Lisardo in the next room which will grant him an exit via the second door, but Laura proves her point to Marcela: '¿Ves, Marcela? En el primero/ hurto al fin nos han cogido. / ¡En buena ocasión me has puesto! (289a). Marcela apologises for the mishap but Laura draws attention to her friend's impulsive naivety: 'Oh a que de cosas se obliga / quien tiene una amiga necia!' (288b). Yet, despite Laura's accusation of foolishness and this first moment of adversity, Marcela will not be thwarted. Rather than see such events as setbacks, she prefers to see them as a challenge, and her recent encounter with a danger that is only just avoided seems to fuel her desire and her confidence to continue with her plan. Marcela is not put off by anything put in her way and demonstrates notable resilience throughout. We have now seen her deploy strategy and speedy improvisation too, and indeed, the events in Laura's house have introduced the physical and mental agility of both women as they helped Lisardo, as well themselves, to dodge through doors and around obstacles. Such improvisation is needed again when Marcela is forced to step in at her own home in order to keep things on track.

After the confusion at Laura's house, Lisardo has been left disorientated by his visit to see his mystery lady, as he says to his *criado* Calabazas: 'Ni sé de donde vengo, / Calabazas, ni sé lo que me tengo' (293a) and with Marcela's refusal to be explicit about her identity, he begins to believe that she can only be Félix's mistress and decides that his only choice is to leave Ocaña. However, he is not privy to the fact that Marcela is hidden in the same house and has a spy in the form of Silvia, who alerts Marcela to fact that Lisardo is to leave. Once again Marcela decides she must act to save her plans. Silvia warns her that such daring interference risks her reputation or worse: 'Mira a qué te atreves' (295a) but Marcela will only listen to her own counsel: 'Nada / me digas, porque no estoy / para escucharte palabra. / Que hoy se va no dices? (295a) and she adds that love inspires her madness: 'Pues, Silvia, de qué te espantas / que haga locuras mi amor?' (295a). We see then that self-determination and passion overrides Marcela's concern for decorum (even from the outset she displayed little reserve) and, in having taken the lead, she is now growing into this role with more assurance: she will follow her own rules and instincts. If we compare Marcela's temperament to Lisardo's there is an apparent reversal of customary expectations: he is bashful, cautious and dithers over decisions, whereas Marcela has little regard for decorum, is

outspoken and makes instant choices. For example, Lisardo admitted earlier to Félix that his veiled lady (Marcela) had complimented him in such a way that it would embarrass him to repeat it: ‘Y añadió favores tales, / que me obliga la vergüenza, / por mi mismo, a que los calle’ (282a). We can infer then that Marcela is open about expressing her interest in him, whereas Lisardo appears to be more modest and reserved. Marcela is clearly not the aloof, silent woman of the Petrarchan imagination evoked in Félix’s earlier speech; in her own mind and thus in her present fiction, she is rather a proactive force who is not coy. And accordingly, just as she has pushed aside the literal barrier of the tapestry used to conceal her room, she continues to brush aside the constraints of womanly modesty as she appears at Lisardo’s quarters to confront him. Even Calderón’s directions at this point are elusive: she is directed as simply veiled as she appears on stage, but she assumes greater fluidity as she appears to have broken down barriers and even passes through them. Her sudden apparition to him gives her a magician-like quality and omnipotence, as she appears to arrive out of thin air, furnished with the secret knowledge of his decision to depart. As Lisardo exclaims: ‘Tan presto tuvisteis nueva / de mi partida?’ (295a) but as Marcela says with apparent innocence: ‘Las malas / vuelan mucho’ (295a). Her comment is amusing for the audience as they know that her powers of knowledge and movement have little to do with the supernatural, but Lisardo, still in the dark about her identity, remains disconcerted and refrains from questioning a ‘mujer que de mí, / donde no soy conocido, / tanta noticia ha tenido’ (289a). But the important point to note in their exchanges is that Marcela consolidates her position as the sexual agent rather than the sexual object, and maintains her resilience and initiative. Not only does she continue to play the advantage but she protests against his departure on the grounds that he is leaving ‘una mujer que os ama’ (295a); and she also voices her love outright. Their meeting is short lived as Marcela senses Félix’s return, but her interference is successful as she manages to prevent Lisardo from leaving and she will soon demonstrate a further notable act of creative improvisation.

Marcela’s attempts to see Lisardo have had the knock-on effect of causing a further rift between Félix and Laura. This is because Félix, at Celia’s behest, also went to Laura’s house that day and saw an obscured man (Lisardo) inside the home which he now believes to be a sign of Laura’s disloyalty. At the end of Act 2, Marcela arrives on the scene and listens to them arguing from the side of the stage. Laura is desperate to prove her innocence to Félix and is about to reveal all: that the man he saw was Lisardo and that Marcela had concocted

the whole plan behind his back. But having arrived just at the right time and realising that Laura is about to give her away, Marcela improvises:

MARCELA: [*Aparte.*]: ¿Qué haré?
Que, por disculparse a sí,
me ha de echar a mí a perder.

FELIX: Que nada me está peor,
que el pensarlo.

LAURA: Sí diré.

MARCELA: [*Aparte.*]

(No dirás, porque primero

Pasa por delante tapada, como jurándosela a don Félix; él quiere seguirla y Laura le detiene.

tus voces estorbaré
con esta resolución.
Amor ventura me dé,
como me da atrevimiento.)
Solo esto he querido ver.

Vase (297a)

As indicated in Calderón's stage directions above, Marcela dons her veil and pushes herself into the room to the bewilderment of Félix and Laura and to the marvel of her audience. On this occasion she demonstrates her physical command readily as she walks straight through the middle of the stage, flaunting her intrusion visually for the audience, as well as for the stunned couple, as she interrupts the action. Laura mistakes this silent *dama tapada*, who has appeared from within, for Nise, her rival for Félix's affections, and she begins to fume with anger. Thus like a curve ball thrown across the stage, Marcela's spontaneous act as a veiled decoy skews the current course of events in another direction: she succeeds in distracting Laura from divulging her story and instead redirects Laura's anger back towards Félix. Indeed, Marcela's reactive physical skills at this point appear somewhat suggestive of the balletic physicality of a *commedia dell'arte* type performer. With the quick moves and imagination of a magician, both this character who *is* an actress and the actress playing this 'dramatic' character appear now to be working as a joint force of nature.

However, it is at the opening of the final act that we can see the extent to which Marcela has seized the balance of control from her brother, establishing herself as a sovereign

of the play around which the other characters have revolved. At the beginning of Act 3, Marcela reflects on her successes in a fine speech of only modest length but with some telling aspects. She describes to Silvia how, taking full advantage of her luck, she has both manipulated circumstances and adapted to anything thrown at her. Her speech, delivered with a refreshing clarity, is very much to the point:

Y como yo lo sabía,
no temí la empresa mía;
pues, a no suceder bien,
ya en Lisardo al menos quien
me defiendiese tenía;
y en fin, ello sucedió
mejor que esperaba yo;
pues yo a mi cuarto pasé,
y en los celos dejé
el lance se barajó
de suerte, que ni Lisardo
se empeñó por mi gallardo,
ni Laura el caso contó,
ni Félix me conoció,
ni mayor susto aguardo. (298a-b)

Interestingly, she claims that her lack of fear in throwing herself into the room in front of her brother was due to her belief that Lisardo's reliable (or predictable) commitment to the code of honour would have meant that he would come to her aid had any real danger arisen; more importantly, her role as the decoy has served to confuse both Laura and Félix and left her own plans intact. Thus in spite of having been called 'necia' earlier by Laura and also admitting to some self-confessed madness, it now seems that Marcela is not foolish but articulate and determined. She is an improviser who has acted to safeguard her plans when required to do so, and is a clear thinker who can deftly sum up and reflect on her actions. It is also apparent that her understanding of others' motivations or adherence to customs has helped her. For example, honour, that code of reputation which inspired her brother to seclude her, is now being used by her to her own advantage. She expected Lisardo's honour to protect and consolidate her plans when she needed it. But perhaps her crowning glory is that she draws such resounding acknowledgement of her success directly from her brother, who appears at her door unwittingly humbled by her skill: far from woman humbled, Marcela assumes the mantle of woman triumphant. Their difference in stature is made evident by the fact that Marcela assumes the position of authority. When Félix comes to see her, she asks *him* for the reason for his intrusion rather than wait to be spoken to, which would be the usual

order of things: ‘Qué novedad / es entrar tú en mi aposento?’ (298b) she boldly asks him, to which he replies with some humility: ‘Es venir mi voluntad / por luz a tu entendimiento, / por consuelo a tu piedad’ (298b). The audience and Marcela are now presented with a reversal of positions loaded with irony. Félix equates Marcela’s scheming, which has so frustrated him, with the light of reason, and he is now asking for her help as if she were a true visionary. This misplaced compliment to his rival is comical, but it is not without an ironic truth. Given the extent of Felix’s delusion, Marcela’s work *has* proved to be rather ingenious. In order to ascertain Laura’s fidelity he has come to submit a plan to Marcela: ‘Para esto ha pensado / una industria mi cuidado’ (299a) and suggests that Marcela become a spy for him in Laura’s house. But like a student approaching a seasoned teacher or an amateur addressing a professional, he is unaware that Marcela is three steps ahead of him. Not only is he offering more information to aid her but his idea seems unoriginal and feeble after Marcela has set the pace – and she draws out his idea with some enjoyment:

MARCELA: ¿Y es, si me la has de decir?

FELIX: Que tú hermana, has de fingir
 que un gran disgusto, un enfado
 connmigo tenido, y que
 en tanto que esto se pasa,
 te quieres ir a su casa:
 y así una espía tendré
 para el fuego que me abrasa;
 pues tú a la mira estarás,
 y a pocos lances verás,
 quién este embozado es,
 y con secreto después
 de todo avisarás

[...]

MARCELA: Aunque hay bien que replicar,
 hoy me iré a su casa. (299a)

Marcela is now toying with him; for a moment she raises objections to his plan, mirroring the earlier scene in which Laura expressed doubts about Marcela’s plan before pretending to submit to his ideas. But having just dealt with Félix, Laura now comes to Marcela for help, still outraged by the silent *tapada*. Aware, of course, that it was she herself who performed this role, Marcela responds innocently to Laura’s distress: ‘¿Quién duda que ella sería?’

(299b) or ‘¡Hay tan gran bellaquería! (299b). Here her remarks in conversation with Laura function in a similar way to Shakespeare’s Rosalind or Viola. As the audience knows the identity of the role-player/disguisers, when they converse with other characters on stage, they can still engage the audience through word-play, *double entendre* or, in Marcela’s case, ironic intonation. For example, in *As You Like It* when Phoebe has mistaken Rosalind for a man, Rosalind asserts: ‘I pray you do not fall in love with me, / For I am falser than vows made in wine’ (3.5.73-4). Here her self-confessed ‘falseness’ is for the audience’s amusement as much as it is meant for Phoebe’s instruction as they know the meaning hidden in her words. Likewise when Marcela calls the decoy *dama tapada*, (i.e. herself), ‘¡la mala mujer!’ (299a) or feigns shock at events which were of her own devising, she increases her bond with her spectators. Although all these heroines may put on a show of pretence for their fellow characters, they can remain transparent friends to their audiences.

Laura is about to submit another strategy, but instead, perhaps tired of another amateur plan, Marcela decides to side with her, and the women now team up for the last time to solve their romantic dilemmas. Laura needs help: ‘Cómo se ha de hacer?’ (300b) and once again it is Marcela who steps in to manage the characters around her: she is now the fully-fledged director of the situation. She thinks on her feet: ‘Así: dame el manto, y dirás, Silvia, / que fui en casa de Laura; que para hacer más creída / la causa, quise ir de noche’ (300b), and directs Silvia and Celia to their respective positions:

Y después...aparte mira,
busca a Lisardo, y dirásle
como mi afecto le avisa
que verme vaya esta noche;
y quédate donde sirvas
a Laura. Tú, Celia, ven
conmigo; pues nos obliga
esto a trocar con las casas
las criadas. (300b-301a)

Laura points out the speed with which Marcela has organised the above, responding: ‘¿Tan aprisa?’ (301a) But Marcela believes this is exactly what is required to enable the plan to work: ‘Estas cosas más se aciertan, / mientras menos se imaginan’ (301a). Marcela has developed significantly further since she embarked on a plan to initiate a relationship with Lisardo, becoming in effect a co-director as she helps organise and fulfil her own and Laura’s aspirations and desires, so paving the way for the resolution of the *comedia*.

The Golden Age Actress and Calderón

Given that Marcela not only has an instinct for drama but also displays consummate theatrical skills in her own unofficial script, it seems logical that Calderón would have also required an exceptional actress to play her in the official script of *Casa con dos puertas*. Navarro Durán (2000) infers that his heroines are so self-accomplished that Calderón simply hands over the keys of his set to his *dama tramoyera*: ‘Ella hace el resto’ (p. 203) and while this idea remains in the mind’s eye when reading the plays as text, in terms of an actual performance Calderón really was handing over ‘the reins’ to the actresses set to embody his heroines. It would seem then that he trusted the proficiency of known actresses to take charge, but that in turn, their talents, attitude and presence may have helped to inspire his version of the archetype. After all, much of Marcela’s particular characterisation mirrors that of a performer: dramatic gifts, self-confidence, fearlessness, and a genuine delight in suspense. Some have cited Cervantine influence on Calderonian theme and structure or the legacy of Tirso’s lively heroines as key inspirations for his women of comedy. Yet the other obvious but rarely mentioned influence is that of her immediate double.

Marcela’s aspiration and enterprising spirit forms the strongest parallel with the real women who would have played her. For instance, Román (1991) maintains that rather than the exceptional woman characters written by dramatists of the *comedia*, it was the actress of the Spanish stage ‘who remained the more spectacular woman of the period’ (p. 455). Thus the correlation of a female character with innate theatricality had a further source of inspiration in early modern Spain: certain women *were* talented theatre-makers in light of their occupations as actresses or *autoras* (actor-managers), their skills honed by all the important roles they played in the transmission of the *comedia*. Cruickshank (2009) writes that there is a surprising number of women in Calderón’s *comedias* who are ‘strong willed enough or clever enough to get what they want’ (p. 236) and he suggests that his women family members or historical figures could well have been the role-models to have inspired them. But he then acknowledges that certain Calderonian heroines, and some who are discussed in the present work, such as the women of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* or Ángela of *La dama duende*, are placed in dramas

with contemporary settings in Madrid, [and] are the most interesting, [as] they can scarcely have been modelled on the poet’s immediate family (his mother and his sister Dorotea), and we are left to guess where he might have encountered them. (p. 236)

I would like to offer my own conjecture here: perhaps Calderón encountered them in the world in which he worked: the theatre.

The advent of the Golden Age actress, of course, had occurred long before Calderón began creating his comic heroines. Rennert (1963) asserts that women had been acting in Spain since the mid-1500s but started to be granted official licenses in 1587, although this entailed a number of telling regulations with regard to decorum: all actresses had to be married and should not appear on stage in men's clothes (p. 143). Oehrlein (1993), however, highlights their growing and widespread influence in 'todos los sectores, tanto en el teatro popular como en el Corte y en el teatro religioso de Corpus' (p. 224) and so much so that 'constituyeran una parte integrante de las representaciones a la que no se podía renunciar' (p. 224). Yet the growth of their popularity generated a parallel growth in policing and concern. Frequent attempts were made by churchmen and opponents of the theatre to ban women from the stage throughout the early 1600s and moralists objected strongly to women putting on male dress despite (or because of) the popularity of the *mujer vestida de hombre* (Rennert, 1967, p. 206-20). Also, given that Calderón's career began in the mid-1620s, and in light of the increased attempts to restrict the appearance of women in male dress in the first half of the 1600s, this may well be the practical issue that contributed to his choice to stage the *dama tapada* rather than the *mujer vestida de hombre*. Whatever the case, the actress was an influential figure.

In terms of real influence, Regalado (1999) suggests that the richness of many of Calderón's female characters may derive from the wealth of excellent actresses with whom he worked. He states that: 'Calderón aprovechó excepcionales intérpretes, actrices como Bárbara Coronel, Baltasara de los Reyes, Ana Martínez, María de Riquelme, Francisca Bezón, Antonia Infanta y María de Córdoba, entre otras muchas' (p. 936-37). With cross reference to Rennert's list 1907, each of the women above is recorded as famous in her own right, and in certain cases moved from actress to company manager. Bezón was 'much admired' and managed a company in 1683 (p. 24), as did María de Córdoba whose company in 1626 'gave eight *comedias* before the king at Aranjuez, for which she received 2400 reales' (p. 44). Rennert also references a performance in 1632 on the *día de candelas* which suggests Córdoba commanded quite a salary and more: 'she received 800 reales, and costumes for herself, besides transportation, board and lodging for herself and maid' (p. 44). Antonia Infanta was 'celebrated' (p. 78) and María de Riquelme revered for her 'virtuous and

exemplary life' (p. 147). According to McKendrick (2006), de Riquelme was 'remembered [...] as a superlative actress so beautiful that she was pursued by many admirers, to all of whom she gave short thrift' (p. 75). The first in the list, Bárbara Coronel, is a woman of interest to Boyle (2014), who describes how this particular actress, famed for her proficiency in the role of the *mujer vestida de hombre*, not only continued to dress as a man off stage, but that her acting talents helped her overcome a controversial court case; Coronel also ran her own company (p. 3).

If such details are accurate, then most of the above actresses known to Calderón were financially independent, confident, successful, or even entrepreneurial. McKendrick (2006) also indicates the flexible, advantageous attitude of actresses: these women could raise themselves from a humble status via the profession or would be prepared to take on other jobs at the same time to earn extra money. They were 'versatile, resourceful and aware' (p. 78) and called 'on their wits and strength of character to survive and thrive as best they might in a society dominated by men' (p. 87). In my opinion the inventive and determined qualities of actresses of the period are all reflected in the attitude of Marcela, and in turn, rather than wholly artificial (self-reflexive) comic characters or fantasy roles without serious credibility, Calderón's *damas tramoyeras* could be seen to chart advances made in the period: a growth of entrepreneurial women best exemplified by the rise of the professional actress. Marcela for example, demonstrates a resolve no doubt demonstrated by many real women who forged careers as actresses and who were seeking to make different lives and better prospects for themselves. After all, she drives herself out of her brother's planned enclosure for her, forges her own plan and makes herself present to Lisardo and her audience through acting - in all senses of the word.

