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THE MAGIC OF ZAYAS

SLIPPERY SORCERY, BAROQUE GAMES WITH THE
DEVIL AND UNCANNY MIRACLES IN THE NOVELLAS
OF MARÍA DE ZAYAS



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Thesis submitted for the degree of doctor of philosophy (PhD)
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My thanks go to Carmen Fracchia in the first instance for having been so positive and encouraging throughout these seven years – I haven't decided whether they were fat or lean yet. I am also very grateful for the words of wisdom from my colleague Sharon Ragaz, who has since moved to greener pastures – although I suspect they are actually white a great deal of the time. I am also in Yolanda Lojo's debt for having generously allowed me to stay in her flat while I was working in the Biblioteca Nacional in the summer of 2013, and I am sorry I was so caught up in my research that I was not as sociable as I would have liked to have been. I should also mention the Zilkha Fund, who munificently offered their financial support for the first five years of my degree. And lastly I wish to express my gratitude to Westminster School, not only for being such a stimulating place to work but also for allowing me to take half a term off to concentrate on my thesis in June 2016.

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signature _____

Place and Date _____

Abstract

The seventeenth century saw an epistemological shift, which resulted in indeterminacy with regards to the supernatural. This indeterminacy is exploited by María de Zayas, albeit not necessarily consciously. In twelve out of her twenty novellas something happens that falls within the remit of the supernatural *sensu lato* – in the early modern period a crucial distinction was made between the supernatural *sensu stricto* (the miraculous) and the preternatural (the marvellous). Sometimes she treats magic as real, sometimes as false, now as a prank, then as a harrowing experience. But even when magic is described as efficacious, her discourse is permeated by indeterminacy. Her stories of the Devil may seem traditional at a first glance, but closer inspection reveals that the author plays a clever game with the reader. The Devil's purported good deed in one of the tales is nothing but subterfuge, fooling protagonists and modern critics alike. Her miracles share much with classical hagiography, except that in some instances she imbues her tales with an almost Gothic sense of the uncanny. This also applies to other episodes, including premonitory dreams, disembodied voices and the undead.

There is no doubt that Zayas uses the supernatural as a means to shock and titillate her audience. As such it ties in with other transgressive aspects of her work. But if she courted the *vulgo* with her sensationalist stories, some of which were recycled as *relaciones de sucesos*, she also aimed to impress the *culto* with her baroque narrative labyrinth where nothing is what it seems. Not only are women innocent victims of irrational male violence, they are subjected to evil spells and the influence of malignant stars more powerful than free will. There really is no way out for them.

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Cover illustration

Six woodcuts made by Eric Fraser for the English edition of a selection of Zayas's novellas translated by John Sturrock: *A shameful revenge and other stories* (London: The Folio Society, 1963).

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Introduction

María de Zayas – the most unabashed, militant Hispanic feminist of her age.¹

IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS OR SO MARÍA DE ZAYAS Y SOTOMAYOR HAS MADE A remarkable come-back. Her two collections of seventeenth-century novellas are published by Cátedra and have been translated into English (three times), Italian, French, and German.² Her oeuvre has been the subject of a good number of monographs and chapters in books on Golden Age literature, as well as scores of articles. She is hailed as a militant feminist *avant la lettre* and celebrated as a subversive writer who offers a savage critique of her society, especially the impossible position of women within it. In her prologue, she defies men and claims that women are just as able and could rival them if only they were given a proper education, thus showing an awareness that gender is a social construct. Her novellas abound in violence perpetrated on women, in particular within the confines of marriage; her heroines are raped, tortured and killed, and the ones who survive usually end up seeking refuge in a convent. Understandably therefore, there has been no shortage of critical attention to Zayas's description of the plight of women in the patriarchy and her transgressive prose. Much of this research has been done from a feminist perspective. However, there is a danger of interpreting everything she writes as subversive, 'retrofitting' her as it were with a modern feminist agenda, or considering her sometimes imperfect syntax as typifying Cixousian *écriture féminine* intended to *bouleverser la syntaxe* [shatter syntax], like Paul Julian Smith does when he remarks that 'woman's experience cannot be spoken in a man-made language without gaps and discontinuities; and that the utopia of a purely

¹ Stephanie Merrim, *Early Modern Women's Writing and Sor Inés de la Cruz* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999), p. xxxvi.

² The Spanish editions by Cátedra, which I will refer to throughout the thesis, are: María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*. ed. by Julián Olivares (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000) and *Desengaños amorosos*, ed. by Alicia Yllera (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983) – in short *Novelas* and *Desengaños*. Some examples of English translations are: *A shameful revenge and other stories*, transl. by John Sturrock (London: The Folio Society, 1963); *The Enchantments of Love*, transl. by Patsy Boyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); *The Disenchantments of Love*, transl. by Patsy Boyer (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1997); *Exemplary Tales of Love and Tales of Disillusion*, transl. by Margaret Greer and Elizabeth Rhodes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and into other languages than English: *Novelle amoroze ed esemplari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995); *Nouvelles amoureuses et exemplaires* (Belval: Circé, 2013); and *Erotische Novellen: exemplarische Liebesnovellen* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1991).

female space must be a break or threshold in a dominant male order'.³ Nevertheless, if we apply Gerda Lerner's definition of feminist consciousness, Zayas undoubtedly fits the criteria, most of them at least:

I define feminist consciousness as the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but societally determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally that they must and can provide an alternative vision of societal organisation in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination.⁴

It is obvious that Zayas sees women as subordinate victims of irrational male cruelty and that she denounces women's lack of education. As for her alternative vision of society, things get more complicated. At the very end of her collection, she paints a nostalgic picture of a golden age of gender relations under Ferdinand the Catholic, when men were men and treated their women with respect, rather than long-haired pansies cavorting on the banks of the Manzanares, refusing to fight for King and Country and abusing their women at home. In a sense, Zayas is a reactionary who sees the decline of gender relations as symptomatic of Spain's political crisis, and who yearns for a bygone age of an imagined political dominance and a more harmonious rapport between the sexes. Zayas is also classist and xenophobic, so we could say that she is an ideologically conflicted writer. This makes it worthwhile to study her work from a cultural-historical point of view as well as through a gynocentric lens. Although much less has been written about Zayas as a baroque author as opposed to an early modern feminist, this is changing. My research strives to contribute to this particular field of Zayan studies by looking at her as a woman writer within the literary and cultural context of her age, which was not only a period of political crisis and societal chaos – especially the 1640s during which she wrote her second, darker collection of novellas – but also a time when the thaumaturgical order was revised as a result of a shift in epistemology, which affected amongst other things the way the supernatural was seen and experienced.

The supernatural is an important but under-studied aspect of Zayas's novelistic output; in twelve out of her twenty novellas something occurs that could be categorized as

³ Paul Julian Smith, *The Body Hispanic. Gender and Sexuality in Spanish and Spanish American Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 38.

⁴ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness from the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 14.

marvellous, miraculous or fantastic. Despite the preponderance of this theme, there is a marked paucity of research into this aspect, and, as far as I am aware, there have been no attempts to give a complete overview of the supernatural in Zayas's oeuvre and connect it to the seventeenth-century shift in epistemology. That is not to say we are in terra incognita; a number of outstanding critics have analysed magic in Zayas's work and devoted chapters or articles to it. The aim of my research is to assess these approaches critically in the context of the seventeenth-century belief in the supernatural, building on some, rejecting or nuancing others. Given the fact that more than half of Zayas's novellas contain at least one supernatural event, and taken into consideration the scope of these occurrences – they range from Marian miracles to 'voodoo rape', from sorceresses to disembodied voices and incorrupt cadavers – our main question must be to ask *why* Zayas had a predilection for the supernatural. What does this tell us about her oeuvre? What does she achieve by her frequent recourse to magic and the uncanny? Where do her tales dealing with sorcery, the Devil and the miraculous stand with regards to the ideology and epistemology of her period? How might the authorities have reacted to these episodes? And her public? How unusual are her descriptions of the supernatural? Is she unique in this respect? We can only begin to answer these questions when we have a good idea about what the supernatural meant to her and her readers. Once we have done this, it becomes obvious that strictly speaking there was a divide between the marvellous and the miraculous; the two pertained to different orders and were the theatre of operations of preternatural and divine agents respectively. Of the two, the marvellous order is the most salient in Zayas's novellas; there are more episodes featuring magic or the Devil than miraculous ones, and they are less straightforward. If we look at the magical episodes, for instance, it becomes clear that there is a notable variety in attitude and tone, and the belief in magic is problematized. When we take the stories featuring the Devil under the loupe, it becomes apparent that things are not what they seem and that a clever game is being played with us. If the seventeenth century saw the belief in magic waning, the belief in miracles was shored up by the Church, prompting the question of how this is articulated in Zayas. Most miracles in her novellas appear to follow well-established patterns and would not be out of place in a classic hagiography, but in some instances the miraculous becomes imbued with the uncanny. This eerie aspect, in turn, cannot be studied without taking into account Zayas's espousal of sensationalist tactics; her novellas were clearly designed to

have a shocking and titillating effect on the reader. In order to answer these questions, I have divided this thesis into five chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 will provide the necessary background needed to begin the discussion of the novellas proper. In chapter 1, I shall give an overview of the little we know about Zayas's life and I shall include some new evidence for her stay in Italy. After that I shall discuss the reception of her work in the seventeenth century as well as her critical rediscovery at the end of the last century. To finish the chapter, I shall review the literature that deals with the supernatural (mainly magic) in Zayas. In chapter 2, I shall discuss the epistemology of the supernatural in the seventeenth century and look at attitudes to magic and witchcraft in Spain and the way they were treated by the Inquisition and portrayed in Golden Age literature. This will lead to a discussion of the indeterminacy of the marvellous in seventeenth-century literature, of which Zayas's novellas are a prime expression.

In the next two chapters I shall discuss occurrences of magic and the Devil in Zayas's work. In chapter 3, I shall offer a reading of four novellas containing sorcery, which will reveal the multivalent ways in which Zayas uses magic and the extent to which the discourse surrounding magic becomes infused with doubt. In chapter 4 I shall analyse the role of the Devil in her work and show that the author is playing a baroque game with the reader, partly because she uses the Devil as a correlate of evil and blackness to be contrasted – in a Caravaggesque manner – with innocence, purity and whiteness, but more importantly because we are – wrongly, I contend – led to believe that the Devil is capable of doing good.

The last chapter deals with other supernatural events in Zayas, ranging from astrology and her controversial subordination of free will to the influence of the stars, to the miraculous and the uncanny. In particular, it will become clear that alongside more conventional miracles, she infuses the miraculous with an eerie atmosphere that seems to foreshadow the Gothic. In the very last section I shall briefly discuss Zayas's ideological stance, putting her feminism in perspective, and address the question of how unique her approach is by looking at the wider literary context in which she operated.

A note on the titles of the novellas and the quotations.

Zayas’s publisher called her first collection, published in 1637, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* [Amorous and exemplary novellas], although in the text the author usually refers to her work as *Sarao y entretenimiento honesto* [Soirée and honest entertainment] and to the tales of her first collection as *maravillas* [marvels]. Her second collection, published in 1647, was called *Desengaños amorosos*. The term ‘desengaño’ is often rendered as ‘disappointment’ or ‘disillusion’, but in this context neither translation is entirely satisfactory. The word designates the opposite of ‘engaño’, which is a deception, a trick, the act of being fooled. The opposite, then, is to be un-deceived, to have the scales falling from your eyes, to be disabused of a notion, to see through deceit and realize what is going on – to wise up, so to say. That is the significance of the title of the second collection of Zayas’s novellas: they are tales that make women understand the deceitful nature of love, the fact that love and marriage are not what they are cracked up to be. That is why the tales are called *desengaños* and the women who tell them *desengañadoras*.

The *Novelas* were published with individual titles for each story. In the second collection only the first tale was published with a title, the other stories merely having an ordinal number: *segundo desengaño*, and so forth. But in the edition by Pablo Campins from 1734 all the *desengaños* were given a (melodramatic) title, and that is how they have been known ever since (see Yllera’s introduction to the *Desengaños*). In the table below, I have given the original title, a more or less literal translation, and then the titles given by Patsy Boyer, Margaret Greer and Elizabeth Rhodes, and John Sturrock.

Original title	More or less literal translation	Patsy Boyer	Margaret Greer and Elizabeth Rhodes	John Sturrock
<i>Novelas amorosas y ejemplares</i> (1637)	<i>Amorous and exemplary novellas</i>	<i>The Enchantments of Love</i>	<i>Exemplary Tales of Love and Tales of Disillusion</i>	<i>A shameful revenge and other stories</i>
1. Aventurarse perdiendo	To venture (whilst) losing (everything)	Everything Ventured	Taking a Chance on Losing	-
2. La burlada Aminta y venganza de honor	The duped Aminta and (her) honour avenged	Aminta Deceived and Honor’s Revenge	-	-

3. El castigo de la miseria	The punishment of miserliness	The Miser's Reward	-	-
4. El prevenido engañado	The (one who has been) forewarned (is) deceived	Forewarned but not Forearmed	Forewarned but Fooled	forewarned but forestalled
5. La fuerza del amor	The power of love	The Power of Love	-	-
6. El desengañado amando y premio de la virtud	The (one who has been) un-deceived (by) loving and virtue's reward	Disillusionment in Love and Virtue Rewarded	-	-
7. Al fin se paga todo	At the end everything is paid for	Just Desserts	-	there always comes the reckoning
8. El imposible vencido	The impossible overcome	Triumph over the Impossible	-	-
9. Juez de su causa	The judge of her (own) case (at her own trial)	Judge Thyself	The Judge of Her Own Case	-
10. El jardín engañoso	The deceptive garden	The Magic Garden	The Deceitful Garden	-
<i>Desengaños amorosos (1647)</i>	<i>(Tales of) disillusion (un-deception) in love</i>	<i>The Disenchantments of Love</i>	-	-
1. La esclava de su amante	The slave of her lover	Slave to Her Own Lover	Her Lover's Slave	-
2. La más infame venganza	The most despicable revenge	Most Infamous Revenge	-	a shameful revenge
3. El verdugo de su esposa	The executioner of his wife	His Wife's Executioner	-	-
4. Tarde llega el desengaño	The realization of deceit comes (too) late	Too Late Undeceived	-	-
5. La inocencia castigada	Innocence punished	Innocence Punished	-	an innocent punished
6. Amar sólo para vencer	To love only for the sake of conquering	Love for the Sake of Conquest	-	-
7. Mal presagio casar lejos	(It is a) bad omen to marry faraway	Marriage Abroad: Portent of Doom	-	-
8. El traidor contra su sangre	The traitor to his blood	Traitor to His Own Blood	-	a traitor to his own flesh and blood
9. La perseguida triunfante	The triumph of she who is persecuted	Triumph over Persecution	-	-
10. Estragos que causa el vicio	The ravages that vice causes	The Ravages of Vice	-	the ravages of vice

Except where indicated otherwise, I have translated all the quotations from Zayas and all other texts myself. In order to avoid tedious repetition, however, I have refrained from translating every occurrence of a title of a novella.

Chapter 1

The Ghostly Sybil from Madrid

María de Zayas y Sotomayor, que con justo título ha merecido el nombre de Sibila de Madrid, adquirido por sus admirables versos, por su felice ingenio y gran prudencia. (Castillo Solórzano)¹

[María de Zayas y Sotomayor, who has rightly deserved the name of Sybil of Madrid, which she has earned on account of her admirable verse, her felicitous genius and her great prudence.]

IT IS COMMONPLACE TO START A DISCUSSION OF MARÍA DE ZAYAS'S LIFE BY STATING that we do not know much about it. She was active in literary circles in Madrid during the first part of Philip IV's reign and left one play and two collections of novellas. Faced with such a dearth of information, there have been a fair few speculations about various aspects of her life, including her sexuality. Much of what scholars have assumed is based on a biographical reading of her novellas and a few purportedly personal interpolations. Conjectures about her life have also been made on the basis of the history of her publications. We find ourselves on much firmer ground when we consider the scholarly attention that she has attracted. Her novellas went from being 'instant best-sellers' (Boyer, *Enchantments*, p. xii) in the 1600s and 1700s to being all but forgotten or else deemed lascivious and repulsive by the few Hispanists who read her in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. A slow re-evaluation began in the second half of the last century, gathering speed in the 1990s. Nancy Lagreca estimates that in the last decade or two scholarly interest has quadrupled and adds that the analyses have matured.² Today her novellas have become part of the Canon and her work is studied at universities around the world with scholars directing their attention to a wide variety of themes in her work, including magic.

¹ Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, *La Garduña de Sevilla y anzuelo de las bolsas* (Madrid: Ediciones de La Lectura, 1922) <<https://archive.org/stream/lagardunadesevil00cast#page/94/mode/2up/search/Zayas>> [Accessed 8 August 2016].

² See Nancy Lagreca, 'Evil Women and Feminist Sentiment: Baroque Contradictions in María de Zayas's "El prevenido engañado" and "Estragos que causa el vicio"', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 28.3 (Spring 2004), 565-82.

1.1 ‘Me conocéis por lo escrito’: a writer hidden behind a screen of fiction

Despite the fact that Zayas may have been one of the best-selling authors of the Spanish Golden Age – more on that assertion below – not much is known about her life. These two facts imply less of a contradiction than might appear at a first glance. Parts of Cervantes’s life are shrouded in mystery and there are a great many gaps in Shakespeare’s biography that generations of determined scholars have failed to fill, to give but two examples. In María de Zayas’s case, the scarcity of biographical information is compounded by her gender, since she would not have been required to sign contracts and other legal documents.³ Nevertheless, there is one instance in which we do appear to have her signature, namely in the register of the *Hermandad de defensores de la Purísima Concepción* of the Hieronymite convent of the Immaculate Conception. Furthermore, in one of the early editions of her novellas someone has penned the words: ‘alabado sea el Santísimo Sacramento y la limpia y pura Concepción de la Virgen sin mancilla, concebida sin la mancha de pecado original’ [praised be the Holy Sacrament and the unsullied and pure Conception of the Immaculate Virgin, conceived without the stain of original sin], which has sometimes been viewed as an autograph by the author.⁴ It is quite possible that Zayas had a special devotion for the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception. One of the narrators of the novellas’ frame story, Estefanía, is a nun of that order and a number of heroines enter Conceptionist convents – Laura in ‘La fuerza del amor’, Juana in ‘El desengaño amando’, and Ana’s sisters in ‘El traidor contra su sangre’. Furthermore, in a list of erudite women the author makes mention of ‘doña María Barahona, religiosa en el convento de la Concepción Jerónima’ [doña María Barahona, nun of the Hieronymite convent of the Immaculate Conception] (*Desengaños*, p. 230). But the reality is that, apart from her novellas, we have virtually no written documents that tell us anything about her life; the real María de Zayas remains hidden behind a screen of fiction. As if she were aware of the way posterity would see her, she writes at the end of her collection, in a literary *trompe l’oeil* that collapses the distance between the real-life author and the protagonist of the frame narrative: ‘me conocéis por lo escrito, mas no por la vista’ [you know me by my writings but not by sight]

³ See Lisa Vollendorf, ‘Good Sex, Bad Sex: Women and Intimacy in Early Modern Spain’, *Hispania*, 87.1 (2004), 1-12. The situation was very different for widows, who could act on their own behalf in legal matters. See Grace Coolidge, *Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Spain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

⁴ See Salvador Montesa Peydro, *Texto y contexto en la narrativa de María de Zayas* (Madrid: Dirección General de la Juventud y Promoción Sociocultural, 1979).

(*Desengaños*, p. 507). The flesh-and-blood María de Zayas has remained invisible and has hardly left a trace, except for her oeuvre, which is why Ximénez de Sandoval refers to her as ‘una escritora fantasma’ [a ghostly writer].⁵ Despite this documentary void, however, it is possible to reconstruct some parts of her life, although much of it is perforce conjecture, and in general one would do well to heed Griswold’s injunction against indulging in ‘psychoanalytical flights of deductive biography’.⁶

We know that María de Zayas y Sotomayor was born on 12 September 1590 in the parish of San Sebastián in Madrid. She was the daughter of Fernando de Zayas and María de Barasa. Her *partida de bautismo* reads:

María de Çayas – En doce días del mes de Septiembre de mil y quinientos nobenta años, yo el bachiller Altamirano, theniente de cura, bapcticé á María, hija de Don Fernando de Çayas y de Doña María de Barasa su muger.⁷

[María de Çayas – On the twelfth day of September in the year fifteen hundred and ninety, I, bachelor Altamirano, assistant priest, baptised María, the daughter of Don Fernando de Çayas and Doña María de Barasa, his wife.]

In her introduction to *The Enchantments of Love* Boyer mistakenly writes that Zayas was the daughter of Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor and Ana de Barasa, while Ximénez de Sandoval incorrectly states that her mother was called Catalina de Barrasa (with double r). He most likely copied the erroneous entry in Serrano y Sanz’s *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas*, which I suspect is a case of bad editing, since in the same article Serrano y Sanz quotes Zayas’s *partida de bautismo* with the correct names. He also discusses María de Zayas’s genealogy and mentions that her father’s paternal grandparents were Alonso de Zayas and Inés Sánchez, from Zafra in Extremadura; his maternal grandparents were Antonio de Sotomayor and Catalina de Zayas, both from Madrid. So it would appear that both her paternal great-grandfather and her maternal great-grandmother were called Zayas. As a result, both María and her grandmother Luísa were called de Zayas y Sotomayor – incidentally, Amezúa incorrectly refers to the author’s mother as Luisa (no accent) de Zayas. Gamboa claims that the author of the

⁵ Felipe Ximénez de Sandoval, ‘Doña María, una escritora fantasma’, in *Varia historia de ilustres mujeres* (Madrid: Epesa, 1949), p. 207.

⁶ Susan Griswold, ‘Topoi and Rhetorical Distance: The “Feminism” of María de Zayas’, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 14.2 (1980), p. 108.

⁷ Quoted in Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas* (Madrid, 1905), p. 584. See also Montesa, *Texto y contexto*, p. 21; and Isabel Barbeito Carneiro, *Mujeres y literatura del siglo de oro. Espacios profanos y espacios conventuales* (Madrid: Safekat, 2007), p. 157.

Novelas might have been of Converso origin, basing her hypothesis on the supposed Jewish origin of the name Zayas as well as her assumption that Zayas's publisher was Jewish.⁸ This seems very unlikely given the fact that Zayas's father was made a Knight of the Order of Santiago, which required rigorous genealogical checks. It is also a mistake to call Esquer Jewish, since Jews had been exiled in 1492, although he might have been from a Converso family. In an article about three Spanish woman writers, Redondo Goicoechea explicitly states that Zayas was *not* of Converso origin, whereas her other two subjects, Teresa de Cartagena and Teresa de Jesús, were.⁹

Zayas's father was an infantry captain and was made knight of the Order of Santiago in 1628. It is quite possible that he followed the court to Valladolid between 1601-1606, which would mean that María spent her early teenage years there. This is the assumption made by Amezúa in his introduction to her novellas. Hesse follows suit, as does Rincón.¹⁰ McGrath, in his introduction to Zayas's play *La traición en la amistad*, simply states that she lived in Valladolid and also claims that she died in 1661, when it is actually generally assumed the María de Zayas who died in 1661 was not the author of the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*.¹¹

In 1610, Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor entered the service of the 7th Count of Lemos and accompanied him to Naples, where the Count served as the Viceroy from 1610-1616. The Count was a 'refined mind and enlightened protector of *belles-lettres*'¹² and when he was appointed to the Viceroyalty, he ordered his secretary to select a group of literati to be incorporated into his literary court. Both Cervantes and Góngora aspired to be in his retinue, but the petty-minded secretary – a mediocre literary talent who was loath to be outshone, according to Canavaggio – denied both of them the opportunity. Had it been otherwise, María de Zayas might have spent her formative years in the company of two of the greatest Spanish writers of all time. That is, if we assume that she followed her father to Naples. This is an important assumption, since if she did, it

⁸ See Yolanda Gamboa, *Cartografía social en la narrativa de María de Zayas* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2009).

⁹ Alicia Redondo Goicoechea, 'La retórica del yo-mujer en tres escritoras españolas: Teresa de Cartagena, Teresa de Jesús y María de Zayas', in *Compás de letras. Monografías de literatura española. En torno al yo*, 1 (1992), pp. 49-63.

¹⁰ María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *Novelas (La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor; El prevenido engañado)*, ed. by José Hesse (Madrid: Taurus, 1965); *Novelas ejemplares y amorosas o Decameron español*, ed. by Eduardo Rincón (Madrid: Alianza, 1968).

¹¹ See his introduction to María de Zayas, *La traición en la amistad* (Newark: European Masterpieces, 2007).

¹² Jean Canavaggio, *Cervantes*, transl. by J. R. Jones (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 244.

would stand to reason that she was not married when her father was appointed or she would have stayed in Spain with her husband.

There are a number of reasons to think this assumption is correct. The author sets her novellas in a wide range of cities – Madrid, Toledo, Salamanca, Seville, Granada, Zaragoza, Valladolid, Palermo, Lisbon, Brussels, and Naples – but she rarely gives detailed descriptions, except when she describes the viceregal seat. This is especially clear in ‘La fuerza del amor’, where the narrator Nise offers precise geographical information on a number of occasions:

Hay en Nápoles, como una milla apartada de la ciudad, camino de Nuestra Señora del Arca, imagen muy devota de aquel reino, y el mismo por donde se va a Piedra Blanca, como un tiro de piedra del camino real, a un lado de él, un humilladero de cincuenta pies de largo y otros tantos de ancho, la puerta del cual está hacia el camino, y enfrente de ella un altar con una imagen pintada en la misma pared. (*Novelas*, p. 365)

[In Naples, about a mile out of town, on the way to the Madonna dell’Arco, a very popular shrine in that kingdom, which is the same road that leads to Pietra Bianca, at about a stone’s throw from the highway to one side, there stands a roadside chapel of fifty feet long and of the same width, whose door faces the road and which has an altar in front of it and an image painted directly onto the wall.]

She also gives details about a local custom: ‘Úsase en Nápoles llevar a los festines un maestro de ceremonias, el cual saca a danzar a las damas y las da al caballero que le parece’ [In Naples they usually bring a master of ceremonies to their balls, who invites the ladies to join the dance and hands them over to a gentleman of his choosing] (*Novelas*, p. 347).

This tradition is again referred to in ‘La más infame venganza’, set in Milan and told by Lisarda:

Ya he dicho el uso y costumbre de aquellos reinos, que son los festines, que un día se celebran en unas casas y otros en otras, y que es permitido a las damas casadas y doncellas, y aun a las viudas, a ir a ellos, y a los caballeros, con máscaras y sin ellas, entrar y sacar a danzar la dama que les parece. (*Desengaños*, pp. 190-191)

[I have already said that in those kingdoms it is customary to hold balls, which are celebrated in one house one day and in another the next, and which ladies, married and unmarried alike – and even widows – are allowed to attend, and where gentlemen, with or without masks, can enter the dance and ask any lady they like to dance with them.]

Zayas's voice comes through when she puts the words 'ya he dicho' [I have already said] in the mouth of Lisarda, when in reality it was Nise who mentioned this costume in a previous tale. It is one of the instances in the collection where the distance between Zayas and one of her characters collapses.

The novella 'El traidor de su sangre' includes a description of the viceregal fleet on its way back to Spain in 1616, led by the marquis of Santa Cruz. The event is probably the return to Spain of the Viceroy Pedro Fernández de Castro Andrade y Portugal. Later that year the Duke of Osuna – Quevedo's patron – would replace the Count of Lemos as Viceroy in Naples. In the same novella, Alonso strikes up a friendship with a dubious character who is described as one of the 'prevetes salvajes' [wild priests]. The word 'prevete' is not standard Italian but appears to be Neapolitan dialect.¹³ In the story Zayas explains who these people are: 'hay en Italia unos hombres que, sin letras ni órdenes, tienen renta por la Iglesia, sólo con andar vestidos de clérigos y llámanlos "prevetes salvajes"' [in Italy there are men who, without having studied or taken orders, receive a stipend from the Church, only by dressing as priests, and they are called 'wild priests'] (*Desengaños*, p. 386). This addition of *couleur locale* and detailed knowledge, absent from stories set elsewhere, make her stay in Naples between 1610 and 1616 more than likely.

Most critics, however, do not go into this much detail about Zayas's purported stay in Italy and content themselves with referring to a passage in 'La perseguida triunfante', which is usually taken to be an autobiographical interpolation.¹⁴ That story ends by saying that the protagonist of the hagiographical tale, Beatriz, 'en toda Italia es tenida por santa, donde vi su vida manuscrita, estando allí con mis padres' [is considered a saint in all of Italy, where I saw a manuscript of her life story when I was there with my parents] (*Desengaños*, p. 467). If this is in effect a biographical interpolation, it is another instance of the collapse of the distance between the author and a character in the frame narrative.

¹³ The standard word for priest in Italian is 'prete', not 'prevete'. Zayas probably Hispanised the adjective 'salvaje', 'salvaggio' in Italian. See <[https://books.google.nl/books?id=QgtZAAAAcAAJ&pg=RA1PA48&lp=RA1PA48&dq=prevete+dialetto+napoletano&source=bl&ots=SD7t617gXw&sig=O0o41QriMjzRrp\]2korXRu7Gi0k&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=prevete%20dialetto%20napoletano&f=false](https://books.google.nl/books?id=QgtZAAAAcAAJ&pg=RA1PA48&lp=RA1PA48&dq=prevete+dialetto+napoletano&source=bl&ots=SD7t617gXw&sig=O0o41QriMjzRrp]2korXRu7Gi0k&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=prevete%20dialetto%20napoletano&f=false)> [Accessed 8 August 2016].

¹⁴ See for instance Montesa; Olivares in his introduction to the *Novelas*; and Eavan O'Brien, *Women in the prose of María de Zayas* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2010).

If Zayas lived in Italy between the age of twenty and twenty-six, she might have learnt enough Italian to read Boccaccio and other *novellieri* in the original. Zayas uses at least one of Boccaccio's stories as the basis of a novella ('El jardín engañoso'), but it is by no means certain that she took the story directly from the *Decamerone*, since there were Spanish adaptations of these Italian tales too, such as Juan de Timoneda's *Patrañuelo*. Barbeito Carneiro has suggested that Zayas could read French and does not wish to exclude that the Count of Lemos had a copy of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* in his library:

Por otra parte, tampoco podemos descartar que existiera dentro de la copiosísima biblioteca del Conde de Lemos, en Nápoles, alguna versión del *Heptamerón* de Margarita de Navarra, en cuyo caso, ese libro de autoría femenina supondría un acicate determinante como fuente de inspiración digna de ser emulada. (Barbeito Carneiro, *Mujeres y literatura del siglo de oro*, p. 165)

[On the other hand, we cannot exclude that the vast library of the Count of Lemos in Naples contained a copy of the *Heptaméron* by Marguerite de Navarre, in which case, this female-authored book would have been an important stimulus and a source of inspiration worthy of being emulated.]

The reason she mentions this sixteenth-century French collection of novellas is that Zayas appears to rework one of Navarre's tales in 'Tarde llega el desengaño'. Sandra Foa equally suggests Zayas must have been able to read French since the *Heptaméron* was not available in a Spanish translation.¹⁵ There is no need, however, to assume that Zayas could read French, since the story referred to – a man who punishes his adulterous wife by locking her up with the corpse of her lover – is also told by Bandello (novella XII of the *Seconda Parte*). It is much more likely that Zayas adapted the story from an Italian source such as Bandello and that she did not speak or read French, nor had she probably heard of Marguerite de Navarre. At the start of Zayas's tale the narrator mentions a string of famous learned noblewomen and woman writers: the sisters of Charles V, Isabel Clara Eugenia, the Countess of Lemos, Margaret of Parma, three nuns known for their erudition or verse, and her friend Ana Caro Mallén de Soto. In this list Marguerite de Navarre, as a noblewoman and novella writer whose story Zayas is about to integrate into her own, is conspicuous by her absence. Had Zayas known about Marguerite de Navarre and read her *Heptaméron*, this would have been an inexplicable omission. The same reasoning applies a fortiori to another episode that is sometimes

¹⁵ See Sandra Foa, *Feminismo y forma narrativa. Estudio del tema y las técnicas de María de Zayas Sotomayor* (Valencia: Albatros, 1979).

also said to be taken from Marguerite de Navarre, namely the episode of interracial love between Beatriz and the Black stable boy Antonio (see 4.1). It is true that in one of Navarre's tales a nobleman finds his wife in the arms of a stable boy, but he is not Black and many other details are absent. The same story appears in *Orlando furioso* and Masuccio – and indeed in the frame narrative of the *One Thousand and One Nights* – so once more, there is no reason to suppose that Zayas could read French.