Most of the actresses listed above, bar Córdoba and de Riquelme, had careers post-1635, and thus are too young to have been among the generation of women Calderón was working with when he composed *Casa con dos puertas*. But Marcela is in fact compared to a real actress of the early 1630s, one Catalina de Acosta,³⁷ and the curious allusion to this actress and her 'statue' has aroused some confusion and speculation. The comparison happens in Act 2 after she has discovered that Lisardo is to leave and Calabazas is bewildered as to how she already knows this: '[*Aparte.*] ¡Vive Dios que con los demonios habla! / ¿Si es

³⁷ Catalina de Acosta is listed in Rennert (1907) as the wife of Antonio de Rueda and in the acting company of Alonso de Olmedo in 1631; both wife and husband were 'received into the *Cofradía de la Novena*' (the Actors' Guild) in 1631 (p. 4).

Catalina de Acosta, que anda buscando su estatua?’ (295a) Muir and Mackenzie (1985) thought Catalina could be the actress who played Marcela in the first performance of *Casa con dos puertas*, reasoning that this would be a cause for her mention, but they could not understand why she is searching for her statue (p. 194). Varey wrote in 1972 that this reference was, perhaps, to a play unknown to us; but in his later work (1985) he uncovered another reason for the reference in regard to Catalina’s various stage names throughout her career. He writes that while:

it is not unusual for an actress of the period to adopt a stage name [...] we can legitimately inquire why she found it necessary, or desirable, to change the name by which she was known so frequently in the course of a relatively short career. (p. 112)

Varey found that, in documents of February 1633, she is referred to as Catalina Carbonera but in March 1635 as Catalina de Sotomayor; in July 1638 she reverts to Catalina de Acosta only to change again in 1640 to Catalina de Rueda (p. 112). The ‘unlikely’ source that led to an explanation was an *auto de fe* that took place in Madrid in 1632. Varey notes that a list of victims burnt in effigy included a woman by the name of Catalina de Acosta: ‘an unfortunate coincidence of names, which may or may not have caused embarrassment to the actress’ (p. 112). Varey surmises that this grisly event caused Catalina continually to change her stage name so as not to be associated with a victim of the Spanish Inquisition. While Varey believes *Casa con dos puertas* was written in the spring of 1629, he indicates that Calderón’s reference to ‘a young actress newly emerged on the Spanish stage’ who is ‘haunted by the effigy of another’ is a link to this event of 1632 and forms a later addition made by the dramatist (p. 113). It seems then to have been inserted for purposes of black humour and topicality if Catalina was now known as an aspiring actress, and if Catalina did go on to play the role of Marcela after 1632, as seems very likely, then in the moment that references Catalina’s name, character and actress did momentarily really fuse as one.

The blend of the professional actress and the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* not only coincides in their strong resolve but the sense of foreknowledge and inside knowledge they share and display. While female ‘knowledge’ and design may be construed as suspect, for example when Marcela talks of her curiosity in light of *la culpa* of Eve, but such knowledge is rendered ironic when it appears related to artisanal knowledge of theatrical construction. Although she is young and inexperienced, I perceive Marcela’s command over the play as a talent blended into her character by the real actress playing her. A female player in an acting company, of course, had inside knowledge of male-authored scripts, set designs, and plot

conventions, and, in passing this knowledge to her character, the performer becomes Marcela, forming a true character-actress and appearing at once as the *joven pasional* and novice performer. Her flair for the dramatic suggested as innate in her personality is increased by the talents of the real actress within the character. Both then go on to move around the set with apparent ease, manipulating it to their needs and pushing their plot over the other characters or they make reference to their foreknowledge of convention. Yet as both character and actress remain within a male-authored script, it is possible to argue that their control over the scene remains only a simulacrum of their influence. But equally it could have been inspired by something more authentic: an allusion to the manner in which professional actresses were taking charge of aspects of their lives. Just as in the example of Catalina de Acosta, actresses could fashion themselves with a stage name, command expenses and if successful, command a large independent salary, which according to Oehrlein (1996), not only rivalled but on occasion surpassed that of their male counterparts (p. 224), and this fact puts some moments in the play in a new light. For instance, in the last act, Marcela's position of dominance over Félix could now be seen as an analogy for the talents of the actress who has usurped the male as sovereign of performance: he is now dependent on her rather than the other way round.

The other important point alluded to earlier is the matter of literacy. My own reaction to such an apparent high level of female literacy in these comedies was to assume that it related to their 'class' as *damas*. McKendrick (2006) writes that while it is very difficult to establish precise levels of female literacy in early modern Spain, it is now considered to be higher than previously thought. For example, new evidence such as signatures of wills and documents suggests a high level of literacy skills amongst women in seventeenth-century Madrid:

Anecdotal evidence during the first half of the seventeenth century suggests that many urban women, particularly perhaps younger women, from the noble professional and merchant classes could read, not least because devotional reading in the vernacular by now played a significant part in religious life. We can assume that some gentlewomen in the country and some women from the artisan and tradesman class could also do so. (p. 89)

The idea that many urban and gentlewomen in the period could read would indeed be apt in the case of Marcela and Laura in *Casa con dos puertas* as young gentlewomen of Ocaña, just as it would be for Clara in the last chapter and Ángela in the next – arguably the heroine who loves language most. Yet it is not just the mistresses who can read, but also Silvia and Celia their respective *criadas*: 'no maid in Golden Age theatre [who] seems ever unable to read the

notes she carries between her mistress and admirer' (McKendrick, p.89). Heroines and their maids need to be able to read and write in order to plan liaisons and thus help construct the plot of a *capa y espada* play, but if this was wholly unrealistic, would dramatists have been able to portray literate women so frequently? Added to the literacy of characters is the matter of the literacy of those playing them: the actress would also need to be able to read unless lines were dictated to her to learn. As McKendrick also notes, aside from royalty or women of religious orders, the other principal female role at this time that demanded literacy was that of the actress: 'I think we can assume that those who played all but very small parts must have been able to read' (p. 89). The women portrayed in *Casa con dos puertas*, and in the other plays discussed in this thesis, are often young, literate and use language within the play to their advantage, and simultaneously, the women performing them were putting their own acquired literacy into action when performing the written dialogue in public. The Calderonian *dama tramoyera* in particular is a literate woman with a taste for the dramatic, just like the professional actress. She represents then not only a determined woman but to an extent a learned and eloquent one as she indicates a growth in female learning within the period rather than the stagnation of passive dependency.

Marcela, Morality and the Actress

I have provided a positive account of Marcela and perceive her qualities as determined rather than self-interested but she has not always been interpreted so positively. For example, Mujica (1986) is more sceptical. She states that while Marcela is a rebel with a cause whose manoeuvring is rewarded by Calderón (through her eventual marriage to Lisardo), this does not make Marcela an admirable person. Mujica perceives her behaviour as egocentric and rash, and particularly objects to the fact that Marcela drops her friend Laura in difficult situations yet remains committed to her own needs. Such selfishness is best encapsulated in Marcela's use of the line: 'primero soy yo' (308a) when she defends herself against Laura's threat to expose her (p. 13). For Mujica, Calderón's *capa y espada* plays pit the unheeded desires of an individual against their personal and social responsibility, and Marcela embodies such self-centredness. Román (1990) also believes selfishness is typical of Calderón's comic leading ladies and is epitomised by Marcela who 'relentlessly' pursues her 'own self-interests' (p. 370). He argues that it is rather the outsider to the situation, Lisardo, who becomes the central figure of the play, as he must 'determine which loyalty is to be honoured', the sister's or the brother's, and when marriage becomes the only option available

at the end, it is the male friendships which are restored and male privilege is re-imposed (p. 370). On the other hand, some feel that were it not for the flexibility and gusto of Marcela the other characters would not have been rescued from darkness and dullness. Muir and McKenzie (1985) state that while Lisardo may steady Marcela, he will also be purged of his earnest persona thanks to her 'zest for novelty', which is a necessary antidote to his serious but 'too worthy existence' (p. xxx). Thus, from their perspective, Marcela can be seen to *transform* others rather than appear to serve only herself.

The negative responses to Marcela relate to the matter of responsibility and the fair treatment of others. For some, her inquisitiveness, exuberance, and self-promotion border on the irresponsible and the selfish, making her a provocative personality as much as an admirable one. But such judgements levelled at Marcela, at least in her time, were equally applied to the personal character of female actors. The Golden Age actress was not a figure who sat easily with moralists of the period (as was the case for male actors too), and the roles appropriate for a given actress had been contested since her earliest appearances on stage. Rennert (1963) asserts that there was a general prejudice levelled at all actors due to their wandering profession and humble origins, which led to accusations of dissoluteness, and the personal moral character of an actress set to perform a part such as the sacred Virgin Mary for example, could be a huge bone of contention (p. 206). Indeed Boyle (2014) points out that the actress was a threat because of her 'chameleon-like ability to play saint or sinner': she could appear in a divine role regardless of the terms of her 'real' lifestyle (p. 10). This then was a divisive figure inviting praise or denunciation, seen as a potential danger to society by some, yet revered by others for her skill and irrepressible stage presence. Actresses were still demanded and required for the successful transmission of the *comedia*.

The contrary reactions still incited by Marcela have something in common with the controversies provoked and endured by Golden Age actresses of the time, and this bolsters my argument as regards their correlation. This (purposeful) polemical quality is perhaps at the heart of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* who creates an ironic shift in the meaning of 'a designing woman' as the theatrical aptitude of his creative heroines *demonstrates* the flourishing craft of real actresses. In the character of Marcela, female artifice is now blurred with dramatic proficiency and vice versa as her propensity for feigning is *celebrated* by both playwright and audience alike while remaining, of course, at odds with contemporary moral guidance for women. Furthermore, Marcela's optimistic outlook, despite the setbacks that she

encounters in the play, may also be seen to reflect the survival instincts of actresses who endured frequent scrutiny and attacks on their moral characters, together with the many attempts to ban them from the stage. Thus the *dama tramoyera* and the actress who come together as one in performance form a female figure of endurance and rebellion of the age, and their daring qualities are comparable to actresses who braved ‘the weight of traditional expectation and current prejudice’ (McKendrick, 2006, 87) to carry on with their chosen livelihoods. Those women could not have been unaware that, in the parts they played, ‘they were effectively challenging society’s prescriptions for, and assumptions about, women and the way a woman’s life was to be lived’ (McKendrick, 2006, 91). Having discussed the influence of the actress on the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* so as to draw out the development of the figure over time, in the next chapter Marcela’s companion heroine Ángela is to be examined with regard to Calderón’s metaphysics of the actor, which further consolidates his radical approach to women.

4. The Prisoner-Actor: The ‘Universal’ Appeal of Ángela of *La dama duende*

A woman does not have the right over her own body.

Juan Luis Vives, The Education of a Christian Woman

I have so far related the meta-theatrical powers of Calderón’s *damas tramoyeras* to the real figures of the *mujer tapada/cubierta* (Clara) and the Golden Age actress (Marcela), to indicate how his approach to this archetype merges the real with the fictional and tests the gender-related conventions of drama and social custom accordingly. In this chapter I am to examine the significance of Doña Ángela of *La dama duende*, through a greater metaphysical interpretation of her powers as well as a temporal one. I have touched on how Calderón’s use of the veil and the sense of Marcela being caged in *Casa con dos puertas* bring out particular forms of female imprisonment. The import of such themes cannot be overstated since they underpin the Calderonian vision: by binding his universal archetypes of the prisoner-actor to women’s experience, Calderón foregrounds rather than downplays their humanity. In the case of Marcela, I noted the connection between her and the prisoner-actor - but it is Ángela of *La dama duende* who combines with these spiritual/philosophical archetypes in the most graphic manner. In terms of a more ‘modern’ or recognisable critical proto-feminist consciousness, Clara’s caustic comments on the state of her freedom in comparison with that of her *novio* in *Mañanas de abril y mayo*, appears to be the most potent. However, in terms of encapsulating the basis for Calderón’s progressive approach to women as discussed in Chapter 1 - the recognition of female experience as *human* (which will eventually lead to her equal rights) - it is Ángela who shows this fundamental advance through her closer relation to his prisoner-actor. She forms a notable precedent to Julia of *La devoción de la cruz* and Segismundo of *La vida es sueño*, and her connection to the ‘universal’ is the likely basis for her enduring appeal - almost at the expense of her later comic sisters.³⁸ Indeed, Ángela has become like a sun around whose infamous aura his later comic heroines spin: she has overshadowed not only her younger sister Marcela but the majority of Calderón’s later *damas tramoyeras*. Given the iconic status of her ‘Phantom show’ it is not hard to fathom her longstanding appeal, and although she may have been created after Marcela, she was likely performed first, hence she

³⁸ While *La devoción de la cruz* is dated later than *La dama duende* at 1633, Cruickshank (2009) notes that a first version of this play exists under the name *La cruz en la sepultura* which can be dated at 1623; thus Julia may in fact have started to take shape a few years before Ángela.

puts down a strong marker for others to follow. Still, by situating her comparatively amongst her comic sisters, we can see that she is not entirely singular (each *dama tramoyera* is both an individual and part of the archetype) but also where she differs which offers more insight into to her lasting appeal.

Of the plays addressed so far, *Ángela* and *La dama duende* sit chronologically between the two, written later within the same year as *Casa con dos puertas* in 1629, but a few years before *Mañanas de abril y mayo* circa 1634, and accordingly, *Ángela* possesses elements of her predecessor (Marcela) and her successor (Clara). She uses her veil to escape the home (although this also forms part of her widow's outfit) and she acts and directs within the drama itself. She is also marked therefore, with the aura of the *mujer tapada/cubierta* and the real actress, bringing with her the corresponding issues of gendered autonomy, decorum and irony associated with these women: that veiled ladies were transforming modesty and restraint into activity, and that actresses as professionally 'feigning women' were widely celebrated by the public. She has a level of self-consciousness more akin to Marcela and shows a playful sense of irony to indicate an awareness of her spectators and bring them closer to her; in addition she has a strong onstage audience in Isabel her maid, and her cousin Beatriz. There is considerable degree of female solidarity on display, but this does not mean that she fails to reach out across the play's frame or forcefully test and expand her limits. In fact, quite the opposite - her phantom-self has arguably had the most 'real' impact of all Calderón's comic heroines. Akin to a hyper-real version of herself, *Ángela's* phantom alter ego breaks through the barriers of the male arranged house/set designed to hinder her and once possessed by this new spirit, she finds the courage to overcome obstacles. Similar to Marcela, *Ángela* is resilient and intelligent, and while she has been put in the margins of the house, she makes herself the star of her own show: she is the unlikely combination of a widow-turned-stage idol. Yet, however fictional or fantastical *Ángela* may be, she draws in an audience to the 'present reality' of the spectacle giving it tangibility, and furthermore, she leaves a long-lasting real legacy amongst Calderón's own characters as well as audiences; on this count she offers some further parallels to Shakespeare's heroines in regard to enduring or 'universal' appeal. Given her similarities to Marcela, *Ángela* also has much in common with Rosalind of *As You like It* together with some shades of Viola of *Twelfth Night* and also Julia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; I return to a comparison with the latter at the end of the chapter. In terms of enduring legacy, however, she is most comparable to Rosalind in that these particular heroines seemingly prove the ultimate interweaving of fiction and reality: that

characters both do and do not exist. For instance, Thirlwell's (2016) description of Rosalind as a female character 'in a fictitious drama and yet alive, threatened by death but never dying, a heroine who breaks the bounds of her play and lives long after it is over' (p. 178), could equally be said about Calderón's Ángela. Both characters have become so much a part of their respective cult theatre histories that they are almost indecipherable from real women of influence: Rosalind has now garnered her own biography charting her experiences and impact.³⁹

Indeed, Ángela's fame has also spread, but hers flows in and outside of illusion, and Calderón has played his part in heightening her reputation. This is because he likes to make recurrent references to his *duende* in his later *capa y espada* plays, a habit thought to indicate *La dama duende's* (and Ángela's) popularity amongst his own theatre-goers, and which has the added effect of a further blend of illusion and reality: his later *damas tramoyeras* now appear akin to Ángela's devotees who are following in the footsteps of their idol⁴⁰ – this could be a device to reflect how she had gained real fans off stage, or even a way of conveying the popularity of the actresses who played her. In a way, the fictional Ángela contravenes the following contemporary advice: 'It is not a proof of chastity for a woman to be too well known, celebrated, and sung of and to be on people's lips under some name they have given her' (Vives, 2000, p. 248). Yet it seems that Ángela was well known and by another name, the '*duende*'; again, this could be another reference to the controversy of actresses who could take on a stage name and were likely to be discussed or celebrated publicly under a new pseudonym. Yet the idea of Ángela having a 'fan club' could be said to still exist. Given the large amount of critical devotion she has received, this woman's charisma and sensual star-power continues to attract numerous scholarly fans and from my own personal teaching experience, the excitement of contemporary drama students. Like Marcela, Ángela transmits to us today the status of the Golden Age actress as a creative powerhouse – she is the fictional double of the most renowned actress of her time, or, given her (and their) rebellious appeal, the seventeenth-century equivalent of a 'rock goddess' with a cult following.⁴¹

³⁹ See A. Thirlwell (2016).

⁴⁰ For example, Clara and Marcela are both compared to the *duende* (in the latter case this is likely a late addition to the first text of *Casa con dos puertas* as discussed in Chapter 3); another example is Lisarda of *Peor está que estaba* (circa 1630) who is also compared to the infamous Phantom Lady.

⁴¹ A possible modern equivalent for the combined attraction of Ángela, her phantom alter ego and the actresses who played her in 1629, might be for example, the huge appeal of certain 'dramatic' female rock/pop icons who emerged during and after the second wave feminism of the 1970s. The British artist Kate Bush and the

Thacker (2002) for instance, notes that *La dama duende* has drawn considerable attention over the years and with a growth in interest in women of the *comedia* in the last twenty years or more, Ángela in particular, amongst Calderón's women in general, has attracted interest.⁴² Her distinctive role-play is the subject of most interest to modern critics and a series of studies has debated the extent to which Ángela may be interpreted as representative of seventeenth-century feminism. She has been described as an anomaly or hybrid who does not fit into the discourse of seventeenth-century society, as a woman consciously shaping her destiny or even an ambivalent new Eve.⁴³ However, she is rarely situated comparatively within the range of Calderón's women of comedy, making her appear a 'one off' rather than as an individual amongst a group. Outside of Spanish-language studies for example, only slowly has she begun to be discussed in regard to the *dama tramoyera*, although a growing sense of this category has now been highlighted by Sánchez (2012). I reiterate, while it is not difficult to understand her appeal, it is worth probing why she has garnered so much interest at the expense of other women of comedy and hence what makes her comparatively unique.

By now placing Ángela within the context of the other *damas tramoyeras* of this thesis, together with Calderón's philosophic vision, we can see that she has much in common with her younger manifestation, Marcela, and anticipates aspects of Clara, but we can also see with more clarity where she differs. What distinguishes Ángela is the form of her role-play: the creation of a persistent alter ego, and in turn, the form this ego takes. What is brought out in Ángela is a stronger desire to be released from her prison (her brothers' house) and a greater sense of her miscasting (the reduced role of young widow). She is also a 'walled-up' *joven pasional* who needs to recapture her full human potential: the right to act (free will) and to do so through recasting: it is not coincidental that the form of her new role is a 'free spirit'. Ángela has the strong aura of a prisoner-actor trying to throw off her chains,

American star Stevie Nicks for instance, were renowned for their songs of compelling female protagonists who they would 'become' on stage – thereby blending performer and character together. Nicks in particular created ethereal personas and her cult status was such that her fans desired not only to imitate her, but to dress-up and become the *characters* she created on stage. Most imitated was the titular heroine of her song *Rhiannon* (1975), an elusive, free witch of Welsh folklore who she often conveyed with a black lace shawl or veil – a prop and tactic not entirely dissimilar to Calderón's own heroines, who become proficient in the art of veiling so as to become elusive personas – and who also gain fans for their artistry in the process.

⁴² See J. Thacker (2002).

⁴³ For example, Ángela features as either the principal subject or as a comparative subject (e.g. the subject of a single chapter in a larger study) in the following: F. De Armas (1976), A. Wiltout (1979), J. Iturralde (1982), A. Schizzano Mandel (1983), C. Larson (1991), M. Martino Crocetti (1991), M. Rich Greer (1994), L. Iglesias Feijóo (1997), M. Gomez y Patiño (2000), C. Morrow (2001), M. Heigl (2001), J. Thacker (2002), J. Sánchez (2012), M. E. Boyle (2014).

and her phantom appears as a metaphor for her desire to be entirely free of all constraint; she anticipates, at least from a contemporary perspective, the fully emancipated woman. Indeed, as evident in the epigraph above, the female body was both a precious and dangerous commodity in Counter-Reformation society; as the vessel of procreation it needed to be guarded to ensure that pure bloodlines and the order of society were maintained. As a woman was considered weak of body and mind, therefore prone to sin, she was not thought capable of or qualified to have authority over her own being, and was placed in the guardianship of men or another corresponding authority; a situation that Calderón sensed threatened her human rights. A phantom, however, is bodiless: it cannot possibly be enchained. Hence Ángela's new role reflects another challenge to the possibility of control, as a spirit cannot be killed, nor its influence contained; she effectively makes herself immortal through fiction. In her case, actress, character and alter ego constitute a combined force on stage, as a double layer of acting is at work and Ángela appears to incarnate a multifaceted performer. At the time, the idea of a human being as a creative or versatile player was valid, although it was one normally universalised as male: the man-actor; it is notable, then, that it is a woman who embodies this role so potently in Calderón's play.⁴⁴ Curiously, the comic medium which allows the heroine to draw out levels of acting and artifice through her meta-dramatic capacity can then reveal the truth of human existence as 'enacted'.

In effect Ángela's need to transform herself can be seen as an existential issue as well as a situational one and, with further reference to Ortega y Gasset's perspective, an issue which is figurative of human existence. While Calderón's archetypes of the prisoner and actor have a theological basis, Ortega y Gasset's theory helps emphasise their temporal aspects. In his treatise, *Idea del teatro*, concerning the interrelated nature of life and theatre, Ortega y Gasset (1958) posits the human condition as one analogous to dual existence: a state between that which is unchosen and that which is aspired to. In effect life is akin to a prison (thus similar to Calderón's understanding) because it is made of innate boundaries and limitations and is, therefore, always inadequate:

⁴⁴ K. Mroczkowska-Brand (1985) suggests that as no modern scientific theory of 'role-playing' had yet emerged during the European Renaissance/Baroque, the theory which may have inspired the double role-playing in dramas of the period may be that of the human microcosm where man was viewed as a sublime player, with a privileged position separated from God only by angels in the chain of being (p. 125): 'Man-Actor (a variant of the homo artifex) capable of great creativity and mutability because he contained within his own microcosm all the elements of the macrocosm and some internal characteristics of all the other beings on the Great Chain' (p. 133). The creative Man-Actor was a concept also bolstered by human progress and achievement in the early modern period (p. 126). However, the central figure of creativity and mutability in *La dama duende* who most resembles this idea of the 'Man-Actor', is a woman: Ángela.

Estamos consignados a esta circunstancia, somos prisioneros de ella. La vida es prisión en la realidad circunstancial. Puede el hombre quitarse la vida, pero si vive – repito – no puede elegir el mundo en que vive [...]. Estamos condenados a prisión perpetua en la realidad o mundo. (pp. 52-53)

These unchosen circumstances fuel the human desire to enter into a different state, a need to become something else: ‘el hombre se pasa la vida queriendo *ser otro*’ (p. 92). This particular idea of Ortega y Gasset is interpreted incisively by Cope (1973) below:

Man, soon discovering the existential self to be imperfect in light of its own aspirations, of limitation, desires henceforth to reach out and annex the other, that universe which is beyond limits, and whose possession would thus enlarge the bounds of self: man passes through life wishing to “be other”. (p. 7)

Ortega y Gasset suggests that in order to satisfy their continual need to be other (*ser otro*), humans have developed theatre-making as a method by which to escape their temporal confines. Any consequent partial loss of identity and reality is justified in itself ‘as a desirable end for dramatic art’ (Cope, 1973, p.7). However, what Cope rightly emphasises, is that Ortega y Gasset’s ideas respond principally to the work of Renaissance/Baroque dramatists (such as Calderón and Shakespeare) and, in turn, to their interest in relating the stage world to the real world as a means by which to convey ‘man’s deepest, most persistent psychic being’ (p. 8). In effect, Ortega y Gasset helps *illuminate* the ‘ultra-existential’ philosophy underpinning Renaissance/Baroque drama; a philosophy in which man’s desire to be other makes *him* the metaphor or dual entity:

la única manera posible de que *una cosa sea otra* es la metáfora – el <ser como> o cuasi-ser. Lo cual nos revela inesperadamente que el hombre tiene un destino metafórico, que el hombre es la existencial metáfora. (Ortega y Gasset, 1958, p. 92)

If human existence is metaphoric, then the human being can only be comparable to the double being of the actor, thus: ‘The stage and the actor are the universal metaphor incarnate’ (Cope, 1972, p. 8). This idea is not only Ortega y Gasset’s understanding of the life/theatre continuum, but a further explication of the world-stage trope at the heart of much early modern European drama. In this light, we can now return to the matter of Ángela, whose desire and actions in *La dama duende* are akin to Ortega y Gasset’s idea of *ser otro*; she is, then, a dramatic representative of the human-actor trope. But there is an obvious, or perhaps not so obvious, issue here. Ortega y Gasset consistently uses ‘man’ as the neuter term for humanity, which is commonplace to be sure, and even more commonplace in the seventeenth

century when humanity was almost always universalised as male. Yet the striking thing about Calderón's *La dama duende* is that it is a *woman* who comes to represent this figure for humanity with such potency; Ángela is one of Calderón's *best* actors. In this play it is not man who represents the idea of *ser otro* and thus the universal human actor but a woman - and this is significant given the time in which the play was written.

Its significance, however, is consistent with what I understand to be Calderón's advanced approach to women. What I seek to explicate in looking at this play is how Ángela's imprisonment and desire to act (*ser otro*) underscores her humanity, while the form of her bodiless phantom (conversely) emphasises the burdens placed on the female body, and that one is *not* reduced at the expense of the other: her human nature (as the prisoner-actor) is far from diminished at the expense of her sex/gender (woman); if anything is it *enhanced*. It seems to me then, that in light of his understanding of human existence as imprisonment and acting, Calderón felt that women living under patriarchy embodied the human condition with more potency than men – a point which serves to explain further why he presents women far more often than men in the role of the prisoner in the course of his dramatic career. Furthermore, this choice is radical in light of Beauvoir's feminism in the twentieth century, not only in that it gives women access to the universal, but that it directly parallels one of her ultimate claims. Moi (2008) observes that for Beauvoir the human condition is characterised by ambiguity and conflict, but in view of the added restrictions imposed on women in male-governed societies, they are far more exposed to conflict and uncertainty: '*under patriarchy women incarnate the human condition more fully than men*' (p. 195). My overall purpose for this chapter, based on the example of Ángela, is to underline how unwise it is *not* to take the role of women seriously in the work of Calderón – including (or especially) comedy: women can embody the heart of his aesthetics and philosophy as effectively as men. Ángela is central to this play and reaches out to many, not only for her powerful charisma but because she is the everyman and the 'everywoman' of the play: and her most notable achievement is that she presents women's experience as universal and women's resistance as a universal struggle.

The extra effects opened up by her 'phantom' complement and enrich her meta-dramatic dimensions. Her performance embodies various levels of acting, the real and fictional become blurred and roles less fixed. The comic medium aids Calderón's heroines as it allows them to enact a sense of 'becoming': 'to recombine that which patriarchal power

had separated, namely the embodied subject from her/his potential, that is, all s/he could become' (Braidotti, 2003, p. 49).

If Ángela desires to be reunited with her potential and hence all that she could become, then Calderón's presentation of the male figures points to the other side of Deleuze's theory: that man is *antithetical* to 'becoming' and as the privileged referent he 'can only be the site of deconstruction or critique' (Braidotti, 2003, p. 49). The idea of man as a hub of deconstruction has, in fact, a literal presence in the play, and one that is more extreme than Don Félix in *Casa con dos puertas*. Don Luis, for instance, determines to run through the house to find her and her accomplices and break down her creation; Don Juan barges into her rooms, takes authority over her and eventually threatens to kill her in the name of honour – rather than parodied as pantomime villains so to speak, the brothers are sinister, offering a mixture of jealous rage (Luis), and cool disinterest (Juan). Manuel and Cosme are far more entertaining and jovial but even Manuel tries to test Ángela with his sword to determine if she is indeed human. Manuel seems to represent a new younger masculinity, more imaginative as he enjoys play acting at Don Quijote, but he still remains uncertain of anything he cannot understand, touch or master. His inability to grasp the quick-moving phantom angers him and he still tries to frame her in a discourse which disappoints Ángela, who recognises herself in terms of inner essence and depth rather than of one-dimensional existence. Despite the wonder Ángela creates and her grand 'tramoya', her seduction or entrapment of Manuel for her on and off stage audience, Calderón never forgets that 'becoming woman' remains fragile in his time - and there is a sense of foreboding not entirely without cause. Lorca's Adela of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, who appears in a fictional rural Spain of the late 1930s, is still fighting for ownership of her body: '¡Yo hago con mi cuerpo lo que me parece!' (p. 54)⁴⁵ and like Ángela, who had appeared on stage three centuries before her, Adela continues to display a desire for a cloak of invisibility in order to get away from the eyes of her mother and sisters and their strict adherence to custom: '¡Quisiera ser invisible, pasar por las habitaciones sin que me preguntarais dónde voy!' (p. 54). Lorca's play suggests that advances in customs concerning women's personal and social liberty were slow in parts of Spain - but, more significantly, given the play's appearance in 1939, that any hopes of transformation were to be crushed by a Franco regime absolutely antithetical, for example, to such transformative possibilities. Still, despite its shadow, the play is also a life-affirming document as her

⁴⁵ All references are to F. García Lorca. (2014). *The House of Bernarda Alba / La casa de Bernarda Alba*, (Trans. G. Edwards). London: Bloomsbury.

phantom show offers laughter and hence new life, courage and romance - and Ángela did not wither away in the dark. Once she took the chance to act and characterise herself, her performance proves that a truly great character (our most creative selves) cannot die: Ángela resists being contained and proves that she *cannot be destroyed*.

The Prisoner-Actor

To explicate my principal argument as to how and why Ángela forms a great prisoner-actor (and hence the importance of this), I begin by discussing how her desire *ser otra* and her intimacy with the audience is built up in Act 1, before looking at the manner and effects of her meta-dramatic speciality: the creation of an alter ego.

Our first view of Angela is in an external setting, as she runs into Manuel who has opened the play with Cosme. She appears in Calderón's stage directions as follows: 'Salen Doña Angela e Isabel, *en corto, tapadas*' (p. 107) and she bursts across the stage. Not unlike Marcela, Ángela throws herself into the path of Manuel, an action that will change the course of his destiny as much as hers. She is already directing things, even if she is unaware of it as yet. This is the 'torbellino' (I. 112) (according to Cosme, a destructive force), but this is also the energetic actress-character. The soon-to-be casting director Ángela is already making her mark on events from the start. And having seen this ball of energy running across stage the audience immediately perceives the contrast when we see this vigorous youth clammed up in the house.

Ángela is literally a trapped 'angel'; another *joven pasional* but one with some experience, which increases the sense of unfairness. She is doubly imprisoned as human, woman, and widow - she has been married and has been out in the world but is now forced back. And accordingly Angela laments her situation with the most frustration of all the heroines discussed so far: '¡Suerte injusta! ¡Dura estrella!' (I. 401)⁴⁶. Calderón appears to have risen to the question as to whether women should confuse their natural seclusion with imprisonment. For example, Vives (2000) notes that 'certain vain women, anxious to see or be seen' interpret seclusion 'to mean in prison for a life sentence' (p. 126). Is the custom of secluding a widow comparable to genuine imprisonment? The starkest allusion to his archetypal prisoner is through the language in her opening speech on returning to the house:

⁴⁶ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (2012). *La dama duende*. (Ed.). J. Pérez Magallón. Madrid: Catédra.

Vuélveme a dar, Isabel,
esas tocas, ¡pena esquivá!,
vuelve a amortajarme viva
ya que mi suerte cruel
lo quiere así (I. 369-372).

As she takes on her widow's garb, this is a return to the dark or the living death: 'amortajame viva' anticipating 'un vivo cadaver' of *La vida es sueño* – the idea of being buried alive:

¡Válgame cielo! Que yo
entre dos paredes muera,
donde apenas el sol sabe
quién soy, pues la pena mía
en el término del día
ni se contiene ni cabe; (I. 379-84)

Here we are offered a sense of the grandeur of her position as she laments the lack of the sun and the presence of the moon and thus the cosmic scope of the wide world: her life is passing by with no one seeing her. Ángela makes clear her stifled opportunities and mentions her 'libertad': this is an advanced vocabulary of philosophic dimension regarding her relative freedom: 'sin libertad he vivido / porque enviudé de un marido, / con dos hermanos casada;' (I. 390-92). Therefore, preceeding Julia of *La devoción de la cruz*, who takes the role of the prisoner via the convent, this young over-protected widow is also related to the universal role, not in spite of, but because of her gender. As we have also seen, she is marked with the imprint of the *mujer tapada/cubierta*, but unlike Clara she does not revel at all in the art of veiling: the veil has helped her escape the house under cover for a brief period but ultimately she sees it as another restriction and insult to her person. As she says to Isabel, having to cover her identity in public is not something she chooses; is it just that she must hide herself in order to go to the spectacles which others enjoy freely? (I. 393-400).

Ángela is deeply unfulfilled by her present circumstances. The role of a young widow has been enforced upon her, and the corresponding decorum of a widow has cut her off from the world while she is still in her prime. She resents her situation on all levels: her enclosure, the sombre covering of her body, the lack of opportunity for self-expression and public life, and the sense of what is acceptable for her in public and private is emphasised by the transformations in appearance that she is obliged to make when crossing boundaries. Having

escaped the house in her veil in the first scene, when she returns home the audience see her shed the role of *dama tapada* and become the widow. In between these changes, Ángela expresses herself openly to Isabel, but she is then seen to internalise her feelings of resentment in the scenes in front of her brothers. Thus the audience begin to see a divide between Ángela's feelings and desires and what is expected of her: how she must perform in front of others and how she behaves in private. Furthermore, as Ángela's daily roles appear as visible costume changes, her familial role (dutiful sister/ grieving widow) and her gender role (submissive and idle), begin to appear akin to performance or ritual: roles which she must put on or put off. In seeing this division between self and roles, the audience are likely to begin to identify with her and be drawn into her predicament. As we see, the added levels of enclosure around her which limit her choices in fact sharpen her insight into what it means to 'act'. Being denied the right to act on impulse or free will heightens her desire for change, stimulates her imagination and thus the ability to recast herself.

The sense of Ángela's claustrophobic existence is also evoked by the aura of her two 'jailors' or elder brothers. On the one hand, Don Luis projects the threat of incest in his paranoid protection of his sister, while on the other, Don Juan is indifferent to her feelings and largely absent – they have considered her value in regard to family reputation and the maintenance of her dowry, but this is at the expense of human contact, leaving her isolated and lonely like Segismundo in his cave at the start of *La vida es sueño*. This distance from her family, however, moves her closer to her female companions and to the audience with the effect of increasing a sense of the levels implicit in her 'acting' in the play. After she has returned home from her clandestine outing, Don Luis comes to see her and is anxious to check on her and her whereabouts; he asks her where she has been all morning. The audience know that she was the *dama tapada* who had attracted his interest, but she says: 'En casa me he estado entretenida en llorar' (I. 527). There is an amusing irony here since she and the audience know that she had managed to escape the house, and refusal to be in mourning is in keeping with the spirit of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*: like Clara and Marcela, she resists stasis and is positive and proactive. Luis is concerned by the woman who ran away from him but she is worried that he knows her identity. Her anxiety is built up in asides to include the audience in her fear (and humour):

DON LUIS: Lo peor es, cuando vengo
 a verte, el disgusto tengo
 que tuve, Ángela.

ISABEL: (¿Otro susto?)

DOÑA ÁNGELA: Pues yo, ¿en qué te puedo dar,
hermano, disgusto? Advierte...

DON LUIS: Tú eres la causa, y el verte...

DOÑA ÁNGELA: (¡Ay de mí!)

DON LUIS: ... Ángela, estimar
tan poco de nuestro hermano...