Throughout her oeuvre, Zayas speaks highly of the Counts and Countesses of Lemos, mentioning them in at least five novellas. In 'La fuerza del amor', Laura refuses to return to her abusive husband and her case is brought before the Viceroy 'don Pedro Fernández de Castro, Conde de Lemos, nobilísimo, sabio y piadoso príncipe, cuyas raras virtudes y excelencias no son para escritas en papeles, sino en láminas de bronce y en las lenguas de fama' [Don Pedro Fernández de Castro, count of Lemos, that most noble, wise and pious prince, whose rare virtues and qualities ought not to be written on paper but engraved on bronze plates and spread by the tongues of fame] (*Novelas*, p. 368). He decides in her favour and allows her to enter the convent. This is a clear reference to her father's employer, who died in 1622. At the beginning of the second night of the *Desengaños amorosos* one of the guests sings a ballad, said to be composed 'estando ausente del excelentísimo señor conde de Lemos, que hoy vive y viva muchos años, mi señora la condesa, su esposa' [in the absence of the most excellent count of Lemos, who is still alive today – and may he live for many more years –, by my mistress the countess, his wife] (*Desengaños*, p. 259).¹⁶ Since the novella was published in 1647, the question arises which Count of Lemos she refers to here. The most likely candidate is Francisco Fernández de Castro y Andrade (1613-1662), the 9th Count of Lemos and Viceroy of Aragón (1649-1652).¹⁷ I have already referred to the list of illustrious women at the start of 'Tarde llega el desengaño'. There, reference is made to the Countess, the current Count's grandmother:

Pues la excelentísima condesa de Lemos, camarera mayor de la serenísima reina Margarita, y aya de la emperatriz de Alemania, abuela del excelentísimo conde de Lemos, que hoy

¹⁶ In the original it reads 'de mi señora', which I assume to be an error.

¹⁷ This is confirmed by Anne-Gaëlle Costa Pascal, who says that 'elle était très liée à la famille du neuvième comte de Lemos' [she had very close ties to the family of the 9th Count of Lemos]. Anne-Gaëlle Costa Pascal, *María de Zayas, une écriture féminine dans l'Espagne du Siècle d'Or. Une poétique de la séduction* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), p. 24.

vive y viva muchos años, y que fue de tan excelentísimo entendimiento, de más haber estudiado la lengua latina, que no había letrado que la igualase. (*Desengaños*, p. 229)

[Then we have the countess of Lemos, who was lady-in-waiting to Her Majesty Queen Margaret of Austria, governess to the empress of Germany and the grandmother of the most excellent count of Lemos, who is still alive today – and may he live for many more years – , whose intelligence was such that, not only had she studied Latin, there was no scholar who could claim to be her equal.]

All of this suggests a rather close relationship between the author and the Count and Countess of Lemos. This has led Barbeito Carneiro (*Mujeres y literatura*) to suggest that Zayas may have been in the employment of the Countess after her return from Naples, although she produces no evidence for this claim.

Whether or not Zayas lived abroad, it is certain that by 18 October 1618 she resided in Madrid, because that is when she signed the register of the *Hermandad de defensores de la Purísima Concepción* mentioned above. In the years that followed, it seems she formed part of a literary circle that included Castillo Solórzano, Pérez de Montalbán, whom Amezúa calls ‘su gran amigo’ [her great friend],¹⁸ as well as Lope de Vega. Zayas mentions Lope de Vega in two of her novellas: ‘El castigo de la miseria’ and ‘El traidor contra su sangre’ and does so eulogistically, calling him: ‘aquel príncipe del Parnaso, Lope de Vega Carpio, cuya memoria no morirá mientras el mundo no tuviere fin’ [that Parnassian Prince, Lope de Vega Carpio, whose memory will not die as long as this world lasts] (*Desengaños*, p. 369). Olivares has suggested that she competed in *justas poéticas* [poetic competitions] at Francisco de Mendoza’s *academia* between 1621 and 1639. Paun de García is a little more cautious and writes that we do not know which *academia* she frequented, but since Pérez de Montalbán and Castillo Solórzano mention her success in *academias* of Madrid, Mendoza’s is a good candidate. Pérez-Erdélyi claims that Zayas formed part of Medrano’s *academia* of from 1617-1622 and Mendoza’s from 1623-37.¹⁹ One of her sonnets appears in the prologue of Miguel Botello’s *La fábula de Píramo y Tisbe* (1621) and other poems by her hand were printed in works published in the 1620s and 1630s. Four more of her compositions appear in works written by others, namely the *Prosas y versos del Pastor de Clenarda* (1622), also by Miguel Botello, the *Orfeo en*

¹⁸ María de Zayas, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (Madrid: Aldus, 1948), p. xi.

¹⁹ See Olivares’s introduction to the *Novelas*; Anne-Gaëlle Costa Pascal; Susan Paun de García, ‘Zayas as Writer: Hell hath no fury’, in *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995); and Mireya Pérez-Erdélyi, *La pícaro y la dama. La imagen de las mujeres en las novelas picaresco-cortesanas de María de Zayas y Sotomayor y Alonso de Castillo Solórzano* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1979).

lengua castellana (1624) by Pérez de Montalbán, Francisco de la Cuevas's *Experiencias de Amor y Fortuna* (1625) and *El Adonis* (ca. 1632) by Castillo de Larzaval. Furthermore she contributed a *romance* to *Las lágrimas panegíricas a la temprana muerte del gran poeta Pérez de Montalbán* (1639).²⁰ She also wrote an epigram on the death of Lope de Vega (1635).²¹ The paratext of her *Novelas ejemplares y amorosas* (1637) includes two laudatory poems by Castillo Solórzano, sonnets by Pérez de Montalbán and Francisco de Aguirre Vaca and *décimas* by Ana Caro Mallén de Soto. The anonymous *Prólogo de un desapasionado* that precedes the *Novelas* is sometimes attributed to Castillo Solórzano.²² In the *edición príncipe* of the novellas (1637) four more poems were printed. One by Don Alonso Bernardo de Quirós, who describes Zayas as a kind of virago (*mujer varonil*): 'no eres mujer ni eres hombre' [you are neither a woman nor a man]. There was also a poem in Portuguese by Diego Pereira, one by Doña Ana Inés Victoria de Mires y Arguillur, and a sonnet by Don Victorián Josef de Esmir y Casanate.²³ She is also mentioned by Lope de Vega in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630) and in Pérez de Montalbán's *Para todos* (1632).

Zayas is said to have been very close to Ana Caro Mallén de Soto, the Sevillian poetess and playwright, who might have stayed with Zayas when she was in Madrid, where she wrote her *Contexto de las Reales Fiestas que se hizieron en el Palacio del Buen Retiro* in 1637. Like the Countess of Lemos, she makes an appearance in Zayas's list of illustrious women:

la señora doña Ana Caro, natural de Sevilla: ya Madrid ha visto y hecho experiencia de su entendimiento y excelentísimos versos, pues los teatros la han hecho estimada y los grandes entendimientos le han dado laureles y vítores, rotulando su nombre por las calles. (*Desengaños*, p. 230)

[Doña Ana Caro, native of Seville: Madrid has already seen and experienced her intelligence and most excellent poetry, since she earned respect in the theatres, and learned men have bestowed laurels on her and applauded her, so that her name is known on all the streets.]

In *La Garduña*, Castillo Solórzano praises both women in the same paragraph, adding that they were in each other's company:

²⁰ For this section, see Amezáa's introduction to the *Novelas* (1948).

²¹ See José Antonio Álvarez y Baeza, 'María de Zayas y Sotomayor (Doña)', in *Hijos de Madrid ilustres en santidad, dignidades, armas, ciencias y artes*, 4 (Madrid: Cano, 1791, repr. Madrid: Atlas, 1973), pp. 48-49.

²² See María Martínez del Portal's introduction to the *Novelas completas* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1973).

²³ See Olivares's introduction to the *Novelas*, p. 157, note 8.

en estos tiempos luce y campea con felices lauros el ingenio de doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor, que con justo título ha merecido el nombre de Sibila de Madrid, adquirido por sus admirables versos, por su felice ingenio y gran prudencia, habiendo sacado de la estampa un libro de diez novelas que son diez asombros para los que escriben deste género, pues la meditada prosa, el artificio dellas y los versos que interpola, es todo tan admirable, que acobarda las más valientes plumas de nuestra España. Acompáñala en Madrid doña Ana Caro de Mallén, dama de nuestra Sevilla, a quien se deben no menores alabanzas, pues con sus dulces y bien pensados versos suspende y deleita a quien los oye y lee. (Castillo Solórzano, *La Garduña de Sevilla*, p. 52)

[In our own time there shines and triumphs, adorned with happy laurels, the genius of María de Zayas y Sotomayor, who has rightly deserved the name of Sybil of Madrid, which she has earned on account of her admirable verse, her felicitous genius and her great prudence, having published a book with ten novellas, which are considered ten marvels by those who write in the genre, since the measured prose, the artistry and the interspersed poems are all so admirable that the most valiant quills of our Spain feel intimidated. She is accompanied in Madrid by Doña Ana Caro de Mallén, a lady from our city of Seville, who is owed no lesser praise, since with her sweet and well-considered verse she excites and delights everyone who hears or reads them.]

Ana Caro Mallén de Soto was mainly known as a poetess, but she also wrote a number of plays, two of which are extant: *El conde Partinuplés* and *Valor, agravio y mujer*. She was not the only female playwright of the period. In 1997 Teresa Scott Soufas published a collection of plays written by women dramatists including Angela de Azevedo, Ana Caro Mallén de Soto, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, Feliciano Enríquez de Guzmán and María de Zayas y Sotomayor.²⁴ Many of these plays ‘depict male characters that are unable to fulfil the patriarchal behaviour ascribed to them by society’ (McGrath, *La traición*, p. 11) and stress the importance of female friendship, thus presenting alternative models of behaviour that question the contemporary panorama of bitter rivalry.²⁵ María de Zayas’s play, which features a female version of Don Juan – Larson has called it ‘simultaneously an inversion, a subversion and a comic copy of Tirso’s *Burlador de*

²⁴ See Teresa Soufas, *Women’s Acts. Plays by Women dramatists of Spain’s Golden Age* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997). To this list of women dramatists could be added Sor Marcela de San Félix – Lope de Vega’s daughter – and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as well as the more obscure Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda, Sor María do Ceo, and Juana Teodora de Sousa. See Alex Samson, ‘Distinct dramatists? Female Dramatists in Golden Age Spain’, in *A companion to Spanish women’s studies* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2011), pp. 157-72. McGrath, who published Zayas’s only extant play (see note 11), gives the same names as well as Isabel Rebeca Correa.

²⁵ For more analysis of Zayas’s play, see José Antonio Rodríguez Garrido, ‘El ingenio en la mujer: *La traición en la amistad* de María de Zayas entre Lope de Vega y Huarte de San Juan’, *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 49.2 (1997), 357-73; Robert Bayliss, ‘Feminism and María de Zayas’s Exemplary Comedy, *La traición en la amistad*’, *Hispanic Review*, 76.1 (2008), 1-17; Valerie Hegstrom, ‘The Fallacy of False Dichotomy in María de Zayas’s *La Traición en la amistad*’, *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 46.1 (1994), 59-70; Nieves Romero Díaz, ‘En los límites de la representación: la traición de María de Zayas’, *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 26.3 (2002), 475-92; Mercedes Maroto Camino, ‘María de Zayas and Ana Caro: The Space of Women’s Solidarity in the Spanish Golden Age’, *Hispanic Review*, 67 (1999), 1-16.

*Sevilla*²⁶ – is entitled *La traición en la amistad* and was probably written sometime before 1632.²⁷

It is not certain whether these plays were ever performed or just read out at gatherings. Samson states that there is no evidence that they were ever performed. Rodríguez Garrido, on the other hand, claims that Zayas's play was performed for a group of friends, possibly including Lope de Vega and Pérez de Montalbán.²⁸ There need not be a contradiction here if we accept that the play may have been performed for a group of friends, but not staged in one of the *corrales*. The same applies to plays written by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and other women playwrights of the period.

Zayas's friendship with Ana Caro has led Brownlee to speculate about her sexuality, saying the poetess from Seville was 'perhaps a kindred spirit in sexual preference as well as literary taste'.²⁹ Commenting on a homosexual scene in 'Mal presagio casar lejos', she writes that 'the sensitivity of the portrayal makes us wonder whether it stems from her own possibly lesbian relationship with another noblewoman'.³⁰ Taken on their own, these statements would seem far-fetched indeed, but in some of her novellas Zayas appears to give a positive portrayal of at least the possibility of lesbian relationships. Zelima, in 'La esclava de su amante', says she had a friend 'cuyo nombre era Leonisa, que me quería con tanto extremo, que comía y dormía en su misma cama' [whose name was Leonisa and who loved me so very much that I ate with her and slept in the same bed] (*Desengaños*, p. 154). In 'La burlada Aminta', the eponymous heroine is seduced by Jacinto, who is accompanied by his apparently bisexual lover Flora, who tells him: 'ya sabes que tengo el gusto y los deseos más de galán que de dama, y donde las veo y más tan bellas, como esta hermosa señora, se me van los ojos tras ellas y se me enternece el

²⁶ Catherine Larson, 'Gender, Reading, and intertextuality: Don Juan's Legacy in María de Zayas's *La traición en la amistad*', *INTI: Revista de Literatura Hispánica*, 40-41 (1994), p. 129.

²⁷ There has been considerable debate about the date of composition. For a discussion see McGrath's introduction and above all Rodríguez Garrido.

²⁸ Rodríguez Garrido furthermore points out that by the time the play was performed, Zayas had probably already written *El juez de su causa*, which deals with the same topic as Lope de Vega's *Las fortunas de Diana*, one of his novellas for Marcia Leonarda. In 1619, he had also written a play called *El juez de su causa*, although it was not published until 1647. There is also a *relación de sucesos* which appears to be based on Zayas (see 5.4.2).

²⁹ Marina Brownlee, 'Genealogies in Crisis: María de Zayas in Seventeenth-Century Spain', in *Generation and Degeneration. Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 192.

³⁰ Marina Brownlee, *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 52.

corazón' [you already know my preferences and desires are more those of a gentleman in love than those of a lady, and when I see such pretty ones as this beautiful lady, I cannot take my eyes off them and my heart melts] (*Novelas*, p. 223).³¹ Even more extreme is the case of Esteban in 'Amar sólo para vencer', where the male protagonist dresses himself up as a woman in order to seduce the young Laurela and spends a year as Estefanía, declaring his love to her as a maid, which causes much mirth. 'Volviéronse a reír, confirmando el pensamiento que tenían de que Estefanía estaba enamorada de Laurela' [They all laughed again, seeing their notion that Estefanía was in love with Laurela confirmed] (*Desengaños*, p. 307) and:

todas lo juzgaban a locura, antes les servía de entretenimiento y motivo de risa, siempre que la veían hacer extremos y finezas de amante, llorar celos y sentir desdenes, admirando que una mujer estuviese enamorada de otra, sin llegar a su imaginación que pudiese ser lo contrario. (*Desengaños*, p. 309)

[they all thought it was folly and more than anything else they found it entertaining and it made them laugh whenever they saw her playing the refined and over-the-top lover, crying with jealousy and showing disdain, amazed that a woman could be in love with another, without the thought ever crossing their minds that the opposite could be true.]

Based on these and other passages, Vollendorf goes so far as to say that Zayas 'sanctions love between women,'³² although in an earlier article she is more nuanced and, in my view, more correct when she writes that:

the extent to which homoeroticism, particularly female homoeroticism, was intelligible to early modern readers cannot be known with any precision. Nor can we know for sure whether our own readings of early modern sexuality (of any sort) accurately decipher the erotic codes present in the texts.³³

Nevertheless, her overall opinion seems to be that Zayas portrays lesbian love positively. 'Zayas's endorsement of female homoerotic desire constitutes an equally striking representation of women's intimacy' (Vollendorf, 'Good Sex, Bad Sex', p. 6). When Lope de Vega mentions Zayas in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1639), he compares her to Sappho.

³¹ Marcia Welles sees Flora's sexuality as the result of her diabolical, dualistic nature, a facet of the Terrible Mother. See Marcia Welles, 'María de Zayas and her Novella cortesana: A Re-Evaluation', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 55 (1978), 301-10.

³² Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body. María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 2001), p. 186.

³³ Lisa Vollendorf, 'The future of Early Modern Women's Studies: The Case of Same-Sex Friendship and Desire in Zayas and Carvajal', *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 4 (2000), p. 270.

A la inmortal Doña María de Zayas | Que sin pasar a Lesbos ni a las playas | Del vasto mar Egeo | Que hoy llora el negro velo de Teseo | A Safo gozará Mitilenea | Quien ver milagros de muger desea: | Porque su ingenio, vivamente claro | Es tan único y raro.³⁴

[To the immortal Doña María de Zayas, who without crossing over to Lesbos or the beaches of the vast Aegean Sea, which weeps on account of Theseus's black sails; Mitilenea will enjoy the favours of Sappho. Whoever wants to see a woman's miracles: her talent is plain for all to see, unique and rare.]

At various points in her oeuvre, Zayas discusses eminent women writers who have gone before her – as we have seen above – thus inserting herself into a historical-literary pedigree, but she never mentions the poetess from Lesbos. Greer suggests that this may be a form of ‘strategic distancing’ and adds that the same is true for Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. I would argue, however, that there are various ways of interpreting the supposed lesbian episodes and that the least probable interpretation is an auto-biographical reading. As with other elements of her novellas, the episodes in question fit the wider framework of her quest for titillation and sensationalism, on a par with her scenes of torture, rape, dismemberment, and assassination.³⁵ Moreover, her stance on sexuality is by no means unequivocal. The bisexual Flora is an evil character, whereas Esteban's spell as a lovelorn maiden, which some critics have seen as exemplifying Judith Butler's theory of gender-as-performance, causes nothing but laughter.³⁶ Furthermore, after he has successfully seduced Laurela, his fervent lesbian discourse evaporates and he abandons her, whereupon she is killed by her father – crushed under a wall. And if the author can be said to be ambiguous about lesbian desire, she is downright scathing about male homosexuality, as is clear in ‘Mal presagio casar lejos’, in which Blanca discovers her husband in bed with his page: ‘Vio acostados en la cama a su esposo y a Arnesto, en deleites tan torpes y abominables, que es bajeza, no sólo decirlo, mas pensarlo’ [She saw her husband and Arnesto in bed, engaged in such awful and abominable pleasures that it is despicable not only to mention them, but to even think about them] (*Desengaños*, p. 360). This is a far cry from Brownlee's ‘sensitive portrayal’ and there is no way this can be read as a sympathetic view of homosexuality. Not only do these episodes correspond to her ‘gusto tremendista’ [taste for the sensational] (Foa,

³⁴ Lope de Vega, *El laurel de Apolo* (London: Leclere y Compañía, 1824), ll. 184-5 <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044025050386;view=1up;seq=9>> [Accessed 30 August 2016].

³⁵ See Nadia Avendaño, ‘La violencia masculina en los *Desengaños amorosos* de María de Zayas’, *The South Carolina Modern Language Review*, 5 (2006), 38-53.

³⁶ For more on Judith Butler and Zayas, see Deanna Mihaly, ‘Socially Constructed/Essentially Other: Servants and Slaves in María de Zayas’ *Desengaños amorosos*’, *Romance Languages Annual*, 10.2 (1999), 719-25.

p. 97) but they are also an integral part of her baroque project of juxtaposing contrasting ideas and playing a clever game of *engaño/desengaño* and *ser/parecer*. We are led to believe one thing, and then it transpires we have been misled; it appears she portrays lesbian relations positively, and then we learn that she does not (for more discussion, see Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*).

Aside from speculations about her sexuality, it is generally assumed that Zayas never married. In 1905 Serrano y Sanz wrote: ‘No he podido averiguar con toda certeza si fue o no casada’ [I have not been able to find out with certainty whether or not she was married] (Serrano y Sanz, p. 584). Amezúa and Alborg are two of the few scholars who do not discard the possibility that she *was* married. The former suggest that she might have moved out of Madrid and settled, perhaps married, in Zaragoza, where her first novellas were published. The latter simply states that she was probably married and moved to Zaragoza or Barcelona.³⁷ As discussed above, had she been married, she would not have moved to Naples with her father, unless she found a husband after she returned to Spain at the age of twenty-six. This supposed spinsterhood, again, has led to all sorts of conjectures. Amezúa assumes she was ugly because other poets only ever praised her talents, not her beauty. ‘Fea o hermosa (más bien lo primero, ya que en las poesías que sus admiradores escribieron en laudo suyo nadie la celebró nunca por bella, unánime silencio muy sospechoso)’ [Ugly or beautiful (the first being more likely, since in the poetry written by her admirers no one celebrates her beauty, and this unanimous silence is suspicious)] (Zayas, *Novelas* (1948), p. xxii). Rincón follows the same line of reasoning: ‘jamás encontró quien loara su belleza [...] ¿Será mucho aventurar que debió ser más bien fea o, al menos, para decirlo con mayor dulzura, poco agraciada?’ [she never found anyone who praised her beauty... Would it be too much to surmise that she must have been rather ugly, or at the very least, to put it nicely, lacking a little in grace?] (*Novelas* (1968), p. 11).³⁸ Barbeito Carneiro, on the other hand, writes that Zayas returned to Spain from Naples ‘en plena juventud y, según los indicios, dotada de belleza’ [in the first flush of youth and, as far as we can tell, beautiful] (*Mujeres y literatura*, p. 162), without explaining what these ‘indicios’ might be. She continues by saying that Zayas published her second volume when she was in her fifties, an age at which she

³⁷ See Juan Luis Alborg, ‘La novela corta: Zayas, Céspedes, Lozano’, in *Historia de la literatura española*, 2 (Madrid: Gredos, 1970), pp. 498-504.

³⁸ In her introduction to her edition of the novellas, María Martínez del Portal ascribes the latter comment wrongly to Amezúa instead of Rincón.

‘arrastra la suma de muchas experiencias negativas, que la han envejecido y afeado más de los años’ [was burdened by many negative experiences, which had made her old and ugly beyond her age] (ibid.). Often, the supposed ugliness is mentioned to account for the difference in tone between the two volumes of novellas, which some have seen as evidence for a bitter experience – a *desengaño* – in love, although in fact, most scholars nowadays agree that it is unreasonable to assume this happened to her when she was in her fifties. As a matter of fact, most scholars who mention this point state that this is the view of *other* critics.³⁹ One poem has come to light, however, that describes her physical appearance in the most unflattering of terms. In 1643, the young Catalan poet Francesc Fontanella described her as a woman with a masculine face and a haughty moustache, who ‘semblava a algun cavaller’ [looked like some gentleman or other].⁴⁰ But since the poem is so clearly in a parodic vein – the poet describes he falls asleep out of boredom during a *certamen* [literary competition] and dreams that he visits the moon – that not much can be deduced from it, although the poet clearly sees Zayas as a sexually ambiguous creature and a freak of nature.⁴¹ Fontanella’s description of Zayas as a virago (*mujer varonil*) in the early modern sense of the word, chimes with Bernardo de Quirós calling Zayas neither a man nor a woman (see above). According to what Laqueur has dubbed the ‘one-sex model’, women were biologically and ontologically inferior versions of men.⁴² Due to a different distribution of the cardinal humours, women were thought to be incapable of true creativity; those who were, were freaks of nature. This is also clear in Huarte de San Juan’s *Examen de ingenios* (1575). Zayas was probably aware of these theories and in her prologue, she upturns the traditional thinking by arguing that women are *more* intelligent on account of their humours:

Porque si en nuestra crianza, como nos ponen el cambray en las almohadillas y los dibujos en el bastidor, nos dieran libros y preceptores, fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y para

³⁹ See Paun de García, ‘Zayas as Writer: Hell hath no fury’; José M. Roca Franquesa, ‘Ideología feminista en doña María de Zayas’, *Revista de la Facultad de Filología*, 26 (1976), 293-311; Salvador Montesa Peydro, ‘Significado de la Estructura Barroca de la Novelas de Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor’, *Analecta Malacitana*, 3 (1980); and Julia Farmer, ‘Inscribing Victory: Rivalry and Mise en Abyme in María de Zayas’s Novella Collections’, *MLN* 126.2 (2011), 245-58.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Kenneth Brown, ‘María de Zayas y Sotomayor: Escribiendo poesía en Barcelona en época de guerra (1643)’ *Dicenda. Cuadernos de filología hispánica*, 11 (1993), 355-60.

⁴¹ The imagined voyage to the moon appears to have been a fairly common theme in the seventeenth century. Francis Godwin wrote *The Man in the Moone* in the 1620s and Cyrano de Bergerac his *Histoire comique des États et Empires de la Lune* around 1650.

⁴² See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

que las cátedras como los hombres, y quizá más agudas, por ser de natural más frío, por consistir en humedad el entendimiento. (*Novelas*, p. 160)

[Because if in our youth, rather than giving us cambric for our pincushions and patterns for our embroidery frames, they gave us books and private tutors, we would be as suited for any position – or indeed professorship – as men, and perhaps we would be even more intelligent, since we are by nature colder, and intellect resides in the damp humour.]

Leaving aside her physical appearance, the above-quoted passage from *La Garduña* (1635) gives some insight into Zayas's literary production. Castillo Solórzano writes that Zayas 'ha sacado de la estampa un libro de diez novelas' [had published a book with ten novellas], even though her first collection did not run off the press until 1637. Three years before Castillo Solórzano wrote this passage, another supposed close friend of Zayas's, Pérez de Montalbán, wrote in his *Para todos* (1632):

D. Maria dezima Musa de nuestro siglo, ha escrito a los Certamenes con grande acierto, tiene acabada vna comedia de excelentes coplas, y vn Libro para dar a la estampa en prosa y verso de ocho Nouelas exemplares.⁴³

[Doña María, tenth muse of our age, who has participated in literary competitions with great success, has finished a *comedia* written in excellent stanzas as well as a book of eight exemplary Novellas, containing both prose and poems, which is ready to go to the printer's.]

From this we can deduce the following. First, it is clear that Montalbán knew what Zayas was going to publish before her work went to the printer's, suggesting a certain degree of intimacy. Second, Zayas must have written two more novellas between 1632 and 1635. In all likelihood, Zayas wrote the first eight novellas between 1620 and the early 1630s. There is a *licencia* [licence] for her novellas dated 4 June 1626, eleven years before her novellas were actually published. Amezúa assumes that this is a misprint for 1636, and as such it appears in Olivares's edition from 2000. Jaime Moll, however, investigated the matter and found that the licence to print must in effect have been issued in 1626, since Dr Juan de Mendieta, who signed it, was no longer in office in 1636.⁴⁴ I would add that the idea of a misprint is very unlikely given that in the original the date is spelled out as 'cuatro de junio de mil y seiscientos y veinte y seis.' If the *licencia* is indeed from 1626, it means that Zayas had already written some of her

⁴³ Juan Pérez de Montalbán, *Para todos. Exemplos morales, humanos y divinos*, f. 353^v <<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/para-todos-exemplos-morales-humanos-y-divinos--0/html/>> [Accessed 27 August 2016].

⁴⁴ See Jaime Moll, 'La primera edición de las *Novelas amorosas* de María de Zayas y Sotomayor', *Dicenda*, 1 (1982), 177-79.

novellas at that time and subsequently continued to add to them until she was finally able to publish a collection of ten novellas in 1637. The reason for this delay is easily explained. In 1625 the Junta de Reformatión proposed to suspend licences for printing *comedias* and novellas, which was accepted by the Consejo de Castilla and remained in force until 1634. It seems that Zayas was able to get the ecclesiastical, but not the civil approval to publish her work, not until 1635 that is. Two years after that, her novellas ran off the press in Zaragoza. Although some, like Amezúa, have seen this as evidence that she had taken up residence in the Aragonese capital, it is much more plausible that her Aragonese publicist Esquer decided to have her novellas printed in Zaragoza because the printers in Madrid were busy with back orders after the ban had been lifted.⁴⁵

Olivares has suggested that Esquer was probably responsible for the title of the collection, hoping to cash in on the commercial success of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*. Zayas herself never mentions Esquer's title, but usually speaks of the *Sarao y entretenimiento honesto* when she refers to the collection. This was also the title on the *licencia* from 1626. All the same, Pérez de Montalbán talks about 'novelas ejemplares', not 'Sarao' (see above). It is also interesting to note that in 1624 José Camerino, who was active in the same literary circles as Zayas, published a collection of novellas equally called *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, one of them entitled 'La soberbia castigada' – Zayas has a tale called 'La inocencia castigada'. Furthermore, his novella 'El casamiento desdichado' has been suggested as the source for 'El traidor de su sangre' by José María Roca Franquesa.⁴⁶

As we saw above, Zayas's name appears in a parody written in Barcelona in 1643. Kenneth Brown, who published a paper on the matter, construes this as evidence that Zayas lived in the Catalan capital and that she was active in its literary circles – the Academia de Santo Tomás de Aquino to be precise – and on intimate terms with

⁴⁵ This is what Olivares suggests in his introduction to the *Novelas*. See also Don W. Cruickshank, 'Literature and the Book Trade in Golden Age Spain', *The Modern Language Review*, 73.3 (1978), 799-824. Willis suggests Zayas called her tales 'maravillas' instead of 'novelas' to avoid the ban, which forbade the publication of *novelas* and *comedias*, but that is unlikely and even if she had, it was unsuccessful. See Angela Willis, 'Fleeing the Model Home: María de Zayas Rewrites the Rules of Feminine Sensuality and "Honra" in the Boccaccesca "Novela Cortesana"', *Letras Femeninas*, 35.2 (Winter 2009), 65-89.

⁴⁶ See María Dolores López-Díaz, 'Un novelista poco conocido: José Camerino y sus *Novelas amorosas*', *Revista de filología*, 8 (1992), 291-98; and José María Roca Franquesa, 'Aventurarse perdiendo (Novela de Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor)', in *Homenaje al Excmo. Sr. Dr. D. Emilio Alarcos García*, 2 (Valladolid: Sever-Cuesta, 1965), pp. 401-10.

Fontanella: ‘Es seguro que Fontanella tenía mucha confianza con María de Zayas para ofenderla tan impunemente. Si lo contrario fuera verdad, tales conceptos serían de demasiado mal gusto’ [It is certain that Fontanella was on intimate terms with María de Zayas to be able to offend her with impunity. Had that not been the case, such notions would have been in really bad taste] (Brown, p. 359). However, to call Zayas a moustachioed virago who hides a sword beneath her petticoats by no means implies a degree of intimacy. Nor would it be the first poem to have been in bad taste; that hardly ever stops anyone from publishing potentially offensive material. A more likely interpretation is that Zayas travelled to Barcelona to discuss the publication of her novellas – the *Primera Parte* of her *Sarao* was published in Barcelona in 1646; the second edition of the *Segunda Parte* in 1649 – and perhaps participated in one or more literary gatherings while she was there. But none of this proves she took up residence in the Catalan capital. Nevertheless, like other scholars, Gamboa assumes that Zayas moved to Barcelona and makes the additional bold suggestion that she was politically involved with the anti-Olivares party and had become *persona non grata* in Madrid:

Aunque desconocemos el paradero de Zayas en los años próximos a su muerte, su relación con Fontanella, y la crítica de los coetáneos de las academias literarias de Madrid [...] me lleva a pensar que su participación política la lleva a los círculos de Fontanella y que no vuelve a Madrid dado que se convierte en *persona non grata*. (Gamboa, *Cartografía social*, p. 166)

[Even though we do not know anything about Zayas’s whereabouts in the years preceding her death, her relationship with Fontanella and the criticism by her contemporaries in the literary salons of Madrid... lead me to think that her political activities brought her closer to Fontanella’s circles and that she did not return to Madrid, where she had become *persona non grata*.]

Gamboa furthermore suggests that the sibyl from Madrid may have ended her days in Perpignan, having gone in exile with other radicals. O’Brien equally follows Brown’s assumption that Zayas moved to the Catalan capital: ‘That this Castilian author should have been found in physical proximity to the conflict and in the company of Francophile and secessionist Catalans is thought-provoking’.⁴⁷ In a broad sense, Zayas is of course very political and critical of what she perceives to be the decline of Spain. Moreover, as Charnon-Deutsch has pointed out, Zayas shares the Foucaultian insight that systems of power and control in the private sphere are reflected in larger political

⁴⁷ Eavan O’Brien, ‘Personalizing the Political: The Habsburg Empire of María de Zayas’s *Desengaños amorosos*’, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 88.3, (2011), p. 290.

spheres.⁴⁸ But there is not much evidence for specific partisan leanings in her novellas, although there is one paratext that could potentially point in that direction, namely the fact that the *Desengaños amorosos* is prefaced by a letter from Inés de Casamayor to Jaime Hernández de Silva, the future Duke of Hijar, whose father was one of the leaders of the anti-Olivares grandees (see Greer, *Baroque Tales*). This would be a more convincing place to start the investigation into Zayas's stance vis-à-vis domestic policies than Fontanella's poem and Brown's supposition that Zayas lived in Barcelona, surrounded by Catalan radicals. Still, apart from providing a possible clue as to her political convictions, Casamayor's letter does not tell us anything about her whereabouts in the 1640s.

After the publication of her second collection of novellas, Zayas disappears from the records altogether, which again has led to considerable speculation. Montesa, in his pioneering work on María de Zayas, has remarked that the *Primera Parte* was corrected by the author, but that this was not the case for the *Segunda Parte*, although the evidence he cites is rather meagre. He states that the order of the stories as announced in the frame narrative differs from the actual order, but that is not the case; he also adduces that after the fifth *desengaño*, the narrator says: 'después de dichos los cuatro desengaños', but that comment is made after Filis has told her tale, which is the fourth *desengaño*, not the fifth (*Desengaños*, p. 255).

In an attempt to dig up more concrete biographical material, scholars have brought to light two death certificates of women called María de Zayas, both from Madrid. One registers the death of 'Doña María de Çayas, viuda de Juan Valdés', whose last will and testament is also known, as well as a *poder* [letter of authorization] issued in her name, neither of which she signed herself, because 'aunque savía escribir, por la grave enfermedad que tenía y tener algo turbada la vista, rogó á testigo lo firmase por ella' [although she was able to read, due to a serious illness and because her vision was clouded, she asked the witness to sign it on her behalf] (Serrano y Sanz, p. 585). The other *partida de defunción* refers to for 'D.^a María muger que fué de Pedro Balcazar y Alarcon, en la calle del Relox' [Doña María wife of Pedro Balcazar y Alarcon, from the street of the Clock] and dates from 1669. Neither of them is likely to have been the author of the *Sarao y entretenimiento honesto*. In 1972, Felipe Maldonado uncovered

⁴⁸ See Lou Charnon-Deutsch, 'The sexual economy in the narratives of María de Zayas', in *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 117-32.

another María de Zayas, making a total of four. She was the wife of Don Fernando de Buitrago and appears in a document from 1636. Elsewhere she is called María Ramírez de Zayas.⁴⁹

With regards to the last years of the author, by far the most common assumption is that she followed the example of her heroines and entered a convent. This, however, constitutes too literal a reading of her novellas. It is true that many of her heroines seek refuge in a nunnery. Lisis, who is about to be wed at the start of the second part of the *Sarao*, sees the light and decides to enter the convent as a *seglar* [lay sister]. The latter is an important point, because it testifies to her mundane rather than spiritual reasons – women who entered the convent as *seglares* possibly did not do so out of religious conviction, but as a means to escape the patriarchy. The convent has often been described as a space outside of the Symbolic Order (see Greer) or ‘a possible feminine utopia’.⁵⁰ Convents were, however, not an entirely feminine space and nuns had male confessors, some of whom, like Teresa de Ávila’s, forced them to write down their visions. Vollendorf also sees the convent as a space outside of the narrative, but at the same time describes it as a site of struggle, a paradoxical institution: a feminine space controlled by the male-dominated church (see Vollendorf, *Reclaiming*). Much more can be said about Zayas and the conventual ending of many of her tales, but to assume that she became a bride of Christ just because so many women in her novellas do is to confuse life with literature, a powerful message in fiction with biographical reality. That is not to say that she did *not* end her life in some cloistered community, which was hardly unusual at the time – unfortunately we have no way of checking because most convent records were destroyed in the Civil War (see Montesa) – but not because she followed in the footsteps of her heroines or in some way or other needed to write the *Desengaños* before making up her mind. In this biographical silence, we can only let her work speak for itself. In an interesting last twist, however, for centuries this was not possible, because, as Olivares points out, Zayas’s novellas only survived in emasculated form, that is to say, without the prologues and the introduction.

Los críticos que afirman que *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* gozó de gran popularidad y que fue un *best-seller* ignoran que el texto que el público leía durante los doscientos años de su

⁴⁹ See Felipe Maldonado, ‘Otra María de Zayas... y van cuatro’, *Estafeta literaria* (October 1972), 10-13.

⁵⁰ Eavan O’Brien, ‘Female Friendship Extolled: Exploring the Enduring Appeal of María de Zayas’s Novellas’, *Romance Studies*, 26.1 (2008), p. 50. See also Nina Cox-Davies, ‘Re-Framing Discourse: Women Before their Public in María de Zayas’, *Hispanic Review*, 71.3 (2003), 325-44.

máxima popularidad – trescientos años en total – no era el de Zayas, sino una invención de otras manos, de editores masculinos. Al igual que los personajes femeninos, víctimas de abusos físicos y violaciones, representados en las *Novelas*, el texto zayesco sufrió una mutilación, una violación de su cuerpo textual femenino. (*Novelas*, p. 127).

[Critics who claim that the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* enjoyed great popularity and that the book was a best-seller gloss over the fact that the text read by the public for two of the three hundred years in which it was at the height of its popularity was not by Zayas, but a creation of others, namely male editors. Like the female protagonists in her *Novelas* who suffer physical abuse and rape, Zayas's text underwent a mutilation, a violation of her female textual body.]

What was missing is what we consider the most appealing and original aspect of her work and without a doubt the main reason for her renewed appreciation since the last decades of the twentieth century: her militant, proto-feminist tone and message.⁵¹ Instead, her novellas survived as macabre tales of gore and violence, a form of pulp fiction.

This concludes Zayas's rather incomplete biography. As I have said before, she is known almost exclusively through her work, which has been subjected to the vicissitudes of fortune and fame, as we shall see in the next section.

1.2 A feminist phoenix from the ashes: fame, oblivion and recognition

The trajectory of Zayas's fame is an inverted bell-curve: famous in her time, then slipping down the ladder of literary appreciation in the centuries afterwards – still read in cheap, incomplete editions and translated, but no longer praised and admired – and after that, all but forgotten except by the odd Hispanist or voracious readers and erudites like Menéndez Pelayo, until she was gradually rediscovered by literary scholars, especially in the United States, in the last decades of the twentieth century. Scholars often mention the fact that Zayas was a popular novella writer in her day, producing 'instant best-sellers' (Boyer, *Enchantments*, p. xii) that were only rivalled by Cervantes, Quevedo and Alemán in popularity and which retained their appeal for two hundred years. Zayas herself mentions her success in the second part of the *Sarao*, referring to three editions of her book: 'como sucedió en la primera parte de este sarao, que si unos

⁵¹ Simerka says she finds the prefix 'proto' in 'proto-feminism' condescending, even though she uses it herself at various points in her article. See Barbara Simerka, 'Feminist Epistemology and Premodern Patriarchy, East and West: "The Kagero Diary" by Michitsuna's Mother and the Novellas of María de Zayas', *Letras Femininas*, 35.1 (Summer 2009), 149-67.

le desestimaron, ciento le [*sic*] aplaudieron, y todos le buscaron y le buscan, y ha gozado de tres impresiones, dos naturales y una hurtada' [as happened with the first part of this *sarao*, where for every a handful of people who thought little of the tales, one hundred applauded them, and they all wanted to buy them and still do, and they have been printed three times, two authorised editions and a pirated one] (*Desengaños*, p. 258). Brownlee explains that by exploiting the taste for the sensational she became 'the best-selling author of the Spanish literary scene after Cervantes, Quevedo and Alemán' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 84). The same statement is made by Merrim who calls her 'the best-selling yet militant feminist Zayas' (Merrim, p. 38) and is echoed by Greer: 'Zayas's novellas were extremely popular in her day' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 39), although she later concedes that Castillo Solórzano and Pérez de Montalbán were even more popular when judged by the number of editions of their novellas. The likely source for these affirmations is Amezúa's prologue to his edition of her novellas – the first complete edition since 1847: 'Con excepción de Cervantes, de Alemán y de Quevedo, no hubo acaso ningún otro autor de libros de pasatiempo cuyas obras lograsen tantas ediciones como ella' [With the exception of Cervantes, Alemán and Quevedo, there was perhaps no other author of popular fiction whose works were printed so many times as hers] (*Zayas, Novelas* (1948), p. xxxi). A short article by the Dutch Hispanist Van Praag is also often adduced as evidence of her popularity. 'Después de las novelas ejemplares de Cervantes son las de doña María de Zayas las que lograron mayor difusión en el occidente de Europa' [After the exemplary novellas by Cervantes it's María de Zayas's ones that were most widely spread in Western Europe].⁵² Margarita Nelken suggested that the vogue for Zayas gave rise to a 'school' of feminine novella writers and cites Carvajal as an example. Mariana Carvajal y Saavedra was a widow from Jaén who published a collection of novellas called *Navidades de Madrid y noches entretenidas* in 1663. Long considered inferior to Zayas – Quevedo said her tales were 'neither no-vellas, nor yes-vellas' and made no sense whatsoever and even Merrim calls the quality of her work 'questionable' (Merrim, p. 83) – there have recently been attempts to rehabilitate her work.⁵³

⁵² J. A. van Praag, 'Sobre las novelas de María de Zayas', *Clavileño* 15 (1952), p. 43.

⁵³ Mariana Carvajal y Saavedra, *Navidades de Madrid y noches entretenidas*, ed. by Dámaso Chicharro (Jaén: Instituto de Estudios Giennenses, 2005). For recent articles on her, see Lisa Vollendorf, 'The Future of Early Modern Women's Studies'; Rosa Navarro Durán, 'La "rara" belleza de las damas en las novelas de María de Zayas y Mariana de Carvajal', *Belleza escrita en femenino*, ed. by Àngels Carabí and Marta Segarra (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1998), pp. 79-86; and Eavan O'Brien, 'Verbalizing the Visual: María

With regards to Zayas's popularity, I ought to make a few remarks. First, Amezúa uses the word 'acaso' (maybe) and mentions the number of translations as a measure of popularity, not Spanish editions. Second, as we have seen at the end of the previous section, Zayas's novellas survived in edited – not to say mutilated – form and lacked the pro-woman didacticism for which she is now best known. Her fame rested more on her ability to shock and titillate than her feminism. Third, as Rhodes reminds us, the claim she is the best-selling author after Cervantes and Alemán is often repeated, but never substantiated.⁵⁴ If Zayas's novellas were printed ten times in the seventeenth century, Pérez de Montalbán's *Sucesos y prodigos de amor* was printed at least nineteen times in the same period – and quickly translated into Italian and French. What should be remembered is simply that novellas *tout court* were all the rage in the seventeenth century. Romero Díaz claims that in the course of the 1600s fifty-eight original collections of novellas were published, plus sixty-five re-editions and five anthologies. She has also linked this enthusiasm for the *novela cortesana* to the urban transformation that took place at that time.⁵⁵ The genre declined after 1665, although many collections, including Zayas's, were reprinted well into the eighteenth century. The situation was much the same in France, where François de Rosset (1570-1619) and Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652) published hundreds of *histoires tragiques* that deal with the same material and that were very popular.⁵⁶

Like other works from Golden Age Spain, some of Zayas's novellas were translated into French, English, German and Dutch (often via French).⁵⁷ Paul Scarron adapted some of her tales; his story 'La précaution inutile', for instance, is based on 'El prevenido engañado', and his 'Châtiment de la misère' takes 'El castigo de la miseria' as its model.

de Zayas, Mariana de Carvajal, and the Frame-Narrative Device', *Journal of Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 12.3 (2012), 116-41.

⁵⁴ See Elizabeth Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill. Death and Meaning in Zayas's Desengaños* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁵⁵ See Nieves Romero Díaz, *Nueva nobleza, nueva novela: reescribiendo la cultura urbana del barroco* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2002).

⁵⁶ See Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the Present*, transl. by Jean Birell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ One Dutch collection in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague is called *De verliefde en niet minder treurige als ook vermakeleyke gevallen* (Amsterdam: Bouman, 1731), which comprises six novellas by Zayas plus two tales that are wrongly attributed to her, namely 'De gelukkige schilder' ('The happy painter') and 'De baetzugtige vrouw' ('The selfish woman'). Van Praag says the Dutch versions appear to have been translated from French – even though the title page claims they have been translated from Spanish by 'een voornaem liefhebber' [an important admirer] – and that compared to Zayas, they are 'mucho más lúbricas' [much more obscene] (Van Praag, p. 43).

In England, three of Zayas's tales were circulated as works by Cervantes: 'Estragos que causa el vicio', 'El traidor contra su sangre' and 'Al fin se paga todo'. Two further novellas by Zayas – 'La esclava de su amante' and 'La inocencia castigada' – were published anonymously in England. In the eighteenth century Zayas's work was published eleven times, leading one critic to suggest 'that her aesthetics had considerable resonance among European readers of pre-Romantic inclination' (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 172).

Between 1847 and 1948 no complete edition of the novellas was available. Greer has linked this decline in popularity with the availability of other women writers, although that probably supposes too much of a gender-consciousness on the part of readers. And even if it were true that women prefer to read women authors, the emergence of a new generation by no means needs to affect the popularity of earlier work – women did not stop reading the Brontë sisters or Jane Austen in the twentieth century because they were able to read books by Virginia Woolf and Iris Murdoch. The nineteenth century was also the period in which the foundations of Hispanic studies were laid. One of the great early Hispanists was George Ticknor from Boston. In his comprehensive overview of Spanish literature, he mentions Zayas and his disparaging comment on one of her stories is often quoted to illustrate his Puritanical attitude towards her entire oeuvre. Olivares in his introduction to the *Novelas* speaks of a 'backlash puritánico' (*Novelas*, p. 127). Goytisolo also refers to the criticism of Ticknor and Pfandl provoked by Zayas's eroticism, while Ordóñez writes that these scholars misread Zayas, labelling her as obscene, immodest, lewd and truculent.⁵⁸ To be fair to Ticknor, though, he also calls her a 'sturdy defender of women's rights'⁵⁹ and his infamous comment is about one story only and is made in a footnote:

One of the stories, – *El Prevenido Engañado*, I mean, – though written by "a lady of the court", is one of the most gross I remember to have read, and was used by Scarron in his "Précaution Inutile", with little mitigation of its shameless indecency (Ticknor, p. 166, note 33).

⁵⁸ See Elizabeth Ordóñez, 'Woman and Her Text'. In her introduction Boyer misquotes Ticknor, writing: 'Although written by a lady of the court, the work is the filthiest and most immodest that I have ever read'. She does not reference the quotation and I suspect she translated it from Amezáa's Spanish rendition back to English without consulting the original, making him sound harsher in his condemnation ('gross' becomes 'filthy and immodest').

⁵⁹ George Ticknor, *History of Spanish Literature*, 3 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1863), p. 166 <<https://archive.org/details/historyofspanish008446mbp>> [Accessed 7 January 2017].

A similarly maligned quotation is one by Pfandl, who at the end of his brief discussion of Zayas poses the question: ‘¿se puede dar algo más ordinario y grosero, más inestético y repulsivo que una mujer que cuenta historias lascivas, sucias, de inspiración sádica y moralmente corrompidas? [is it possible to find anything more vulgar and crude, more hideous and repulsive than a woman writing lascivious, obscene stories that are sadistic and morally corrupt?].⁶⁰ This reads like an outright rejection of her work, but elsewhere he is much more sympathetic, calling her novellas entertaining and interesting: ‘Estas novelas no dejan de ser entretenidas y casi siempre son interesantes’ [Still, these novellas are entertaining and nearly always interesting] (Pfandl, p. 369). Having said that, his exclamation of ‘¡Delicioso feminismo!’ [Delightful feminism!] (Pfandl, p. xxiv) can easily be construed as condescending.

Before Amezúa’s publication of the novellas, Zayas did not attract much academic attention, although there were some early studies, such as the ones by Sylvania Lena, Margarita Nelken and Edwin Place. Right up to the early 1980s, scholars were still looking for more biographical information or studying her possible sources. Zayas was generally seen as a *costumbrista* writer whose harrowing tales gave a realistic view of the harsh realities of her era, an approach that has since been abandoned.⁶¹

As indicated above, an important step in the rediscovery of her novellas was the first complete edition since 1847 by Agustín Amezúa in 1948, with a thorough introduction to her work. Among the criticism published after this edition was an article by Van Praag, who commented on the author’s popularity (see above), and by Morby, who discussed the source of one of Zayas’s novellas. From the late 1950s, there is also some purely literary interest in the writer. She features in a humorous vignette in Azorín’s *Los clásicos redivivos*, in which she is an old spinster who lives alone with her cats. After the scandal caused by ‘El prevenido engañado’ – the tale that so shocked Ticknor – she has turned her hand to writing *folletines* [newspaper serials].⁶² In the early 1960s a selection of

⁶⁰ Ludwig Pfandl, *Historia de la literatura nacional española en la edad de oro*, transl. by Jorge Rubió Balaguer (Barcelona: Sucesores de Juan Gili, 1933), p. 370.

⁶¹ See Sylvania Lena, ‘Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor: A Contribution to the Study of her Works’, *Romantic Review*, 14 (1923); Margarita Nelken, ‘La novela, el teatro y la licencia de la pluma’, in *Las escritoras españolas* (Barcelona: Labor, 1930; repr. Madrid: horas y HORAS, 2011), pp. 151-65, which has a section called ‘Las novellas amorosas y ejemplares de María de Zayas y la escuela cínica’; Edwin Morby, ‘The *Difunta pleiteada* Theme in María de Zayas’, *Hispanic Review*, 16 (1948), 238-42; Ricardo Senabre Sempere, ‘La fuente de una novela de Doña María de Zayas’, *Revista de filología española*, 46 (1963), 163-72.

⁶² Azorín, *Los clásicos redivivos* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958).

her more macabre novellas was translated into English by John Sturrock, who held that the principal attraction of her tales ‘lies in their improbable mixture of gothic extravagance and practical feminism’ (Zayas, *A shameful revenge and other stories*, p. v).⁶³ This edition is adorned with a series of striking woodcuts by Eric Fraser. The 1960s also saw a range of publications of her novellas in Spanish – Hesse (1965), Rincón (1968) and Martínez del Portal (1973) – while in the 1970s a number of book-length studies on Zayas appeared, both in Spain and abroad.⁶⁴

One of the most influential studies of that period was Juan Goytisolo’s essay on Zayas in his *Disidencias*.⁶⁵ Although he recognises the conventional approach of the author and her predictable plots, he lauds her description of women as desiring subjects. In addition, he jettisons the notion of her work as realistic and *costumbrista*. Goytisolo’s article opened the door to a new appreciation of Zayas as a feminist and subversive writer. This trend was further developed by Paul Julian Smith, who drew on French feminist theories and Lacan to analyse Zayas’s oeuvre.

From the 1990s onwards, an ever increasing number of studies on Zayas was published that focused on the feminist aspect of her oeuvre. In 1995 Amy Williams and Judith Whitenack published an important collection of articles on the author.⁶⁶ Around the turn of the century, a high-water mark was reached with the publication of three further collections of articles on early modern women-writers including Zayas,⁶⁷ a Spanish

⁶³ This is more nuanced than Kenneth Stackhouse suggests when he writes that Zayas’s tales have been rejected on account of their superstition, an attitude that ‘persists into the twentieth century with her English translator’s dismissal of her tales as mere “Gothic extravaganza”’ (Kenneth Stackhouse, ‘Verisimilitude, Magic, and the Supernatural in the Novelas of María de Zayas y Sotomayor’, *Hispanófila*, 62 (1978), p. 67).

⁶⁴ Montesa Peydro (*Texto y contexto*) and Irma Vasilesky, *María de Zayas y Sotomayor: su época y su obra* (New York: Plaza Mayor, 1972) in Spain; Foa (*Feminismo y forma narrativa*) and Alessandra Melloni, *Il sistema narrativo di María de Zayas* (Turin: Quaderni Ibero-Americani, 1976) in Italy; and Hans Felten, *María de Zayas y Sotomayor. Zum Zusammenhang zwischen moralistischen Texten und Novellenliteratur* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978) in Germany.

⁶⁵ Juan Goytisolo, ‘El mundo erótico de María de Zayas’, in *Disidencias* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1977), pp. 63-115.

⁶⁶ Amy Williamsen and Judith Whitenack (eds), *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995).

⁶⁷ Monika Bosse, Barbara Potthast and André Stoll (eds), *La creatividad femenina en el mundo barroco. María de Zayas - Isabel Rebeca Correa - Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 2 vols (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1999); Anita Stoll and Dawn Smith (eds), *Gender, Identity, and Representation in Spain’s Golden Age* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000); and Gwyn Campbell, and Judith Whitenack (eds), *Zayas and Her Sisters, 2. Essays on Novelas by 17th-Century Spanish Women* (New York: Global Publications Binghamton University, 2001).

collection of woman-authored novellas, including work by Zayas,⁶⁸ and four monographs: Stephanie Merrim's *Early Modern Women's Writing*, with a chapter on Zayas, Margaret Greer's *María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men*, Marina Brownlee's *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* and Lisa Vollendorf's *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism*. Merrim, Greer and Vollendorf all write within the feminist tradition, which has arguably become the most prolific field of Zayan studies. Other scholars working in this field are Eavan O'Brien, Yolanda Gamboa, Laura Gorfkle, Yvonne Jehensen, Amy Kaminsky, Teresa Langle de Paz, Mercedes Maroto Camino, Susan Paun de García, Lía Schwarz, and many others. Most of the research on Zayas comes from the United States. In Spain, the interest seems to have dried up or else is not reaching a global audience. In his nine-page bibliography at the end of his introduction to the *Novelas* published by Cátedra, Julián Olivares almost exclusively lists English-language articles from North-American scholars.

Brownlee's monograph is a good example of a different approach to Zayas that has evolved in the last few decades, which takes into consideration the literary and cultural background of Zayas's works, highlighting the baroque elements of her oeuvre. One of the pioneers in this respect was Marcia Welles, who re-evaluated the *novela cortesana* and Zayas's place within that tradition (see note 31). Then there appeared a much-referred-to article by Susan Griswold, who views Zayas's feminism as a mere rhetorical game, a literary topos, and nothing more: 'nor can Zayas's work be said, by any stretch of the imagination, to be an intrepid defence of women's rights. At best, feminism and antifeminism are counter-themes which provide an important structuring element to the book' (Griswold, p. 113). She also claims that the focus on Zayas's defence of women's rights detracts from her merits as an artist. Initially, her challenge to treat Zayas as a baroque writer was not taken up by many scholars, but since the 1990s and especially since the turn of the century, more and more research is done that highlights this aspect of her oeuvre. As Nancy Lagreca writes: 'Analyses of Zayas's prose have matured from placing undue emphasis on the feminist message and didacticism of the novellas [...] to valuing baroque characteristics of her art, thus recognizing a place for her in the Canon of Spanish Golden Age literature' (Lagreca, p. 567). And in her study on seduction in Zayas, Costa Pascal says that the author 'mérite donc de ne pas être enfermé dans une

⁶⁸ Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros and Marta Haro Cortés (eds), *Entre la rueda y la pluma. Novela de mujeres en el Barroco* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999).

classification générique ou simpliste où l'écriture d'une femme serait nécessairement celle d'une parole subversive' [therefore deserves not to be locked up in a generic or simplistic classification where the writing of a woman must needs be subversive] (Costa Pascal, p. 219). Scholars who have contributed to this field include Patricia Grieve, Marina Brownlee, Louise Salstad, Nieves Romero Díaz, Nancy Lagreca, Irene Albers, Anne-Gaëlle Costa Pascal, and Elizabeth Rhodes.

These two strands of research – the baroque and the feminist – are, of course, everything but mutually exclusive and some scholars, such as Brownlee, manage to combine both approaches very fruitfully. Indeed, whichever way we look at Zayas's novellas, there is always a need to reconcile her modern-sounding feminism with her baroque outlook and techniques.

1.3 Magic in Zayas: a review of the literature

In the above-mentioned publications, very little attention has been paid to supernatural or magical elements in Zayas, although, given the prevalence of magic and witchcraft in the novellas, it is not surprising that it has elicited a number of comments throughout the history of Zayan studies. An assessment typical of earlier scholarship comes from Amezúa, who highlights 'el frecuente y deliberado empleo que hace de lo sobrenatural y maravilloso' [the frequent and deliberate use she makes of the supernatural and the marvellous] (Zayas, *Novelas* (1948), p. xxviii), ascribing it to the fact that the belief in magic was widespread and that she, as a woman, was especially susceptible to such beliefs. Melloni claims that magic was a common literary trope taken seriously by Zayas: 'La Zayas prende terribilmente sul serio [...] la magia e il soprannaturale' [Zayas takes magic and the supernatural very seriously] (Melloni, p. 85). The same is stated by Martínez del Portal, while Montesa (*Texto y contexto*) comments that the only thing that sets Zayas's treatment of magic apart is its comparative abundance. Boyer is of the opinion that in Zayas 'magic seems to represent a fashionable and flashy literary device' (Zayas, *Enchantments*, p. xviii). She goes on to say: 'Magic and witchcraft are significant feminist issues in that the persecution of witches was, in fact, a persecution of women' (ibid.). That is a gross oversimplification. Even if in most countries it was mostly women who were the victims of witchcraft trials, to call it as a persecution of women *tout court* ignores the complexities of the matter (see 2.4). Goytisolo too makes mention

of Zayas's supernatural episodes, saying they anticipate Gothic literature and are among her best-written passages.

Los episodios de brujería de *El desengaño amando*, con la viva descripción del gallo con anteojos y la figura humana hecha de cera y, sobre todo, de la posesión carnal de doña Inés gracias a las artes diabólicas de un nigromántico moro, figuran sin duda entre las páginas más logradas de la pluma de la escritora. En ellas (y en algunos pasajes paródicos) el estilo se aligera y desembaraza de los clisés que lastran y dificultan la lectura de sus obras, consiguiendo a momentos una eficacia dramática (o cómica) digna de los mejores escritores de aquel tiempo. (Goytisolo, p. 106)

[The episodes of witchcraft in 'El desengaño amando', with the vivid description of the blinkered cock and the waxen statuette, and above all the carnal possession of Doña Inés by means of the diabolical arts of a Moorish necromancer are without a doubt amongst the most successful pages written by the author. There (and in some parodic passages) her style becomes lighter and she rids herself of the clichés that encumber her prose and make it difficult to read, pulling off at times a dramatic (or comic) efficiency that is worthy of the best writers of that period.]

None of the studies mentioned so far *analyse* the magical episodes. A few other critics, however, have offered an insight in Zayas's treatment of the supernatural.

1.3.1 Kenneth Stackhouse, 'Verisimilitude, Magic and the Supernatural in the Novelas of María de Zayas y Sotomayor' (1978)

One of the first publications in which the supernatural in Zayas is of central concern is an article by Kenneth Stackhouse. In his analysis, Zayas wants to provoke *admiratio* by giving a realistic account of supernatural events. He suggests that her verisimilitude is more moral than psychological, although it is not entirely clear what he means by that. If he means that actions must seem to be following moral precepts and punish the wicked while saving the innocent, he could not be further from the truth, since in Zayas's novellas many virtuous innocent women die or are horribly martyred.

The article further makes mention of other supernatural events in Lope de Vega, Alarcón and Tirso de Molina. In addition, Stackhouse refers to work by Thorndike published in 1923, who claims that Spain in the seventeenth century was more open to the occult than other European countries. This assertion is not explained and cannot be taken at face value without knowing more about this work. Nevertheless, Stackhouse correctly points out that 'Zayas's concept of magic and the supernatural, however, lies well within her contemporaries' moral and religious beliefs' (Stackhouse, p. 67). What he does not address, however, is why there is such a range of supernatural events,

sometimes actual, sometimes false, now amusing, then shocking. Magic may have been part of the belief system of Zayas's contemporaries, but the interesting thing is that these attitudes are changing in the seventeenth century.

In addition, Stackhouse states that Zayas's use of magic is attenuated in order not to interfere with the verisimilitude of her novellas. This idea is criticised by Whitenack (see 1.3.3) and it is in fact difficult to accept that this is the case if we take the example of 'La inocencia castigada' where Inés is raped repeatedly while under a spell; there is no attenuation there.

Furthermore, the article makes the following four claims about magic in Zayas: it is real and efficacious; those who use it pay an extreme penalty; it occurs more abroad than in Spain due to the influence of the Inquisition and it is temporary, as if by divine dispensation, and powerless when faced with the Virgin. The claim that magic is real and efficacious is not true for all the occurrences, however. In the case of Inés it is, but in 'El castigo de la miseria', the magical ceremony is described as a sham. What is interesting about the use of magic in Zayas is precisely its scope, variety and contradiction. As for the extreme penalty paid by perpetrators, it is true that the necromancer who puts a spell on Inés is caught by the Inquisition (see 3.4) and the Italian witch Lucrecia, who put a spell on Fernando in 'El desengaño amando', kills herself (see 3.3), but the sorceress who sends Laura to the gallows to collect hair and nails from a hanged man in 'La fuerza del amor' is not punished (see 3.2), and Jorge, who murders his brother and then strikes a deal with the Devil to win over Constanza in 'El jardín engañoso', ends up marrying his beloved, escaping punishment altogether (see 4.5). Clearly, then, not all perpetrators of magic pay the extreme penalty. Stackhouse's claim that magic occurs more abroad than in Spain is not quite true either, although it is often practised by foreigners, such as the Italian-born Lucrecia and the Moorish necromancer who puts a spell on Inés. Lastly, the claim that magic happens as if by divine dispensation is not specific to Zayas; this is per definition the case for all magic in the early modern *Weltanschauung*, as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

When discussing seventeenth-century ideas about the supernatural, Stackhouse refers to Nieremberg's *Ocultia filosofía*, in which the author warns that what seems to be supernatural, may in fact be natural. 'Like Nieremberg, Zayas realizes that extraordinary discretion is necessary to distinguish between magical or supernatural events and natural

phenomena' (Stackhouse, p. 76). This explains why some episodes show that a supposedly supernatural event does, in fact, have a rational explanation. A ghost turns out to be a man dressed in a sheet walking on stilts and rattling a chain; a magical ceremony is shown to be a hoax. And when magic is not unveiled as a sham, the narrators insist that the stories are real. According to Stackhouse, the unreliability of the supernatural events is one step removed. The novellas are based on gossip – a word that is associated with the novella itself – and gossip has the power to persuade. The narrators may doubt or be doubted, and when we go to the source of the story, we often find that it is unreliable. This is a valuable insight and shows that in the stories there is real as well as false magic. It may also be true that it is hard to distinguish between the two, but when Nieremberg underlines the difficulty of differentiating between the natural and the supernatural, he is not talking about rational, Sherlock Holmes-like explanations for seemingly supernatural events, but rather about natural magic (see 2.2). Nor does this view take into account the unexplained, eerie passages in Zayas's work that lack a rational or any other kind of explanation. And rather than stressing the fact that the stories are gossip, I see the indeterminacy of magic as symptomatic of the epistemological shift (see 2.7 and 3.6).

1.3.2 Susan Paun de García, *Magia y poder en María de Zayas* (1992)

In 1992 Susan Paun de García published an article on magic and power in Zayas in which she refers to Spengler's notion that in the early modern period people saw the world as a struggle between the forces of good and evil, and that witch-hunts were a manifestation of this battle. She refers to Stackhouse on a number of occasions and translates his quote from Thorndike about Spain's supposed susceptibility to the occult. In a brief comment, she declares that the Inquisition 'al fin empezó a percibir la hechicería como una superstición y no como un hecho' [in the end began to perceive witchcraft as a superstition and not as a fact].⁶⁹ This suggests that the Inquisition gradually changed its mind on the matter of magic, but in reality the Holy Office never took the offences very seriously in the first place (see 2.6). She rightly points out, however, that enlightened thinkers as well as members of the Church 'podían empezar a dudar de los poderes de brujos y hechiceros, pero no de los poderes del Demonio' [were able to begin to doubt the powers of witches and sorcerers, but not those of the Devil] (Paun de García, 'Magia y poder', p. 46). More precisely put, acts of magic were

⁶⁹ Susan Paun de García, 'Magia y poder en María de Zayas', *Cuadernos de ALDEUU*, 8 (1992), p. 45.

not ruled out in theory, but each individual manifestation was doubtful. We shall discuss this in more detail in the next chapter (see 2.7).