DOÑA ÁNGELA: (¡Eso sí!) (I. 454-461)

Her asides allow the audience to share in her fear of being found out, and implicit here is her awareness of them; that she knows she is acting in a play. Ángela's last remark is also telling – her brother Juan *does* think little of her, which will help her plan events behind his back, but it is equally symptomatic of his lack of thought for her needs. She is starting to stand out as the most authentic person on stage by looking out of the play's frame and drawing the audience into her predicament. Together with the asides above, she offers another sign of her implicit self-consciousness. Luis describes the veiled lady who spurned him, and in a refrain reminiscent of Marcela, (as she knows that this woman was herself) she refers to this mystery *dama tapada* as a bad example of womanhood:

¡Miren la mala mujer
en qué ocasión te había puesto!
¡Que hay mujeres tramoyeras! (I. 515-17)

Here for the first time appears the term '*tramoyera*' in a Calderonian *capa y espada* play. Ángela is playing on the association between an indecorous woman and an artificial one, and given the term '*tramoyera*' conveys tricks of the theatre, more specifically that an indecorous woman *is* a woman of the theatre. She is drawing attention to her own role of artifice while creating at least two levels of irony which shift the meaning of the term. For example, she seems more genuine and trustworthy to her audience in her awareness of artifice, hence her closer alignment with them as witnesses of the action, and, her future actions will shift the meaning of the word further towards a woman of imagination rather than one of malicious

deception. There is also the added irony, of course, for the actress speaking the line given that she is currently in the business of stage artifice and, thus, living the controversial life of a female performer.

Once Luis has left, Ángela and Isabel discuss recent events and Manuel's arrival in Madrid, and once again Ángela draws attention to the conventions of fiction and the *capa y espada* play:

Pero aún bien no lo he creído,
porque cosa estraña fuera
que un hombre a Madrid viniera
y hallase recién venido
una dama que rogase
que su vida defendiese,
un hermano que le hiriese
y otro que le aposentase. (I. 553-58)

In heightening the idea that Manuel's recent arrival is an improbable event, her remark in fact gains a humorous effect (especially in the play's original performance context), because Ángela is playing with her audience's familiarity with the conventions of a *capa y espada* play. The idea that such an unlikely set of events could take place actually offers the reverse insinuation for the audience, as they know that such improbable occurrences *are* frequently what happens in a make-believe world, especially in the hyper-real format of the *capa y espada* play. Ángela is baiting the spectators' anticipation of what is to come and whether or not things will conform to their expectations, and indeed, whether *she* will conform to expectations, or if she will produce something more exciting and different from the norm. The foregrounding of the play's artifice then is conversely another way of introducing novelty into proceedings - and, for the *dama tramoyera*, a way of bringing out her individual attributes as well as her archetypal ones. As noted earlier, it turns out that Ángela sets a high standard, as Calderón's later heroines are often judged as to whether they can rival her infamous creation of the phantom. Also events will not seem quite so unreal or improbable given that her self-awareness makes her appear more present to the audience in the real time of the play. Ángela's awareness of her listening spectators signals the comic spirit of indecorum and as she is not fully aligned with the stage, she will test the boundaries of decorum. We know that she has been placed in the dialectic of freedom and form - a widow torn between the dictates of custom and the idea of another life - and by her meta-dramatic

power of self-consciousness, which pushes her into a position midway between stage and audience, as if looking out to the future or for escape, and heightens the turbulence of her emotional state which is to be pulled in two directions.

However, after discussing the prospect of their new guest, it is Isabel who advises Ángela that she may access Manuel's room in secret via the glass panel disguised as a mirror: 'Esta, aunque de vidrios llena, / se puede muy bien mover' (I. 591-592). Once equipped with this information, Ángela's designs can begin to take shape: she can move between the rooms of the house without being seen, and as Isabel affirms: 'Notable cuento será' (I. 638). In effect, Ángela turns defence into offence: if custom demands that she will not be seen, then paradoxically, she will make herself present and alive to Manuel *through* becoming invisible. In taking the chance to release her latent potential, Ángela develops her alter ego of the *duende* with great literary and aesthetic flourish, and what began as a secret way to enter Manuel's rooms becomes a means to create a fully-fledged character. Like Marcela who pushed aside the tapestry in *Casa con dos puertas*, when Ángela pushes aside the glass panel concealing her rooms and crosses the boundary of her demarcated space, she is also reversing a role of expected passivity into one of agency. Once the coast is clear, she invades Manuel's space and searches through his possessions; but Ángela's main ploy is to leave letters for him written in a chivalric style reminiscent of Don Quijote. When Manuel discovers the notes later, he is disconcerted and entertained by this mystery person and how they could possibly have got into his room. Although unsure of the identity of the woman he is communicating with, and suspecting she may be Luis' mistress, he still responds enthusiastically to her notes, naming her 'Fermosa dueña' (p. 170) and himself 'El caballero de la Dama Duende' (p. 171). This is the response she craves; Manuel appeals to Ángela because he is willing to participate in her creation and responds to her letters with enthusiasm – Cosme had already joked in the opening scene of the play that his master's gallantry recalled Don Quijote trying to defend every passing Dulcinea. Yet, ironically, Ángela is not playing Dulcinea. In fact, it is she who possesses the qualities associated with the hero knight, a figure who 'enjoys a special status between the world of ordinary mortals and a supernatural world of semi-divine and magical potentates' (Murillo, 1988, p. 9). Ángela appears as a source of creativity who is making her own amendments to the original story of Don Quijote, and in her adaptation (which is now effectively Calderón's *La dama duende*) she casts herself in an unlikely but original lead role: a lonely widow who can do extraordinary things.

Inspired by the power of her new alter ego, we start to see even more of its ‘real’ effects on Ángela. As she becomes more of the Phantom Lady, she grows in confidence with her aesthetic designs, and plans a banquet scene in which she will meet Manuel dressed as a noble woman (this will keep her identity secret and their romance safe from the knowledge of her brothers.) He is to be led blindfolded through the glass panel so he will know where he is going or where he has ended up. Indeed, reminiscent of Marcela, Ángela voices her endeavours as if she were now a seasoned illusionist, telling her cousin Beatriz (who is an avid audience for her adventures) of her latest remarkable device:

la más notable
traza, sin que yo al peligro
de verme en su cuarto pase
y él venga sin saber dónde (II. 1294-1297).

As she continues to merge with her invisible Phantom, her ambitions start to take on real shape. Yet however much she has been cooped up, Ángela’s brothers cannot control her imagination or her mental activity. It seems that the last battle is that of the mind: her brothers cannot prevent her from creating a fiction and an alter ego that will help to liberate her – a point which also has parallels to the actions of real women active in society. Overall Ángela’s recourse to writing and designing continues to mark Calderón’s approach to the *drama tramoyera* as a figure - marked by some of the most liberated or challenging women in his Counter-Reformation society who, by no means coincidentally, were working in the arts: actresses, *autoras* or publically writing women such as Maria de Zayas as noted in Chapter 2; moreover the advance of the image of a free-thinking woman also anticipates the work and beliefs of Sor Juana addressed in the final chapter.

An example of the effect that her behaviour has on the men can be found in a central scene of Act 2 where the confusion culminates. As Ángela grows in strength and confidence in her new role, Manuel and Cosme become more confused and to the great amusement of Ángela and her companions - Beatriz even queries Ángela as to why she remains interested in a man who has still not worked out her stratagem. Cosme is (humorously) scared of what he believes is a genuine sprite in the house, whereas his master becomes increasingly frustrated. The scene also offers an example of an imaginary light show; in its day this scene in candlelight would have been played in daylight increasing the farce; today it would be atmospheric and elusive if played in true darkness and light. Cosme is convinced that Ángela

and Isabel's movements are the actions of a real spook and enters the guest quarters addressing it with a cowering reverence: 'Duende mi señor' (II. 1557). Isabel, however, has been in the room while he was out, and is still hidden in the dark. Cosme senses a presence: ¡Qué gran músico es el miedo! (II. 1582) which allows Isabel to make a mockery of his fear, as she hits him over the head before making to leave: '(Esto ha de ser de esta suerte) (*dale un porrazo y mátale la luz*) (II. 1583). While Cosme believes he has been knocked out or killed - 'me han muerto' (II. 1584) - Isabel tries to escape. But Manuel has returned: '¿Qué es aquesto? / Cosme, ¿cómo estás sin luz? (II.1586-7). Isabel is left fumbling for the panel as Manuel catches her basket; she survives the mishap showing a resilience normally typical of the heroine, gives up the basket and escapes. A comical image ensues: Manuel, determined to catch the phantom, is left jumping around in the dark, snatching at the air:

Pero solo abrazo el viento
y topo solo una cosa
de ropa y de poco peso.
¿Qué será? ¡Válgame Dios,
que en más confusión me ha puesto! (II. 1606- 1610)

Although Isabel was involved on her behalf in the scene above, it is Ángela who remains master director behind the scenes. Since she has become her phantom and released some of her chains she now appears to be ensnaring others. Not only is Manuel now jumping around in the dark in confusion, in a previous visit to his room she found a portrait of another woman that she eventually steals so as to remove the woman from his life and replace her with herself.

As well as having disoriented the men, Ángela's transition into her phantom also alters planes of interpretation in regard to herself. This is exemplified when Manuel attempts to define her in a frame of Petrarchan conceits when he finally meets her face to face. After being led by Isabel blindfolded through the glass panel and into Ángela's room, Manuel does not know where he is, or even that he has been kept within the same house. Ángela has taken charge of this scene and directs the setting: lighting (candles), props (sweetmeats), costumes (fine dress and jewellery) and her fellow actors (her cousin Beatriz to attend her): all these effects are used to create her chosen scene and atmosphere. Ángela greets him in costume, 'ricamente vestida' and Manuel is overwhelmed by the setting: '¡Qué mujeres tan lucidas! ¡Qué sala tan adornada!' (III. 2279-2280). He then embarks on a speech expressing his

admiration, but Manuel's rhetoric disappoints Ángela: 'quejarme quiero, no en vano, / de ofensa tan lisonjera' (III. 2335-2336). Instead, she decides to cut short his hyperbolic praises, and defines herself by what she is not:

No soy alba, pues la risa
me falta en contento tanto,
ni aurora, pues que mi llanto
de mi dolor no os avisa (III. 2343-2346).

Ángela does not identify with the stereotypes above which are put to her by Manuel, and instead she endorses her own sense of constancy: that she has always been 'una mujer' (III. 2355). We could say that the house which she has transformed into a private hub of activity rather than stasis - and which is thus comparable to the idea of a private creative space under a veil - has turned her further towards a "core self" which is not defined by appearance but 'by an inner sense of consciousness itself' (Grace, 2004, p. 209). This is also comparable to the idea of 'becoming-woman' as understood as 'a space of dynamic marginality' (Braidotti, 2003, p. 49): Ángela has used her marginalised position in the home to engender transformative possibilities rather than to consolidate the status quo. Consequently, she no longer understands herself as a woman in terms of appearance alone; she knows that she has more depth, breath and aspiration. Indeed, her layers of acting have brought out all her dimensions, capacities and feelings; she is not a beauty to be boxed inside a picture like the portrait of a woman she stole from Manuel's room. And aptly, like Clara, she does not use the expression 'soy quien soy' but something more ambiguous: 'ni soy lo que parezco / ni parezco lo que soy' (III. 2375-2376). Ángela is also aware of the different angles, lights and perspectives informing people's perception of each other and, appropriately, she compares her situation with that of a painter and sitter. She explains that she cannot tell Manuel exactly who she is, as he may not like her when he sees her in a different light:

Si hoy a aquesta luz me veis
y por eso me estimáis,
cuando a otra luz me veáis
quizá me aborreceréis. (III. 2389-2392)

She instinctively knows that if she were to reveal herself as just a widow and sister she would not be so appealing to him or to herself, and the audience might also be sad to see her diminish in scope. She desires to maintain her fragile dream of acting as a freer woman as

long as possible – and in some respects this also appears to be Calderón’s dream on her behalf.

Heigl (2001) argues that as Ángela defies the categories in which other characters try to locate her in the play, between familiar roles (*hermana*, *viuda*) or spiritual ones (*ángel*, *espíritu*, *demonio*) or Petrarchan ones as noted above, she ‘exceeds any stereotypical characterization and resists any clear-cut definition [...] her body outgrows itself’ making her a ‘cultural grotesque’ which must have ‘unsettled, the author, the spectator’: in effect Ángela is ‘a hybrid and grotesque creature’ (p. 65). It is true, for example, that in an early modern context, something apparently composed of opposite elements could be considered monstrous, hence Rosaura calls herself ‘monstruo’ (III. 2725)⁴⁷ in her mixture of male and female dress at the end of *La vida es sueño*, just as Shakespeare’s Viola calls herself ‘poor monster’ (2.2.30) once dressed up in male disguise as Cesario in *Twelfth Night*. But in the case of Ángela, this seems a somewhat eerie view which belies the wonder of the play. While she is mutable and has overstepped her demarcated bounds, her role-play has had the warmth and humour of creativity: would she really have been perceived as ‘grotesque’ by her original audience or indeed by Calderón? After all, if we are to assume that his recurrent references to her in his later works convey her popularity, then she is likely to have been one of his absolute favourite creations, and I am not sure that this was because she appeared to them as monstrous. The paradox of his comic heroines who step out of the play’s frame at times, is that there is something *real* and familiar about their presence despite their acknowledgment of their existence within a play; and yet this familiarity occurs, of course, because their ‘acting’ makes them appear all the more human and identifiable as opposed to alienating. Also, in light of my interpretation of the comic ethos behind Calderón’s *dama tramoyeras*, their need to resist definition is intrinsic to their nature as comic paradigms: in my opinion they are figures who refuse to conform and who play on the ‘edge’ of acceptability rather than appearing as ‘grotesque’ in the full sense of the word. Furthermore, as I have argued in this chapter, by situating Ángela within the scheme of Calderón’s wider philosophic vision, her creative mutability can equally be seen as indicative of her fundamental humanity and the need to partake in two worlds: that which she is confined to and that which she aspires to. Ángela’s life had become a series of unsatisfactory roles and the only way she could escape was to become something else and attempt to create a new reality within her present one. Ángela does not ‘act’ in the play simply to demonstrate her humanity to man, but because she

⁴⁷ All references are to Calderón de la Barca. (2008). *La vida es sueño*. (Ed.) C. Morón. Madrid: Catédra.

is human. The comparative perspective of Cosme, for example, who situates her between spook, demon and angel, certainly plays into the idea of something suspect, that a 'woman' is no better than a devil, but I think this also has the contrary effect of setting off and bringing out the wonder and emotional depth of Ángela.

The home (or prison) that Ángela had navigated and opened up, however, starts to close around her during Act 3. Her brothers have grown suspicious and seek to intrude on her meeting with Manuel. Luis had overheard her and Beatriz discussing how best to arrange the banquet scene in Act 2: '¡Que esto escucho! Con nuevas penas y tormentos lucho' (II. 1797) and is troubled by the thought of women conspiring against him. He decides in a jealous rage to destroy the plot of his enemies:

Pues si esto es así, cielo,
para el estorbo de su amor apelo
y, cuando esté escondida,
buscando otra ocasión, con atrevida
resolución veré toda la casa
hasta hallarla (II. 1817-1822)

Ángela's hopes and hard work are about to be tested by the jealous violence and authority of Juan and Luis, and the fragile side of her designs becomes apparent. Both brothers come to her room at different points demanding to know what is happening, and the women just manage to get Manuel away through the glass panel. But as her brothers begin to think that the honour and reputation of the family may have been breached by her behaviour she starts to fear for her life: ¡Ay, infelice de mí / Unas a otras suceden / mis desdichas ¡Muerta soy! (III. 2893-2895). Beatriz suggests that she leaves to find shelter and so Ángela is forced back, tumbling down from her high hopes into her *cárcel* which appears even stronger now as the traps of a woman's existence. When Ángela is eventually found and brought back to the house by Juan, she is able to see Manuel once more to tell him that she is the hidden sister of her brothers. Her words convey a fall from grace, foreshadowing Rosaura's speech at the opening of *La vida es sueño*:

mi casa dejo y a la obscura calma
de la tiniebla fría,
pálida imagen de la dicha mía
a caminar empiezo;
aquí yerro, aquí caigo, aquí tropiezo
y, torpes, mis sentidos

prisión hallan de seda mis vestidos;
sola, triste y turbada
llego, de mi discurso mal guiada,
al umbral de una esfera
que fue mi cárcel, cuando ser debiera
mi puerto o mi sagrado,
mas, ¿dónde le ha de hallar un desdichado? (III. 2926-2937)

Ángela describes above how she struggled through the streets in her silk skirts, which shortly before had been a costume for her creative purposes, but now slowed her down, seemingly imprisoning her back into the role of a kept sister and widow. At this moment it seems that her imprisonment is inescapable and that the desire to *ser otro* and for a partial loss of identity can only be a temporary release from the weight of unchosen circumstances and human existence - but she does ultimately escape one of her prisons, her brothers' home, through a marriage to Manuel. Her risky strategy does prove effective in having ensnared his interest and protection. Like Marcela and Lisardo, Ángela in fact relies on Manuel's commitment to honour and gallantry to consolidate his protection of her; one of her greatest tricks or '*tramoyas*' therefore, is that she has manipulated the code of honour so it becomes an aid to her escape as opposed to being the cause of her death. Ángela later confesses to Manuel that she made herself a shadow in order to love him: 'Por haberte querido / fingida sombra de mi casa he sido' (II. 2989-2990). Yet this is only true in one sense: she had to make herself undetectable so as to keep their forbidden contact alive, but in having drawn the audience to her as witness to her show, she has also been the stand-out figure. And here I want to return to Shakespeare to compare how both dramatists create presence, empathy and the 'universality' of their heroines.

When Ángela compares herself to a shadow, this makes an unlikely but valid comparison to a similar use of the term by Shakespeare's earliest girl-page, Julia of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. A shadow is the metaphor that Julia uses to indicate the isolation she feels in her disguise and also how feels invisible to her false love Proteus. The comparable moment occurs in the final Act of the play, where Julia in her disguise as the page Sebastian, finds herself present at an exchange between Proteus and Silvia. Proteus is putting his suit to Silvia and tells her that Julia, the lady whom he has left behind, is dead. But Julia (in disguise) utters an aside in answer: 'Twere false, if I should speak it; for I am sure she is not

buried' (4.2.103)⁴⁸. With no other presence on stage (the Host is asleep) the audience are the main recipient of her words - they know that far from buried she is very much alive, as she stands there trapped in her disguise between Proteus and Silvia. Julia relates her current position to the darkness of the grave; she is correlating her position with that of the audience, who sit in the dark so to speak on the other side of the play. Proteus claims to be a shadow of devoted love to Silvia, but Julia makes a criticism of his love in an aside: 'If 'twere a substance, you would, / sure, deceive it, / And make but a shadow, as I am' (4.2.121-123). Julia, therefore, describes herself as a lonely silhouette that is forced to make unheard asides in the dark. However, although she may feel trapped in her role as Sebastian, the audience's knowledge of her real persona has allowed her to express her feelings to them implicitly, and instead of being a shadow obscured from the drama, Shakespeare allows her character to come across to them as the most intense, sympathetic and human in the entire play.

I have asserted that Calderón's presentation of Ángela's role-playing binds her to his universal human archetypes of the prisoner-actor where this is not reduced at the expense of her gender; if anything her sense of acting is sharpened by her femininity in a male-dominated society, and it also helps her reach out across the stage to bring the audience into her confidence and feelings. Not only does Shakespeare also use his heroines' meta-dramatic power (literal disguise), as in the case of Julia above, to help draw the audience into the play and make her stand out, but like Calderón, there is also a connection of the page-girl to a universal role. Hyland (1978) argues that the page-girl was important to Shakespeare because she created a 'particular sort of response from the audience' (p. 27). The split in her persona allows her to become a character who can partake in the stage action but also comment on it for the audience: in effect she becomes the audience's voice and representative. The key point, however, is that this was not an entirely new device, but a hangover from the morality play of the medieval English tradition. As Righter (1962) explains, in the morality play at the end of the fourteenth century, the audience were closely related to the illusion by a figure called 'Mankind' or 'Everyman' who acted as the audience's double (p. 25) and by the time of Shakespeare, audiences still enjoyed (or demanded) having some form of close involvement with the action as was traditional, but this was a problem for the young playwright attempting to make drama an art form in itself as opposed to a ritual. Thus, as Righter further notes, as drama underwent secularisation, Shakespeare needed a bridge, something that would keep the play separate from the crowd but also connected and relevant

⁴⁸ All references are to Shakespeare. (2004). *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. (Ed.) W.C. Carroll. London: Arden.

to his audience: hence his development of prologues, epilogues, a Chorus, clowns/fools, anything that could recognise the audience and give them a part in the play (p. 60); but in addition to these devices are his page-girls, who also address the audience once split into two personas in their disguise. The interesting thing about the girl-page from a modern perspective, however, is that Shakespeare was now using female characters to represent ‘Everyman’ or ‘Mankind’, titles that universalise humanity as male: the young girl-page had taken the role of the people and everyone’s voice.⁴⁹ She also had another difference from medieval times: the page-girl embodied and presented Shakespeare’s aesthetic vision with regard to the relation between life and drama, which is in essence that humans are players on a world stage. His page-girls, especially Julia, Rosalind and Viola, have the consciousness of an actor *and* an audience member so as to blur and interlink the two realms together, and they are often in the possession of a strong theatrical vocabulary to keep the connection alive and exploit dualities in the English language. They like to use words such as ‘part’ and ‘play’ ‘which possess in ordinary usage both a non-dramatic and a specifically theatrical meaning. The fact that life imitates the drama is implicit in such words’ (Richter, 1962, p. 90).

Like Calderón’s *damas tramoyeras*, therefore, Shakespeare’s page-girls reach out from the stage and can exist midway between stage and audience so as to help relate art and life and also to illuminate women’s perspectives. In summary, both Calderón and Shakespeare can be said to position their women of comedy in a universal role where everyman is now everywoman via their appeal to the world-stage metaphor; this is a comparable advance of significance and one which likely underpins the enduring appeal of Ángela as well as Rosalind and her page-girl sisters. However, a clear difference of course in regard to the dramatists’ approach, is the apparent androgyny of Shakespeare’s page-girls. For Thirlwell (2016), part of the reason that Rosalind remains appealing and ahead of her time is because she is: ‘dual gendered, universal and inclusive’ (p. 77). In a sense, we could say that Calderón and Shakespeare anticipate the two main areas of modern gender studies and feminism: the branch interested in androgyny and the undoing the division of male and female, masculine and feminine; and the branch championed by Moi for example, who refuse to hand over the term woman so to speak, and thus follow the tradition of Beauvoir.

⁴⁹ There is, of course, some debate and dispute as to what extent a female character was truly present on the early modern English stage given that men originally played women’s roles – see for example Greenblatt (1996) and Regalado (1995). However, I think it is a disservice to Shakespeare not to interpret his page-girls first and foremost as women.

While both dramatists use their interest in the world-stage to bolster their heroines' powers, in my view, Calderón's heroines continue to have the edge, owing to their lack of recourse to male disguise to empower them, their sharper exploitation of irony and the manner in which Calderón binds the female cause to his human archetype. Shakespeare's use of disguise or role-play works to dissolve barriers between the sexes, yet in my opinion, it is generally angled toward creating empathy or sympathy with the heroine and encourages a bringing together of all on and off stage, rather than an awareness of her ironic (hence socio-political) critique. Marcela is one of the most light-hearted of Calderón's heroines, but there is a notable angst on the part of Ángela and a sharp satire on the part of Clara, and both these aspects are heightened by the localised contexts and settings of the *capa y espada* genre. As Hutcheon (1994) states, irony is a strategy that 'cannot be understood apart from its embodiment in context and also has trouble escaping the power relations evoked by its evaluative edge' (p. 86). In the case of Clara in particular, her ironic stance and veiling invoke and critique the power issues concerning her relative autonomy of movement in her society. Calderón suggests that, in his society at least, there is a greater *a priori* fight on the part of women to ensure that both sexes can be brought together (on or off stage). In effect there is an unsettled tone to his plays as well as an entertaining one, and marriage is a questionable remedy. Marcela (and Laura subsequently) seem the most optimistic about the prospect, but for Ángela marriage appears the only option open to her in order to gain greater freedom, and for Clara it does not appear a satisfactory solution at all. From the comic perspective, Calderón suggests that marriage in his society was not a clear-cut answer to his heroines' hopes or dilemmas, because unless they gain the right to greater freedom of choice within matrimony, they may be at risk of harm from an erring partner or simply dissatisfied with their limitations.

My argument concerning Calderón's advanced approach to the representation of women in comedy is now to be backed up once more in my final chapter. In the following section I shall discuss how the Calderonian *dama tramoyera* (in the shape of Laura of *El secreto a voces*) also made an impact beyond Spain as she became of interest to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz writing in colonial Mexico in the late 1680s. Now credited as the first feminist of the New world, it is no small thing for Sor Juana to have co-opted aspects of a Calderonian heroine into her own work, given that she defended the rationalization and education of women almost to her death, and, (re)positioned the Virgin Mary as the *woman* who gave birth to the word.

5. The Veil of Modesty: Laura's Disguised Rebellion in *El secreto a voces* with Comparative Perspectives on Leonor of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Los empeños de una casa*

'Y así, es la ordinaria respuesta a lo que me instan, y más si asunto sagrado: ¿Que entendimiento tengo yo?'

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

La Respuesta a Sor Filotea (1681)

To consolidate my argument concerning the link between the meta-theatrical capacities of Calderón's *damas tramoyeras* with issues of gender and advancement, in this final chapter I shall examine the role of Laura, in Calderón's little-studied *comedia de palaciega*, *El secreto a voces*.⁵⁰ Over twenty years ago Cascardi stated that *El secreto a voces* is rarely analysed, which remains a valid claim: very little critical material has been dedicated to this play since Cascardi's own chapter in 1984⁵¹. In light of the minimal attention given to this *comedia*, the present chapter offers some deserved further consideration of *El secreto a voces*, but it also serves another purpose in the context of this thesis. In readdressing this play of 1642, my main intention is to examine how the drama's heroine, Laura, can be seen as a type of precedent to Leonor of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Los empeños de una casa* (1683) via their mutual aptitude for a cerebral, rather than literal, form of disguise, and one that I have termed a 'veil of modesty', although in the latter case the idea of 'false modesty' may be more appropriate. So far I have bolstered my argument concerning Calderón's advanced approach to women principally in regard to modern feminism, but this position can be further defended by recourse to the work of Sor Juana of New Spain, a female writer much closer in time to Calderón and a certain proto-feminist of the late seventeenth century. I believe that there is a valid claim to be made for Sor Juana's co-option and development of certain elements of Calderón's Laura into the characterisation of her heroine Leonor, a figure who in many ways forms a double for Sor Juana and her life experiences in *Los empeños de una casa*. In this sense Sor Juana grafts herself onto her heroine and in doing so, places her own stamp firmly

⁵⁰ A *comedia palaciega* resembles a *capa y espada* play but the action occurs at a court or palace as opposed to in an urban environment.

⁵¹ See A.J. Cascardi (1984).

onto the precedent of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*. Sor Juana's slant on this archetype can thus be said to form an important legacy of Calderón's drama, and one that is not wholly reactionary, but responsive and expansive. By blending herself into the figure and in a sense, by putting her own face to this female archetype who frequents the comedies of Spain's most revered male dramatist of the age, Sor Juana performs a rebellious (or cheeky) act, very much in tune with the spirit of a *dama tramoyera* who is not afraid to test the limits. Sor Juana trespasses onto Calderón's work via her response to and adaptation of his own comic heroine(s), but in a manner which I see as more of a complementary venture than an opposed one.

In addition to the above, Sor Juana can also be seen as a forerunner in regard to the use of autobiography in dramatic art, now acknowledged as a significant device deployed by female performers/artists in particular from at least the eighteenth century onwards. Scholars of drama and performance suggest that the insertion of biographical details by women working in theatre arts functions as a means of expression and control of their public and private selves, and notably, this device has found great resonance in modern Latin America.⁵² Svich (in Gale and Gardner, 2004) writes that twentieth-century Latina playwrights and performance artists have reclaimed the tradition of religious Hispanic mystics such as Santa Teresa de Ávila and closer to home, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. In light of Sor Juana's personal approach to writing for performance, it is perhaps unsurprising to discover that contemporary Latina performers often use the 'confessional autobiographical model' where they 'manipulate and play tricks with the form, creating multiple versions of themselves and their 'true stories'' in a game of fact or fiction which enables them to question and diffuse certain myths or stereotypes surrounding Latina women (p. 178).⁵³ Svich uses the example of the American born Hispanic playwright Migdalia Cruz as one who incorporates acts of personal experience/exposure into her plays so as to 'theatrically break down the boundaries between fiction and reality' (p. 186). The purpose of the tactic is to encourage an audience to 'guess which aspects of her work come from real life and which are wholly imagined [in] such a forthright manner that the characters seem to speak directly to the audience [...] with an authorial voice' (p. 186). In her baroque *comedia* written several hundred years earlier, Sor Juana proves herself a pioneer, as she employs just such a method by lending her own

⁵² For a general volume concerning the matter of women's use of auto/biography in theatre, art and performance across time, place and cultures, see M.B. Gale & V. Gardner, (Eds.), (2004).

⁵³ See C. Svich (in Gale and Gardner, 2004) on contemporary Latina theatre/performance and meta-theatrical acts of personal 'exposure'.

experiences to Leonor who speaks at length in an authorial tone on the obstacles that she (and hence Sor Juana) encountered in regard to her desire for study. Fact and fiction are mixed together for the audience as Sor Juana and Leonor appear to speak to them at the same time. Several other characters in Sor Juana's play, such as Ana, Leonor's rival for Carlos, and Castaño the cross-dressing *gracioso*, also frequently turn to the audience, drawing the spectators and the 'real world' into the play. Boyle (1999) argues that Sor Juana's characters' propensity to speak in asides is greater than their desire to speak to each other on stage. In her opinion this style anticipates some distinct modern aesthetics and she likens the style of the drama to somewhere between 'Brecht, Pirandello and Hollywood ham' (p. 234). Although Sor Juana lived the majority of her life behind convent walls, it seems that she found a way to communicate directly with her public audience through her characters, especially her character-double Leonor who tactically conceals (through modesty/understatement) yet *reveals* her political concerns. In my opinion, Sor Juana could identify with the Calderonian approach to the *dama tramoyera*, and had much to add to the paradigm in light of her own experiences as a woman of the age. As we see Sor Juana's own tactics for dealing with misogyny or control are not so removed from the methods exemplified by Laura in Calderón's play. If Calderón's *damas tramoyeras* push boundaries in order to expand their horizons, then the hitherto unacknowledged Laura crossed a rather large border as she was exported across the sea to the New World and seemingly into the receptive hands of Sor Juana.

In making a claim for a positive connection between the work of Calderón and Sor Juana, I want to challenge the opinion of Merrim (1991) for example, who claims that male-authored *comedias*, including Calderón's, are inherently antagonistic to Sor Juana's cause as a proto-feminist. Merrim argues that male authors of the *comedia* provided no credible or optimistic female role models for a woman playwright, as they cast women as troublesome as opposed to innovative, and even if a heroine does appear to drive the plot, this does not present a real strength but a mere textual strength (p. 97). However, as I have been arguing, there is strong evidence to suggest that Calderón not only challenged collective perceptions of women in his time, but furthermore, that the meta-dramatic qualities of his *damas tramoyeras* are in large part inspired by the resistant activities of real women in Golden Age Spain. His heroines are thus not just granted a textual power, but were in fact *empowered* by the activities of women in real life, and likewise, Sor Juana empowers her heroine Leonor by lending her own voice and experiences to the character.

The first thing to mention about Calderón's Laura is that she does not initially appear to be one of his *dama tramoyeras* at all, as she does not bear the most iconic marks of his approach to the archetype. There is no recourse to the veil and no overt mention of theatrical enterprise, but there is a strong level of self-consciousness, indeed, one of her defining features is her frequent use of asides. Also, in terms of temperament Laura has an unassuming demeanour as opposed to a lively one like Marcela or a bold one like Clara. Therefore rather than appearing as a disguising *dama tramoyera*, Laura could be said to be a Calderonian *dama tramoyera* in disguise. Conversely, Laura *does* have a capacity for masquerade, but it is not in the usual form of the veil: the physical garment has been removed and in its place appears a veneer of compliant discretion, which forms a cerebral disguise of passive aggression. Johnson (1997) suggests that in light of Calderón's presentation of the female-gendered attribute of *discreción* in *El gran teatro del mundo*, the dramatist indicates how women in his time were remanded into passivity by the world 'in frustration of their intellectual desires' (p. 270): in effect they were taught and encouraged to understand that discretion in a woman *was* passivity, i.e. that a woman's mind should be pacified in order to keep her in line with the status quo. What is curious about Laura in *El secreto a voces* is that she does appear to epitomise the virtue of discretion in contrast to the temper of the Duchess Flérida, but equally, this is not quite what it seems. Laura makes compliant remarks and responses to her ruler, father and cousin Lisardo (who wishes to marry her but whom she dislikes), which on the surface are true. However, by allowing his characters to reveal information to the audience unknown to other characters at different points in the drama (like a game of hide-and-seek), Calderón enables the audience to realise that Laura's words in fact only remain true in regard to her own intentions and desires. Her self-effacement starts to appear as a subtle disguise which satisfies the appearance of womanly compliance and innocence (as both virtue and naivety) in the face of others, which allows her to act in the opposite way underneath. Laura always judges a situation in regard to her own sense of truth, and she is steadfast in regard to her own choices. It is possible to argue that, paradoxically, Laura's artless, unsuspecting tactic makes her the most sophisticated artist of all the heroines addressed so far, and furthermore, she offers a tactic easily imitable by ordinary women. While seemingly modest, Laura interrupts the frame of the play almost from the start to indicate that she is not in tune with Flérida's rash demands at court, and so like her prior comic sisters, she moves into the liminal position to acknowledge both the audience and her resistance to the role in which she has been cast. Laura is the 'everywoman' of the play as she invites the audience to identify with her perspective, and she offers a resistant voice of the

people against a poor and unstable ruler. But once again, as we see her dodge autocratic, paternal and (would-be) unwanted marital authority, we note that Calderón puts this woman's experience at the centre of the play and enhances her right to free will and choice. Her resistant voice on the part of the people is also a voice that complains and calls for greater independence on the part of this young female courtier.

Stavans (1997) states that Sor Juana's political agenda is what separates her from the Spanish Golden Age playwrights, but I believe there was more to interest her in Calderón's approach than to repel her. For instance, the political slant of *El secreto a voces* which emerges in the courtiers' anxiety towards an unsound ruler, along with the apparent proto-feminist overtones concerning the position of Laura, offered fertile ground for Sor Juana to compare and contrast with her own concerns. While Calderón's defence of Laura's rights is couched in terms of a Christian defence of the oppressed, if his constant return to the position of women under patriarchy will be of interest to modern feminists, and there is no reason to suppose that this was not of interest to the proto-feminist Sor Juana. Laura's erudition, her position at court, and her experience of being hunted by authorities trying to bend her to their will, together with her manipulation of modesty in defence of her rights, were all likely points of concern and *identification* for Sor Juana. Indeed, the game of masks which enables Laura to defend her free will in Calderón's play is comparable to the particular guises Sor Juana used during her own life in order to defend the right of women to education.

Following McKendrick's (1974) categories of the *mujer varonil* in the Spanish *comedia*, Merrim (1991) argues that given Sor Juana's distaste for marriage and eventual entry into a convent, the *mujer esquiva* (the 'aloof woman' who is resistant to love/marriage) is the figure that appealed to Sor Juana as a source of admiration or resistance, but I think that this is neither quite the case, nor the whole story. To be sure, with more awareness and interest in comedy and the *dama tramoyera* this perspective may change acutely. Franco (1989), for instance, observes that 'Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz [...] not only trespassed, at least symbolically, on clerical terrain but directly defied the clergy's feminization of ignorance' (p. 23). In a similar vein, Greer Johnson (1993) writes that, driven by her own 'self-perception', the young Juana 'tricked her sister's teacher into giving her reading lessons before her third birthday, and from that day forward her determination to circumvent rules and regulations in pursuit of study only increased' (p. 64). In light of her self-awareness, trespassing, manoeuvring and staunch defence of the rationalization of women, in my view the figure that most appealed (or even resembled) Sor Juana is the *dama tramoyera*, and not earlier versions

by Lope or Tirso, but the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*, especially a strong cerebral one in the shape of Laura. The apparent resemblances between the two heroines of Laura and Leonor indicates, I believe, Sor Juana's co-option of Laura's modest but marked intelligence, together with Calderón's defence of this women's right to free will, into her own defence of a woman's right to free thought and learning. Indeed, Leonor takes on an allegorical stance unique to Sor Juana, whereby modesty is the guise of Reason (*entendimiento*) and the veil of false modesty, or feigned ignorance, becomes an acute way of challenging an attack on a woman's intellect. Indeed, Sor Juana feigned ignorance during her career as a way of defending her work, and with modern eyes this appears as an effective tactic which allowed her to reveal the great irony (and flaws) in the official religious stance of the time, which prohibited women from intellectual enquiry. As she suggests in her *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* (1681), if a woman such as herself is not thought capable of having anything useful or intelligent to say, why are the religious authorities threatened by her endeavours and ideas?⁵⁴ The use of irony so key to Calderón's approach to the *dama tramoyera* was thus also an important resistance method for the literary Sor Juana.