Her most original contribution to the debate is the realization that in Zayas there are contrasting attitudes to magic. ‘En algunos casos, la magia se ve como impostura, como medio para despojar al crédulo, principalmente para sacarle dinero, y también, a veces como broma pesada. Pero en la mayoría de los casos, la magia se pinta como verdadera’ [In some cases, magic is seen as a fraud, as a means to fleece the credulous, principally to take his or her money, but also sometimes as a prank. But in most cases magic is described as real] (Paun de García, ‘Magia y poder’, p. 47). She discusses ‘La fuerza del amor’ and ‘El castigo de la miseria’ as examples of false magic, and ‘El desengaño amando’ and ‘La inocencia castigada’ to show how magic is treated as efficacious (see 3.3 and 3.4). But Paun de García merely highlights this varied approach, without analysing it or putting in the context of the epistemological uncertainty with regards to magic. In her article, Paun de García proceeds to discuss a few more novellas in which the Devil makes an appearance, namely ‘La perseguida triunfante’ and ‘El jardín engañoso’. Like other critics, she takes at face value the unusual – oxymoronic – deed by the Devil who tears up a contract in which a soul is promised to him. I disagree with this view and think that Paun de García, like others, has been led up the garden path (see 4.5).

Paun de García ends her article with the acknowledgement that for Zayas’s narrators magic can effect minor things, but that the great conflict is between the Devil and the Virgin Mary. Moreover, she claims that in Zayas’s novellas the forces of good prevail. This claim must be qualified, however. It is true that in Zayas magic, when is it efficacious, is always overcome, albeit not always with the help of the Virgin, but the effects can still be devastating. Nor it is obvious that the forces of good always prevail, even if religion trumps magic. One only has to think of the countless innocent victims in Zayas’s novellas.

1.3.3 Judith Whitenack, “*Lo que ha menester*”: Erotic Enchantment in “*La inocencia castigada*” (1995)

Judith Whitenack was one of the editors of *The Dynamics of Discourse* and contributed an article on enchantment in one of Zayas’s novellas. She begins her article by underlining that according to early modern thought women were sexually insatiable and more

susceptible to diabolical influence than men, which led them to use amatory magic. She then analyses the mechanics and history of enchantment and points out that ‘to bewitch’ and ‘to enchant’ are very common metaphors for seduction and that the distinction between magic and sexual attraction is not always very clear (see 3.3 for a discussion of this insight in the context of a different novella). In Homer’s epic Ulysses is seduced and bewitched by Calypso and by Circe, with both episodes suggesting a subliminal male fear of woman’s power. In antiquity, heroes like Ulysses were expected to have love affairs, since these show the irresistible nature of the male hero. This changes in medieval legends and chivalresque romances, where knights errant are bewitched by lascivious sorceresses and lose their identity; they are blissfully unaware of the goings-on and therefore carry no blame for their infidelity. As an example, she cites Lancelot’s adventure with Elaine, the mother of Galahad, in which the Arthurian paladin is made to believe he is sleeping with Gwenevere.

In ‘La inocencia castigada’, the situation is reversed. A Moorish necromancer puts a spell on Inés at the behest of a lascivious man. While under the spell, Inés is entirely passive and in a trance; she is like a traditional enchanted knight, but unlike her chivalric counterparts, she remembers what happened to her. Unwilling to believe in their reality, however, she ascribes these memories to ‘descompuestos sueños’ [lewd dreams] (*Desengaños*, p. 278). Whitenack claims that Inés was married against her will, although in fact she married to get away from her sister-in-law, and that she suffers from neglect. At the start of the tale, Laura, who tells the story, explains that women can be led to ‘bajezas’ [vile acts] when they do not get ‘lo que ha menester’ [what is needed] (*Desengaños*, p. 266). Whitenack correctly adds, however, that the narrator continues as follows: ‘No le sucedió por esta parte a doña Inés la desdicha, porque su esposo hacía la estimación de ella que merecía su valor y hermosura’ [In this case, this misfortune did not befall Doña Inés, because her husband respected her, as her virtue and beauty deserved] (*Desengaños*, p. 266). Whitenack contends that this ‘strange shift of focus serves the purpose of separating Inés from these avenging women’.⁷⁰ Brownlee (*Cultural Labyrinth*) also addresses this apparent contradiction and interprets it as part of Zayas’s labyrinthine narrative structure and baroque polysemy. The audience is wrong-footed and confused, drawing conclusions that seem to go against the content of the tale (see also the discussion of Zayas’s ‘approval’ of homosexuality in 1.1). This narrative trap is

⁷⁰ Judith Whitenack, ““Lo que ha menester” Erotic Enchantment in “La inocencia castigada”, in *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), p. 180.

deployed even more successfully in ‘El jardín engañoso’ (see 4.5). Whitenack interprets Inés’s feelings of guilt for her salacious dreams as manifestations of repressed sexual longing of which she is ashamed. When it is discovered that she has been raped under a spell, she is uncharacteristically remorseful; she is not merely desperate or furious at having lost her honour, but pleads with her husband to kill her because she has been ‘bad’: ‘se arrojó a sus pies pidiéndole que la matase, pues había sido mala’ [she threw herself at his feet, asking him to kill her, since she had been bad] (*Desengaños*, p. 281).

Whitenack further discusses the fact that Catholic doctrine and popular belief held that men and women have free will, which cannot be overcome, not even by enchantment. The conclusion she draws is ‘that someone who is enchanted is in some way susceptible to it, consciously or not’ (Whitenack, ‘Lo que ha menester’, p. 184). Inés must have had deep-seated longings that made her a possible victim of the erotic enchantment. Whitenack further suggest that Zayas ‘may even be casting doubt on the whole notion of erotic enchantment while at the same time making use of the ancient motif’ (Whitenack, ‘Lo que ha menester’, p. 185). She disagrees with Stackhouse’s notion that Zayas attenuates enchantment in order to reconcile her feminist message with contemporary ideas of verisimilitude. Her conclusion is that the tale warns against the neglect of women by their husbands and serves as an admonition to keep them from dying from ‘puras necesidades’ [serious needs] (*Desengaños*, p. 265).

This is an interesting and intelligent reading of the novella, although it ignores the fact that according to Zayas free will is subjected to the stars (see 5.1). As for the suggestion that Zayas is casting doubt on the notion of erotic enchantment, I wonder how that works. If the enchantment was not efficacious – despite being proved to be so in the tale – then perhaps the evil sister-in-law was right after all, and the spell was a just a pretence to cover up the adulterous affair: ‘debía de fingir el embelesamiento’ [she must have been faking the enchantment] (*Desengaños*, pp. 281-82). This would undermine the moral of the story and, indeed, the *Desengaños amorosos*, whose women are invariably innocent victims of male brutality and uxoricide.

1.3.4 Yvette Cardaillac Hermosilla, *La magia en las novelas de María de Zayas* (1999)

Yvette Cardaillac Hermosilla begins her brief study of magic in Zayas’s novellas with the statement that in patriarchal societies woman’s knowledge was often confined to

magical rites.⁷¹ In relation to this, she makes the observation that the practice of magic was unrelated to diabolical witchcraft. What she probably refers to is the distinction between *hechicería* (sorcery) and *brujería* (witchcraft), something I shall discuss at some length in the next chapter (see 2.4). The rest of the article is dedicated to the following issues. First, the way in which Zayas creates a narrative atmosphere where the magical, the marvellous and the fantastic blend like in the epic genre. Second, the fact that Zayas rejects the deceit of magic. Third, the question of whether Zayas is implicitly undermining the dominant order.

Cardaillac Hermosilla discusses Zayas's use of magical terms to describe the affliction of love and seduction. As we have seen in Whitenack, this is not exclusive to Zayas, but in fact commonplace. She then states that the supernatural invades the natural order and that Zayas is interested in our relationship with the beyond (*el más allá*), which we cultivate in order to placate our fears of death; the elaborate description of the road side chapel (*humilladero*) in 'La fuerza del amor' (see 3.2) and other uncanny episodes, including disembodied voices, are given as examples (see 5.3). Zayas is furthermore influenced by the mix of magic and marvellous that occurs in hagiographies. After relating the episode of the revived hanged man in 'El verdugo de su esposa' (see 5.2.2), Cardaillac Hermosilla states that 'Zayas mantiene la ambigüedad en unos relatos en los que la diferenciación entre el bien y el mal suele ser muy clara' [Zayas maintains a certain ambiguity in some stories where the difference between good and evil is normally very clear] (Cardaillac Hermosilla, p. 357), and that the treatment varies greatly. In addition, she correctly points out that these episodes are often seen through 'una mirada irónica o burlesca' [an ironic or burlesque gaze] (Cardaillac Hermosilla, p. 358). She contends that magic is used as a meta-language which imbues the dominant order with ludic or ironic connotations. I would rather argue, however, that the ambivalence of magic is representative of the era's structural epistemological ambiguity, which is key to understanding Zayas's deployment of the supernatural, even if humour is clearly present in a few of her novellas.

Her next argument is that Zayas's attitude towards magic rejects deceit, since the narrator who tells the tale of the magic garden does not guarantee its veracity. After

⁷¹ Yvette Cardaillac Hermosilla, 'La magia en las novelas de María de Zayas', in *La creatividad femenina en el mundo barroco hispánico. María de Zayas - Isabel Rebeca Correa - Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*, 2 vols (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1999), 1, p. 354.

that, the critic discusses various kinds of sorcery involving images, including the accusation that the Jews of La Guardia used magic on a representation of Christ. She seems to assume that that event actually took place as described, even though it is far more likely that the accusations levelled against the Jews followed a predictable pattern and bore little relationship with actual activities in La Guardia.⁷² After referring to the episode of the blinkered cock, Cardaillac Hermosilla mentions the case of a witch from Madrid whose exploits are even more bizarre than those of the fictional Lucrecia in Zayas' novella, and who was sentenced to exile and a fine at an auto-da-fé in 1633. She furthermore observes that the Inquisition does not punish magic in any of the novellas. This is true for most tales involving magic, although the necromancer in 'La inocencia castigada' ends up in an inquisitorial prison (see 3.4). What is more important is that the Holy Office was generally very relaxed about magic-related crimes, so Zayas does not describe the Inquisition's attitude as anything other than it was (see 2.5).

The third and last point Cardaillac Hermosilla makes is that Zayas uses magic to construct a parallel world that questions the dominant order, although she does not really explain how Zayas does this. She adds that, like Lope de Vega, Zayas wishes to please her audience, and that magic provides a versatile tool to do just that. In spite of the occasional burlesque treatment, Zayas echoes the beliefs of her time.

The last section of the article is devoted to dreams and their confusion with reality, a baroque topos. After referring to modern psychological experiments, she goes on to say that dreams allow 'la imbricación de dos sistemas de valores' [the overlapping of two belief systems] (Cardaillac Hermosilla, p. 369), which appears to be related to the idea that Zayas proposes transgressions as a more authentic way of reflecting reality. 'La autora acepta el orden establecido, por lo que parece a primera lectura, pero el mundo mágico brota como una protesta implícita, es un germen de revolución social, el temor principal de las autoridades de la época' [The author accepts the established order, at least on a first reading; however, the world of magic sprouts up like an implicit form of protest, as a seed of a social revolution, which was the main fear of the period's authorities] (Cardaillac Hermosilla, p. 372). I agree that Zayas accepts the dominant order, but precisely *how* Cardaillac Hermosilla thinks the author of the *Sarao* uses magic to question the dominant order, much less sow the seeds of a social revolution, remains

⁷² For a discussion of the accusations levelled against internal enemies, see Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons. The Demonisation of Christians in Medieval Christendom* (London: Pimlico, 1975).

unclear, especially since she also argues that the belief in magic was widespread. As for social revolution, Zayas is notoriously classist (see 5.4), so unless the terms are redefined as a feminist revolution, it is hard to see how Zayas strove for anything of the sort.

1.3.5 Margaret Greer, *The Undead and the Supernatural* (2000)

Of the Zayan monographs that were published around the turn of the century, Greer's *María de Zayas Tells Baroque Tales of Love and the Cruelty of Men* is the most comprehensive and gives a broad overview of the scholarship up to that date. Her overall approach to Zayas is Lacanian, focusing on desiring subjects, the *objet petit a*, the (m)other, the phallic woman and so forth. One of her chapters is dedicated to the undead and the supernatural. Greer contends that Zayas reworks magic and death in the defence of women, although it never becomes entirely clear how this works.

Greer begins her analysis by stating that Zayas's conservatism 'facilitated rather than restricted her [literary] freedom in crossing other barriers – in violating the frontiers between life and death and between natural and supernatural causality' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 239). In general, Zayas's conservatism is socio-political, but how this would affect her views of boundaries is far from obvious, unless by conservatism Greer means an unsceptical attitude towards magic, which appears to be borne out by her statement that magic and the living dead are presented 'with a straightforward seriousness' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 240). This may hold true for many episodes, but equally there are instances of false magic imbued with doubt (see 3.6) or miraculous events infused with the uncanny (see 5.2.2). Greer also points out that Zayas uses magic more often than Cervantes and introduces supernatural elements in her rewrites of his stories, 'as if she were deliberately reinscribing the tales in the older, magical order' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 242). The critic furthermore refers to Adorno's analysis of the decline of social systems, which causes paranoia and the search for irrational causes such as astrology or the occult, explaining early modern witch-hunts as an attempt to 'artificially reconstruct a social order that by that time had become obsolete'.⁷³ As I shall discuss later, it is a gross oversimplification, not to say misrepresentation, to see witchcraft persecutions as an expression of a reactionary political ideology (see 2.4). Zayas does, however, express a fatalistic and controversial faith in astrology (see 5.1). I agree that the author lived in a

⁷³ Theodor Adorno, *The Stars Down To Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 165.

time of turmoil (social, political, and epistemological), but I disagree that this led to an increased belief in magic or that she reinscribes her tales in a past – magical – paradigm. If anything, she can be said to look ahead to a Gothic aesthetic (see 5.3).

In the remainder of her analysis, Greer stresses that supernatural and uncanny episodes are described in detail, setting them apart from the rest of the tales, which are written in an idealistic style. Greer analyses ‘El castigo de la miseria’ and discusses the various uses of ‘Devil’, ‘demonic’ and ‘diabolical’ throughout Zayas’s work, making the observation that her deployment ranges from metaphorical to literal, even though behind the former there is always an implicit belief in the latter as inspiration of evil acts (see 4.2). Nevertheless, says Greer, the operation of free will is never cancelled out. This overlooks some fatalistic comments in the novellas that seems to suggest that being born under a malign star has more influence over the course of your life than the use of your free will (see 5.1). Greer states that magic occurs more in the *Novelas* than in the *Desengaños*. Furthermore, she says it is predominantly perpetrated by foreigners and unusually male, claiming that Zayas ‘cross-dresses’ magic (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 250) and projects its negative power onto the demonized ‘other’. Whereas it is true that there are more men than women practising sorcery – there are sorceresses in ‘La fuerza del amor’ and ‘El desengaño amando’, and male magicians of some description in ‘El castigo de la miseria’, ‘La inocencia castigada’, ‘La perseguida triunfante’, ‘El jardín engañoso’ and also in ‘El desengaño amando’ – to say that Zayas *cross-dresses* magic would need more elucidation. Greer herself goes on to explain that there were two classes of magic, each associated with one gender. There was magic in pursuit of wealth, which was a mixture of astrology, alchemy and other Neoplatonic occult practices; this was the domain of men. Then there was amatory magic, commonly associated with women (see 2.2). In Zayas men practise ‘male’ and women ‘female’ magic (with the notable exception of the Moorish necromancer). This is all relatively well established and explains the distribution of gender better than the notion that feminine magic is somehow parading in masculine attire. In general, magic in Zayas is given a Lacanian explanation by Greer, who calls it ‘a formalization of the anxiety caused by the formulation of the subject in alienation, in which our sense of “self” is dependent on the message received from the Other’ (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 256).

The rest of the chapter deals primarily with death and the undead, and women who speak through their martyred bodies: ‘Symbolic Order language afford virtuous women

no medium for survival. Women, her tales of disillusionment imply, can only speak their innocence through their bodies, in death' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 264). The macabre attention to gory detail and the description of incorruptible, beautiful female cadavers in Zayas is described as 'a fundamentally masochistic fantasy' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 281). She further interprets 'El imposible vencido' in true Lacanian fashion by calling the heroine's resurrection from the dead as 'akin to the maternal rewriting of the fall of humankind' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 267), while the decapitation in 'El traidor contra su sangre' is interpreted, following Cixous, as a symbolic action that eliminates the feminine chatter and laughter.

In summary, Greer offers an elaborate and intelligent analysis of Zayas's work with an important section devoted to the supernatural, although much of it relies on Lacanian interpretative schemata. However, she bypasses the shift in epistemology and concomitant indeterminacy of magic, and she does not offer an analysis of the uncanny miracles that occur in the novellas (see 5.2).

1.3.6 Marina Brownlee, 'Reading Magic: Mass Printing, Mass Audience' (2000)

Brownlee published *The Cultural Labyrinth of María de Zayas* the same year Greer published her monograph. Brownlee addresses the wider cultural context of Zayas, and in particular her baroque polysemy. She dedicates a chapter to magic, mass printing and mass audience; her starting point is the emerging reading market in seventeenth-century Spain. In addition, she stresses the shift from the collective and universal to the private. What happens in Zayas is that the private is made public, making the reader a kind of voyeur. Zayas is 'committed to exploring the new mass market of private readers with a taste for the sensational, the erotic, and the forbidden' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 77). At various points in the chapter, Zayas is praised for her knack for reading the market and exploiting its potential. Brownlee links this to the popular press, which, in her words, 'was, in fact, read more widely in her day than any other kind of reading material' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 79). Both these precursors of our tabloids and Zayas's novellas play on fear caused by societal chaos and the struggle of the modern subject 'to define itself in relation to the official, totalizing discourse of the state' (ibid.). Another key element in Zayas's work is her polysemy, which Brownlee links to the 'emerging appreciation of human subjectivity and its manifold complexities' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 82).

Brownlee discusses what she calls the Renaissance ‘obsession’ with magic and the determination to understand science as a rational discipline: ‘magic is endowed with a serious epistemological valence’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 85). This may be true for the High Renaissance, but what Brownlee glosses over is that in the seventeenth century an epistemological shift took place, which problematized the belief in magic. Nevertheless, she correctly underlines the fact that magic is anything but monolithic, but instead marked by ‘baroque tension and unresolved polysemy’ (ibid.). She proceeds to discuss ‘the seventeenth century’s relentless fascination with the epistemology of the supernatural, ranging all the way from apparitions of the Virgin and her miraculous powers, to false ghosts’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 94). Brownlee relates this fascination to the topos of appearance versus reality. Furthermore, she mentions the distinction between elite (*culto*) and popular (*vulgo*) readers. She disagrees with Maravall, who sees all baroque literature as kitsch; instead, she views Zayas’s novellas as appealing to various audiences by attracting one kind with her melodramatic tales and another by the *admiratio* caused by the aesthetically pleasing way in which she recounts her complex stories. ‘The *Novelas* were clearly designed to have this type of mass appeal, but that is only one aspect of Zayas’s literary project. To reduce her twenty tales to “pretentious and shallow” writing bereft of artistic quality is to distort the polysemy they project’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 89). This is a key point to which I shall return (see 3.6). Brownlee subsequently discusses Lugo y Dávila’s encouragement to adhere to verisimilitude, but adds that Zayas instead insists on veracity, indicating that her stories are based on gossip, which was one of her ‘clever marketing strategies’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 94).

In the rest of the chapter, Brownlee analyses a number of novellas. According to her, in ‘El jardín engañoso’ magic is deployed ‘for the purpose of generating further indeterminacy’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 95). The story about the magic garden is also a play on the labyrinthine possibilities of language, an opposition between prelapsarian and postlapsarian language, the latter being the ‘potentially mendacious power of words to deceive’ (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 98). At the end of the tale, a fraud and a fratricide are both hailed as exemplary characters of magnanimity. In ‘El desengaño amando’ magic is treated in a very casual way. The demons in the ring that Juana is given by the student from Alcalá are ambiguous. On the one hand, they seem to pertain to a pagan world; on the other, they know of God (see 3.3). Brownlee also points out that in the same story Lucrecia’s magic goes on after her death, thus

contravening one of Stackhouse's rules (see 1.3.1). Magic here is treated as 'a titillating world to be savoured by the individual reader' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 111).

Brownlee also discusses 'La inocencia castigada', the novella in which we are told about the risks run by men who neglect their wives, only to have the rug pulled out from under us when we read that this does not apply to the heroine Inés. She disagrees with Whitenack's analysis that Inés is not loved by her husband. More important, she underlines the fact that Inés is avenged and punished at the suggestion of her treacherous sister-in-law, thus obstructing a straightforward misandrist interpretation of the tale. Another disparity that is pointed out is the gap between divine and civil justice: evil men do not always get their just reward. She then analyses the episode of the resurrected hanged man in 'El verdugo de su esposa' (see 5.2.2) and 'La perseguida triunfante' (see 4.4), at the end of which there is virtually no discussion of the tale, as happens with other stories. Brownlee rightly disagrees with an earlier view uttered by Grieve that 'Zayas invests her novellas with the formal properties of hagiography while subverting the ideology of that Church-sanctioned genre'.⁷⁴ Instead, according to Brownlee, Zayas offers a saint's life to devotional readers, and an additional tale of gore and blood and violence to her *vulgo* audience, but this time with a miraculous restoration of the maimed or missing body parts. Referring to work by Marina Warner, she adds that the hagiographic genre is characterized by pornographic and sadomasochistic sensationalism. In other words, the appeal of this tale, as of the others, is its polyfaceted construction. That, says Brownlee, is 'the true magic of the book' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 128).

In sum, Brownlee argues that Zayas uses the supernatural – magic, necromancy, and hagiography – to catch a glimpse of the forbidden, the sensational, and the pornographic. The martyred female bodies, whatever else they may represent, attract a popular readership and the exploitation of boundary issues aligns her with the emerging tabloid press.

⁷⁴ Patricia Grieve, 'Embroidering with Saintly Threads: María de Zayas Challenges Cervantes and the Church', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 44.1 (1991), p. 86.

1.3.7 Ingrid Matos-Nin, *Las novelas de María de Zayas (1590-1650): lo sobrenatural y lo oculto en la literatura femenina española del siglo XVII (2010) and various articles*

In 2010 Matos-Nin published her thesis on the supernatural and in the years leading up to this she published a number of articles on the same topic. In her view, Zayas uses the supernatural to capture the attention of her readers in order to warn them about the dangers of love. ‘La función que tiene el tema sobrenatural en las novelas de esta escritora es esencialmente la de capturar la atención del lector y prevenirlos contra los peligros que puede acarrear el amor en la vida del ser humano’ [The function the supernatural theme has in the novellas of this writer is essentially to capture the attention of the reader and warn them against the dangers that love can cause in the lives of human beings].⁷⁵ In a metaphor that crops up various times in her work, Zayas has found a window in the edifice of social customs from which she can escape without being accused of heresy. On the whole, Matos-Nin’s work is marred by sweeping generalisations and a lack of detailed analysis. For example, to claim that ‘la mujer es el chivo expiatorio con el que se explican los males en esta sociedad’ [woman is the scapegoat with which the evils of that society are explained] (Matos-Nin, *Lo sobrenatural*, p. 27) is not saying very much. She makes other stark claims with which I cannot agree, such as the notion that the Devil in ‘El jardín engañoso’ returns the contract because being a fallen angel he has a sense of honour (for a very different view, see 4.5). In addition, she sees *La vida es sueño* as an intertext for the hagiographic novella ‘La perseguida triunfante’, which is far-fetched and unconvincing to say the least.

Her articles repeat the same, rather hazy, arguments she offers in her thesis. In one article she discusses the role of the main narrator Lisis, whose name she analyses as ‘resolve’, ‘relax’, but she fails to make any reference to earlier discussions by Boyer and Brownlee to this effect.⁷⁶ She goes on to state that Zayas ‘had to shield herself behind Lisis, just as Cervantes did with his crazy caballero’ (Matos-Nin, ‘La importancia de la verosimilitud’, p. 175).

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⁷⁵ Ingrid Matos-Nin, *Las novelas de María de Zayas (1590-1650): lo sobrenatural y lo oculto en la literatura femenina española del siglo XVII* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), p. 21.

⁷⁶ See Ingrid Matos-Nin, ‘La importancia de la verosimilitud en *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud* de María de Zayas y Sotomayor’, *Confluencia*, 22.1 (Fall 2006), 58-66.

Since the gradual rediscovery and reappraisal of Zayas's oeuvre much has been written about her pro-woman argument, but there is also an increasing body of scholarly work devoted to the baroque aspects of her novellas. However, one of the more salient features of her tales – her deployment of the supernatural – remains relatively under-studied. As we have seen, a number of intelligent and pertinent analyses exist, but none analyse the epistemology of the supernatural and link it to the increased indeterminacy surrounding magic. Nor are there any studies that explore the uncanny aspect of Zayas's work. A few scholars, Brownlee in particular, have hinted at a connection with the popular press, but without adducing concrete examples. These questions will be addressed in the remainder of this thesis. But before turning to magic, the Devil, miracles and the uncanny in Zayas's novellas, it is crucial to have an understanding of how the supernatural was conceived in seventeenth-century Spain, how it was experienced and dealt with by the authorities, and which role it played in the literature of the period.

Chapter 2

Witches and Watermelons: the Supernatural in Early Modern Spain

We do therefore hereby signify to all in general (and to the surviving sufferers in special) our deep sense of, and sorrow for, our errors, in acting on such evidence to the condemning of any person; and do hereby declare, that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken; for which we are much disquieted and distressed in our minds; and do therefore humbly beg forgiveness. (From the recantation of the Salem village jurors, 1693)¹

IN ONE OF ZAYAS'S NOVELLAS A WITCH CALLED LUCRECIA HEXES HER LOVER BY putting blinkers on a cock and chaining it up in the attic. In another, a Muslim necromancer fashions an effigy of a married woman so that the man besotted with her can lure her to his bed and have his wicked way with her. In yet another tale, an unhappily married woman and the victim of domestic abuse seeks out a sorceress and is told to collect the hair and teeth from a corpse for a spell. When she is at a roadside chapel to do this, her brother receives a telepathic warning and comes to her rescue. There is also the story of a would-be adulterer on his way to a rendezvous who is addressed by a man swinging on a gallows who offers to go in his stead. The hanged man is murdered by the jealous husband and returns from the dead to explain what happened. Elsewhere a lover sees the corpse of his beloved, who has been killed by her brother, bathed in an unnatural light, the blood still flowing from her wounds even though she has been dead for nine hours, and the blood is still said to flow a year later when she is relocated to a new tomb.

When Zayas describes supernatural events in her novellas, she does so in an age where the thaumaturgical order was being reassessed. This process was part of a larger epistemological shift that took place in the seventeenth century, a period that is sometimes hailed as the birth of the clockwork universe. This change did not take place overnight nor did it affect all parts of society in equal measure. Nevertheless, it is clear that claims and explanations regarding supernatural events that were commonly

¹ Quoted in Alan Kors and Edward Peters (eds), *Witchcraft in Europe 400-1700. A Documentary History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 429.

accepted in the sixteenth century were no longer taken seriously one hundred or so years later, at least not by the cultured elite.

The change may be best expressed by saying that in the sixteenth century the claims of a would-be prophet would always be seriously investigated, even if ultimately exposed as groundless, but by the eighteenth century the majority of educated men concurred in dismissing them *a priori* as inherently ridiculous.²

The seventeenth century also saw large-scale witch-hunts in many parts of Europe in which tens of thousands of women were burnt at the stake. Spain was spared the worst of the excesses, in large part due to the sceptical attitude of the Inquisition; witchcraft was believed to be possible in theory, but the Holy Office was reluctant to accept the evidence with which it was presented in individual cases. With regards to sorcery, which is not quite the same as witchcraft as we shall see below, inquisitors often accused the practitioners of fraud, but showed themselves lenient in their sentences.

Studying the supernatural episodes in *Zayas* requires understanding what the supernatural meant for the author and her readers, and adopting what anthropologists call an emic – as opposed to an etic – perspective.³ Sorcery, deals with the Devil, miracles, disembodied voices and incorrupt cadavers play an important part in *Zayas*'s oeuvre, but such events are far from absent in the works of her contemporaries, which is why it pays to have a brief glance at how magic and witchcraft are dealt with in Golden Age literature before analysing her novellas. But let us start by asking ourselves what we talk about when we talk about the supernatural.

2.1 The natural, preternatural and supernatural orders

So far, I have used the word 'supernatural' as if its definition were self-evident and unproblematic. Supernatural episodes in *Zayas* are stories involving sorcery, diabolical pacts, miracles, discarnate voices, and so forth. These are all events or manifestations that, in the words of the Oxford English Dictionary, are 'attributed to some force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature'. Merriam Webster's definition equally stresses the transcendental origin of supernatural events, but fails to distinguish between God and the Devil as their ultimate source, defining them as 'being, having reference to, or proceeding from God or a god, demigod, spirit, or infernal being'. This

² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin), p. 173.

³ See Malcom Gaskill, *Witchcraft. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

is what we might call the supernatural *sensu lato*. To the educated early modern mind, however, there was a crucial difference between the supernatural *sensu lato* and the supernatural *sensu stricto*, the latter being the exclusive domain of God, who alone can contravene the laws of Creation. Wedged in between the supernatural and the natural order, we find the preternatural order. This is strictly speaking an extension of the natural order and subject to the same laws, except that it contains the *extra*-ordinary – in the etymological sense of the word – and everything that causes wonder and amazement. Amongst other things, the preternatural comprises monsters, freaks and other outlandish creatures and phenomena, and as such it corresponds to the period's vivid interest in teratology. The preternatural order is also called the marvellous, the amazing or the prodigious order, and preternatural operations are known as marvels or wonders (*mira*). It is the theatre of operations par excellence of the Devil, who can perform prodigious feats that may appear to exceed the bounds set by nature, but in fact never do. As the theologian Wolleb put it: 'Mali Angeli mira faciunt, sed miracula facere nequeunt. Miracula enim sunt opera, omnem creaturarum potentiam superantia' [Evil Angels can do wonders, but not work miracles, for miracles are works exceeding all powers of creatures].⁴ Being a fallen angel, who has been around since before the Creation, the Devil has awesome powers and a vast knowledge of the workings of the universe. By moving objects at astonishing speeds, for example, he can trick us into believing something has vanished altogether, even though this is strictly speaking impossible; and by stirring a corpse, he can make us believe it has been brought back to life. But that would require breaking the rules of nature, and this can only happen in the miraculous order, also called the order of grace, whose operations are known as miracles (*miracula*), which can only be performed by or through God; this is the supernatural *sensu stricto*.⁵ The Spanish friar Castañega, who wrote a treatise on superstition and witchcraft, warns his readers that: 'nunca jamás hemos de decir que sea milagro cosa que naturalmente, aunque por virtudes a nosotros ocultas, se pueda producir, porque el milagro es obra que la virtud natural no tiene fuerzas para obrarla' [we should never call something a miracle that can occur naturally, albeit through

⁴ Quoted in John Steadman, 'Milton and Wolleb Again (Paradise Lost, I, 54-56, 777)', *The Harvard Theological Review*, 53.2 (April 1960), 155-56.

⁵ For more on *mira* and *miracula*, see Gaskill; Geoffrey Scarre and John Callow, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1987); Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons. The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); and above all Martín del Río, *Investigations into magic*, transl. and ed. by P. G. Maxwell-Stuart (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

powers hidden from us, because a miracle is something that natural powers lack the virtue to accomplish].⁶ As a truly baroque agent of deception and illusion, the Devil makes us believe he can carry out miraculous deeds, when all he can do is create marvels. Moreover, he makes people believe that he can be summoned to do their will, with the result that the deluded victim is twice deceived. First by thinking that he or she can summon and command the Devil, and second by taking his preternatural legerdemain to be miracles.