Stavans (1997) considers Sor Juana's thought and work as a bridge to the Enlightenment due to 'the subtlety of her subversion, and her pursuit of secular forms of knowledge' (p. xxi). While Calderón's approach to the *dama tramoyera* is underpinned by a Christian-based defence of women's rights, his stance could be seen as forming a relevant bridge to Sor Juana, whose approach went a step further in its anticipation of the Enlightenment and eventual emancipation of women. Sor Juana's importance to Mexican, colonial, Latin American and women's literary history is significant. An examination of her *Los empeños de una casa* in the light of her total legacy is beyond the scope of this chapter, but a résumé of her life/work in context is provided ahead. First, however, it is necessary to provide some background on the dissemination of Calderón's work in New Spain and his apparent resonance in the New World before examining the plays' heroines.

Calderón in Nueva España

Hesse (1955) states that Calderón was the most popular dramatist to be imported into New Spain from the Peninsula, as evidenced by the vast number of recorded performances of his

⁵⁴ Sor Juana's *Respuesta a Sor Filotea* (1681) or '*Respuesta*' is a letter written in response to an attack made on her by a male cleric who wrote under the pseudonym of a nun, 'Sor Filotea'. The cleric criticised her opinions and intrusion into theological matters. The letter now forms a vital document, a first call by a woman in the New World for the female right to equality in education.

comedias across the Spanish colonies (p. 12). Mexico City was the particular cultural ‘focal point’ where a taste for drama was strong, and ‘the general preference in Mexico [was] for Calderón’s *comedias de capa y espada*’ (p. 16). Boyle (2004) also acknowledges that the popularity of Calderón’s *capa y espada* plays in Mexico indicates a particular resonance of this style of drama with the climate of ‘complex social and racial structures, emergent identities’ and natural wonders of the ‘new world’ (p. 12). Hesse further offers a basic overview of theatrical conditions in New Spain including a possible first date of a performance of Calderón:

Mexicans of all classes, including the clergy, witnessed plays at two spacious theatres in the capital. Plays were also staged at the viceregal palace, and in front of some church or *colegio*. The earliest known performance of a Calderón play is *Los empeños de un acaso* in November 1679. (p. 15)

Hesse observes that this first recorded performance of Calderón’s *Los empeños de un acaso* is likely to have been the source of inspiration for Sor Juana’s *Los empeños de una casa* composed circa 1680 (p. 15). Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that Sor Juana’s title refers to Calderón’s play, with ‘un acaso’ becoming ‘una casa’. Yet aside from Calderón’s original *Los empeños de un acaso*, *Casa con dos puertas* and *La dama duende* are also frequently cited as comparable dramas in structure and character, and sometimes, aspects of three Calderonian predecessors are acknowledged as relatable in some shape or form to Sor Juana’s play.⁵⁵ There are also, of course, the similarities which I believe exist between *El secreto a voces* and Sor Juana’s drama. As noted ahead, there is a symposium scene amongst the courtiers in *El secreto a voces* which appears to have been borrowed, slightly reformulated and then transposed into Sor Juana’s own play. Sor Juana’s Leonor even takes the same stance in the symposium as Calderón’s Laura does in his earlier play - hence my suggestion that *El secreto a voces* and the role of Laura in particular was seemingly adopted and developed by Sor Juana for her own purposes. Hesse does not record a performance date for *El secreto a voces* in Mexico before 1700, but he does note that a number of Calderón’s plays were imported between 1678-80 among which *El secreto a voces* could have been included and thus first seen or read by Sor Juana.

⁵⁵ See for example, P. Kenworthy (1982) who compares Sor Juana’s treatment of love in *Los empeños de una casa* to Calderón’s treatment of the same subject in *Los empeños de un acaso*, *Casa con dos puertas* and *La dama duende*; S. Merrim (1991) argues that Sor Juana’s play most resembles Calderón’s *La dama duende*; E.H. Friedman (1991) notes comparable Calderonian dramas such as *Casa con dos puertas*.

A point yielded by such comparative studies of Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa*, is the sense of a 'patchwork' of Calderonian *comedias* which influenced or underpinned her play. In terms of Sor Juana's legacy as both a thinker and writer of colonial Mexico, Stavans (1997) argues that she did not go on to articulate a full 'reformist world view' as this was not her aim. Instead, her writing offers a 'syncretism of the colonial mask under which it hides; no original philosophical system is offered, only a quilt made of bits and pieces, a sum of disparate parts' (p. xl). Here the image of a 'quilt', a fabric made of various parts, is used as a metaphor of Sor Juana's application of the aspects of European thought which she blended and adapted into her own views, especially those brought with the Spanish colonisers. The idea of the quilt also parallels with the sense of a patchwork of Calderonian dramas to which she may have responded in her play, and equally, Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa* is not a fully reformist piece of drama. The play still resembles the structure of the Spanish Calderonian *capa y espada* play, but it is not a copy and it is more than just a combination of parts. Sor Juana does not offer an alternative dramatic structure, but neither does this appear to have been her purpose: her play is not an imitation of the colonial import but a reformulated response, as is also, in my opinion, her version of the Calderonian *dama tramoyera*.

Calderón and Sor Juana

That Calderón and Sor Juana are linked by more than their drama is another matter of interest. In her introduction to Sor Juana's plays, García Valdés (2010) notes their shared personal and scholarly attributes, both being:

intelectuales, dominados por la sed de conocimiento, poetas cortesanos, sobre todo, típicos espíritus barrocos que manifiestan profundo desengaño ante glorias y vanidades humanas, pero en los que a veces late un espíritu regocijado. (p. 42)

Indeed, a shared interest in the matter of reason and understanding is well manifested in the characterisation of both of their heroines in the plays to be discussed. However, Sor Juana as a woman, as a *criolla*, as a nun in New Spain, experienced and expressed in her own writing a battle with misogyny and prejudice that cannot easily be equated with Calderón, a publicly honoured man who became official court dramatist to Philip IV. Yet, despite her travails, Sor Juana did become an important literary figure. It is ironic then, that given the misogyny she endured and the efforts to contain women in colonial Mexico, she went on to become a major

figure of the literary baroque. As implied earlier, in many ways the true legacy of the fictional Calderonian *dama tramoyera* is the *real* Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who through education, defiance, irony and masquerade achieved some of the highest literary accolades of respect.

In terms of Juana's remarkable development into a literary icon, by the age of fifteen she 'had already established a reputation as the most learned woman in Mexico' (Schons, 1991, p. 39). When presented at court as a young woman in 1664, she attracted the attention of the vice-regal couple and especially, the Vicereine Leonor Carreto (Boyle, 2004, p. 15). However, at the age of twenty there came an abrupt change when Juana chose to become a nun, a life which she considered less 'repugnant' than marriage. Schons (1991) writes that Juana's decision to retire from 'la publicidad del siglo (worldly limelight) to the convent' has perplexed many as 'one looks in vain for religious motive underlying this important step in her life' and Juana herself even expressed concern at convent life interfering with her intellectual endeavours (p. 40). Aside from the issue of her intellectual ambitions coupled with her gender, Schons puts forth a complex set of reasons that led to her eventual retreat, citing for example, the moral conditions prevailing in Mexico and the licentiousness of 'adventurers' (male or female) which concerned the church. A concern for the moral health of Mexican society, together with a sure view of women as temptresses, also fuelled the building of *recogimientos* (places of retreat) for the protection of women and the rehabilitation of 'fallen' women (p. 40). Schons argues thus that Juana as a female prodigy was a likely object of strong but also unwelcome attention: 'if ordinary women were not safe Sor Juana certainly was not', and so, with the support of the viceroy and her confessor Father Núñez 'a safe haven' was found for her in a convent. It seems that isolation came in the guise of strict male protection for Juana, a point which manifests itself in the plot of *Los empeños de una casa* and is a frequent narrative in Calderón's *Casa con dos puertas* and *La dama duende*, another likely point to have bolstered her interest in his work.

However, despite any ambivalence in regard to her decision to take the veil, Sor Juana was able to study and compose her works in the Convent of St. Paula and by the early 1680s she was an important literary figure in New Spain.⁵⁶ But she soon faced some strong opposition to her endeavours. Her intellectual contributions were savagely attacked by the

⁵⁶ Sor Juana is perhaps best known for her masterpiece *Primero sueño* (circa 1685) an extensive Baroque poem, together with many other works of poetry; she is the author of at least two *comedias*, *Los empeños de una casa* and *Amor es más laberinto* (circa 1689) (she is thought to be co-author of the latter work).

clergy and even her supporter, Núñez, abandoned her; it that seems she had strayed too far onto terrain considered unsuitable for a woman. The torments which fuelled Sor Juana's *Respuesta* include a self-comparison to Christ-like suffering that she raised in reaction to the persecution she endured for daring to offer an opinion on sacred matters. Sor Juana (1997) declares the impossibility of resisting her inclination to learn which would have meant a kind of martyrdom for her: '¿Qué me habrá costado resistir esto? ¡Rara especie de martirio, donde yo era el mártir y me era el verdugo!' (p. 28). She claims that a desire for wisdom in the context in which she lived was rewarded by a crown of thorns: '[una] cabeza que es erario de sabiduría no espere otra corona que de espinas' (p. 34). Sor Juana's *Respuesta* calls for free intellectual enquiry, and the essence of this demand was that free enquiry be fully granted to women. Sor Juana's stance on the source and pursuit of knowledge cannot be separated from her experience of being a thinking, ambitious woman in a society of male supremacy, and offers some explanation as to her development of Leonor into a figure of persecuted reason.

Laura of *El secreto a voces*

In order now to demonstrate how Calderón's heroine Laura of *El secreto a voces* anticipates Sor Juana's later heroine Leonor, I shall compare how each dramatist presents the heroine's sense of erudition, her interactive potential and her modesty/false modesty as a method of defending her rights or choices in the face of authority figures, be they autocratic or paternal. I begin with Laura of *El secreto a voces*, an understated heroine of great resolve who has become somewhat hidden in this lesser-known *comedia*, but before her role is considered in more detail, her female counterpart requires some attention. *El secreto a voces* is a *comedia palaciega* set at the court of Flérida, Duchess of Parma. Muir suggests Calderón took inspiration for Flérida from Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano* whose heroine, Diana, is the Countess of Belflor⁵⁷. Indeed, the plot of *El perro del hortelano* is similar in character and theme to *El secreto a voces*. Flérida is in love with Federico, an attendant at her court but a man of lower status, which mirrors the position of Diana who loves her secretary, Teodoro, in Lope's play. As Federico is not a socially appropriate match for the Duchess, she is unable to speak openly of her love, and becomes jealous when she discovers he has another love interest. Flérida gains the trust of Federico's servant, Fabio, to glean information, and Fabio gives his master away as he tells the Duchess of Federico's secret meetings with an unknown

⁵⁷ See K. Muir's (1980) introduction to his English translations of four Calderonian comedies, including *The Secret Spoken Aloud* (*El secreto a voces*), p. 70.

lady. But as Fabio does not know who the secret lady is, Flérída has to use other ways to discover the lady's identity, and resorts to methods that border on an abuse of her power. Flérída's abuse of her position has led some to view her as a representative of something or someone else. Román (1997) believes *El secreto a voces* is 'perhaps Calderón's own open secret; his enigmatic commentary on the power, policy and play of Philip IV and the events of the early 1640s' (p. 71). Flérída's unjust and self-interested behaviour is held up as an example of a ruler lacking in prudence and forms an indirect criticism 'of excess and self-absorption'. Her gender as a ruler is not pertinent to the play's messages, but is a strategy that deflected direct comparison to the King in an attempt to comment on what could not be openly acknowledged.⁵⁸ It is worth noting here, however, where *El secreto a voces* parts company with Lope's *El perro de hortelano*. Unlike Teodoro who is in love with the Countess Diana in Lope's play, Federico is not in love with the Duchess but one of her ladies-in-waiting, Laura. Flérída's fancy for Federico is thus sacrificed to order, and in the end she must accept a match with the Duke of Mantua. In this respect the play remains conservative, but as Román implies, it is not wholly subservient to the status quo either. A resistance to the ruler manifests in the secret discourse spoken by those below her station, and the character who resists the will of the Duchess under the most difficult circumstances is Laura.⁵⁹

In Román's view, the positive male-female partnership between Laura and Federico shifts the focus of the play from an examination of gender struggle to politics and matters of state: 'the central dilemma of *El secreto a voces* has less to do with gender negotiations per se, and more to do with the roles between ruler and subject' (p. 73). Yet in the social context in which the play was written, gender struggle and power relations were not mutually exclusive: a woman (barring a sovereign) was subordinate in nearly all her relationships, not just to the official state ruler. Laura's mission in *El secreto a voces* is to protect her

⁵⁸ D. Román (1997) indicates that while it would be absurd to suggest that Calderón would promote an overthrow of the King, it is interesting that given the instability of Spain and the position of the theatre in the early 1640s, that he should choose to write a play 'critical of absolute power'. Román also notes that the play most probably found its audience at court rather than the *corrales* and was not likely to have been construed as a criticism of the monarchy: its revival at court throughout the 1680s would in fact indicate its 'apolitical appeal'. Román maintains that Philip IV as patron of the arts thought the 'illusion of power' could be maintained through the spectacle of theatre. However, in *El secreto a voces* Laura's interruption of the symposium with her alternative discourse highlights the false discourse of the Duchess and the play goes on to present 'potentially subversive anxieties' about the King's judgement as ruler.

⁵⁹ The titular 'secret spoken aloud' refers to the love between Laura and Federico in the play, who develop a code which enables them to communicate with each other in front of the Duchess or those at court. Along with exchanging secret letters, they also decide to make a secret cipher which involves a signal (the wave of a handkerchief) before one or other of them speaks in public. The receiver of the message must then take the first word of each sentence to reveal the concealed personal message: their secret love is thus spoken aloud.

relationship with Federico from three forms of supremacy: from ruler, father and an unwanted would-be husband. Laura is vulnerable to the unjust authority of not one but three figures, yet she proves highly capable, and her strategy is cerebral and effective. She protects herself through a projection of modest obedience while remaining loyal to her own feelings and not to those of any of her temporal superiors. She is not a political revolutionary but she is aware of the obstacles placed in front of her in terms of both class and male supremacy and she duly invites the audience to recognise this. Indeed, she steps out of the play's frame to mark her difference and draws attention to how her subtle disguise is functioning in regard to others on stage.

Although this moment occurs at the end of *El secreto a voces*, Laura voices her direct recognition of her role as an actor in the play:

¿Habrá precepto
más riguroso? ¡Que haga
yo el verdadero y fingiendo
papel de aquesta farsa
de noche, donde aun seña
de la cifra no me valga! (1242a)

In this scene Laura has been cast by Flérída in the role of a night watcher, an order which is consistent with Flérída's demand throughout the play that Laura perform the role of a loyal servant. Yet Laura, caught up in a relationship with Federico, is being forced to play the fool here - the woman she is meant to be watching out for is herself. In effect, Laura feels that she is being made to play a supporting role when she is the heroine. This direct reference to the play occurs at the end but is implicit throughout: Laura's resistance is conveyed meta-theatrically to the audience as she forms a bridging character between stage and audience. Use of asides is a crucial part of her character, as she offers a commentary on both her feelings as well as on Flérída's behaviour, and she invites the audience to recognise how she is dealing with this ruler. Calderón exploits the comic heroine's meta-dramatic power so as to invite speculation from the audience on the authenticity of the behaviour at court, and implicitly they are led to acknowledge Laura's sophisticated understanding and use of nuance as she guides them through the play. Laura's role-playing, one role for Flérída and one role for herself and the audience, also highlights her creation of a protective barrier for her threatened free will: there is a clear disjunction between those who seek to control her and her own journey in the *comedia*. In *El secreto a voces*, Laura's use of the world-stage metaphor

indicates how she has to play true to herself even when she finds herself at the mercy of erring human directors and actors. That she remains true to her will, which belongs to no one but God, is in keeping with Calderón's Christian ethics, but Laura's awareness and resistance to three forms of temporal authority would be seen today in active feminist terms.

Laura's erudition and reasoning ability is first made evident in the organised symposium which occurs in the opening scene of the play. Flérida wishes for a distraction from her thoughts of Federico and opts for a debate; she asks Arnesto, Laura's father to suggest a topic, to which he answers: '¿Cuál es mayor pena amando?' (1208a). The courtiers including Federico, and the Duke of Mantua (disguised as a messenger), give their responses to the topic. Laura is last to speak in the round and gives a complex but personal understanding of the matter:

El que ama y es amado
siempre vive temeroso:
tal vez discurre dichoso
cuándo será desdichado:
tal se juzga despojado
de las dichas que merece,
y a aborrecerlas se ofrece:
luego tiene el que es querido
despechos de aborrecido. (1210b)

Laura's thesis is unusual in that she declares that the greatest pain of love is being loved in return. Her argument is deemed a 'new' one by Flérida, who is unconvinced that Laura can prove her point, but Laura does defend her opinion against the other 'pains of love' raised by the courtiers, such as scorn, jealousy and lack of hope. She argues that mutual love is the most perilous state when a lover realises it could be transitory, as they are left in constant fear of a future moment of being unloved: 'pues que ha temido / siempre el riesgo amenazado' (1211a). Laura's speech is based on her personal situation and the love she has found with Federico, but her concerns foreshadow the threat Flérida will pose to her relationship. Flérida does not sense any genuine feeling underpinning Laura's words, which she interprets as clever word play, and she even accuses her of showing off: 'Esas son sofisterias / con que ha querido tu ingenio, Laura, ostentarse; que no / razones de fundamento' (1211a). Still, Laura's words rupture the atmosphere of the symposium indicating her refusal to comply. Indeed, Flérida will enforce her power and attempt to manipulate those around her regardless of their feelings. Her lack of respect for Federico's true love interest is why Laura's dilemma and

resistance take root. Laura may not hold a position of authorised power but she is armed with knowledge, and she uses her insight to protect herself from the whims of the Duchess, and her intelligence and modesty become a trusted disguise of resistance.

Laura's insight is also illustrated by the perceptive way in which she reads the behaviour of the Duchess. Flérida is continually concerned with concealing her feelings for Federico and tries to project a persona which bears little relation to how she really feels. But her anxiety and anger communicate information to Laura which other members of the court only perceive as a bad mood. Laura, however, makes this aside to the audience: '(*Aparte*) Mucho dicen los extremos / de Flérida. ¡Quiera amor / no sea lo que sospecho!' (1211b). Laura realises that she has understood what other attendants have not:

FLORA: [*Aparte.*] ¡Notables desigualdades tiene su tristeza!

LIVIA: [*Ap. A Laura*] ¡Extremos bien extraños son!

LAURA: [*Aparte.*] ¡Ay triste de quien llega a conocerlos,
cuando todos a ignorarlos! (1208b)

Laura has guessed that the Duchess is irritated by Federico because she likes him, and this is uncomfortable knowledge for her as it means that a social superior is now a threat to her relationship. To complicate matters, Laura is favoured by the Duchess as a reliable confidante and she is missed if she is not present: ‘Laura, prima, ¿en qué mi amor / tanta ausencia te merece, / que en todo hoy no me has visto?’ (1216a). Laura, therefore, must now begin a dual role where she asserts her loyalty in the presence of the Duchess while keeping her own feelings, movements and motivations hidden:

Estimo el favor de haberme
echado menos, señora;
pero un pequeño accidente
me retiró, y aunque dél
mal el alma convalece,
no he querido recogerme;
y así vengo a saber sólo
cómo, señora, te sientes. (1216a)

Laura maintains above that she is flattered by the Duchess's favour, but in the eyes of the audience she has concealed in her response where she has been and with whom. Laura has

arranged to meet Federico again but as the audience know and Laura does not, the Duchess has bribed Federico's servant Fabio for information and knows about Federico's further planned meeting. To prevent the rendezvous taking place, Flérida decides to ask Federico to deliver a letter to the Duke of Mantua to keep him away from the court, but on this point the Duchess is also in the dark. Unaware that the Duke is already at court in disguise as a messenger, he instead aids Federico by forging a letter. Federico can then pretend he has run the errand for the Duchess and still keep his meeting with Laura; the play starts to become a game of cat and mouse amongst the characters.

Laura has to continue her double role for the rest of the play, and the audience can continue to sense two meanings in her words. In doing so they are practising the close attention to nuance in language and behaviour that Laura displays herself: her role-playing thus promotes effective stage-audience interaction. After playing the night watch for the Duchess, once more Laura speaks in two senses. Flérida asks Laura to recall if she saw a woman in the garden, and Laura can claim with honesty that only she was there:

Pues digo
que en su hermosa estancia amena
estuve, hasta que riendo
el alba de mi obediencia,
convirtió la risa en llanto,
una flores y otro perlas,
y nadie bajó al jardín:
de suerte que tus sospechas,
si no es contra mí, señora,
no hay otra de quien las tengas. (1219b)

Laura is telling the truth when she promises that only she was present in the garden during the night, but her words are of honest duplicity: Laura was both the loyal night watcher *and* the rival lady whose identity Flérida desperately wishes to know. Laura uses an aside to acknowledge this and the audience can share in Laura's situation: '(Ap.) ¡Si bien supieses cuán necia, tercera tú de tus celos, / los has juntado tú mesma!)' (1219b).

At another point later in the drama, we start to see her negotiate the additional problem of her cousin Lisardo who is her father's choice for her marriage partner. Lisardo praises Laura for her 'nobles prendas' (1222b) which he believes demonstrate her appropriate discretion and hence obedience to his authority; at one point he demands that Laura show him a letter she is reading. Laura reminds him that he is not her husband and has no right to

dictate her actions to her, but he still claims his rights over her: ‘Soy tu primo y soy tu amante, cuando tu esposo no sea’ (1223a). Now that she is under the scrutiny of the Duchess, Lisardo and through him, her father, Laura feels increasingly hunted. Not seeing a future at court with Federico, she decides to take matters into her own hands and writes a letter to Federico planning their escape:

Tened para aquesta noche
prevenidos dos caballos
en la surtida del puente
que hay entre el parque y palacio;
que yo saldré a vuestra seña,
porque de los celos vamos
huyendo, si hay donde huir dellos,
Y Dios, que os guarde mil años. (1234a)

Calderón directs Federico to read this letter aloud on stage, which enables the audience to know of Laura’s plan to run away. In turn they can witness how her double role-playing moves more assuredly in relation to her father and Lisardo. For instance, in response to her father’s demands, she says that she will marry the man she loves:

Obedecerte espero;
que una cosa (¡mal fuerte!)
es disgustarte, y otra obedecerte,
y así, obediente digo
que tomaré el estado
que mi suerte me ha dado;
y dese aquí me obligo
a disponer de parte mía, que sea
mi esposo quien hoy más serlo desea. (1234b)

Her father believes that her words are in accordance with his own wishes: ‘Tu obediencia agradezco’ (1234b), and once again Laura appears to have spoken the truth: she will marry whom she loves, but she does not mean the man whom her father has chosen for her - she will marry Federico, the man she has chosen for herself. Not only is she intent on resisting her father’s authority, she then uses the guise of her father’s command to her advantage as it forms a temporary shield from the unwanted attention of the would-be husband Lisardo:

Lisardo, esta licencia
a mi padre se debe:
él mis acciones mueve,

no elección, obediencia
hay en mí; y así en vano
mano me agradecéis que es de otra mano. (1234b-1235a)

Here, Laura uses her father's stance to protect her from Lisardo, but she has no intention of complying with either man; instead she will assert her own free will again under a veil of obedience. Her modesty and intelligence have been assumed by her male relations, along with the Duchess, to imply that she is in agreement with their dictates. In contrast, the very essence of obedience for Laura is to be true to herself, and Calderón voices this idea in language clearly related to free will:

Tirano el padre mío,
esclavo hacer pretende mi albedrío;
Lisardo enamorado
avasallar desea mi cuidado;
y Flérida violenta
tiranizar mi voluntad intenta. (1241a)

Laura acknowledges the battle for her free will here, as she describes both her father and Flérida as tyrannical in their desire to make her will a slave to theirs, which is then trebled by the unwanted impositions of Lisardo. This assertive stance is in keeping with Calderón's belief in the freedom of the individual regardless of sex, and through the comparison of her will to a hostage, she is associated with the human archetype of the prisoner-actor, one who is both restrained and yet who must act. However, through Laura's example it is made clear that being free to choose for a woman has added difficulty. Her free will has faced a threefold threat and it has taken a subtle and sustained strategy to outmanoeuvre the erring authority figures around her before she triumphs. It is worth noting that it is Laura who decides on a daring escape plan (although she does not have to see this through in the end) and who has been at most personal risk throughout the drama. While she is understated in temperament, this is not equated with timidity or fear. Laura could have suffered greatly at the hands of Flérida if the Duchess had found out that she was her rival, but instead Laura braves it out, is resilient and trusts herself and her talents. The disguise and aptitude deployed by Laura is discrete and prudent. She takes time to read others' words or actions before deciding on the best interpretation and a subsequent course of action, and this is not a show of discretion equal to passive compliance. Calderón upholds her self-belief, demonstrates her poise and intelligence and allows her new approach to *discreción* to be an example for the people (the

audience). In calling attention to the added obstacles overcome by this woman, there is a proto-feminist overtone, and an anticipation, if not revelation, of an advance in women's education based on both visible evidence and a show of support for Laura's rationale.

From the exuberant, dramatic exploits of Marcela and Angela in the late 1620s, to the veiling artistry of Clara in the 1630s, we come to Laura in the 1640s who still faces a threat to her free will from paternal, autocratic authority, but who offers a subtle, less overtly theatrical tactic to cope with her situation. She does not use an alter ego or a literal disguise, but maintains an inscrutable demeanour in order to confront face to face the very people who seek to thwart her. To some extent, Laura's situation could be seen as analogous to Calderón's new position as court dramatist to Philip IV. In the role of royal dramatist, he would have tactically to conceal any anxiety about or resistance to the 'powers that be' present in his dramas. Thus just like his earlier *damas tramoyeras* who function as co-directors in their dramas, Laura also performs as Calderón's discrete theatrical accomplice, as she both negotiates and reveals Flérida's abuse of power on stage. In light of Calderón's position as court dramatist since 1635, it is not surprising that the setting of *El secreto a voces* is no longer a domestic house but a palace court, and we observe in this location a cautious atmosphere of hide and seek or cat and mouse between ruler and subjects, characters and audience. We are now witness to a refined, diplomatic style of negotiation on the part of Laura, whose role and skills could be seen today as comparable to that of a modern 'double agent'. Furthermore, her calm, measured behaviour is more akin to that of a seasoned leader rather than a subject - hence Laura's firm belief that she has been cast in the wrong role. It could be argued that this play shows signs of support for women's *appropriate* place in politics, whether at court or in actual power via the rise of Laura. Cruickshank (2009), for example, notes that the Spanish were less averse to the idea and presence of a female monarch than the English were at this time, and indeed Calderón chose to portray several admirable queens throughout his dramatic career. But given that Laura is not cast as a sovereign but as more of an effective diplomat, her character could be interpreted as Calderón's tacit recommendation of women for such a position.

Leonor of *Los empeños de una casa*

It is now time to consider how Leonor of *Los empeños de una casa* compares with Calderón's Laura. Sor Juana's Leonor emerges in the late tropical Baroque with no recourse to literal

disguise, and like Laura, she is armed instead with her learning and also seeks her own path, through correspondence with her chosen male partner Carlos. Apart from a brief moment when Leonor hides from view under her cloak, the customary use of the veil is left behind, although in a parodic twist, the veil does make an appearance in a moment of male drag in which Sor Juana's *gracioso*, Castaño, performs a construction (or deconstruction) of a *dama tapada*. In a moment reminiscent of that in *Mañanas de abril y mayo* when Hipólito cannot tell the difference between Clara and Ana under their veils, Sor Juana takes a similar case of mistaken identity a step further. Towards the end of her play, the jealous Don Pedro is unable to tell the difference between a veiled Castaño in a dress and Leonor, his so-called love interest. The idea of a superficial obsession with the external, superficial signifiers of womanhood as opposed to the individuals underneath is taken to the extreme by Sor Juana. However, this distinct piece of satire has been addressed elsewhere and my purpose here is to concentrate on the portrayal of Calderón's and Sor Juana's understated heroines.⁶⁰ As we see, the modest masks worn by both Leonor and Laura are protective acts which conceal a firm resolve to realise their own desires and both defy their fathers at all costs and remain constant to their chosen partners.

Laura of *El secreto a voces* did not go through with her plan to escape from court as Flérida eventually relinquished her interest in Federico. In *Los empeños de una casa*, however, certain that her father would not allow her a happy outcome with her chosen partner Don Carlos, Leonor's attempted escape precedes the opening of the play - but things have not gone to plan. We first meet Leonor after she has been dragged back by Don Pedro who has faked a kidnapping as a means of having her at his disposal. We do not hear of this from Leonor, but from Doña Ana, the sister of Don Pedro who is resident at her brother's house in Toledo. Ana explains in an expository speech that her brother wishes to marry Leonor and when he heard of her intention to leave decided to interfere in her plan. Not only has Pedro had Leonor captured but has also arranged for her would-be partner Carlos to be attacked by men under the guise of 'Justice'. Ana explains that Leonor is now due to arrive at their house, thinking it a safe haven, when in fact Pedro's plan is duplicitous. He wishes to return to the house later and appear as Leonor's saviour, the man who has rescued her from an attack, when in truth it is he who has foiled her plan. The ensuing action of *Los empeños de una casa*

⁶⁰ See C.B Weimer (1992) on the satiric function of Sor Juana's *gracioso*.

involves a combination of the efforts of both siblings, Ana (who takes a liking to Carlos) and Pedro, to keep Leonor and Carlos apart.

This opening to the play is key as the motifs of escape and kidnap set the tone and pattern of the events set in motion by Leonor's actions. Indeed, it seems that Leonor wished to remove herself from the play's entangled script before it even began, but Sor Juana suggests that her heroine's bid for freedom was idealistic and so her escape is short-lived; she fled only to be pulled back into the play's plot by a jealous Don Pedro and his henchmen and furthermore, she continues to be blocked or hounded for the rest of the drama. Still, despite her sorrowful appearance, Leonor's elusive instinct prior to the play is an underlying sign of the *dama tramoyera*: the figure who resists frames of enclosure whether social, theatrical or archetypal – a figure who possesses a sense of comic contradiction and resistance. Indeed, Sor Juana's Leonor is a great example of such a paradoxical dynamic, as she possesses a curious mix of the humble, confident, passive and defiant. It is my belief that this particular characterisation can be attributed to Sor Juana's use of her own life and philosophy along with both female Calderonian archetypes found in his *capa y espada* plays: the *dama tramoyera* together with shades of his melancholy ladies. The stances, vocabulary and characteristics of these prior archetypes are then adopted and admired, or challenged and developed by Sor Juana, coming to represent in Leonor a philosophical and politicised female paradigm unique to her work.

When we are first introduced to Leonor she expresses her sorrow with a concern for the fate of her reputation:

Señora, en la boca el alma
tengo (¡ay de mí!), si piedad
mis tiernas lágrimas causan
en tu pecho (hablar no acierto),
te suplico arrodillada
que ya que no de mi vida,
tengas piedad de mi fama (I. 200-206)⁶¹

Her opening plea to Ana contains the rhetoric of suffering, tears and pity more akin to a conservative Calderonian comic heroine such as Ana of *Mañanas de abril y mayo*: a woman concerned with honour, reputation and social convention. As she bemoans her present state

⁶¹ All references are to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. (2010). *Los empeños de una casa*. In *Los empeños de una casa, Amor es más laberinto*. (Ed.). C. C. García Valdés. Madrid: Catédra.

‘atropellando / el cariño de mi padre, / y de mi honor el recato, salí a la calle’ (I. 488-491). To be sure, there is evidence here of the tone of the melancholy heroines of Calderonian comedy who act as foils to the *dama tramoyera*. For instance, Mason (2003) considers the role of an unhappy woman who is forced to flee her home under her veil at the beginning of play as a distinct motif of Calderón’s *capa y espada* plays. And indeed, examples are Leonor of *Peor está que estaba* who forms a sad heroine in contrast with Lisarda who is a *dama tramoyera*, together with Beatriz, an unfortunate heroine of *La desdicha de la voz* (1639). Yet Sor Juana’s use of a self-pitying stance will prove another guise: it is intended that Leonor does not appear to be a rebellious woman at first or in general. We soon hear Leonor’s story in a moment which also reverses a tradition of Calderonian comedy. Rather than a *galán* charting the sorry state of his love affair such as Don Juan at the start of *Mañanas de abril y mayo* or Félix of *Casa con dos puertas*, Sor Juana gives the primary speech to Leonor who charts the sorrowful results of her intellectual endeavours. It is this speech which is credited as being autobiographical, as Sor Juana puts aspects of her own life story into the mouth of her character. Leonor hesitates about telling her tale which raises a sense of modesty and discretion on her part:

si digo que fui
celebrada por milagro
de discreción, me desmiente
la necedad del contarlo;
y, si lo callo, no informo
de mí, y en un mismo caso
me desmiento, si lo afirmo,
y lo ignoras, si lo callo. (I. 291-298)

Yet, after stressing her desire not to boast of her achievements, she tells of her passion for learning:

Inclineme a los estudios
desde mis primeros años
con tan ardientes desvelos,
con tan ansiosos cuidados,
que reduje a tiempo breve
fatigas de mucho espacio. (I. 307-312)

Although she appeared to be in anguish, Leonor soon recovers, and does not shy away from listing her talents and speaks confidently of her history. We might imagine Sor Juana’s intention here as writer/director: an actress in the role of Leonor could play up to comic irony

in her sudden turnaround in demeanour. In having Leonor mimic accepted forms of ‘feminine discourse (obedience, self-denigration)’ (Franco, 1982, p. 25), (for example, the trademark exclamation ‘¡ay de mí!’ of a melancholy lady), contrasts with her impressive achievements, creating irony between what is being said and how it is expressed. Sor Juana calls attention to the artificiality (or borrowed sense) of these expressions in the voice of her heroine who speaks in the New World, or more generally, the inadequacy of this linguistic register to represent accomplished women.

Indeed, rather than the implicit erudition of Laura, Leonor is a self-declared intellectual and lists her studious endeavours in detail. Her speech offers an intriguing combination of the genuinely humble and the falsely modest. Leonor takes pains to assert her humility, playing down her successes which others magnify: ‘La pasión se puso antojos / de tan engañosos grados, / que a mis moderadas prendas / agrandaban los tamaños’ (I. 337-340), but at the same time she affirms how she completes difficult tasks with ease and in ‘tiempo breve’. She then tells of how her hard-earned knowledge came to be revered as genius by fellow countrymen and women: ‘Era de mi patria toda / el objeto venerado / de aquellas adoraciones, / que forma el común aplauso’ (I. 321-324), but such idolisation led to her downfall. Her achievements gained a following, and men began to worship her, coming from afar to seek her hand in marriage. Smothered by such attention and duly prevented from pursuing study, she is then pushed towards marriage. It is on this point that Bergmann (1990) bases her argument for Sor Juana’s feminist politics. Leonor may thrive in exercising her mind and expanding her knowledge but the outcome is paradoxical: in reality she loses her literal freedom through the marriage/domestic destiny expected of women. Still, Leonor tells of how amongst the many who worshipped her, she finally met Don Carlos, a young foreigner whom she considers her equal, and who impressed her and returns her love. Leonor’s tearful concern does not equate to regret or the state of her honour. She says that it is not the loss of honour that now calls for her death, but the loss of Carlos who represents mutual love and correspondence:

Donde en un punto me hallo
sin crédito, sin honor,
sin consuelo, sin descanso,
sin aliento, sin alivio,
y finalmente esperando
la ejecución de muerte
en la sentencia de Carlos’. (I. 540-546)

Leonor's concern thus does not appear to be true regret in regard to her original decision to escape; like Laura she will ultimately follow her own heart and choice regardless of the effect on her reputation. Sor Juana's use of the tone of the melancholy lady with the instinct of a cerebral *dama tramoyera* are coming through in Leonor, who reveals irony in self-denigration and turns defence into offense by using modesty as a guise to cover up a more determined, individualist stance beneath.

Aside from a sense of modesty/false modesty which conceals an independent mind, the overt link between Leonor and Laura occurs halfway through *Los empeños de una casa*. In Act 2 Ana decides to have a musical scene performed for all present at Pedro's house. Ana asks her musicians to 'Cantad pues' (II. 1453) and they offer the following topic: '¿Cuál es la pena más grave / que en las penas de amor cabe?' (II. 1455) We have a topic which parallels the symposium at the beginning of *El secreto a voces*, and a debate begins amongst the characters on the pains of love. Furthermore, Sor Juana positions Leonor in the part which Laura offered in her play. Leonor argues that to love and be loved in return causes the most suffering:

Aunque se halla mi sentido
para nada, he imaginado
que el carecer de lo amado
en amor correspondido;
pues con juzgarse querido
cuando del bien se carece,
el ansia de gozar crece
Y con ella crece el mal (II. 1500 -1507)

Leonor now appears strongly reminiscent of Laura, which suggests a possible admiration for this Calderonian heroine on the part of Sor Juana. Sor Juana could well have empathised with the sure voice that Calderón gives Laura along with her ability to reason, to present her own ideas against the dominant ruler, and her determination to keep her resolve under a guise that diverts awareness from her true intentions. Leonor and Laura also have in common their mutual love interests. Sor Juana rejected marriage but Leonor's love for Carlos also comes to represent a reciprocal relationship of choice which Sor Juana found in her work. Sor Juana had to learn to negotiate those in authority who were against her like Laura, and while she does not set her play at court, we find that Leonor still has to dodge and navigate the

obstacles presented by a father, the burden of an unwanted love interest as well as the rivalry of Ana.