This division into a natural, preternatural and supernatural order goes back to St Thomas Aquinas.⁷ Amongst others it is referred to by Pedro Ciruelo, who, like Castañega, wrote a treatise on superstition:

Cualquier cosa que nuevo se hace en el mundo, tiene causa o causas de donde procede. Estas son en tres maneras, y no puede haber otras fuera de ellas: porque procede de causas naturales que tienen virtud para hacerla, o procede de Dios que milagrosamente obra sobre curso natural, o procede de los ángeles, buenos o malos, que se juntan con las causas naturales.⁸

[*Anything new that is done in the world has a cause, or causes, from which it stems.* There are three ways something can happen, and there cannot be any other: because it either stems from natural causes that have the virtue to do so, or it comes from God, who miraculously operates above the natural course of things, or it stems from good or bad angels who ally themselves with natural causes.]

In his *relectio* on magic pronounced in Salamanca in 1540, the friar Francisco de Vitoria says that most marvels achieved by magi are ‘falsas, fingidas y creídas sólo por la frivolidad de la gente’ [false, feigned and believed only by frivolous people].⁹ But, citing Biblical evidence, he acknowledges that magic worked by immaterial forces is not beyond the realm of possibility. He distinguishes between evil angels, good angels and God as the source of these operations, although he adds that humans (Christians) too may work miracles by virtue of *gratiae gratis data*.¹⁰

⁶ Martín de Castañega, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (Madrid: De la luna, 2001), p. 53.

⁷ See Fabián Alejandro Campagne, ‘Witchcraft and the Sense-of-the-Impossible in Early Modern Spain: Some Reflections Based on the Literature of Superstition (ca. 1500-1800)’, *Harvard Theological Review*, 96.1 (2003), 25-62.

⁸ Pedro Ciruelo, ‘Tratado por el cual se reprueban las supersticiones y supercherías’, in *Brujería y exorcismos en España. Textos fundamentales*, ed. by Servando Gotor (Zaragoza: Lecturas Hispánicas, 2014), p. 111

⁹ Francisco de Vitoria, *Sobre la magia*, ed. by Luis Frayle Delgado (Salamanca: San Esteban, 2006), p. 57.

¹⁰ For more on *gratiae gratis data* versus *gratiae gratum facientes*, see <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10350a.htm>> [Accessed 12 February 2017].

The details of the three orders, however, were not worked out until Martín del Río's influential *Investigations into Magic*, published in 1595. Interestingly, the Spanish Jesuit acknowledges that for many people – then as now – there is no distinction between the supernatural and the preternatural:

This order does not go beyond the boundaries of the natural order, but is said simply to go beyond reasonable explanation. People (most people, at any rate) are not aware of this and so they usually call it 'supernatural' too, in the widely accepted meaning of the term. But the more accurate and more meaningful term is *preternatural*. (Del Río, p. 57)

The lexicographer Covarrubias hints at a similarly broad use of the Spanish term 'milagro' (miracle) in his dictionary from 1611:

Latine miraculum, quidquid admirationem affere potest, quasi sit contra naturam, portentum, prodigium, monstrum, hoc grammatici. Pero en rigor milagros se dicen aquellos que tan solamente se pueden hacer por virtud divina. Largo modo, decimos acá milagros, cualquiera cosa extraordinaria y admirable, como decir 'Fulano ha hecho milagros', id est ha hecho cosas tan grandes que no se esperaban dél.

[In Latin 'miraculum', to wit, all that can cause wonder, as if it were something unnatural or prodigious, a portent, an omen, thus say the grammarians. But strictly speaking miracles are only those events that can come about by divine power. Broadly speaking, we call miracles anything that is extraordinary and wondrous, like when we say 'so-and-so has done miracles', meaning that he has done great things that were not expected of him.]

This echoes what Vitoria says: 'Y aunque los latinos empleen el nombre de milagro para significar cualquier hecho sorprendente y admirable, los teólogos sólo lo usan en ese sentido dicho y con razón' [And although the Latins use the term 'miracle' to refer to anything that is surprising and causes wonder, theologians only use it with the aforesaid meaning and with good reason] (Vitoria, p. 97).

Although the preternatural is actually a sub-order of the natural, many people treat it as identical to the supernatural and fail to see the crucial difference between *mira* and *miracula*. They are therefore deceived (*engañado*) and only a correct understanding of the difference between the two will lead to the scales falling from their eyes so that they realize what is real and what is not and thus become un-deceived (*desengañado*). What is more, the baroque opposition between being (*ser*) and appearance (*parecer*) is not restricted to the natural order, but lies, in effect, at the heart of the opposition between the preternatural and the supernatural. Only a full cognizance of the thaumaturgical order will make us appreciate the true power of God and see through the Devil's deception.

The following anecdote could serve as an example of Del Río's reasoning. When the author was living in Belgium, he heard the story of a man who was said to have had sex with a cow. The animal subsequently gave birth to a human boy with bovine leanings, such as grazing and chewing the cud. Del Río concludes that this must have been the Devil's handiwork: the Evil One made the cow look pregnant, snatched a boy from somewhere and dropped him near the cow. The boy, believing he was born from a cow, developed the aforementioned traits in his imagination. Del Río does not accept that the boy was *actually* cow-born, which would contravene the laws of Creation (and, indeed, procreation), nor does he dismiss the story as an old wives' tale, but instead he reinterprets the facts of the story so they fall within the remit of the preternatural. The belief in the Devil's existence is never in doubt and the arch-deceiver is assumed to have used his prodigious powers to create the impression that a cow had given birth to a boy, although it never becomes clear what the purpose of this deceit might have been. Apart from his preternatural speculations, Del Río's story also shows some insight into the psychology behind autosuggestion. The medieval philosopher Nicholas Oresme formulated a similar belief when he proposed that the hearer of a curse is affected by the physical properties of the word, not their significance, and that the resulting disturbance in the imagination is what affects the body.¹¹

In the example above, it appears that the Devil took the initiative to fool the people. More often, however, people claimed to arrogate preternatural powers on their own initiative, appealing directly or indirectly to God's sempiternal adversary. The action of influencing the world around us by bringing about something that exceeds (appears to exceed) the bounds of nature through conjurations, spells, potions, hexes, curses, charms, philtres, effigies, and so forth is known as magic.

2.2 Magic: a bird's-eye view

The history of magic is diffuse and complex; indeed, one could argue that there is no history of magic at all, only a history of magical practices or attitudes to magic.¹² Magic has been described as 'the bastard sister of science', since it is based on the same principles of cause and effect, albeit misguided; as filling a gap in human knowledge, especially in situations we cannot fully control; as springing from the same fountain as

¹¹ See Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹² This point was made by Ronald Hutton in a paper he presented at a conference on Magic and the Supernatural in the Medieval and Early Modern Period held at Cardiff University (21 July 2015).

religion, namely *mana*, the Melanesian name for the spiritual force inherent in all things, and much more besides.¹³ According to James George Frazer's monumental study on religion and fertility rites, magic thinking preceded religion and is rooted in the belief that we humans can impose our will on the world, provided we perform the right acts. He distinguished between two kinds of magic: sympathetic (which functions like a simile) and contagious (which is based on the notion of prior contact). Among the myriad examples offered by Frazer, let the following suffice:

In the island of Saghalien, when a woman is in labour, her husband undoes everything that can be undone. He loosens the plaits of his hair and the laces of his shoes. Then he unties whatever is tied in the house or its vicinity. In the courtyard he takes the axe out of the log in which it is stuck; he unfastens the boat, if it is moored to a tree, he withdraws the cartridges from his gun, and the arrows from his crossbow. (Frazer, p. 193)

The idea behind the husband's actions is obvious enough: everything is done to ensure the baby's unobstructed passage through the birth canal. If a cartridge is stuck in the barrel of a gun, this may hinder the baby's birth, because there is a magical link between the birth canal and the barrel; they influence each other at a distance through analogous operations. A similar principle underlies the common superstition of placing an open pair of scissors under the bed of a woman in labour. The usual explanation is that it 'cuts the pain in half', although it is at least as likely that the scissors were originally thought to assist the passage of the infant by 'cutting through' any impediments. The survival of such beliefs – if they can be called that – shows that one system of thought is never fully superseded by the next; vestiges and practices often remain as a kind of substratum.

María Helena Sánchez Ortega, who studied love magic in early modern Spain by looking at inquisitorial *relaciones de causas*, found a wealth of amorous spells that follow the pattern of analogous thinking and sympathetic magic. In one type of conjuration, salt or alum was thrown into the fire with the words: 'Que así te has de quemar, se queme el corazón de Fulano porque me venga a ver' [Just like you must burn, may the

¹³ The 'bastard sister of science' quote comes from James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A new abridgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 46. On the 'gap in human knowledge' hypothesis, see Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (London: Souvenir Press, 1948). On *mana*, see Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, transl. by Robert Brain (London: Routledge, 1950).

heart of so-and-so burn, so that he will come and see me].¹⁴ In another spell, a woman would twist the cotton or linen she had used to clean herself after intercourse into a wick and then light it in an oil lamp, uttering the words: ‘Como arde esta torcida, arda el corazón de Fulano’ [Just as this twisted cloth burns, may the heart of so-and-so burn] (Sánchez Ortega, p. 81). Others used even cruder spells: ‘Furioso vienes a mí, furioso vienes a mí, tan fuerte como un toro, tan fuerte como un horno, tan sujeto estés a mí como los pelos de mi coño están a mí’ [Furious you come to me, furious you come to me, as strong as a bull, as hot as an oven, may you be as attached to me as the hairs of my cunt are to me] (Sánchez Ortega, p. 67). Sometimes such incantations involved sacred imagery: ‘Tan humilde, tan sujeto, vengas a mí, como mi señor Jesucristo subió al santo árbol de la cruz, a morir por ti y por mí. Amén’ [May you come to me as humble, as subjected, as my Lord Jesus Christ when he climbed the Holy Tree of the Cross to die for you and me. Amen] (Sánchez Ortega, pp. 69-70). Santa Elena was invoked with regularity because of her association with the nails of the True Cross – thus having the power to ‘pin a man down’. A certain witch-like Marta was also often called upon: ‘Marta, Marta, a la mala digo, que no a la santa, a la que por los aires anda, a la que se encadenó. [...] Otra Marta, no la buena ni la santa, sino la mala y la endemoniada, la que los infiernos manda’ [Marta, Marta, the evil one I mean, not the saintly one, the one who flies through the air, the one who was chained up... The other Marta, not the good or saintly one, but the evil one, the wicked one, the one sent by hell] (Martín Soto, p. 112). Although less explicitly formulated, this magic thinking is evident in the spells alluded to in *Zayas*. The blinkered and chained cock analogizes Lucrecia’s lover, who only has eyes for her and is bound to her. And when Diego lights a candle on top of an effigy of his beloved Inés, we can imagine this act being accompanied by the incantation ‘just like this statue burns...’.

St Augustine held that all pagan gods are demons and that magic is perforce a diabolical activity. In spite of this, the idea developed or persisted that not all magic was diabolical, but that there was also such a thing as *natural* magic. The Renaissance magician was convinced that it was possible to harness the hidden or occult forces of the universe to a good end. This version of magic was called theurgy and was tied up with the Neoplatonic worldview, first formulated by Plotinus (205-270 CE) and revived in the

¹⁴ María Helena Sánchez Ortega, ‘Sorcery and Eroticism in Love Magic’, in *Cultural Encounters. The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, ed. by Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne Cruz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 66.

Renaissance by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who traced the occult teachings back to the legendary Hermes Trismegistus – a supposed Egyptian sage thought to be a contemporary of Moses. According to this theory, the universe is imbued by a *spiritus mundi*, connecting everything to everything else. The magus Cornelius Agrippa, for instance, taught that there were three kinds of magic: natural magic, concerned with occult sympathies between substances; celestial or mathematical magic, which dealt with astral influences; and ceremonial magic, which directed itself to the supercelestial world of angelic spirits.¹⁵ Del Río calls Agrippa ‘the Arch-magician’ (Del Río, p. 72) and firmly rejects his kind of magic: ‘Since there is no such thing as theurgy or “white” magic, it follows that all this magic of wonders is nothing other than *goetia* and “black” magic’ (ibid.). He explains that Agrippa believed that it was possible to compel demons to obey us, and it is easy to see why he was scornful about such a suggestion. In one of Zayas’s stories, ‘El castigo de la miseria’, we are introduced to a bogus version of the Renaissance magus who conjures up the demon Calquimorro, in reality a cat with its tail set on fire (see 3.1). Like the Neoplatonic astrologers, Zayas was convinced of the influence of the stars on our lives. The difference is that in her case she is not attempting to harness the forces of natural magic for good ends, but uses it to convey her profound fatalistic pessimism. In fact, she even goes so far as to claim that the stars are more powerful than our free will (see 5.1).

Some have seen theurgy and *goetia* as corresponding to ‘high magic’ and ‘low magic’ (see Kieckhefer), but it simply will not do to equate ‘high magic’ with white magic and ‘low magic’ with black magic. After all, the key difference is intention, which is hardly dictated by social status or learning. That is not to say that philosophically grounded magic and folk magic are identical. There are scholars who maintain that the latter is a mere corruption – even perversion – of the former.¹⁶ But this is based on the false assumption that popular culture must needs be derivative. Black magic is often rooted in folk tradition and orally transmitted, going back to half-remembered pseudo-science (see Scarre and Callow). Keith Thomas observed that some wise men or wise women may have had books on magic, but that they learnt their techniques from a relative or a neighbour. Their knowledge had come down to them from the Middle Ages and had links with both Anglo-Saxon and classical practice. ‘Even when the cunning man’s

¹⁵ See Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge, 1979).

¹⁶ See Rafael Martín Soto, *Magia e Inquisición en el antiguo reino de Granada* (Málaga: Arguval, 2000).

procedures are recognizable as debased reflections of Neoplatonic or hermetic theories there is usually little to suggest that he was aware of this descent. His was a stereotyped ritual, not an application of previously worked-out theory' (Thomas, p. 272). In addition, folk magic had no lofty pretensions; it was a means to an end. The knowledge upon which it relied was held in the collective memory of each community, forming 'a rich medley of indigenous beliefs, practices and rituals'.¹⁷ The omnipresent folk healers were 'multi-faceted practitioners of magic who healed the sick and the bewitched, who told fortunes, identified thieves, induced love, and much else besides' (Davies, *Cunning-Folk*, p. vii). They were often consulted when one suspected witchcraft, even though they themselves were at risk of being persecuted as witches.¹⁸ Cunning-folk were also known as wise men or wise women, charmers, blessers and conjurers in Britain, and as *sabias*, *santiguadores*, *curanderos*, *saludaderos*, and *ensalmadores* in Spain. After a visitation of the Basque valleys the inquisitor Salazar refers to a 'copia de santiguadores y ensalmadores de todos géneros de estados' [abundance of blessers and conjurers of all kinds and backgrounds] in those lands.¹⁹ This is echoed in one of Zayas's tales where it is said that in Naples it is easy to contract the services of sorceresses because there are so many of them. They are portrayed as duplicitous schemers who are only out to line their pockets with their credulous victims' money (see 3.2).

The ubiquity of folk-healers and superstitious practices led to a number of Spanish treatises on superstition. After a few cases of suspected witchcraft, the bishop of Calahorra charged Fray Martín de Castañega with the task of writing the *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías*, which was published in Logroño in 1529. Apart from denouncing some rather innocuous forms of superstition, like the excommunication of locusts, he also writes a great deal about witches, describing them as members of a diabolical anti-church. Better known than Castañega's work is the treatise on superstition and fraudulence by Pedro Ciruelo, published in 1538. He deals with pretty much the same material, writing about witches (*brujas* and *jorguiñas*) who travel through the air to meet the Devil, true and false astrology, the evil eye – which he says is either natural or caused by witchcraft – and people who conjure clouds and excommunicate

¹⁷ Owen Davies, *Cunning-Folk. Popular Magic in English History* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), p. x.

¹⁸ See Keith Thomas. See also Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1970).

¹⁹ Quoted in Gustav Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents. Inquisitor Alonso de Salazar Frías and Others on the Basque Witch Persecution* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 263.

vermin. Francisco de Vitoria equally mentions *saludadores*, but indicates he has not made up his mind about them: ‘no veo claro qué pensar y decir de ellos’ [I do not really know what to think or say of them] (Vitoria, p. 89). They lead disreputable lives and although their proceedings are not superstitious per se, they are not sufficiently religious to be saintly or credible. On the whole, therefore, he says:

mucho me temo que sean impostores que no tengan eficacia alguna; y si alguna tuvieren me temo que sea más del demonio que de Dios. Pero digo esto no de modo definitivo, puesto que las gracias se dan para el bien común. Bien puede suceder que el Señor quiera impartir su misericordia a los hombres por medio de esas personas, sean como sean. (Vitoria, p. 89)

[I rather fear that they are imposters who have no efficacy at all; and if they ever did, I am afraid it is the Devil’s work and not God’s. But I do not say this in a definitive way, since grace is given for the benefit of all. It may well happen that the Lord wants to bestow his mercy on mankind by means these people, no matter what they are like.]

This attitude is typical of the doubt that surrounded much of magic and witchcraft (see 2.7).

The most important group of practitioners of magic for this research are those involved in amatory magic, which was more or less the exclusive domain of women, although renegade priests have sometimes have been linked to the practice too.²⁰ Their main objective was to make people fall in love through love philtres, spells or incantations, or to retain a lover’s or husband’s affections. Rather than being love-struck fools, these women were being pragmatic since they relied on male support (see Sánchez-Ortega). Ruggiero, who studied amatory magic in early modern Venice, explains why many women turned to black magic to get what they wanted. The body, and therefore sexuality, was dominated by the Devil, whereas the soul was God’s province. So if you wanted to have any control or power over the body, it was only logical you should turn to the Devil, even if you remained bound to God for spiritual matters. This is part of what he calls the ‘rich and eclectic creativity of popular cultures that must explain the complex, apparent illogic of everyday life’ (Ruggiero, p. 98). The use of black magic and diabolical incantations is further complicated by the fact that spells did not merely involve demons, but often also appealed to Christian imagery or saints, as we saw in the example quoted above (see 2.2).

²⁰ See María Tausiet, *Urban Magic in Early Modern Spain. Abracadabra Omnipotens* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014); and Guido Ruggiero, *Binding Passions. Tales of Magic, Marriage, and Power at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Naturally enough, the pervading presence of magic and its practitioners in early modern Spain are far from absent from the literature of the period. To get an idea of the literary landscape in which Zayas was operating, let us cast a brief glance at how magic and sorcery are portrayed in some of the works of her contemporaries.

2.3 Magic and sorcery in Golden Age literature

In Golden Age plays there are occasional appearances of magicians, astrologers or characters who strike deals with the devil. Some of these *comedias* are run-of-the-mill and unremarkable – Ana Caro’s *El conde Partinuplés*, Lope de Rueda’s *Armelina*, Calderón’s *El jardín de Falerina* and his *El astrólogo fingido*, Alarcón’s *La prueba de las promesas*, *El anticristo*, and *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* are some examples. Other plays, like Calderón’s *Las cadenas del demonio* and especially *La vida es sueño* and *El mágico prodigioso*, are much more powerful and thoughtful reflexions on the preternatural. In Zayas the lack of theological and philosophical subtlety is made up by variety, and in her work we have a bogus magician (see 3.1) as well as a number of men who make a pact with the Devil (see 4.4 and 4.5).

A number of Golden Age plays and novellas deal with the phenomenon of ghosts. Again, these revenants range from moderately successful – Calderón’s *El galán fantasma*, Castillo Solórzano’s *La fantasma de Valencia* – to hair-raising, like Tirso’s stone guest in *El burlador de Sevilla*, or eerie, like the shadow (*sombra*) in Lope de Vega’s *El caballero de Olmedo*, who warns the eponymous hero of his impending death. We see the same eeriness in various novellas by Zayas, where it is more fully worked out than in Lope de Vega, although they do not necessarily feature ghosts or shadowy figures (see 5.3). That said, there are two novellas in which ghosts do play a role, one being an actual penitent soul from Purgatory, the other a fake phantom (see 3.3).

The most common occurrence of preternatural activity in Golden Age literature, as in Zayas, is love magic. Its archetypal practitioner is Celestina. Fernando de Rojas’s enormously popular *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (*La Celestina*), published in 1499, gave rise to a vast number of continuations and persiflage.²¹ In the original, Celestina

²¹ Examples of continuations are Feliciano de Silva’s *La Segunda Celestina*; Gaspar Gómez de Toledo’s *La Tercera Celestina*; Sancho de Muñón’s *La tercera Celestina o La Tragicomedia de Lisandro y Roselia*; Sebastián Hernández’s *La Policiana*; as well as *La Selvagia*, *La Eufrosina* and *La Florinea*. See Menéndez Pelayo Marcelino, ‘Artes mágicas, hechicerías y supersticiones en los siglos XVI y VII’, in *Brujería y exorcismos en*

puts a spell on the girdle she gives to Melibea to make her fall in love with Calisto. The magic thinking is clear enough and very common – the girdle will ‘bind’ Calisto to her. Valbuena has suggested an additional metaphorical reading, namely that just as Melibea must unwind the girdle, just so will she lose her virginity.²² Moreover, the girdle has been soaked in snake oil, with all the associations that entails – the serpent as the seducer of Eve, as a phallic animal, and so on. But Celestina does much more than merely apply a magical lubricant to a belt; her room is filled to the rafters with objects associated with black magic such as the skin of a black cat, a paper written in the blood of a bat, a piece of rope, presumably from a gallows, and much else besides. What is more, she invokes the help of the Devil, thinly disguised as Pluto, even threatening him should he not accede to her demands. ‘Conjúrote, triste Plutón, señor de la profundidad infernal, emperador de la corte dañada [...] Si no lo hazes con presto movimiento, tendrásme por capital enemiga. [I conjure you, dismal Pluto, lord of the infernal depths, emperor of the damned court... If you do not it forthwith, I shall be your arch-enemy] (*La Celestina*, p. 158). And when the spell works, she thinks she has successfully forced the Devil to do her bidding: ‘¡O diablo a quien yo conjuré, cómo cumpliste tu palabra en todo lo que te pedí!’ [Oh Devil conjured by me, how well you have kept your word and done everything I asked of you!] (*La Celestina*, p. 171). This goes to show the extent of her deception. Not only does she put her faith in *goetia*, she compounds this by believing she is in control. Celestina conformed to a certain type of sorceress, combining her love magic with procuring, prostitution and ‘the restoration of virgins’.

Lope de Vega’s play *El caballero de Olmedo*, already referred to, equally features a Celestinesque sorceress cum procuress called Fabia, who gives a shoestring and a ‘seasoned’ letter to Inés to make her fall in love with Alonso. Like Rojas’s antiheroine, she invokes the Devil: ‘¡Apresta, fiero habitador del centro!’ [Prepare yourself, fierce dweller of the centre!] (ll. 393-394). And likewise, she is convinced of the efficacy of her spell: ‘¡Oh, qué bravo efeto hicieron los hechizos y conjuros!’ [O what a wonderful effect the spells and conjurations had!] (ll. 816-817). Up to this point, Fabia follows her model Celestina very closely. At the end of the play, however, Rodrigo attributes

España. Textos fundamentales, ed. by Servando Gotor (Zaragoza: Lecturas Hispánicas, 2014), pp. 23-70. A clear persiflage is Pablos’s mother in Quevedo’s *El buscón*.

²² See Olga Lucía Valbuena, ‘Sorceress, Love Magic, and the Inquisition of Linguistic Sorcery in Celestina’, *PMLA* 109.2 (1994), 207-24.

powers to Fabia that go beyond those of a mere cauldron-stirring love-sorceress and part-time pimp:

Fabia, que puede trasponer un monte;
 Fabia, que puede detener un río
 y en los negros ministros de Aqueronte
 tiene, como en vasallos, señorío;
 Fabia, que deste mar, deste horizonte,
 al abrasado clima, al Norte frío
 puede llevar un hombre por el aire.
 (*El caballero de Olmedo*, ll. 2320-2326)

[Fabia, who can move mountains – Fabia who can hold a river back – and who, over Acheron’s dark retainers, – holds sway as if they were her vassals – Fabia, who from this sea, this horizon – to scorching climes, to the frozen North – can transport a man through the air.]

In *El Crotalón* the narrator is warned of similarly powerful sorceresses, who are said to have the ability to metamorphize men and change the course of the stars:

Y luego como comenzamos a caminar por Navarra fue [sic] avisado que las mugeres en aquella tierra eran grandes hechiceras encantadoras, y que tenían pacto y comunicación con el demonio [...] eran poderosas en pervertir los hombres y aun convertirlos en bestias y piedras si querían [...] mandan el sol y obedece, a las estrellas fuerzan en su curso, y a la luna quitan y ponen su luz conforme a su voluntad.²³

[And as soon as we began to walk through Navarre we were warned that the women of those lands were great sorceresses and enchantresses, and that they had a pact with the Devil and communicated with him... and that they had great skills in perverting men, even converting them to animals and stones if they wanted to... they command the sun and it obeys, they force the course of the stars, and they give and take the light from the moon, as they see fit.]

The Navarrese setting is no coincidence, since of all the provinces of the Peninsula, the Basque region (including Navarre and the Pyrenees) was the one most commonly associated with witchcraft. Castañega wrote his treatise in reaction to a witchcraft trial in the diocese of Calahorra y la Calzada, in La Rioja, on the border with Navarre. In Vélez Guevara’s *El diablo cojuelo* the eponymous lame Devil shows Cleofás ‘una vieja, grandísima hechicera’ [an old and very great sorceress] who is applying flying ointment

²³ Cristóbal Villalón, *El Crotalón* (Biblioteca Virtual, 2003), p. 42 <<http://www.biblioteca.org.ar/libros/89158.pdf>> [Accessed 8 January 2017].

‘para hallarse en una gran junta de brujas que hay entre San Sebastián y Fuenterrabía’ [in order to go to a large reunion of witches that is celebrated between San Sebastián and Fuenterrabía].²⁴ And in Cervantes’s canine picaresque novella ‘El coloquio de los perros’, one of the witches says: ‘Tres días antes que muriese habíamos estado las dos en un valle de los Montes Perineos en una gran jira’ [Three days before she died the two of us had been to a valley in the Pyrenees, to a large outdoor-feast], an obvious reference to a witches’ sabbath.²⁵

2.4 *Hechiceras (sorceresses) versus brujas (witches)*

Although at a first glance the terms ‘witch’ and ‘sorceress’ may seem synonymous and fully interchangeable, strictly speaking *Celestina* and her brood are *hechiceras* (sorceresses), not *brujas* (witches). Modern English usage does not clearly differentiate between ‘sorceress’ and ‘witch’ and in the English translations of one of the most famous texts on witchcraft, the *Malleus maleficarum*, the key word ‘maleficum’ is translated as ‘sorcery’ by Mackay and as ‘witchcraft’ by Summers. But for the author of *La Celestina* and his contemporaries, ‘in consonance with prevailing, popular literature, the terms “bruja” and “hechicera” signalled substantially separate entities’.²⁶ The word ‘bruja’ is not used once in Lope de Vega’s play discussed above. The same is true for *El Crotalón*, which only mentions ‘magas’ and ‘hechiceras’. In Rojas’s wonderful work the term ‘bruja’ appears only once and applies to *Celestina*’s best friend Claudina. And even there, as Cárdenas Rotunno has noted, she is only *accused* of being a witch: ‘le levantaron que era bruxa’ [they accused her of being a witch] (*La Celestina*, p. 198), and she is forced to make a false confession: ‘la hizieron aquella vez confesar lo que no era’ [on that occasion they made her confess to being what she was not] (*La Celestina*, p. 199). In Cervantes’s ‘El coloquio de los perros’, by contrast, we are introduced to three women who are said to be both ‘bruja’ and ‘hechicera’. The greatest of the three, Camacha de Montilla, has the power to control the weather and transport people through the air: ‘Ella congelaba las nubes cuando quería, cubriendo con ellas la faz del sol, y cuando se le antojaba, volvió sereno el más turbado cielo; traía los hombres en un instante de lejas tierras’ [She would freeze the clouds when she wanted to, covering the face of the sun

²⁴ Luis Vélez de Guevara, *El diablo cojuelo* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1999), p. 23.

²⁵ Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares I & II*, ed. by Harry Sieber (Madrid: Cátedra 1980), p. 340.

²⁶ Anthony Cárdenas Rotunno, ‘Rojas’s “*Celestina* and Claudina”: in Search of a Witch’, *Hispanic Review* 69.3 (2001), p. 278.

with them, and when she felt like it, even the stormiest skies would turn serene; in the blink of an eye she would transport men from faraway places] (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 337). In addition, she can transform men into animals, which is why Cañizares, one of the other witches, thinks that the dog Berganza is her friend Montiel's bewitched son.

So far, nothing new. The threesome appear to be weather-altering, demon-conjuring *hechiceras* of the same ilk as Fabia and the Navarrese *magas* of *El Crotalón*. But when we are first introduced to Cañizares, the fact that 'bruja' and 'hechicera' are not synonymous is made quite clear: 'Fuese la gente maldiciendo a la vieja, añadiendo al nombre de hechicera el de bruja' [The people went off, cursing the old woman, calling her not just a sorceress, but a witch to boot] (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 336). After her friend Montiel is executed as a witch – 'al fin murió bruja' [in the end she died a witch] (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 338) – Cañizares attempts to give up *hechicería*, but finds it impossible to relinquish *brujería*: 'he querido dejar todos los vicios de la hechicería en que estaba engolfada muchos años había, y sólo me he quedado con la curiosidad de ser bruja, que es un vicio dificultísimo de dejar' [I've wanted to give up all the vices of sorcery I'd been mixed up in all those years, and my only fancy now is that of being a witch, which is a vice that is extremely difficult to give up] (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 338). Cárdenas Rotunno claims that this shows that for Cervantes 'hechicería' carries a greater semantic charge than 'brujería', implying that the former is the more evil of the two. I disagree. For Cañizares, *hechicería* is an activity that can be given up at will, but through *brujería* the Devil has such a strong hold over her, that she cannot possibly abandon it, even if she wanted to. Cañizares has been so befuddled by the Horned One that it is impossible to leave his service: 'Con todo esto, nos trae tan engañadas a las que somos brujas, que, con hacernos mil burlas, no le podemos dejar' [What with all that, he has deceived us witches to such an extent, by playing a thousand tricks on us, that we cannot leave him] (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 339). What is more, they take part in witches' sabbaths where they meet their billy goat (*cabrón*):

Vamos a verle muy lejos de aquí, a un gran campo, donde juntamos infinidad de gente, brujos y brujas, y allí nos da de comer desabridamente, y pasan otras cosas que en verdad y en Dios y en mi ánima que no me atrevo a contarlas, según son sucias y asquerosas, y no quiero ofender tus castas orejas. (*Novelas ejemplares*, II, p. 339)

[We go and see him very far away from here, in a large field where a huge number of us get together, warlocks and witches alike, and there he offers us foul food to eat, and other things take place that, for the sake of the truth and God and my soul, I don't dare tell you, lest I offend your chaste ears, that's how disgusting and revolting they are.]

What makes them *brujas* in addition to *hechiceras* is that they are part of a Satanic sect. That is also why in *El diablo cojuelo* the only time the word ‘bruja’ is mentioned is when the witches all get together in the Basque country.

For much of their history, there had not been much to distinguish a *bruja* (also known as *xorguiña* or *jorguiña*) from an *hechicera* (or *maga*), but with the emergence of a new type of witch in the early modern period – of the Devil-worshipping variety – the difference became an important one. The typical *hechicera* worked alone and in an urban setting. Her main task was to perform love magic with the help of potions and spells. She was not averse to conjuring the Devil and skulking about cemeteries at night to collect ingredients for her dark arts. The *bruja*, by contrast, was a rural creature, in Spain predominantly associated with the Basque region. She was a member of a Satanic sect, whose members travelled long distances through the air to meet the Lord of Hell and commit unspeakable evil.²⁷ The sorceress-witch is of all ages and known on all continents, whereas the Devil-worshipping witch is unique to early modern Europe and its colonies. It is true that Evans-Pritchard, who studied the Azande in the early twentieth century, also distinguishes between witches and sorcerers – witches are born as witches and have a ‘witch substance’ in their body and over time suck the soul out of their victims, whereas sorcerers cause immediate and serious harm by means of learned spells – but he was transposing African notions to English.²⁸ Another difference, which is often overlooked, is that *hechiceras* were undoubtedly real, whereas *brujas* were almost certainly figments of the imagination. And lastly, it was *brujas* who were burnt at the stake in their tens of thousands, not *hechiceras*.

In the early modern period it was widely assumed that the end of time was nigh, and it had been prophesied that this would be heralded by the coming of the Antichrist and general apostasy. That explains why Castañega writes about the two churches of this world: the Catholic Church with its sacraments, and the diabolical church with its ‘excrement’. In a brilliant study of this phenomenon, Stuart Clark explains how

²⁷ For more on the urban/rural dichotomy, see Julio Caro Baroja, *The World of the Witches* (London: Phoenix, 2001); Tausiet (*Urban Magic*); Martín Soto; Owen Davies, ‘Urbanisation and the Decline of Witchcraft: an Examination of London’ in *The Witchcraft Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 353-66; María Lara Martínez, *Brujas, magos e incredulos en la España del siglo de oro. Microhistoria cultural de ciudades encantadas* (Cuenca: Alderabán, 2013); and José Ignacio Carmona Sánchez, *La España mágica. Mitos, leyendas y curiosidades pintorescas* (Madrid: Nowtilus, 2012).

²⁸ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, abridged and with an introduction by Eva Gillies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

witches were a diabolical form of Bakhtinian misrule, the expression of an eschatological expectation, a necessary evil and a complete inversion of all that Christianity stood for. Witches did everything backwards ('fair is foul, and foul is fair'): they celebrated black masses, ate revolting food, worshipped the Evil One, and, in general, strove to bring down Christendom. This topsy-turvydom is described with some relish and in great detail in the *Relación de Logroño* (1611), a news sheet that appeared in the wake of one of the best-known witchcraft trials ever to take place in Spain. The *Relación de Logroño* was printed a year before the publication of Cervantes's novellas, which were written between 1590 and 1612. And I would venture a conjecture that 'El coloquio de los perros', which appears as the last of the *Novelas ejemplares*, was also written last, after Cervantes had heard about the witches of Navarre and read about them in this *relación* or a similar text, using it as a platform to investigate the discourse surrounding witchcraft, just as 'Rinconete y Cortadillo' is in some way an exploration of the jargon of the Sevillian underworld.

From being an irksome superstition of the people, denounced but not persecuted by the Church, witches had become a sprawling, clandestine and highly nefarious (albeit purely imaginary) sect, the arch-enemies of the common weal. This explains why statespeople and lawyers like Jean Bodin and King James I wrote demonological treatises. These works should not be dismissed as quirks and aberrations, but formed part of a mindset that made possible the large-scale trials. 'They described and accounted for contemporary problems in what seemed an accurate way and presented attractive solutions to them.' (Clark, p. 686)

The 'witch-craze' did not strike everywhere with the same force. The vast majority of the executions – about seventy-five percent – took place in German-speaking lands.²⁹ Other centres of widespread persecution were Scotland and parts of France. Despite the fame of the self-styled 'witch-finder general' Matthew Hopkins in seventeenth-century Essex and the infamous trial in Salem, witch-hunts were relatively rare in Old and New England and almost absent in the United Provinces, Italy, and Spain. A number of explanations for the uneven distribution have been put forward, but the most compelling account of regional variation hinges on the presence or absence of central

²⁹ See Wolfgang Behringer, 'Weather, Hunger and Fear: Origins of the European Witch-Hunt in Climate, Society and Mentality', in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 74-85; and Darren Oldridge, *The Devil. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

judicial control. Where central control was weak, local magistrates ran the risk of giving in to popular pressure and trials could turn into ‘village inquisitions’. Where central judiciary control was strong, witchcraft trials were more likely to be thrown out by the courts. In Spain and Italy witchcraft fell under the remit of the Inquisition, which exerted a strong central control; this explains why these lands saw ‘surprisingly few witchcraft trials’ (Scarre and Callow, p. 25).³⁰

Like most of her contemporaries, Zayas steers clear of Satan-worshipping *bryjas* and confines herself to urban *hechiceras* of the Celestina type and other practitioners of black magic. Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding witchcraft and the attitude of the Inquisition towards it shed light on the indeterminacy surrounding the preternatural, which is fully exploited by Zayas. This is why it is worth having a look at the attitudes of the Holy Office with regards to witchcraft and sorcery.

2.5 Inquisitorial responses to witchcraft and magic

In 1637 Deodato Scaglia wrote *La Pratica di procedere con forma giudiciale nelle cause appartenenti alla Santa Fede*, a document which contains guidelines for the Roman Inquisition. It shows the cautious attitude of the Holy Office with regards to confessions made by witches.

We do not rush headlong, especially in the matter of these nocturnal games, to believe and proceed as if the crime were fully established; but, rather, the prudent judge weighs various questions: is the confession plausible or does it contain features that are impossible and contrary to nature, as is the case, for example, where a woman confesses that she has been in person at night participating in one of these covens and yet had not left her husband’s bed; or when she asserts that she physically left the house without passing through any door or window.³¹

This attitude stands in stark contrast to that of the instigators of the witch-hunts in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, where perhaps as many as 9,000 people were executed as witches in the first half of the seventeenth century (see Roper).

³⁰ See William Monter, ‘Witchcraft, Confessionalism and Authority’, in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 198-204. See also Brian Levack, ‘The Decline of Witchcraft Prosecutions’, in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 341-48. For other hypotheses, see Erik Midelfort, ‘Heartland of the Witchcraze’, in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 99-106; and Christina Lerner, ‘Was Witch-Hunting Woman-Hunting?’, in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 253-56.

³¹ Deodato Scaglia, quoted in John Tedeschi, ‘The Question of Magic and Witchcraft in Two Unpublished Inquisitorial Manuals of the Seventeenth Century’, *Proceeding of the American Philosophical Society*, 131.1 (1987), p. 106.

By and large, the Spanish Inquisition proceeded along the same lines as its Roman counterpart, but that did not prevent the occasional trial from taking place. The majority of these took place in the Basque country and Navarre, which saw witchcraft trials in 1507, 1517 and the 1520s (see Scarre and Callow). As a result of these events, the Inquisition convened a meeting in Granada in 1526 during which a vote was taken to decide if witches really attended sabbaths or if they only went there in their imagination. Six inquisitors thought they really did attend, while four – including the future Inquisitor General Valdés – were convinced that it was all in their imagination (Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*; Tausiet, *Urban Magic*). Since then, the Suprema showed itself reticent when it came to sentencing witches and acted swiftly if a local tribunal executed people accused of witchcraft. Spain did have one notorious trial of witches, however, which took place between 1608 and 1612 and was the indirect result of mass persecutions in the Labourd organized by Pierre de Lancre, who believed that devils from all over the world had congregated in that particular corner of France.³² In Spain it all started when the twenty-year-old María de Ximildegui returned to Zugarramurdi after having lived for four years in Ciboure, across the border in France. She claimed to be a member of a sect of witches and accused others in the village of the same. Many of the accused eventually confessed under duress and the Inquisition was alerted. They sent inquisitor Valle on a visitation with the aim to root out suspected witches. As was the custom, whenever he visited a village or town, an edict of grace was read out from the pulpit, inciting the congregation to declare knowledge of anyone who had trespassed against the faith. These edicts contained vivid descriptions of the activities of which witches were accused, and with our modern understanding of psychology we can see how they formed the framework for subsequent (self-) accusations and confessions.³³ All in all, more than 5,000 people were suspected of witchcraft and around 2,000 were eventually charged with the crime. Eventually, however, only six people were burnt at the stake – plus another five in effigy – at an auto-da-fé celebrated in Logroño on 7 and 8 November 1610. Of the three inquisitors on the tribunal, one had voted against the

³² See Jane Davidson, *Early Modern Supernatural. The Dark Side of European Culture. 1400-1700* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), pp. 55-56; Gerhild Scholz Williams, 'Pierre de Lancre and the Basque Witch-Hunt', in *The Witchcraft Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 180-84. See also Caro Baroja (*The World of Witches*) and Lara Martínez.

³³ It is not uncommon for a witch-craze to start with the accusations or confessions of children or adolescents who dream about witches. See Levack, 'The Decline of Witchcraft Prosecutions'. In Germany and Sweden a number of mass trials were started by the accusations of children (see Henningsen, *El abogado*). Gaskill points out that in Salem, the conflict between Indians and settlers in the mid-1670s caused anxiety and that in people's imagination demons and native warriors had merged.

death sentence. His name was Alonso Salazar Frías, the youngest of the three and a protégé of Sandoval y Rojas, the Inquisitor General.

When rumours of a recrudescence of witches were seeping out of the Baztán Valley, Salazar went on an elaborate tour of eight months, after which he returned to Logroño carrying with him an astonishing 5,600 folios of documentation. In his investigation Salazar found that many people wanted to retract their earlier confession. What is more, he realized that the phenomenon of witches was new: ‘No hubo brujos ni embrujados en el lugar hasta que se comenzó a tratar y escribir de ellos’ [There were no witches or bewitched in the place until they began to be talked and written about] (quoted in Henningsen, *El abogado*, p. 382). Salazar knew that in France a ‘witch-craze’ had fizzled out after the bishop of Bayonne, the erudite Bertrand d’Echaux, had forbidden the people to talk or write about the matter.³⁴ Although Salazar did not deny the *possibility* of witchcraft, he found that there was no concrete evidence on which to base a conviction: ‘No he hallado certidumbre ni aun indicio de que colegir algún acto de brujería que real y corporalmente haya pasado’ [I have not found anything certain nor any indication which would lead me to deduce that any acts of witchcraft have actually and corporally taken place] (quoted in Henningsen, *El abogado*, p. 366). From looking at the inquisitorial records, he was aware that the institution had always shown restraint with regards to witchcraft and he set out to write a series of recommendations to the Suprema. In this, he was supported by Venegas, the bishop of Pamplona, who wrote the following to the Inquisitor General on 4 March 1611:

Y ahora, por mayor, digo a Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima que siempre he tenido por cierto que en este negocio hay gran fraude y engaño, y de tres partes de lo que se dice, las dos no son verdaderas (quoted in Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, p. 189).

[And now I am telling Your Illustrious Grace outright that I have always believed that in these matters there is much fraudulence and deception, and that two thirds of what they say is untrue.]

During his visitation, Salazar carried with him a copy of Pedro de Valencia’s treatise *Discurso acerca de los cuentos de las brujas*, written at the behest of Sandoval in 1611, in the wake of the auto-da-fé in Logroño. Pedro de Valencia, like Salazar, acknowledges the existence of witchcraft, but finds that witches claim to do impossible things and recommends that their supposed deeds not be published: ‘no conviene que las

³⁴ See also Toby Green, *Inquisition* (London: Pan Books, 2007).

relaciones de tales confesiones y delitos, verdaderamente nefandos, se impriman, ni aun se reciten en público' [it is not fitting that the tales of such confessions and crimes, which are truly heinous, be printed, nor that they be read out in public].³⁵ Based on his findings Salazar wrote recommendations that became known as the *Instrucciones de Logroño*, which were introduced in all the other tribunals and even known by the Roman Inquisition. However, it is important to underline that:

Salazar's long memorial was a victory neither for humanism nor rationalism, but quite simply for the laws of evidence. As a trained lawyer (*letrado*) he was interested less in the theological debate over the reality of witchcraft than in the material problem of having to arrest people on the basis of unsupported hearsay. (Henningsen, *El abogado*, p. 274)

Although some have seen Salazar as 'un auténtico precursor de los hombres ilustrados del siglo XVIII' [a true precursor of the enlightened men of the eighteenth century],³⁶ he was closer to Montaigne in spirit and simply loath to condemn someone to the stake if he was not absolutely certain a crime had been committed: 'Après tout c'est mettre ses conjectures à bien haut prix, que d'en faire cuire un homme tout viif' [After all, it is putting a very high price on one's conjecture to roast a man alive for them].³⁷

If witchcraft trials were a comparative rarity in Spain, we have already seen that there were plenty of *hechiceras*, *saludadores*, *santiguadores*, *ensalmadores*, and other practitioners of folk magic. Here too the Inquisition showed a remarkably lenient attitude. In 2000 Rafael Martín Soto published *Magia e Inquisición en el antiguo reino de Granada*, in which he describes the activities of the Inquisition with regards to 'magic crimes' as recorded in the archives of the Granadan tribunal. The total number of cases is low, only about 7.2%, and references to witchcraft only appear after 1571. In the sixteenth century fewer than 1% of the trials dealt with witchcraft: twenty-four of the three thousand cases investigated. The vast majority of cases of that period concern Moriscos (43%) and Judaizers (10%). In the seventeenth century, the percentage of magic-related crimes rose to 10%, while the numbers of cases dealing with Moriscos decreased dramatically to 14%. The number of cases involving Judaizers, by contrast, rose to 38%, mainly due to the influx of *marranos* from Portugal after 1580.

³⁵ Pedro de Valencia, *Discurso acerca de los cuentos de las brujas. Obras completas*, 7 (León: Universidad de León, 1997), p. 256.

³⁶ Manuel Fernández Álvarez, *Casadas, Monjas, Rameras y Brujas. La olvidada historia de la mujeres españolas en el Renacimiento* (Madrid: Espasa, 2010), p. 384.

³⁷ Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2001), pp. 1604-05.

As a result of the Council of Trent, the Church was involved in a drive to stamp out superstitions, considered a threat to the Church's monopoly (see Clark). The same motivation underpins the treatises by Castañega and Ciruelo. Blasphemy, folk healing, amatory magic, divination and treasure hunting all fell under the rubric of superstition. Many of the convicted were sentenced to public shaming (*salir a la pública vergüenza*), often with the administration of one to two hundred lashes and exile from the city for a stipulated number of years. Punishments were harsher for recidivists. On occasion, the Inquisition would absolve defendants because they could not see any heresy in their actions. Martín Soto cites a case of a 'possessed' women who masturbated continuously and who introduced sundry objects into her vagina, including crucifixes. Her case was suspended and she was urged to find a new confessor to direct her soul and persuade her to give up her vice (*vicio*). In the convent of Santa Clara de la Paz in Antequera obscene rituals were held between men and women, both professed and lay. They would gather to adore the Devil, who would copulate with one of the women present. There were claims that participants could freely go from cell to cell and fly away after having applied an ointment. After the ceremony there was a banquet and all participants engaged in sexual activities. Many nuns became pregnant and tried to abort; some gave birth and subsequently killed their infants, using their blood for ointments. Eventually the Inquisition got involved; they sent some of the culprits away and then offered a general amnesty provided that everyone confess their sins.

In dealing with these 'crimes', the Inquisition regularly used the term 'sortilega' [fortune-teller], instead of 'hechicera', often in conjunction with the epithet 'embustera' [mendacious] or 'supersticiosa' [superstitious]. In many instances, the defendants acknowledged that it was all fake: 'todo era mentira [...] pues solo era un invento para sacar dinero, ya que era muy pobre' [it was all a lie... it was only something I made up to fleece people, seeing as I was very poor] (Martín Soto, p. 139). For many, it seems, magic was a *modus vivendi* and did not result from a true belief in its efficacy: 'sólo Dios puede saber las cosas por venir, y no creyó que dicha oración tuviese virtud para obrar los efectos que aconsejó a la mujer, y que todo[s] sabe[n] que es embuste' [only God has knowledge of the things to come, and she did not believe that the aforesaid prayer had the power she pretended it had to the woman, and everyone knows it is make-belief] (Martín Soto, p. 355). In part, Zayas evinces the same sceptical attitude, although none of the leniency, when she portrays some of the women involved in love magic as

imposters (see 3.2). Even when the efficacy of the magic spell is borne out by the story, the sorceress in question is still referred to as full of lies and tricks (see 3.3).

The inquisitorial attitude may appear modern and enlightened, but, as Henningsen has argued, this sceptical attitude is the result of the ‘old-fashioned’ Aristotelian – as opposed to the ‘modern’ Neoplatonic – teaching at Salamanca, that is to say it is a product of Spain’s Catholic orthodoxy and conservatism. ‘The healthy, sensible attitude of the Spaniards to the witch problem was thus not a matter of being “ahead of their time”, but rather of being “behind” the general development of philosophy. This is the Spanish paradox’ (Henningsen, *The Salazar Documents*, p. 13). Moreover, many inquisitors were trained as canonical lawyers, not as theologians, and were therefore trained to look for evidence.³⁸

The Church authorities showed an attitude of pragmatic scepticism with regards to magic and witchcraft, the belief in which was moreover gradually being eroded. This erosion was part of a larger epistemological shift, a kind of intellectual watershed changing the way in which the natural and supernatural were seen and experienced, although it must be stressed that it was a gradual process, and one which did not affect everyone to the same extent.

2.6 The seventeenth-century epistemological shift

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault attempts to lay bare the archaeological strata of our knowledge, which he sees as a succession of ‘epistemes’, each of which constitutes a rupture with the previous internally coherent system of thought. In the Renaissance episteme, he explains, the universe was conceived of as a book replete with signs that awaited interpretation, even if this was not as straightforward as one might suppose. The difficulty lies in what Foucault describes as a parallax: hermeneutics (uncovering the meaning of signs) and semiology (the body of knowledge necessary to know what a sign is) were superimposed in a way that rendered the interpretation of signs opaque. Reading a sign is never direct and unmediated, but always at one remove. Sympathies, conveniences, emulations, resemblances and similitudes were all interlinked in non-predictable and non-transparent ways. In the Renaissance the key epistemic notions were resemblance and similitude; to write the history of a plant or animal was to

³⁸ See José Luis Betrán Moya, ‘El mundo mágico de Julio Caro Baroja’, *Historia Social*, 55 (2006), 79-111.

describe its elements and organs, its virtues and uses, but also the legends and stories that surrounded it, its place in heraldry, what the Ancients recorded of it or travellers might have said of it, and so forth. This was not because science was hesitating between rational vocation and naïve tradition; it was because signs and signatures were part and parcel of the things themselves. Nature and antiquity were both fields and spaces that required interpretation; divination and erudition were part of the same hermeneutics. As a result, ‘sixteenth-century knowledge condemned itself to never knowing anything but the same thing’.³⁹

An integral part of this worldview was the existence of natural magic; the universe was assumed to be filled with occult forces, sympathies and antipathies, the ‘virtudes a nosotros ocultas’ [virtues hidden to us] referred to by Castañega (see 2.1). Common examples of these notions are the belief that a corpse would start bleeding in the presence of the murderer, or that a wound could be cured by applying a salve that came from the weapon that caused it. Likewise, it was thought that snakes cannot abide the shadow of the ash tree – according to legend the Cross was made from this type of wood – or that tarantulas and scorpions hate each other.⁴⁰ In 1633 the Spanish Jesuit Eusebio Nieremberg published what was essentially a compendium of classical learning on this topic, the *Ocultia Filosofía de la Sympatia y Antipatia de las Cosas*, in which he explains the workings of these hidden forces of attraction and repulsion:

Sympatia y Antipatia, como hablan los Griegos; esto es vna secreta conformidad, y auersió que parece, ò ay en las cosas con que se executan efetos admirables por lo extraordinario, y anomalo, que tienen a la vista, y lo inuisible, y oculto de sus causas. (Nieremberg, *Ocultia Filosofía*, fol.1^r)

[Sympathy and Antipathy, as the Greeks call it; this is a secret conformity and aversion that is apparent, or exists, in things, and that creates effects that are wondrous because of what we perceive as extraordinary and anomalous, and because of the hidden and invisible nature of their causes.]

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2002; first publ. in English by Tavistock, 1970), p. 34.

⁴⁰ Corpses that bled when their killer was near were widely reported (Clark; Mauss). Del Río thinks that the cause of this is that a ‘hidden, mysterious quality is imprinted upon the body and remains there after death’ (Del Río, p. 49). The weapon-salve caused great controversy in the 1630s (Thomas; Clark). The example of the snake comes from Reginald Scot, and that of the tarantula from Nieremberg’s *Ocultia Filosofía de la Sympatia y Antipatia de las Cosas* (Madrid: Emprenta del Reyno, 1633; repr. Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2010).

Perhaps the most emblematic figure to emerge from this period is the Renaissance magus. These were men like Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) – dubbed ‘the Arch-magician’ by Del Río – and Paracelsus (1493-1541). Other famous intellectuals who devoted their studies to the occult were John Dee (1527-1608), Giambattista della Porta (1535-1615) and Robert Fludd (1574-1637). These men inspired a number of well-known literary characters such as Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, based on a historical figure, and Shakespeare’s Prospero, but also protagonists of Golden Age fiction (see 2.3).

Although Foucault has been taken to task for his sweeping generalisations, obscurantist language and circular reasoning – using examples as illustration instead of evidence – as well as giving untoward prominence to a marginal group of hermetic writers, he nevertheless provides us with a compelling model for the history of thought in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ He describes how in the course of the seventeenth century the Renaissance episteme was replaced by a new system of thought, which he calls the Classical Age: the era of taxonomy and tabulation. In his inimitable prose, the French thinker explains that the universe was no longer replete with signs, whether we knew about them or not, but that there was no sign unless it was recognised as such, because a sign ‘can be constituted only by an act of knowing’ (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 65). The pre-ordained and pre-existing system of divine hieroglyphics evaporated. Turning to Spanish literature, Foucault cites Don Quixote as the negative image of the Renaissance world that was about to disappear, a world where ‘resemblances and signs have dissolved their former allegiance; similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary or madness’ (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 53). More important for this investigation is what he has to say about the baroque as a period of epistemological crisis, describing it as an era in which:

the chimeras of similitude loom up on all sides, but they are recognized as chimeras; it is the privileged age of *trompe-l’œil* painting, of the comic illusion, of the play that duplicates itself by representing another play, of the *quid pro quo*, of dreams and visions; it is the age of the deceiving senses; it is the age in which the poetic dimension of language is defined by metaphor, simile, and allegory. (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 57)

⁴¹ For a balanced appreciation of Foucault, see Gary Cutting, *Michel Foucault’s Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); for a much more critical view, see George Huppert, ‘Divinatio et Eruditio: Thoughts on Foucault’, *History and Theory*, 13.3 (1974), 191-207.

The examples that could be taken from Spanish literature and art to sustain this idea are legion, from Velázquez's *Las meninas* (with which Foucault starts his book) to Lope de Vega's *Lo fingido verdadero* to Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* and Góngora's poetry. In Zayas's novellas we encounter premonitory dreams (see 5.3.2) and we find that things are not always what they seem. Although her prose lacks the scintillation of Cervantes's wit or the dazzling quality of Góngora, she nevertheless constructs a polysemous, intricate narrative labyrinth where readers' senses are deceived. Her work is also baroque in its morbid fascination, which is the obverse of the festive baroque.

When the philosophers of the Enlightenment looked back at the early modern period, it seemed to them that in course of the seventeenth century witchcraft prosecutions had disappeared like phantoms of the night fleeing the blinding rays of Reason. But this is a triumphalist account and we should not see the decline of witchcraft prosecutions as the direct corollary of the emergence of the 'clockwork universe'. The ideas formulated by Descartes and Newton took time to percolate down to the people and there is a significant gap in time before they were taken up by the population at large. It is also well known that Newton himself took a lively interest in astrology and dabbled in alchemy. Instead, what took place was a more gradual process during which, as happened in Spain with Salazar, the evidence for the old world-view simply no longer seemed convincing, constituting a crisis, which would lead to the development of a new paradigm.⁴²

2.7 'Betwixt Charybdis and Scylla': the indeterminacy of magic

At the time that Zayas was writing her tales of sorceresses and necromancers, the old epistemological system was crumbling and its sands were shifting. Characteristic of this 'tired episteme' – or pre-paradigmatic crisis – is the indeterminacy surrounding magic and the preternatural. Determining whether something was supernatural *sensu stricto* or preternatural demanded exceptional (navigational) skills, as James I explains in his treatise on demonology:

And by these meanes shall we saill surelie, betwixt *Charybdis* and *Scylla*, in eschewing the not beleeing of them altogether on the one part, least that drawe vs to the error that there is no Witches: and on the other parte in beleeuing of it, make vs to eschew the

⁴² See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

falling into innumerable absurdities, both monstrouslie against all Theologie diuine, and Philosophie humaine.⁴³

This wavering attitude did not mean an outright rejection; the existence of the Devil was beyond dispute, and witches too were thought to constitute a genuine threat:

Evil spirits are on the loose, seeking to take possession of foolish and deluded souls. Never have there been as many witches as there are today, and the main reason for this is the faintness of and contempt for the Catholic faith [...] Idolatry and witchcraft go together, as innumerable Jesuit testimonies from India illustrate (Del Río, p. 27).

We have seen heresy flourishing in Belgium and we see swarms of witches laying waste the whole of the North, like locusts (Del Río, p. 29).

Despite the undeniability of the Devil and his minions, demonologists like Del Río refused to accept any old story at face value; we have seen for example how he reinterprets the story of the cow-born boy as a preternatural trick (see 2.1). He eloquently sums up his attitude as follows: ‘Whoever maintains that every effect is the result of trickery, or believes that every effect is real, should be regarded as a watermelon rather than a human being’ (Del Río, p. 78). So within a clearly delineated, post-Tridentine, Catholic intellectual framework, he urges us to be sceptical. Pedro de Valencia was likewise convinced of the gravity of the threat of witches, but stresses that they confess to do things that can scarcely be believed:

como en aquellas confesiones, supuesto que en el todo fuesen verdaderas, se mezclan particularidades tan poco provables i casi increíbles, muchas personas, no pudiendo inducirse a creerlas, juzgarán por ellas que todo el hecho es vanidad, ilusión i sueño. (Valencia, p. 235)

[since those confessions, supposing that on the whole they are true, include particulars that are so unlikely and well-nigh incredible, that many people, unable to convince themselves of their truth, will on account of these facts dismiss them altogether as vain illusions and dreams.]

Far from being an all-out sceptic, the Spanish humanist is afraid that because some of the elements of the confessions are so outlandish, there are those who might reject witchcraft altogether. The outrageous claims are in fact a diabolical ruse: witches mix incredible things with truth so that they will not be believed at all. After discussing whether or not people can be transported by angels or devils, Pedro de Valencia states

⁴³ James I, *Demonology* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1597; repr. San Diego: The Book Tree, 2002), p. 42.

that in individual cases it is legitimate and recommendable to doubt and that we should always prefer a naturalistic explanation:

Esto en lo universal del dogma. Pero en lo particular del hecho, en cada caso es mui lícito, i aun prudente i devido, el dudar – en las cosas que pueden acontecer de muchas maneras – de cuál dellas aconteció la de que se trata. I la presunción está siempre por la vía ordinaria, humana i natural. (Valencia, p. 236)

[This as far as the universality of the dogma is concerned. But in the particulars of each case, it is most legitimate and even prudent and necessary to be doubtful; things can occur in many ways, and we must establish how the event in question occurred. And the assumption must always be that it happened in the normal, human and natural way.]

When Salazar, who had read Pedro de Valencia's treatise, wrote his *memoriales*, he showed himself impatient with people who invoke the Devil's preternatural powers. What is important is to assess whether or not we should believe people based on their ludicrous claims, much less sentence them.

Y tampoco mejora con averiguar que el Demonio puede hacer esto y aquello, repitiendo cada paso sin provecho la teoría de su naturaleza angélica; y que también digan los doctores por asentadas estas cosas, que sólo sirven ya de fastidio inútil, pues nadie las duda; sino en creer que en el caso individuo [*sic*] hayan pasado como los brujos las dicen de cada acto particular, por las dudas que dejé apuntadas y porque ni ellos han de ser creídos, ni el juez dar sentencia, sino en lo que exteriormente traiga verdad perceptible igual para cuantos la oyeren – pues no lo es para ninguno: volar cada paso una persona por el aire, andar cien leguas en una hora, salir una mujer por donde no cabe una mosca, hacerse invisible a los presentes, no se mojar en el río ni en el mar, estar a tiempo en la cama y en el aquelarre (quoted in Henningsen, *El abogado*, p. 409).

[Nor does it help to stress that the Devil can do this, that and the other, reiterating all the time and without any benefit the theory of the Devil's angelic nature; and also that learned men have taken these things to be well established, because this is merely a useless nuisance, since no one doubts this; what matters is to believe that in each and every individual case things happen the way witches say they do, because of the doubts I have raised, on account of which they should not be believed, nor should any judge sentence them, except if the truth can be established by an outside source and told to anyone who may listen, because what they claim is quite something: people flying through the air all the time, travelling a hundred leagues in one hour, women leaving their houses through holes too small for a fly to get through, making oneself invisible to everyone else, not getting wet when crossing rivers or seas, and being at the same time both in bed and attending a witches' sabbath.]

We have already seen that in 1526 the Inquisition voted on whether or not witches could fly to their sabbaths and that four in ten inquisitors voted against the proposition. We see the same hesitancy and ambivalence in Castañega and Ciruelo, who both write

that sometimes witches actually fly to sabbaths, while at other times the Devil merely implants the idea in them. Almost a century later, things were no clearer. The witches tried in Logroño were thought to attend sabbaths, sometimes in the flesh, sometimes only in their dreams: ‘ítém que [...] muchas veces van espiritual y mentalmente en sueños, aunque otras veces vayan corporalmente’ [also that... many times they go there spiritually and mentally in dreams, although at other times they go physically] (quoted in Henningsen, *El abogado*, p. 238). Covarrubias’s definition of ‘bruxa’ displays this indeterminacy well:

Bruxa, cierto género de gente perdida y endiablada, que perdido el temor a Dios, ofrecen sus cuerpos y sus almas al demonio a truco de una libertad viciosa y libidinosa, y unas veces causando en ellos un profundísimo sueño les representa en la imaginación ir a partes ciertas y hacer cosas particulares, que después de despiertos no se pueden persuadir sino que realmente se hallaron en aquellos lugares y [*sic*] hicieron lo que el demonio pudo hacer sin tomarlos a ellos por instrumento. Otras veces realmente y con efeto las lleva a parte donde hacen sus juntas, y el demonio se les aparece en diversas figuras, a quien dan la obediencia, renegando de la santa fe que recibieron en el bautismo.

[*Witch*, a certain type of people that have gone astray and are possessed by the Devil; having lost their fear of God, they offer their bodies and souls to the Devil in return for a sinful and libidinous freedom, and the Devil sometimes causes them to fall into a profound sleep during which they imagine that they visit certain places and do certain things, and when they wake up, they insist that they really visited those places and did what the Devil demanded that they do of their own free will. On other occasions, he really takes them to places where they meet, and the Devil appears to them in various guises, and they pledge obedience to him, reneging the holy faith they received in baptism.]

Note, incidentally, how the lexicographer starts with the gender-neutral ‘gente’ [people] and ‘ellos’ [they], but then ‘slips into’ the feminine ‘las’ [them] when he writes: ‘las lleva a parte donde hacen sus juntas’ [he really takes them to places where they meet], that is to say, the gender-neutral witches become women precisely when they attend the sabbath. In ‘El coloquio de los perros’, when Cañizares explains to Berganza how she goes to meet the Devil, she gives another textbook explanation of this uncertainty:

Hay opinión que no vamos a estos convites, sino con la fantasía en la cual nos representa el demonio las imágenes de todas aquellas cosas que después contamos que nos han sucedido. Otros dicen que no, sino que verdaderamente vamos en cuerpo y en ánima; y entrambas opiniones tengo para mí que verdaderas, puesto que nosotras no sabemos cuándo vamos de una o de otra manera, porque todo lo que nos pasa en la fantasía es tan intensamente que no hay diferenciarlo de cuando vamos real y verdaderamente. (*Novelas ejemplares*, II: 339-340)

[Some say that we don't actually go to those meetings, but only in our imagination, with the Devil conjuring up the images of all those things we later say happened to us. Others disagree and say we truly attend the sabbath in body and soul. Personally I think they are both right, since we don't know whether we attend in one way or in another, because everything that happens in our imagination is so intense that it is impossible to tell whether we are there for real or not.]

We have already seen that the preternatural too was marked by dubiety. Vitoria admitted that he had not made up his mind about *saludadores* (see 2.2), and some of the people involved in magical practices confessed that it was all a lie (see 2.5). Their clients on the other hand probably believed that black magic worked, although even here we cannot be sure. One of the women studied by Ruggiero, for example, was asked by the Inquisition if she believed in her spell. She replied that if it was effective, she did, and if it was not, she did not.