Indeed, from the cult that idolised but overwhelmed her, to her attempted escape and kidnapping, we find repeated blocks to Leonor's path. This is not coincidental; in Sor Juana's own case 'her road to success was blocked by obstacles, not least her gender' (Stavans, 1997, p. xxxiii). Leonor's father, who seeks her out for her defiance, slanders her character and considers her studious, modest demeanour to have been a sham: '¿Quién diría / de aquella mesurada hipocresía, / de aquel punto y recato que mostraba, / que liviandad tan grande se encerraba / en su pecho alevoso?' (I. 677-681). In a similar vein to Laura's father in *El secreto a voces*, Leonor's modesty and intelligence are assumed by her father to signify obedience to his will - indeed this is the very meaning of modesty to him. If they do not conform to his wishes, beauty and humility are false masks. As Don Rodrigo exclaims, Leonor's prized learning has done nothing to help his material interests:

Pensaba yo, hija vil, que tu belleza,
por la incomodidad de mi pobreza,
con tu ingenio sería
lo que más alto dote daría;
y ahora, en lo que has hecho,
conozco que es más daño que provecho;
pues el ser conocida y celebrada
y por nuevo milagro festejada,
me sirve, hecha la cuenta,
sólo de que se sepa más tu afrenta. (I. 686-696)

Sor Juana continues her proto-feminist politics here. Once Leonor's monetary or exchange value diminishes, so does her worth to her father. Her study was tolerated only if it could be of some material use; it is not valued for its own sake. However, it is not only men who seek to frustrate Leonor or who are frustrated by her. Leonor's cleverness and innocence are also an irritation to Ana, who is at pains to keep Leonor from Carlos. Here Sor Juana suggests how women can also prevent their mutual ambition and success through competition for men.

Aside from the dodging of obstacles, the key patterns to emerge in Leonor are her use of outwardly helpless language which contrasts with her inner resolve, the mix of humility and false modesty and passive aggression: she triumphs by trusting her partner and reasoning

out her feelings in response to the labyrinthine plot around her. Apart from her transgression before the *comedia* opens, Leonor does very little in terms of intervening or challenging others in the rest of the play. She waits and trusts, and like Laura, shows thoughtfulness and considers her options. When locked in the house, Leonor is baited by Celia who tries to convince her that all is lost and that her love has deceived her. Celia suggests that all she need do to rectify her position is to marry Don Pedro which will please her father and allow her to avenge herself on the deceitful Don Carlos. Leonor responds by asserting her resolve: ‘Primero romperá el mar’ (III. 2150) and demands: ‘Celia, yo me he de matar / si tu salir no me dejas / de esta casa, y de este encanto’ (III. 2092-2094). Later, when confronted again with the thought that Carlos has betrayed her, she still considers another option, that he is at the house to free her: ‘Mas ¿si acaso conoció / que dejaba en el empeño / a su dama, y a librarla / viene ahora? / Yo me acerco / para escuchar lo que dice’ (III. 3146-3150). Despite all the attempts to thwart and confuse her, Leonor remains steadfast. Her main aim is to avoid her father, who may force her to the altar, even if this means fleeing and hiding herself away in a convent:

Intento, amiga, que tú,
pues te he fiado mis penas,
me des lugar para irme
de aquí, porque cuando vuelva
mi padre, aquí no me halle
y me haga casar por fuerza;
que yo me iré desde aquí
a buscar en una celda
un rincón que me sepulte. (III. 2172-2180)

Twice Leonor claims she must not return to the clutches of her father and that she will find some way to avoid the insistent Don Pedro. Together with her static stance, many of Leonor’s exclamations, as noted, belong to the rhetoric of passivity. She describes her state at one point thus: ‘Como quien toca, / náufrago entre la borrasca / de las olas procelosas’ (II. 1254) and often refers to ‘mis congojas’. At the height of her emotional turmoil she exclaims: ‘¿Qué descanso / puede tener la que sólo / tiene por alivio el llanto?’ (II. 1539-1541).

At this point, the curious characterisation of Leonor can be better understood if she is viewed in closer comparison to Sor Juana’s own *Respuesta* than purely Calderonian drama. At base Leonor is a self-confessed ‘intellectual’ who tells how her first passion was not a

man. If she is viewed allegorically and in light of Sor Juana's philosophical/theoretical stance, she takes on crucial added meaning: Leonor can be seen as a personification of *Reason*. Sor Juana (1997) felt that Reason is the most persecuted of all qualities and that Modesty and Reason are inseparable virtues:

pero la que con más rigor la experimenta es la del entendimiento. Lo primero, porque es el más indefenso, pues riqueza y el poder castigan a quien se les atreve y el entendimiento no pues mientras es mayor es más modesto y sufrido y se defiende menos. (p. 32)

Sor Juana describes Reason as the most noble but also the most defenceless quality; by its nature it is modest and does not naturally resist or defend itself. Thus Leonor's apparent passivity, refusal to fight or manipulate can be seen to make her an embodiment of this quality. While others have smothered, undermined or blocked Leonor's achievements, she remains non-violent and steadfast to her principals. Her difference is not therefore to be understood in light of the active (male, positive) / passive (female, negative); she is not passive because she is afraid to resist convention (as demonstrated by attempted her escape), and if she suffers it is for reasons other than lost honour. In her *Respuesta*, Sor Juana (1997) states that any aspiration to knowledge was persecuted in the context in which she lived and the experience of Leonor appears to represent this situation (see p. 32).

Sor Juana's suffering woman who appears bereft of honour and reputation is no more than a cover. Leonor represents persecuted Reason, which as Sor Juana experienced was doubly persecuted in a woman; in my opinion, this is the alternate cause for Leonor's constant need to lament, hide or flee. Leonor stands for a free thinker whom others seek to undermine as well as a guarded daughter or marriageable woman. The mix of the modest and the falsely modest can also be understood by considering Sor Juana's own words and experiences. Sor Juana considered Reason by its very nature to be defenceless, and in an age of male supremacy, this quality in a female was doubly vulnerable. To counter this position we find that Sor Juana uses modesty in a conscious way in order to defend and maintain her endeavours against persecution. The opening line of her *Respuesta* takes this stance; she challenges her (male) accuser to explain why he feels threatened by her if she is just a humble nun and ignorant as a woman as he says she is. She further highlights the inconsistency in attacks on her:

Porque según la misma decisión de los que lo calumnian, ni tengo obligación para saber ni aptitud para acertar; luego si lo yerro, ni es culpa ni es descrédito. No es culpa, porque no tengo obligación; no es descrédito, pues no tengo posibilidad de acertar. (p. 10)

Sor Juana calls attention to the inconsistency in attacking a woman while using her assumed inability to possess Reason as a mask to continue her argument. Indeed, her *Respuesta* is an exercise in ‘false’ modesty: the letter displays an assuredness and erudition that completely belie the self-belittling statement that she is a humble nun. I am not the first to call attention to the role of humility in Sor Juana’s theatre, for example, Rodríguez Garrido (2010) suggests that Sor Juana’s mask of humility reaches a peak at the end of *Amor es más laberinto* where, like a magician, she remarks that she has written a drama without apparently knowing how she has done it.

Leonor is not a self-conscious heroine in that she does not ask the audience to identify with her role in the manner of Laura, but instead, Sor Juana makes her own presence felt on stage. The real and the illusory become one as Leonor plays Sor Juana’s double by communicating her biographical details and simulating her defence tactics. Sor Juana is present behind the mask of the character as she encourages the audience to accept the transgressions of Leonor, who is admirable and yet who refuses certain boundaries and seeks a place beyond the inherited script of the *comedia* or the limits of social conventions. Svich (2004) states that contemporary Latina artists work ‘behind a veil because the act of performance necessitates that the work presented is seen through the lens of craft and composition: autobiography is altered on stage’ (p. 179). Sor Juana as a forerunner to this technique also worked behind a veil of her convent and her character, but of course the veil is opaque - her art makes her and her ethos discernible. Her use of autobiography on stage is also altered as she crafts her heroine through a reformulation and adoption of the approach of the Spanish dramatist. On the one hand, the cerebral, negotiating qualities of Calderón’s undercover *dama tramoyera* Laura are merged with Sor Juana’s concerns for women’s rationale and pursuit of education, while on the other, the tone of some of his more melancholy women is parodied as unnecessary diction for intelligent women who should be confident in themselves. Furthermore, the defencelessness of Leonor which could be confused with ‘weakness’ is simply not that; instead it represents the defencelessness of Modesty which accompanies Reason. It is a sign of strength and noble ability as opposed to

any innate weakness in a woman. Through Leonor, Sor Juan upholds and creates her unique paradigm of *entendimiento* and *modesto* as qualities akin to women, and her absolute defence of this fact *is* her political agenda. I hope to have indicated some points of convergence and similarity between Calderón and Sor Juana's work rather than an antagonism. As evident in this thesis as a whole, my stance is grounded on the fact that Calderón's approach to women should be fully reconsidered. Indeed, Sor Juana's response to the Spanish dramatist gives further validation for my argument concerning Calderon's ability to bring to light the increasingly outmoded position of women in his society.

Conclusion

This thesis has considered the leading heroines of four Calderonian *comedias de capa y espada* in regard to the engagement of their meta-dramatic powers with the gender issues of Calderón's Counter-Reformation society. A further objective has been the development of a wider critical perspective on Calderonian women and comedy. The heroines have been discussed both as individuals and as *damas tramoyeras*, artful figures in the best and literal sense, women who are inventive, determined and talented. Female role-play and disguise constitute a dramatic motif with a notable literary and dramatic history in European theatre, but the *dama tramoyera* is a type of female comic character specific to the Spanish *comedia* and present since the time of Cervantes. However, in the later dramatic work of Calderón, this archetype has acquired the status of a sophisticated female aesthete whose meta-dramatic capacities prove her to be an innovative force. Calderonian *damas tramoyeras* are rule-breakers. They are artists of the veil (as disguise) and theatrical design, who possessed real cultural and polemical resonance in their time, and they continue to appeal today. Contrary to much scholarship of the twentieth century which has tended to side-line Calderón's comic work in favour of his serious plays, I have sought to defend the genre's relevance to him as a dramatist through my examination of the role of his comic heroines. I have suggested that we can deepen our understanding of Calderonian comedy through re-approaching a view understanding of Calderonian women: that a new perspective on one enhances an understanding of the other and vice versa.

A major ethos of comedy is its resistance to form or a refusal to play by the rules. In the past, the ambiguous ethics apparent in Calderón's *capa y espada* plays have been seen by scholars as seemingly at odds with his moral principles. I do not believe that such resistant impulses run counter to Calderón's philosophy but that, in fact, they complement them. In particular, the comic genre's resistance to the rules and boundaries of form and protocol accords with his interests in the human right to free will, the fate of women under patriarchy and his commitment to irony. To be sure, these intertwining concerns emerge in the resistant spirit of his comic heroines, and his affinity for these figures reveals itself in the symbolic value which he bestows on them. The heroines' role-play and disguise takes on effects and purposes which connect these characters to central concerns across his drama: notions of imprisonment, freedom, independence and control. Whether a Calderonian heroine chooses a literal disguise or not, her role-play consistently aids her movement across boundaries, literal and imaginative. These figures thus also blur with two human archetypes central to

Calderón's work: the prisoner and the actor. Calderón's ability to position women in roles which are representative of humanity has not gone unnoticed in serious plays and, at a time when humanity was almost always universalised as male, this is a striking aspect of his work but one that has rarely been considered or applied to his women of comedy. Yet, as confirmed by the situation of all the heroines in this study, the female is constrained by a form of imprisonment on the temporal level.

To set a basis for my approach, it was necessary first to review a number of perspectives on Calderonian women and comedy over time before positing an alternative approach. Some longstanding notions of Calderonian women as victims lacking psychological depth and social relevance, for instance, have obscured the full picture, a situation that has persisted to the present time. Yet a valid and alternative understanding of their role in his work can be posited: a role that is central, dynamic and complex. With this in mind, we can not only justify applying this perspective to comedy, but demonstrate how this view is further enhanced by his *damas tramoyeras*. The aim was to look at a group of Calderón's comic heroines in more depth in order to compare and contrast their individual strategies. Each *dama tramoyera*, to a greater or lesser extent, expresses frustration at the level of control or enclosure in which she finds herself in a patriarchal society, but each heroine actively seeks to change their circumstances in inventive and intelligent ways. Instead of falling into stasis, the *dama tramoyera* is a true comic paradigm: she is indecorous and tests theatrical and social mores. Indeed, there is a link between her meta-dramatic powers and a modernising intent. These women stretch and break the bounds of the play to engage with their audience and their skills in disguise and design are inspired by real 'unconventional' women of the age: aspiring actresses and *mujeres tapadas*. In turn, these figures represent and envisage a fresh sense of womanhood where a 'designing woman' is now a talented actress and creative powerhouse rather than a deceptive Eve. While the heroines unsettle events on stage and may remain mysterious to their male counterparts, they are less enigmatic to their audience as they draw their spectators into a collusive relationship. Their self-awareness also appears analogous to a notable critical intelligence or socio-political consciousness as their refusal to return to ignorance anticipates their future emancipation. Their inspired behaviour is such that their male counterparts are often reduced to impotent rage or to the comic display of an outmoded chivalric sense of masculinity which is wholly inept, or, as Calderón suggests, hypocritical, if male privilege thrives on a form of control which threatens women's human rights.

My argument has also been reinforced by comparative perspectives on Shakespeare and Sor Juana who, in their differing ways, have, like Calderón, sought to enrich their female characters by conferring upon them a fully human and universal dimension. Both Calderón and Shakespeare exploit the meta-dramatic powers of their heroines to engage the audience and encourage them to make comparisons between the stage world and the real world. The heroines might be seen as moving in a liminal space between the characters and the spectators, thus breaking down barriers between reality and illusion, or between what *is* and what *could be*. Marcela of *Casa con dos puertas*, and Ángela of *La dama duende*, in particular, have the vivacity and self-conscious playmaking ability of Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Also, comparable to the manner in which Shakespeare uses the duality (the split in character) created by his heroines' disguises to highlight their emotions for the audience with pathos, Calderón uses role-play to bring the feelings and presence of Ángela and Marcela out from the 'darkness' of their internal rooms in the plays' settings. However, in my view, a comparison of the dramatists' approach sheds light on why Calderón's heroines have the edge concerning the women's cause. The immediate local contexts of the *capa y espada* plays along with the use of a non-masculine, culturally specific disguise (the veil) for example, brings the gender issues at hand into sharper focus, and Calderón binds both woman and her cause closely to his human archetypes. In my opinion, Shakespeare's heroines appear more inclined to promote empathy and understanding, while Calderón's remain rather more sceptical in regard to the status quo. In particular, the latter's women possess a political edge owing to what I interpret as their sharper exploitation of irony which, as Hutcheon (1992) asserts, is a rhetorical strategy which always brings into play power relations (in this case gender) in a given context.

If Calderón's approach to the situation of women has a political edge, then this sits appropriately with the work of Sor Juana. As we have also seen, in co-opting Calderón, Sor Juana confirms his status as an early proto-feminist. As one committed to the rational ability of women and their right to free learning, Sor Juana can be said to have been a real *dama tramoyera*. Famous for her transgressions onto terrain considered inappropriate for a woman of her time (theological enquiry and intellectual pursuit), she was an authentic rebel who became a female literary icon in spite of the restrictions placed over women's ambitions in colonial Mexico. The cerebral and disarmingly modest disposition of Calderón's later comic heroine Laura of *El secreto a voces* appears to have attracted Sor Juana, as her own heroine Leonor of *Los empeños de una casa* mirrors this Calderonian heroine in temperament and

more directly in a symposium scene which Sor Juana appears to have adapted from Calderón's play. Both heroines have no recourse to literal disguise and instead sport metaphorical 'veils of modesty', a new and subtle form of disguise which conceals and protects their ambition. The understated approach of Calderón's Laura is comparable to the strategy of Sor Juana's Leonor, but Leonor is enriched in light of Sor Juana's own life experiences. Indeed, Sor Juana blends reality with illusion by giving voice to her life experiences through her on-stage heroine Leonor, who acts as a partial double for Sor Juana: she is a self-confessed intellectual who is consistently blocked from fulfilling her romantic and intellectual aspirations by her father, a jealous female rival and an unwanted love interest in the shape of Don Pedro. While Calderón emphasises the threatened free will of Laura in his play, Sor Juana adapts this sense of a dignified and determined voice to form her own particular paradigm. Leonor, for example, does little but attempt to retain her dignity in the play, and is presented as a contradictory mix of humility, false modesty, confidence and passivity. Yet with reference to Sor Juana's own writings and philosophy this curious mix becomes clearer. Leonor can be read allegorically as an image of Reason (*entendimiento*), because for Sor Juana, Reason is accompanied by modesty and thus does little to defend itself. However, Sor Juana knew, and experienced first-hand, that this quality was doubly vulnerable in woman living in a patriarchal context. As we find in her own writings, she often had to employ false modesty as a strategy to succeed, a quality that is also present in Leonor. Sor Juana consciously had to feign ignorance for example, in order to justify her work or to expose ironies in the laws which forbade women from intellectual pursuits in her society. In sum, I see in Sor Juana's approach to Leonor a response to and an expansion of a subtle Calderonian *dama tramoyera* such as Laura, rather than an antagonistic reaction.

I have aimed to extend existing work on Calderón's women, role-play and comedy in order to open up and affirm new ways of thinking about Calderonian women and their impact on the European stage. In addition, I have attempted to show that, through a different approach to his female characters it is possible to acknowledge why comedy is not antithetical to Calderón but in tune with his interests. Ter Horst (1982) writes that 'Woman is Calderón's muse (p. 34)', and the implications of such an idea have perhaps only been examined partially. From queens and intellectuals to sceptics and aesthetes, the Calderonian woman is frequently complex and brilliant: she deserves our acknowledgment of the memorable independence of spirit and richness of character that Calderón conferred upon her.

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