In the seventeenth century the border between the natural and the preternatural had become unstable. Many things once thought possible, at least in theory, were hesitantly and inconsistently recategorized as impossible and therefore inexistent, or else a natural cause was found. Faced with the mechanistic explanations of the universe the Church had to redefine its sense-of-the-impossible. In this process, the triple ordering of natural-preternatural-supernatural was maintained – each with its own boundaries – but the preter- and supernatural were significantly reduced in scope and only applied to rare and remote occurrences. Consequently the preserve of the preternatural and supernatural was slowly shrinking (see Campagne). In addition, the borders of the supernatural had to be patrolled and policed. There was no doubt surrounding the miraculous like there was with regards to the marvellous, but it was important to exert control over what was considered a miracle and what was not. As a direct result of the Reformation and the subsequent confessional rivalry in Europe, God's wondrous interventions had been exposed as cultural constructs. Stuart Clark sees this realization, which also affects magical thinking, as the cause of the eventual demise of the belief in witchcraft and writes that as early as 1653 Sir Robert Filmer expressed the view that witchcraft was what we now refer to as a cultural construct when he pointed out that if according to Del Río a witch had to renounce the Virgin, then only Catholics could be witches. This strategy, though, had its dangers and created a slippery slope, since the problem of establishing hard and fast criteria to distinguish between natural and supernatural phenomena had a 'corrosive effect on the status of the miraculous in

general'.⁴⁴ Miracles were subjected to a bureaucratization and episcopal investigations and had in effect become legal as well as cultural constructs. 'In this juridical context, miracles no longer provided irrefragible proof of Christian doctrine or the sanctity of an individual, but were themselves in need of proof' (Keitt, p. 180). This resulted in circularities, as visions for example were evidence of virtue, but the virtue of the visionary became key evidence in order to establish the validity of visions; true revelations were not given to dishonest women, who were accused of 'inventing the sacred with strange singularities' (ibid.).

In the literature of the period we see the same indeterminacy surrounding the preternatural. In his 'Coloquio de los perros' Cervantes has Cañizares admit that she does not know whether or not they actually meet the Devil. More generally, the author deftly creates a multi-layered narrative where no one knows *what* to believe. Cañizares tells her story to a dog, who is telling his tale to a fellow canine – neither of whom is sure whether what is happening to them and the fact that they can talk is real or a dream – and these two dogs are overheard by Campuzano, who is recovering from a bout of fever, after having been cruelly deceived by a woman, and he in turn is telling what has befallen him to a comrade he meets outside a hospital. And the whole is the closing tale of a collection of novellas whose author boasts he has *invented* all of them: 'mi ingenio las engendró, y las parió mi pluma' [begotten by my imagination and by my pen brought into this world] (*Novelas ejemplares*, I, p. 52).⁴⁵

Calderón likewise plays on the belief and disbelief in ghosts. In *El galán fantasma* many characters take Astolfo to be a ghost. He was believed to have been murdered by his rival but survived and secretly meets his beloved in her garden, which he enters via a secret tunnel. The *gracioso* Candil, however makes light of the superstition, saying that 'en mentira de fantasmas nada en mi vida he creído' [I have never in my life believed in the lie that there are ghosts] (*El galán fantasma*, p. 88). In *La dama duende*, it is the servant Cosme who is the credulous one. His master Manuel has moved in with an old friend.

⁴⁴ Andrew Keitt, *Inventing the Sacred. Imposture, Inquisition, and the Boundaries of the Supernatural in Golden Age Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 179.

⁴⁵ The same claim is made, but with less justification, by Castillo Solórzano, who writes: 'lo que te puedo asegurar es que ninguna cosa de las que en este libro te presento es traducción italiana, sino todas hijas de mi entendimiento' [what I can assure you is that nothing of what I present to you in this book is a translation from Italian, they are all daughters of my imagination] (Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, *Tardes entretenidas*, 9 (Madrid: Librería de los bibliófilos españoles, 1908), p. 13).

Unbeknownst to him, his friend's sister lives in a secret room adjacent to his and has fallen in love with him. When he is out, having locked the door, she sneaks in from her hiding place, leaves him a letter and the room in a mess. On their return, the *gracioso* thinks there are sprites (*duendes*) at play and the following dialogue ensues:

Don Manuel: [...]

pero, no, Cosme, creer
cosa sobrenatural.

Cosme: ¿No hay duendes?

Don Manuel: Nadie los vio

Cosme: ¿Familiares?

Don Manuel: Son quimeras

Cosme: ¿Brujas?

Don Manuel: Menos

Cosme: ¿Hechiceras?

Don Manuel: ¡Qué horror!

Cosme: ¿Hay súcubos?

Don Manuel: No

Cosme: ¿Encantadoras?

Don Manuel: Tampoco

Cosme: ¿Mágicos?

Don Manuel: Es necesidad

Cosme: ¿Nigromantes?

Don Manuel: Liviandad

Cosme: ¿Energúmenos?

Don Manuel: ¡Qué loco!

Cosme: ¡Vive Dios que te cogí! ¿Diablos?

Don Manuel: Sin poder notorio

Cosme: ¿Hay almas en purgatorio?

Don Manuel: ¿Que me enamoren a mí?

¿Hay más necia bobería?

(ll. 1071-1091)

[**Don Manuel:** '[...] but not, Cosme, to believe in anything supernatural'

Cosme: 'Are there no goblins? – 'No one's ever seen them.' – 'What about familiar spirits?' – 'A mere illusion.' – 'And witches?' – 'Even more so.' – 'Sorceresses?' – 'How awful!' – 'Do succubuses exist?' – 'No.' –

‘Enchantresses?’ – ‘Neither.’ – ‘Magicians, then?’ – ‘You’re being silly.’ – ‘Necromancers?’ – ‘Nonsense.’ – ‘Can people be possessed?’ – ‘That’s madness.’ – ‘Thank God I ran into you! What about devils?’ – ‘Not with any real power.’ – ‘Are there souls in Purgatory?’ – ‘Falling in love with me? Have you ever heard of anything so foolish?’]

Apart from a healthy scepticism within the bounds of the Catholic faith – devils and Purgatory are not denied – this passage also shows and the split between *vulgo* belief and *culto* scepticism, something equally exploited by Zayas, although not always for comical purposes.

* * *

At the time when Zayas was writing her novellas the belief in the supernatural *sensu lato* was in a state of flux. The old episteme was being eroded, but had not been replaced by a new one. The pervading sense surrounding the supernatural was one of indeterminacy. The supernatural *sensu stricto* was brought under control and miracles were in danger of becoming classified as cultural constructs. Although the belief in the Devil was very real and witches were thought to exist, Spain was spared the worst of the early modern ‘witch-craze’ thanks in large part to the cool-headed attitude of the Inquisition, which also dismissed other practitioners of folk magic as frauds and imposters. Great minds like Del Río and Valencia advocated a doubting, sceptical stance when it came to the preternatural.

In the literature of the period there are references to astrologers, Celestina-type sorceresses and Basque witches. The attitude is often sceptical and the effect almost always comical. In Zayas not only do the occurrences of marvellous and miraculous events abound, but the tone and approach are much more varied, and some of her stories are dark and disturbing as well as comical and light-hearted. This multivalent approach is particularly clear when we study the episodes involving magic.

Chapter 3

Slippery Sorcery

Es un mundo exaltado, maravilloso y sobrenatural, con apariencias nocturnas de fantasmas, sueños fatídicos, conjuros y embrujos eróticos, pactos diabólicos, raptos, estupro y asesinatos. (Joaquín del Val)¹

[It is an exalted, marvellous and supernatural world, with nocturnal appearances of ghosts, premonitory dreams, erotic spells and conjurations, diabolical pacts, abduction, rape and murder.]

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER WE SAW THAT ATTITUDES TO THE SUPERNATURAL WERE changing in the seventeenth century and that the discourse surrounding it became pervaded by doubt. In no other writer from the period is the indeterminacy more explicitly played out than in *Zayas*. When we look at her treatment of sorcery and witchcraft, it becomes clear that the author embraced a multifarious approach. She does not deny nor confirm the possibility of magic; sometimes she treats it with irony and light-hearted scepticism, whereas in other instances magic – whether efficacious or not – is deployed in unsettling tales of rape and abuse. I do not claim that *Zayas* consciously exposes the contradictions of a shifting episteme, but that she reflects and exploits the uncertainty and ambivalence vis-à-vis the supernatural *sensu lato*. By showing multiple facets of magic one could say that she sits on the epistemological fence. This strategy fits in well with her overall aim to cause *admiratio* by her baroque enterprise where the reader is led into a narrative labyrinth of apparent contradiction. Modern readers are sometimes surprised at her daring descriptions of sex, violence and sorcery and wonder how ‘she got away with it’. By far the most likely answer is that the censors – and her public – read her tales as they were intended: a series of novellas where things are not always what they seem, and where for many views that are presented (magic is real, women are innocent) the opposite can be found (magic is a sham, some women are evil), all of which has been brought under the umbrella of a notional morality of warning and exemplarity, however shallow and hackneyed that conceit had become – perhaps it always was. That is why in the *Aprobación* and the *Licencia* the censors state

¹ Joaquín del Val, ‘La novela española en el siglo XVII’, in *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas*, 3 (Barcelona: Barna, 1953), p. lix.

that the tales contain nothing ‘contra nuestra Santa Fe ni buenas costumbres, antes gustosa inventiva y apacible agudeza digna de tal Dama’ [against our Holy Faith nor good customs, but rather pleasing creativity and gentle intelligence, worthy of such a Lady]. Zayas’s exploitation of the indeterminacy surrounding the preternatural becomes clear when we compare and contrast four novellas that feature magic.

3.1 Fraudulent magic in ‘El castigo de la miseria’

In ‘El castigo de la miseria’ Marcos loses his fortune after he has been tricked by Isidora, who pretends to be a rich young widow. The morning after their wedding night, he discovers she is almost twenty years older than she had given herself out to be, with her face full of wrinkles, and wearing a wig and false teeth, some of which Marcos finds in his moustache when he wakes up. Shortly afterwards, Marcela, one of the maids, disappears, and with her Marcos’s fortune. Isidora, her ‘cousin’ Agustinico – in reality her young lover – and another maid also take to their heels and flee to Barcelona. Some time later Marcos bumps into Marcela, who bursts into crocodile tears and promises to help him find his lost treasure by taking him to a magician who will perform a ceremony. Her real intention, however, is to play a prank and shake him down for his last *reales*: ‘ella se determinó a engañarle y estafarle lo que pudiese’ [she decided to trick him and fleece him for all he was worth] (*Novelas*, p. 283). Marcos agrees to come with her, claiming he is not the least bit afraid of demons: ‘que era ver un demonio ver un plato de manjar blanco’ [that seeing a demon was the same as seeing a blancmange] (*Novelas*, p. 284). After an elaborate sham ceremony, involving a fake grimoire and some mumbo-jumbo, someone deliberately sets fire to the tail of a cat and lets it loose on Marcos, whose face is badly scratched as a result. The hapless victim faints, convinced he was confronted, not with merely one demon, but with a whole legion. The authorities are informed, the imposter thrown in jail and Marcos interrogated. It soon transpires that he has been had; the magician was a charlatan and the grimoire nothing but a battered old copy of *Amadis de Gaula*. This causes much mirth and Marcos leaves with the laughter of the people at court still ringing in his ears. He is seen as the most cowardly man in town, having lost his fortune to boot. Back home, he receives a letter from Isidora, mocking him cruelly. After that, he is taken ill and dies, at least in most editions – in the first edition he actually commits suicide; this alternative ending will be discussed in the next chapter.

The novella owes a clear debt to Cervantes. First of all, the plot is reminiscent of ‘El casamiento engañoso’. In both stories a gullible man is deceived by false appearances and driven by his lust for money, not by love or even concupiscence. Second, the tale is told with wit and irony and is a perfect companion piece to the other story of the evening, that of the naïve Fadrique who searches in vain for the perfect wife – ‘El prevenido engañado’. Both stories are narrated by male participants in the *sarao* and together with the equally male-narrated ‘Al fin se paga todo’ these tales fit Emilia Pardo Bazán’s description of Zayas’s oeuvre as ‘la picaresca de la aristocracia’ [the aristocratic picaresque], although this is much less apposite when applied to her entire oeuvre.² Maroto Camino has made the claim that the male-narrated novellas have been more successful than the female-narrated ones, although she does not adduce any evidence. But if Scarron’s adaptations into French, which in turn were translated into other languages, are anything to go by, then there is some truth in the assertion, since these three above-mentioned tales were precisely the ones he chose for his renditions.³

Sandra Foa considers all characters in the novella to be caricatures, and this would not be surprising in a novella that has obvious comical elements. Marcos is described as being as thin as an asparagus and Zayas spends a great deal of time recounting his miserly actions. Another clear parody is the false magician.

Y luego el astuto mágico se vistió una ropa de bocacé negro y una montera de lo mismo, y tomando un libro de unas letras góticas en la mano, algo viejo el pergamino para dar más crédito a su burla, hizo un cerco en el suelo y se metió dentro con una varilla en las manos, y empezó a leer entre dientes murmurando en tono melancólico y grave, y de cuando en cuando pronunciaba algunos nombres extravagantes y exquisitos que jamás habían llegado a los oídos de don Marcos. (*Novelas*, p. 285)

[And then the astute magician donned a cape of heavy black lining cloth and a cap of the same material, and taking a book written in Gothic letters on rather old parchment in one hand and to add credibility to his prank, he drew a circle on the floor, placed himself in the centre, took a wand in his other hand and began to read, muttering something under his breath in a melancholy and serious voice, sometimes pronouncing outlandish and exotic names that Marcos had never heard before in his life.]

² I have not been able to find Pardo Bazán’s *Biblioteca de la mujer* in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid or elsewhere and have taken the quote from José Hesse’s introduction to his edition of two novellas by Zayas (*La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor; El prevenido engañado*) and from Samuel Gili Gaya, ‘Apogeo y desintegración de la novela picaresca’, in *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas*, 3 (Barcelona: Barna, 1953), p. xxi.

³ See Mercedes Maroto Camino, ‘Spindles for Swords: The Re/Dis-Cover of María de Zayas’s Presence’, *Hispanic Review*, 62.4 (Autumn 1994), 519-36.

The fake magician is a humorous, mock version of the Renaissance magus (see 2.6). The esoteric tradition that is poked fun at here was on the wane and may never have had much currency in Spain in the first place, but there were plenty of people – predominantly men, a fair few of them lower clergy – who resorted to this kind of magic in order to find treasures. In this novella Zayas describes a preternatural activity light-heartedly. Not only is the magic ceremony a hoax, the victim cuts a pathetic, ridiculous figure. In ‘El castigo’ the fake ceremony is performed by a man, which follows the pattern described in the previous chapter (see 2.2). Amatory magic, by contrast, was almost entirely a female domain, as is the case in the fifth tale of the *Novelas*.

3.2 A wily sorceress and a haunting roadside chapel in ‘La fuerza del amor’

‘La fuerza del amor’ is set in Naples where the beautiful Laura is courted assiduously by Diego after he sees her at a ball. He wins her hand in marriage, but very soon begins to lose interest and returns to his erstwhile lover Nise. When Laura protests and weeps, he beats her brutally. Her brother Carlos intervenes and would have killed Diego had Laura not stopped him. Unable to see her suffer, her father and brothers abandon her to her fate and return to their home in Pietra Bianca. In her despair, Laura seeks out a sorceress in order to win back Diego’s love. The ‘wily sorceress’ (*taimada hechicera*) sends her to a roadside shrine (*humilladero*) at the outskirts of town to collect the beard, hair and teeth of a hanged man – the corpses of executed criminals being brought to the shrine to decompose on iron hooks over a pit. Before she sets out, she rails at the misfortunes of love, desecrating her feminine condition and imprecating Diego for his male perfidy. When she enters the pit, her brother receives a telepathic warning and jumps on his horse, which stops dead in its tracks when it reaches the shrine. He takes her back to Pietra Bianca, but she refuses to return to Diego and decides to enter a convent of the Immaculate Conception as a lay sister (*seglar*). Her husband leaves to join the army and is soon blown up by a mine, while she takes the habit, living piously ever after.

Historically, many of the women involved in love magic were prostitutes, lovers of friars, or else women of ‘loose morals’, but some of them were married. In her research Sánchez Ortega found a good number of women who, like Laura, were beaten and abused by their husbands. In one instance, a woman claims she was fed ground-up glass

by her spouse in an attempt to kill her. Having recourse to black magic was not seen as apostasy by these women. To truly reject Christ and worship the Devil would involve cutting loose all the early modern anchors: family, Church, and neighbourhood or village. Very few if any of those involved in love magic would fit the category of complete renegades. In this poetics of the everyday, flesh slides into spirit, good into evil, evil into good (see Ruggiero). Laura's plight and her recourse to sorcery therefore perfectly fit an established pattern.

The sorceress asks Laura to collect hair and teeth from a cadaver. These were very common ingredient in spells – Tello in *El caballero de Olmedo* is told to do the same by Fabia – because they were thought to contain a person's life spirits (a notion based on contagious magic). Throughout the story it is made clear, however, that magic is an imposture, just as in 'El castigo de la miseria'. But there is a considerable difference in tone. Where the tale of Marcos's pathetic miserliness and his come-uppance is comical, Laura's is a harrowing tale of wife battery, abandonment and impotent rage at her lot. The wily sorceress is clearly out to trick Laura out of her money and has no effective magic to offer. Her only objective is to 'bleed Laura's purse' (*sangrar la bolsa*). The narrator peppers her tale with references to 'supersticiones' [superstitions], 'apariencias de verdades' [apparent truths], 'invenciones' [inventions], 'enredo' [scheme], and the 'común engaño de personas apasionadas' [common deceit of impassioned people]. She calls the sorceress 'embustera' [imposter], 'falsa enredadora' [false trickster], and 'taimada hechicera' [wily sorceress]. We are left in no doubt that Laura's despair has led her astray and she has fallen into a trap, seeking a magic solution to her problems: 'oyendo decir que en aquella tierra había mujeres que obligaban con fuerzas de hechizos a que hubiese amor [having heard that in those lands there were women who use spells to force people to love each other] (*Novelas*, p. 361). The scene at the shrine is described in macabre detail. A mile out of town, the shrine stands a little bit away from the main road to Pietra Bianca (see 1.1) and is surrounded by a pit on all sides.

A estado de hombre, y menos, hay puestos por las paredes garfios de hierro, en los cuales, después de haber ahorcado en la plaza los hombres que mueren por justicia, los llevan allá y cuelgan en aquellos garfios; y como los tales se van deshaciendo, caen los huesos en aquel hoyo que, como está sagrado, les sirve de sepultura. (*Novelas*, p. 365)

[At about the height of a man, and sometimes lower, there are iron hooks sticking out of the wall. After criminals who have been sentenced to death have been publicly hanged, their corpses are brought here and hung from these hooks. As the bodies decompose, the bones fall into the pit, which, being consecrated ground, serves as their tomb.]

The situation becomes even more eerie when her brother receives a telepathic warning that she is in danger.

Estando don Carlos acostado en su cama al tiempo que llegó Laura al humilladero, despertó con riguroso y cruel sobresalto, dando tales voces que parecía se le acababa la vida [...] vuelto más en sí, levantándose de la cama y diciendo: ‘En algún peligro está mi hermana’, se comenzó a vestir [...] a la una se halló enfrente del humilladero, donde paró el caballo de la misma suerte que si fuera de bronce o piedra. (*Novelas*, p. 366)

[Don Carlos was fast asleep in his bed when Laura arrived at the roadside chapel, but suddenly he woke up with a terrible and cruel fright, shouting so loudly that it seemed he was dying... Having recovered his senses, he got up and said: ‘My sister is in some kind of danger,’ and got dressed... At one o’clock, as he rode past the roadside chapel, his horse stopped in its tracks and refused to move, as if it were made of bronze or stone.]

This uncanny episode complicates the reading of the story as a merely sceptical account of magic. Moreover, what happens is referred to as ‘un caso portentoso’ [a portentous case] (*Novelas*, p. 368). So despite presenting magic as an imposture, Zayas manages to create an otherworldly, uncanny atmosphere (for more discussion, see 5.3).

Laura may have been saved, but she does not return to her husband. Her ordeal came about because she was abandoned by her father and brother – precisely the people who were supposed to love and protect her – and brutally beaten by her husband. She embodies the predicament of women in the patriarchy. This explains why instead of fearing the salvific implications of her recourse to black magic, she rails against her position as a woman, repeating almost verbatim what Zayas says in her prologue:

¿Por qué, vanos legisladores del mundo, atáis nuestras manos para las venganzas, imposibilitando nuestras fuerzas con vuestras falsas opiniones, pues nos negáis letras y armas? El alma ¿no es la misma que la de los hombres? Pues si ella es la que da valor al cuerpo, ¿quién obliga a los nuestros a tanta cobardía? Yo aseguro que si entendierais que también había en nosotras valor y fortaleza no os burlaríais como os burláis; y así, por tenernos sujetas desde que nacemos vais enflaqueciendo nuestras fuerzas con los temores de la honra y el entendimiento con el recato de la vergüenza, dándonos por espadas rucas y por libros almohadillas. (*Novelas*, p. 364)

[Why, vain legislators of the world, do you tie our hands and prevent us from avenging ourselves, hamstringing us with your false opinions since you deny us learning and arms? Is not our soul the same as a man’s? And if it is the soul that gives our bodies courage, what is it that compels us to such cowardice? I assure you that if you understood that in us too there is courage and strength, you would not cheat on us the way you do; from the day we are born, you subject us and weaken our strength with fears about honour, and our intelligence with modesty and shame, giving us distaffs instead of swords and pincushions instead of books.]

This is why Hernández Pecoraro sees Laura's descent into the pit as a metaphorical descent into hell, even if strictly speaking the protagonist does not enter the pit nor touch the cadavers.⁴ Instead, she spends three hours in the chapel unable to go through with what she has set out to do: 'jamás consiguió su deseo, desde las diez que serían cuando llegó allí, hasta la una [she never managed to get what she wanted, from ten o'clock, when she arrived, until one] (*Novelas*, p. 366). But Laura's three hours in the vicinity of the corpses constitutes a harrowing experience and I agree with Hernández Pecoraro that Laura dies a metaphorical death and is resurrected and reborn, having come to the decision never to return to her husband and turn her back on her family. Her reconciliation is not with the patriarchy that condemns her to a denigrating existence, but with the feminine sphere of the convent. This tallies with Greer's conviction that Zayas's project is aimed at implanting 'the conviction that heterosexual union is *not* the desired goal but a fatal trap for most women, and that true happy endings can only be found by sublimating desire for any corporeal male and rejoining the mother in the feminine world of the convent' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 340).

When Laura decides to seek out a sorceress, the narrator tells us that this is a cinch because in Naples there are many such women and the Inquisition is not there to put a stop to these practices.

Hay en Nápoles, en estos enredos y supersticiones, tanta libertad que públicamente usan sus invenciones, haciendo tantas y con tales apariencias de verdades que casi obligan a ser creídas. Y aunque los confesores y el virrey andan en esto solícitos, como no hay el freno de la Inquisición y los demás castigos, no les amedrentan. (*Novelas*, p. 361)

[There is in Naples, as far as these superstitions and schemes are concerned, so much freedom that they go about their business openly, and these acts are so frequent and seem so real that one is almost compelled to believe them. And although the confessors and the Viceroy are trying to tackle the problem, seeing as the Inquisition is not there to curb it, these people are not scared.]

There are a few noteworthy elements here. First, the references to superstitions and 'apariencias de verdades' [apparent truths] that are so typical of the seventeenth-century approach to magic. Next, the narrator makes a clear effort to align herself with the Spanish authorities and the Church, stressing that the Viceroy and the confessors are trying to remedy the situation, but that they are simply overwhelmed by the sheer

⁴ See Rosilie Hernández Pecoraro, 'La fuerza del amor or The Power of Self-Love: Zayas's Response to Cervantes's *La fuerza de la sangre*', *Hispanic Review*, 70.1 (Winter 2002), 39-57.

number and hampered by the absence of the Holy Office. The situation in Naples appears to be very similar to the one in Rome in 1645, as described by Scipione Mercurio in *De gli errori popolari d'Italia*:

This plague is so widespread here where I am writing that without any consideration or fear, almost everyone for a headache, or other infirmity, first goes to visit the *malefica* or witch to be signed by her, and for childbirth ailments, for tertiary or quartan fevers, for wounds or dislocations, and even for syphilis they go to be signed by these really witches, who, with less infamous name are called *segnaresse* (quoted in Tedeschi, 'The Question of Magic', p. 100).

Since the Spanish Inquisition was established in Castile and Aragon in 1478, there had been a number of attempts to introduce it to other parts of the empire. King Ferdinand tried to set up a branch of the tribunal in Naples, but to no avail. Charles V attempted the same, although with less vigour, and was equally unsuccessful. In 1547 there were revolts when the people thought that the Spanish Inquisition was about to be active in the city. At the time of his successor to the throne, the people 'had [...] lost none of their horror of the Spanish institution and, when Philip II endeavoured to force it upon Milan, their fears were aroused that it might be imposed upon Naples'.⁵ The king was forced to assure his subjects 'that he had no intention of introducing the Spanish Inquisition and that trials for heresy should be conducted in the ordinary way as heretofore' (Lea, pp. 86-87). This sounds as if there was no Inquisition at all in Naples, just as Zayas suggests, but in fact, as elsewhere in Italy, there was an episcopal inquisition that operated in Naples and which had gradually been brought under the control of the papal (Roman) Inquisition by the seventeenth century (see Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*). But even if there *had* been the 'freno de la Inquisición' (literally: the bit or curb of the Inquisition), it would probably not have made any difference. In the previous chapter I discussed the leniency of the Holy Office with regards to sorcery and the fact that Alonso de Salazar's recommendations to the Suprema counselling reticence in matters of witchcraft were known by the Roman Inquisition, as well as the fact that Italian inquisitors were advised not to 'rush headlong' into these matters (see 2.5). Apart from showing that Zayas aligns herself with the authorities and the Church, the passage is proof that the Holy Office was not universally feared by Spaniards, despite the famous proverb 'del Rey y de la Inquisición, chitón' [about the King and the Inquisition,

⁵ Henry Lea, *The Inquisition in the Spanish Dependencies* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 86 <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044020533410;view=1up;seq=9>> [Accessed 15 August 2016].

best to keep shtum]. Henry Kamen has suggested that the Inquisition was more accepted in Castile than elsewhere, but never enthusiastically supported (nor universally feared), adding that the Reformation made it appear more natural and acceptable and that it fulfilled a social role ‘as guardian against heresy, as keeper of public morality, as arbiter between factions, as tribunal for small causes’ (Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition*, p. 82).

In the two novellas I have just discussed, magic is not treated as real, but either as a comic sham ceremony or as the shady schemings of a heartless fraud. I shall now turn to two tales in which magic is described as perfectly efficacious, even after being tested by the authorities; diegetically there is no doubt that what happens *is* the result of a spell. But like in the previous two stories, the tone differs from one novella to the other. Although the contrast is not as stark, the spell in one of the stories is explicitly referred to as a funny detail, whereas the heroine in the other suffers a fate even more harrowing than Laura’s.

3.3 A funny spell in ‘El desengaño amando’

The sixth *novela amorosa* of Zayas’s collection, ‘El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud’, is set in Toledo and tells the story of Fernando, an inveterate gambler and womaniser who falls in love with Juana, who is initially courted by Octavio. After some assiduous wooing with poetry and music, Fernando wins her over under the promise of marriage, and Octavio leaves town. After having his wicked way with her, however, he is reluctant to marry her, pretending that his widowed mother does not agree with the match. Not having any family, Juana turns to her friend Lucrecia. The latter, however, also falls in love with Fernando and writes him a letter to that effect. Suspecting foul play, Juana decides to take on her rival ‘con las mismas armas’ [with the same weapons] (*Novelas*, p. 382). She enlists the help of a student from Alcalá who gives her two rings with green gems that contain genies who are able to tell him whom she will marry provided she wears the rings a certain way when she interrogates Fernando about his plans. After that, she should take off the rings. Juana follows the instructions and gives the rings to her maid for safekeeping. The maid surreptitiously puts them on as she does the washing. When the student returns, Juana gives the rings back, whereupon the genies beat the living daylights out of him for allowing them to be drenched. They tell him that he and Juana will both go to hell, after which they seem to disappear. Juana

takes in the badly beaten student, who renounces the dark arts. Notwithstanding, Juana persuades him to teach her a spell to make her ex-lover Octavio come back to her. She thinks he is alive and well in his native Italy, where she told him to go when a duel threatened to break out between Fernando and himself. Unbeknownst to Juana, however, he has died and when she conjures him up, it's his ghost that appears to harangue her. Juana mends her ways and enters the convent of the Immaculate Conception. Meanwhile, Fernando has amassed huge gambling debts and his roving eye is caught by the young Clara, whom he marries mainly because of her supposed wealth. But after four years and having fathered two daughters, he runs off with Lucrecia to Seville, where they live as man and wife. Although courted by a well-meaning marquis, Clara decides to follow Fernando and Lucrecia. She is hired as a maid by Fernando and Lucrecia, who do not recognise her. Clara is keen to find out what Lucrecia's secret is, and one day her mistress asks her to feed a cock that lives in a large chest in the attic. The animal is chained-up and wears blinkers. When she takes them off, Fernando recognizes his wife and starts to weep. Lucrecia knows her game is up and sticks a great needle into a waxen effigy of Fernando. Then she takes a knife and stabs herself in the heart, dropping dead onto the floor. The authorities are informed and an investigation is mounted. In order to verify Clara's story, they put the blinkers on the cock, and, sure enough, Fernando has no idea who she is. After that, they doff the blinkers and Fernando recognizes his wife, weeping bitter tears. The procedure is repeated various times and the magistrates are convinced of the efficacy of the spell. Fernando and Clara are declared innocent and will not face a prison sentence, unlike the female slaves of the household who are deemed to have been complicit. Fernando remains fatally ill from the effects of the spell. He is taken back to Toledo, where he dies, leaving Clara free to marry her suitor the marquis. They live happily ever after and the two daughters she had with Fernando enter the convent of the Immaculate Conception to join Juana.

Of all the novellas in Zayas's collection, this is the one where magic is most central to the plot. There are three distinct episodes, the first is that of the magic rings, then there is the conjuration of Octavio's ghost and lastly we have Lucrecia's spells. The ring-dwelling *demonios* areimps or hobgoblins rather than Satan's servants, even if they claim to be able to foresee the future. With reference to the green stones, Matos-Nin says they are emeralds, stating that: 'La crítica moderna piensa que esta es una idea ridícula y falta de lógica' (Matos-Nin, *Lo sobrenatural*, p. 64) without indicating which critics have said this. When the rings do not work, Laura uses a spell to make Octavio come to her.

When his ghost appears, rattling his chains and surrounded by licking flames, it is not because the spell was effective, but because ‘aunque el demonio es padre de mentiras y engaños, tal vez permite Dios que diga alguna verdad en provecho y utilidad de los hombres, para que se avisen de su perdición’ [even though the Devil is the father of lies and deceit, sometimes God may permit him to speak the truth for the benefit of the people so that they are warned of their damnation] (*Novelas*, p. 387).

Martín del Río discusses ghosts in his *Investigations into Magic*, saying that only God has the power to release souls from Purgatory, but that in fact he will never allow it: ‘To think that he would do so because of the prayers and incantations of magicians is impious’ (Del Río, pp. 71-72). Necromancers who claim they can summon up souls are fraudulent. According to Ciruelo one of the ways the Devil manifests himself is by pretending to be ‘algún alma ensabanada que dice que anda en pena’ [some sheet-covered soul saying it is in Purgatory] (Ciruelo, p. 110). But sometimes God allows souls to appear to us ‘tomando cuerpo fantástico del aire’ [assuming a fantastical, aerial body], albeit ‘muy de tarde en tarde’ [very occasionally] (Ciruelo, p. 203). Vitoria too stresses the rarity of the event, although he does not want to exclude it entirely. He condemns the costume of asking souls from Purgatory for help, saying the apparitions are largely false ‘Y si algunas fueran verdaderas, serían obra de los mismos demonios’ [And should some of them be real, they would be the Devil’s work] (Vitoria, p. 93). Zayas’s description of Octavio’s ghost is therefore strictly conventional, albeit rare. This very real ghost forms a neat contrast with the fake ghost in ‘Mal presagio casar lejos’ (see 5.2.1).

The novella’s most elaborate description of magic involves the ‘artes y conjuros’ [arts and spells] by Lucrecia. When we are first introduced to her we are told that she is Italian, though ‘tan ladina y españolada como si fuera nacida y criada en Castilla’ [so sly and Hispanized that it seemed she had been born and raised in Castile] (*Novelas*, p. 380). She is over forty-eight years old but still attractive and reputed to be a ‘grandísima hechicera’ [very great sorceress]. She only uses her craft for her own benefit and keeps it a secret. We are told that Lucrecia uses her magic to seduce Fernando and that when the latter decides to marry Clara, there is a lull in her spell, probably due to an oversight on the Italian sorceress’s part: ‘no estaba [Fernando] tan apretado de los hechizos de Lucrecia’ [Fernando was less under the influence of Lucrecia’s spells] (*Novelas*, p. 390).

But when she finds out he has married another, she is furious and casts a nasty spell on him:

Supo Lucrecia el casamiento de don Fernando a tiempo que no lo pudo estorbar por estar ya hecho; y por vengarse, usando de sus endiabladas artes, dio con él en la cama, atormentándole de manera que siempre le hacía estar en un ¡ay!, sin que en más de seis meses que le duró la enfermedad se pudiese entender de dónde le procedía. (*Novelas*, p. 392)

[Lucrecia found out about Don Fernando's marriage too late to prevent it, as it had already taken place; and to avenge herself she used her devilish arts and attacked him in his bed, tormenting him in such a way that he was forever crying out in pain, and in the more than six months that his illness lasted he never found out where it came from.]

Then there is the famous episode with the blinkered cock. What he wears are described as 'unos antojos' (*Novelas*, p. 403), referred to by some critics as glasses (Greer, *Baroque Tales*; Matos-Nin, *Lo sobrenatural*), while Brownlee calls it a blindfold (*Cultural Labyrinth*). The true meaning, however, is that of blinkers. In his dictionary Covarrubias defines 'antojos' first as 'cravings' (as in modern Spanish) and then as spectacles or glasses ('anteojos' in modern Spanish) and then adds: 'antojos de caballo, estos le ponen no para que vea sino para que esté quedo y no se espante' ['antojos de caballo' are what they put on horses, not so they see better, but so they are quiet and do not scare]. Zayas makes this reading clear by adding 'a modo de los de caballo, que le tenían privada la vista' [like a horse's, depriving him of his sight] (*Novelas*, p. 403). The logic behind the spell is evident and based on sympathetic magic: just like the cock is chained and blinkered, just so is Fernando tied to Lucrecia, only having eyes for her and not his wife.

Lucrecia's magic can also be read metaphorically. Fernando may have been merely seduced by Lucrecia. After all, we still use the language of magic to refer to seduction. We speak of someone's charm, and say we are *encantado* or *enchanté* when we meet someone attractive; we sing about men or women putting a spell on us, so that we end up 'bewitched, bothered and bewildered'. Likewise we can be spellbound, fascinated (subjected to the evil eye) or obsessed (originally a demonological term) by someone (see Whitenack, 'Lo que ha menester' and Kieckhefer). Zayas makes this link explicit in a number of other novellas. In 'La perseguida triunfante', for example, Federico says: 'Y no te espantes que tema a un hombre enamorado en presencia de una mujer hermosa, que es un hechizo la hermosura que a todos mueve a piedad' [And do not be amazed that I fear a man in love to be in the presence of a beautiful woman, because beauty is a

spell that moves all to devotion] (*Desengaños*, p. 451). We are also told that Lucrecia is past the prime of her youth and does everything in her power to keep herself attractive:

aún no había perdido la belleza que en la mocedad había alcanzado de todo punto, animándolo todo con gran cantidad de hacienda que tenía granjeado en Roma, Italia y otras tierras que había corrido, siendo calificada en todas por grandísima hechicera. (*Novelas*, p. 380)

[she had not yet lost the beauty she had reached to perfection in her youth, enhancing it with the great wealth she had acquired in Rome, elsewhere in Italy and in other countries she had passed through, being labelled in all of them as a very great sorceress.]

This can be read as follows: she successfully enhances her beauty by means of the great wealth she has amassed and *as a result* she is labelled (*calificada*) a sorceress wherever she goes. It suggests Lucrecia has powers of seduction akin to those of Cleopatra – ‘Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety; other women cloy the appetites they feed: but she makes hungry where most she satisfies’.⁶ Zayas adds that ‘esta habilidad no era conocida de todos, porque jamás la ejercitaba en favor de nadie, sino en el suyo’ [this ability was not known by all, because she never applied it on anyone else’s behalf, only her own] (*Novelas*, p. 380), implying she does not share her beautifying secrets with anyone. This naturalistic reading is made problematic, however, by the fact that Lucrecia is nick-named Circe (three times) and it is alluded that she has made a pact with the Devil, although that too could be interpreted metaphorically. At one point, Fernando feels torn between the embers of his love for Juana and Lucrecia’s charms and spells:

aquí le tiraba alguna voluntad, que aún había algunas brasas entre las muertas cenizas, y acullá los encantos y embustes, estaba parado en la calle, batallando con amor y hechizos, sin saber dónde acudir; mas al fin podía más Lucrecia, o por mejor decir el demonio, a quien ella tenía muy de su parte. (*Novelas*, pp. 381-382)

[he was pulled this way by his desire – there were still some embers among the dead ashes – and that way by her spells and tricks, making him stand still in the street, torn between love and a hex, not knowing which way to go; but in the end Lucrecia won out, or, to be more precise, the Devil, who was very much on her side.]

This acknowledgement of the Devil’s agency behind in Lucrecia’s preternatural powers is in line with the theological conviction that any act of black magic relies on a diabolical

⁶ Shakespeare, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Act II, scene 2.

pact, be it explicit or implicit. As Del Río writes: ‘All magical operations rest, as on a foundation, upon a pact made between the magician and an evil spirit’ (Del Río, p. 73).

When Lucrecia realizes her game is up, she takes ‘una figura de hombre hecha de cera’ [a statuette of a man made from wax] (*Novelas*, p. 404) and sticks a great needle into its head, pushing it down through the body before throwing it into the fire. Again, the voodoo doll is a very common instrument in black magic and the thinking behind the action is clear enough. Fernando remains fatally wounded, although he has the opportunity to repent. His contrition and confession may save his soul, but he cannot overcome the effects of the spell. This lends some poetic justice to the narrative, but it is unusual, since magic is supposed to disappear with the demise of its source. After his death, Clara marries the marquis, giving the novella a fairy tale ending:

Doña Clara vivió muchos años con su don Sancho, de quien tuvo hermosos hijos que sucedieron en el estado de su padre, siendo por la virtud la más querida y regalada que se puede imaginar, porque de esta suerte premia el cielo la virtud. (*Novelas*, p. 408)

[Doña Clara lived many years with her Don Sancho, with whom she had beautiful children who inherited their father’s estate, being more loved and esteemed on account of her virtue than one can imagine, because this is how Heaven rewards virtue.]

The overall tenor of the novella is upbeat. The evil sorceress Lucrecia gets what is coming to her, the fickle Fernando pays the price for his treachery although he is allowed to clear his conscience and die confessed, Juana is saved, and Clara is rewarded by her marriage to a rich and doting husband. The audience too experiences the tale as a happy one and refers to Lucrecia’s secret in the attic as ‘el gracioso suceso del gallo con antojos’ [the funny event with the blinkered cock] (*Novelas*, p. 408).

3.4 Voodoo rape in ‘La inocencia castigada’

If ‘El desengaño amando’ is on the whole a positive story, quite the reverse is the case for ‘La inocencia castigada’. In that novella, Diego falls in love with the beautiful Inés, whose husband is away on an extended business trip to Seville, but despite his best efforts, she refuses to give in to his advances. His unhappiness is noticed by a neighbour, who proceeds to deceive him. She borrows one of Inés’s dresses and makes a prostitute wear it, tricking Diego into believing he has finally conquered her. The deceit is found out and the woman severely punished. In his despair, Diego turns to a Moorish necromancer who fashions a waxen effigy of Inés that will give him control of

her. All the spurned lover needs to do is to light the candle on the head of the statue and his beloved will come to his bed. The spell works. After being raped under a spell Inés returns home and when she wakes up, she complains about ‘descompuestos sueños’ [lewd dreams]. The abuse goes on for a month until one night Inés is found sleepwalking in the street by her brother and the Corregidor [magistrate], who follow her and witness her slip into Diego’s bed. Diego remembers not to blow out the candle and tells Inés to go home. He then confesses his crime and Inés is so desperate she asks her brother to kill her for having been ‘mala’ [bad]. The Corregidor decides to test the enchantment and concludes she is not to blame. But her sister-in-law convinces her brother and her husband, who has returned from Seville, that she faked the spell. They wall her up in a very narrow space where she spends the next six years, standing in her excrement and covered in worms. The authorities lock up Diego and, after having some difficulty in tracking him down, send the Moor to an inquisitorial dungeon in Madrid. When Inés is finally rescued after a neighbour hears her moan and pray piteously, she has gone blind. Her husband, brother and sister-in-law are punished and she is put in a convent.

In this tale Diego is first subjected to a baroque test of truth and appearances, which he fails, taking the prostitute wearing Inés’s dress to be Inés herself. Then he turns to a magician, ‘habiendo oído decir que en la ciudad había un moro, gran hechicero y nigromántico, le hizo buscar, y que se le trajesen, para obligar con encantos y hechicerías a que le quisiese doña Inés’ [having heard that in the city there was a Moor, a great sorcerer and necromancer, he sent for him to force Inés to love him by means of spells and sorcery] (*Desengaños*, p. 276). Etymologically, a necromancer is someone who consults the spirits of the dead, like the witch of Endor through whom Saul tried to communicate with the departed prophet Samuel.⁷ But in early modern Europe, ‘the conjuring of demons came to be known as necromancy’ (Kieckhefer, p. 152) and it was the name for an *explicit* form of demonic magic. Zayas’s ‘nigromante agareno’ [‘Mohammedan’ necromancer] is said to have some hold over the Devil, which is not difficult for him being a non-Catholic: ‘como ajenos de nuestra católica fe, no les es dificultoso, con apremios que hacen al demonio’ [since they do not profess the Catholic

⁷ See 1 Samuel 28. In the King James version, the woman is not called a witch, but ‘woman that hath a familiar spirit.’ In the early modern period there was some controversy over whether Saul actually saw Samuel’s spirit. Martín del Río thought he had, but not on account of the spell. Reginald Scot was convinced the woman was a charlatan and ventriloquist.

faith, this is not difficult for them, with the demands they make of the Devil] (*Desengaños*, p. 276). He proceeds to make a waxen statue of Inés with a candle on her head. Álvarez Amell misreads the description of the statuette and takes the figurine to be headless, writing that as a result Inés has been represented by a ‘falsa imagen fálica y acéfala’ [a false phallic and acephalic image] and thus robbed of her autonomy.⁸ The sympathetic magic is once more evident: as this candle is burning, just so will Inés’s heart burn for Diego. Moreover, her heart is pierced by a golden arrow. After Diego has been discovered, the spell is tested rigorously by a magistrate.

Que algo más quieta la desdichada dama, mandó el Corregidor, sin que ella lo supiera, se saliesen fuera y encendiesen la vela; que, apenas fue hecho, cuando se levantó y se salió adonde la vela estaba encendida, y en diciéndole que ya era hora de irse, se volvía a su asiento, y la vela se apagaba y ella volvía como de sueño. Esto hicieron muchas veces, mudando la vela a diferentes partes, hasta volver con ella en casa de don Diego, y encenderla allí. (*Desengaños*, p. 281)

[When the unfortunate lady had calmed down a little, the magistrate ordered them to leave the room and light the candle without her being aware, and no sooner had they done just that than she got up and left the room to go to where the burning candle was, and when they told her it was time to go, she returned to her seat and when they extinguished the candle, she came to her senses, as if waking from a dream. They did this many times, placing the candle in various places, even taking it back to Don Diego’s house, where they lit it.]

The fate of Diego and the Moor has led to some confusion. Matos-Nin (*Lo sobrenatural*) claims the Moor is the Devil himself, because she says he disappears without a trace, and Patsy Boyer mistranslates the relevant passage so that it reads as if *Diego* is never seen again instead of the Moor. It is only in the first instance that it seems the necromancer has vanished; he is apprehended and sent to an inquisitorial cell in Madrid and never seen again. The Spanish is not entirely clear, but this is how I read the passage:

El Corregidor otro día buscó al moro que había hecho el hechizo; mas no pareció. Divulgóse el caso por la ciudad, y sabido por la Inquisición, pidió el preso, que le fue entregado con el proceso ya sustanciado, y puesto cómo había de estar, que llevado a su cárcel, y de ella a la Suprema, no pareció más. (*Desengaños*, p. 282)

[The next day the magistrate subpoenaed (lit. looked for) the Moor who had cast the spell, but he did not appear. The case became known all over town, and when the Inquisition

⁸ Diana Álvarez Amell, ‘El objeto del cuerpo femenino en el “Quinto Desengaño” de María de Zayas’, in *Actas Irvine-92 II Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas*, ed. by Juan Villegas (University of California, 1994), p. 29.

got wind of it, they demanded the prisoner be transferred to them, which they did, after he had already been sentenced (*in absentia*), and they put him where he ought to be, and after he had been moved to their cell, and from there to the Suprema, he was never seen again.]

Whitenack devoted an article to this novella and in her view Inés is plagued by lewd dreams and guilt-ridden because somehow she was susceptible to the spell (see 1.3.3). She blames her desire on her being (sexually) neglected by her husband. The novella is introduced by the notion that women who do not get ‘lo que ha menester’ [what is needed] are led to ‘bajezas’ [vile acts], leading men to lose their honour and women to lose their life. Furthermore, she refers to the conviction that free will cannot be subdued by enchantment (for more discussion, see 5.1). This suggests that Inés failed to use her free will to avoid her being raped, which might explain why she wants to die for having been ‘mala’ [bad]. Still, it would go too far to lay the blame at her door. Let us not forget that the novella is called ‘Inocencia castigada’. In contrast to her earlier expression of guilt, from within the extremely narrow confines of her cell she bemoans her fate and insists on her innocence:

¿Señor, no castigarás? Pues cuando tú envías el castigo, es a quien tiene culpa, y aun entonces es con piedad: mas estos tiranos castigan en mí lo que no hice, como lo sabes bien tú, que no fui parte en el yerro por que padezco tan crueles tormentos. (*Desengaños*, pp. 284-285).

[Lord, won't you punish them? You only punish those who are guilty, and even then it is with clemency: but these tyrants punish me for something I didn't do; you know I had no part in the crime for which I am suffering such cruel torments.]

And when a friendly neighbour discovers her and asks her what she has done to deserve her ordeal, Inés replies: ‘no tengo culpa; mas son cosas muy largas y no se pueden contar’ [I am not to blame: it is a long story and impossible to tell] (*Desengaños*, p. 286). She clearly believes she is blameless and the story emphasizes the power of the enchantment over her free will since she is ‘forzada de algun espíritu diabólico’ [forced by some diabolical spirit] (*Desengaños*, p. 277).⁹ What appears to be at stake is Inés's utter powerlessness and abandonment, which is given voice through an irrational fear of magic. In Friedman's words: ‘When Zayas resorts to the supernatural in this novella and throughout the collection, she seems to imply that, in a world of social negotiations,

⁹ See Matthew Stroud, ‘Artistry and Irony in María de Zayas's *La inocencia castigada*’, in *Zayas and Her Sisters, 2: Essays on Novelas by 17th-Century Spanish Women* (New York: Global Publications Binghamton University, 2001), pp. 79-95.

reason cannot suffice.¹⁰ Victorino Polo too argues that in ‘La inocencia castigada’, the introduction of the *nigromántico* changes the story completely, since the human plane is abandoned and the story turns to the dominions of the Devil ‘donde el hombre viene a ser puro juguete sin voluntad ni razón, víctima de poderosas fuerzas telúricas y siderales, leño frágil lanzado a un torbellino sin fondo’ [where man becomes a mere plaything without will or reason, a victim of powerful telluric as well as sidereal forces, a piece of driftwood thrown into a bottomless whirlpool].¹¹ But that is not the whole story and magic is not merely an atavistic relapse into irrationality in a modernizing world or the concomitant decline of social systems, as Adorno has suggested (see also 1.3.5).

A closer reading of the narrator’s introduction to the novellas reveals some further rifts in Whitenack’s argument. Laura introduces the tale as a warning against adultery by women of loose morals and an encouragement to men to forgive women even if they behave badly. She adds that men are hard-hearted and that blame normally falls on women. When she starts the tale, she warns that a woman in despair is likely to do anything if she does not get what she craves. But then she proceeds by saying: ‘No le sucedió por esta parte a doña Inés la desdicha, porque su esposo hacía la estimación de ella que merecía su valor y hermosura’ [This misfortune did not befall Doña Inés, however, because her husband valued her in accordance with her virtue and beauty] (*Desengaños*, p. 266). Brownlee sees this as an example of Zayas’s project of polysemy in which the reader is put on the wrong foot. However, the tale is not simply the reverse of what it purports to be about. Whitenack says that Inés marries against her will, but to be more precise, she marries in order to escape from her wicked sister-in-law. Once married, her husband departs on an extended trip to Seville, during which she falls victim to the Moor’s spell. When he returns, he is persuaded by the treacherous sister-in-law (*la traidora cuñada*) to wall up his innocent wife. According to Vollendorf (*Reclaiming*) the spatial confinement of Inés hyperbolizes the patriarchal impulse to confine women. Walled-up women were not uncommon in early modern Spain, but immurement was rarely used as punishment; most of the ‘emparedadas’ [walled-up women] were urban female hermits who lived in tiny cells in the walls of cities or

¹⁰ Edward Friedman, ‘Innocents Punished: The Narrative Models of María de Zayas’, *Confluencia*, 20.1 (2004), p. 14.

¹¹ Victorino Polo García, ‘El romanticismo literario de Doña María de Zayas y Sotomayor’, in *Murcia. Anales de la Universidad* (1967), p. 562.

convents.¹² The evil in-law is convinced that Inés made the enchantment up to cover up her love affair: ‘decía que doña Inés debía de fingir el embelesamiento por quedar libre de culpa’ [said that Doña Inés had to be faking the enchantment to avoid blame] (*Desengaños*, pp. 281-282). In her study of women in Zayas, O’Brien sets out her idea that the author portrays a community based on gyn/affection as well as its obverse: the ‘perfidious sisterhood’ (see O’Brien, *Women in the prose*). The evil sister-in-law is a prime example of a woman’s lack of solidarity and her siding with the patriarchy. This interpretation is made explicit by the narrator, who says of the ‘traidora cuñada’ that ‘por mujer, pudiera tener piedad de ella’ [being a woman, she should have taken pity on her] (*Desengaños*, p. 282). Gorfkle sees the sister-in-law as the classical oedipal rival and a terrifying mother figure, although she does not elaborate the point.¹³ A cynical reading of the tale could agree with the sister-in-law, though. Inés *could* have feigned the whole thing, even during the tests. Because if there is no magic, then we are left with any alternative explanation, including a cynical one. But there is simply too much diegetic emphasis on the efficacy of the spell to allow for this interpretation to be acceptable. At the end of the story, she is put in a convent, beautiful but blind. Greer, not too convincingly, sees Inés’s blindness as a ‘synecdochic punishment: it is inflicted on the eyes of the woman whose beauty arouses desire in the eyes of others, envy in those who do not possess her, and a thirst to punish her in the flesh on the part of the cruel sister-in-law’ (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 275). I would say that Inés’s tale is about evil powers, sexual frustration, female entrapment and abandonment as well as betrayal by those who are supposed to look after us. She exploits not only the indeterminacy surrounding magic, giving just enough room for the cynic to disregard the veracity of the spell, but also the fear of the irrational, the notion that women are not in control over their bodies and their fate.

3.5 Verisimilitude and magic

In his study of love magic already referred to, Ruggiero tells the following story. One day when mass was celebrated in Feltre, in the north of the Veneto, a waxen statue pierced with needles was found underneath the altar. It had been placed there by a young woman who had been seduced by a local rake. He had made her several promises

¹² See Anne Cruz, ‘The Walled-In Woman in Medieval and Early Modern Spain’, *Gender Matters. Discourses of Violence in Early Modern Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Mara R. Wade (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 349-66.

¹³ See Laura Gorfkle, ‘Seduction and Hysteria in María de Zayas’s *Desengaños amorosos*’, *Hispanófila*, 115 (1995), 11-28.

of marriage and she was pregnant with his child. At one stage during the courtship, her father and another male member of the family burst into her room and discovered the two in bed. They forced the young man to promise he would marry the girl in question and made him give her a ring. This would have been a valid marriage by pre-Tridentine standards. After Trent, however, such marriages, not having been sanctioned by the Church, were no longer accepted. The father took his case to the authorities, but they were reluctant to take action. He then built his case on honour and claimed his family had been dishonoured. Meanwhile, the rake had fled to fight in Flanders. At that point the *burlata* [duped woman] contacted a woman called Lucrezia, who had the reputation of being a witch and who was nicknamed Circe. This go-between had been successful at bringing about marriages through her spells and she was the one who suggested to have the waxen effigy made and place it underneath the altar.

All the classic ingredients of many a novella and *comedia* are present in this account: the girl who is seduced and then abandoned, the rake who leaves her to fight in Flanders, the stain on the family honour. We also have an Italian *strega* (witch) called Lucrezia and nicknamed Circe, exactly as we have it in Zayas's novella 'El desengaño amando'. Another case Ruggiero cites is reminiscent of the spell in 'La inocencia castigada'. A courtesan named Isabella used magic as a way of ensuring that her lover Milano would come to her. She would burn a holy lamp in front of a Tarot card depicting the Devil. She did this 'so that Milano would come to me, that was my intention, that he come' (Ruggiero, p. 97). Another woman, Elisabetta Giantis, describes a ritual that allowed her to conjure up a shadow version of herself, a true and literal inversion, who would go out and reverse her lover's reluctance:

She [a witch called Betta] also taught me that I should undress fully nude both having bought and said [that I buy] a candle in the name of the Devil. Then [having lit the candle] I should turn my face to the shadow [thus created] and say 'I have undressed myself and you dress yourself' and also say 'good evening my shadow, my sister you go to the heart of so and so'. Then I took the candle from behind me and I said, 'I understand that one must pay the Devil'. (Ruggiero, pp. 122-23)

Sánchez Ortega gives some Spanish examples of the same type of conjuration: 'Sombra, cabeça tenéis como yo, cuerpo tenéis como yo, yo te mando que así como tienes mi sombra verdadera que tú vayas a Fulano e lo traigas a mí' [Shadow, you have a head like me, you have a body like me, I send you just like you are my actual shadow to fetch so-and-so and bring him to me] (Sánchez Ortega, p. 79). Examples such as these should

convince us that at least for some people in early modern Europe, magic was real. This means that for a portion of Zayas's readers, the magic episodes described in 'La inocencia castigada' and 'El desengaño amando' had a ring of truth. The novellas have what we might call 'popular verisimilitude', even if the term 'popular' is fiendishly difficult to define and problematic in that it suggests that there is such a thing as 'the people', that they are a monolithic unit and that we can know what it was they thought, when in fact all we know about them has been mediated and comes to us through written records.¹⁴ Nevertheless, inquisitorial records like those studied by Kamen, Tausiet, Ginzburg, Sánchez Ortega, Ruggiero, and Martín Soto offer us at least a glimpse of the thoughts and beliefs of the 'people', and at times their voices do come through. In the case of Zayas's description of efficacious magic, this 'popular verisimilitude' would reconcile what some scholars like Foa and Montesa have seen as a contradiction in her work: the claim to verisimilitude and the use of the supernatural.

We should, however, not be tempted to read too much into the insistence by the narrators that their stories are true; it is also just part of a genre convention. At the start of the second *sarao*, Lisis instructs her *desengañadoras* only to relate true stories. Nise returns to this stipulation at the start of the third tale:

Lisis manda que sean casos verdaderos los que se digan, si acaso pareciere que los desengaños aquí referidos, y los que faltan, los habéis oído en otras partes, será haberle contado quien, como yo y las demás desengañadoras, lo supo por mayor, mas no con las circunstancias que aquí van hermoseados, y no sacado de una parte a otra, como hubo algún lego o envidioso que lo dijo de la primera parte de nuestro sarao. Diferente cosa es novelar sólo con la inventiva un caso que ni fue ni pudo ser (y ése no sirve de desengaño, sino de entretenimiento), a contar un caso verdadero, que no sólo sirva de entretener, sino de avisar. (*Desengaños*, pp. 199-200)

[Lisis demands that all the stories we tell are true, and if it would appear you have already heard elsewhere the *desengaños* that have been told and are yet to be told, it must be because they were told by someone who, like me and the other *desengañadoras*, heard it first-hand, but not with the extra details that make these ones more pleasing, nor taken from various sources, like some uninformed or jealous person said was the case for the first part of our *Sarao*. It is one thing to tell a tale that never happened nor could ever happen based solely on the imagination (which could not serve as a *desengaño*, but only as amusement), and another to relate a true case that not only serves to entertain, but also to warn.]

¹⁴ See Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings. Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), especially chapter 4.

Since sources have been found for a good number of Zayas's novellas, the insistence that all stories are based on actual events is nothing but empty rhetoric. That should not come as a surprise, since apart from Cervantes, who famously boasted that he invented his own plots (see 2.7), the novella tradition was all about reworking old tales to suit new tastes. To give but one example, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was probably based on Arthur Brookes's English rendition of Pierre Boaistean's French adaptation of an Italian novella by Bandello, who may have taken the story from Da Porta, who in turn was inspired by Salernitano's *Novellino*, which contained an updated – Italianized – version of Ovid's *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which was undoubtedly inspired by an even older story, since it is set in Babylon.¹⁵ In fact, Nise hints at Zayas's *modus operandi*: she adorns the stories she finds and has selected and reworks them in order to fit her pro-woman agenda: to warn women of male perfidy. Her retelling of familiar tales – taken from Boccaccio, Bandello, Timoneda, Cervantes, Calderón and others – is also meant to evoke *admiratio* by the way it is achieved. This is where magic comes in; the sheer possibility of a preternatural intervention causes shivers to run down one's spine and at least part of the audience could indulge in a what-if fantasy. Zayas undoubtedly aimed to have as wide a readership as possible, both the elite (*culto*) and the 'people' (*vulgo*). For the *vulgo* audience, the magical episodes might have provided a titillating glimpse at a forbidden world (see Brownlee), whereas for the *culto* it was the way in which the story was told, with all its baroque complexities and contradictions, that caused admiration.

These baroque complexities and contradictions are evident in the way Zayas deals with sorcery in the stories we have discussed in this chapter. But a closer look at the tales in question reveals that the indeterminacy has infiltrated other areas too.

3.6 Seeds of doubt: the indeterminacy of the preternatural

As we have seen, the four stories that involve sorcery are either light-hearted or harrowing, while the magical events are either efficacious or fraudulent. This leads to

¹⁵ See Arthur J. Roberts, 'The Sources of Romeo and Juliet', *Modern Language Notes*, 17.2 (1902), 41-44. There are also scholars who suspect that Shakespeare read Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, a collection of novellas, amongst others based on Bandello and Boccaccio. Some scholars believe Shakespeare read all three Italian sources as well as the English ones. See Amanda Mabillard, 'Sources for Romeo and Juliet', *Shakespeare Online* (2009) <<http://www.shakespeareonline.com/sources/romeosources.html>> [Accessed 17 August 2016]. This implies that Shakespeare could read Italian, which is claimed by at least one critic. See Naseeb Shaheen, *Shakespeare Survey*, 47 (1994), 161-69. The suggestion that the story ultimately goes back to Ovid and possibly Babylonia is my own.

four possible combinations of variables, which can be shown in the following somewhat structuralist scheme:

	‘El castigo de la miseria’	‘El desengaño amando’	‘La fuerza del amor’	‘La inocencia castigada’
<i>Comical elements</i>	+	+	–	–
<i>Efficacious magic</i>	–	+	–	+

However, a closer analysis reveals that within the two tales that purport to show efficacious magic, indeterminacy has nestled itself. As I have discussed, Zayas mentions Lucrecia’s tricks and lies (*embustes*), while the story appears to bear out the reality of her spell. So, is the enchantment of Fernando an ‘embuste’ or not? Likewise, in ‘La inocencia castigada’, until he has seen Inés come to his bed, Diego, although happy to gaze upon the (nude) likeness of his beloved, is not so sure the Moor’s enchantment will actually work: ‘don Diego, aunque no muy seguro de que sería verdad lo que el moro le aseguraba, contentísimo cuando no por las esperanzas que tenía, por ver en la figura el natural retrato de su natural enemiga’ [Don Diego, even though he was not really sure if what the Moor had promised him would come true, was nevertheless overjoyed, if not because of the hopes he entertained, then at least because he saw in the statue the very likeness of his natural enemy] (*Desengaños*, p. 276). The usual rhetorical stratagem used by Zayas is to give the reader options and leave it up to her or him to make a choice. As a result, even if the most likely scenario is usually indicated, we are still left with an alternative, and thus a little seed of doubt is planted. We are told, for instance, that Fernando is attracted by Lucrecia *either* because he was tired of his wife’s beauty and wanted something new, even if it was an ugly woman, *or* he was attracted by the prospect of having a lot of money to spend on games and gambling, *or else* he was attracted by her arts and spells (*artes y conjuros*), which is offered as the most likely case.

Leyó don Fernando [la carta de Lucrecia], y como era vario de condición, y los tales tienen el remudar por aliño, porque cansados de gozar una hermosura, desean otra y tal vez apetecen una fealdad; que fuese esto o el interés de tener que gastar y jugar, o lo más

cierto, que le inclinasen las artes y conjuros de Lucrecia, aceptó el partido que le hacía, acudiendo el mismo día a su casa. (*Novelas*, p. 381)

[Don Fernando read Lucrecia's letter and since he was fickle – people like that are prone to spicing up things by changing them around, because when they are tired of enjoying one beauty, they desire another and may even be attracted by someone ugly; whether it was this, or the lure of having money to spend on games, or else, most likely, because he was won over by Lucrecia's arts and spells – he accepted her offer and went over to her house the very same day.]

In the same novella, Octavio's ghost appears *either* because the spell has worked, *or* because it was God's will, which is stated as the most likely cause and is later borne out by Octavio's own words.

Tres [noches] serían pasadas cuando, o que las palabras del papel tuviesen la fuerza que el embustero estudiante había dicho, o que Dios, que es lo más cierto, quiso con esta ocasión ganar para sí a doña Juana haciendo instrumento al demonio y sus cosas para que fuese el mismo la causa de su conversión. (*Novelas*, p. 387)

[Three nights or so had passed when either the words on the bit of paper had the power the deceitful student claimed it had, or that God, which is much more likely, wanted to use this opportunity to win over Doña Juana, making use of the Devil and his works in order that he, the Devil, would be the cause for her conversion.]

In 'La inocencia castigada', Inés, after she has been summoned by the Moor's spell, returns to her house without anyone noticing her, *either* because everyone happens to be sound asleep, *or* because they are also under a spell: 'Y llegando a [su casa], abrió, y volviendo a cerrar, sin haberla sentido nadie, o por estar vencidos del sueño, o porque participaban todos del encanto, se echó en su cama' [And arriving back home, she opened the door and shut it again behind her, without anyone noticing her – either because they were overcome by sleep, or because they were part of the spell – and threw herself on her bed] (*Desengaños*, p. 278).

This indeterminacy spills over into other areas, too. In 'El castigo de la miseria' Marcela tricks Marcos *either* because she wants to be rid of him *or* because she was a maid, implying all servants are untrustworthy.

Parecióle a Marcela ser don Marcos hombre poco pendencioso, y así se atrevió a decirle tales cosas, sin temor de lo que podía suceder; o ya lo hizo por salir de entre sus manos y no miró en más, o por ser criada, que era lo más cierto. (*Novelas*, p. 282)

[Marcela reckoned Don Marcos was not the quarrelsome type, which is why she dared to tell him such things, not fearing what might happen; either doing it to get away from his

clutches, not caring about the consequences, or because she was a maid, which is more likely.]

In the open grave near the roadside chapel Laura cannot reach the dead men's heads to extract their teeth, *either* because God prevents her from committing something so horrifying, *or* because she lacks the skills. In 'La inocencia castigada' God allows Inés to survive her six years of martyrdom *either* because he wanted to punish those who were guilty, *or* because of her merit. And Inés loses her eyesight *either* because she had been deprived of light, *or* because she had wept so much:

En primer lugar, aunque tenía los ojos claros, estaba ciega, o de la oscuridad (porque es cosa asentada que si una persona estuviese mucho tiempo sin ver luz, cegaría), o fuese por esto, u [*sic*] de llorar, ella no tenía vista. (*Desengaños*, p. 287)

[In the first place, even though her eyes were clear, she was blind, either because of the darkness (because it is well known that if a person is deprived of light for a long time, he or she will go blind), or because of that, or it was on account of her weeping that she lost her eyesight.]

The indeterminacy in *Zayas* goes much further than these examples. I have already referred to Brownlee's notion of polysemy and the idea that readers are wrong-footed and forced to reconsider their initial judgement. The fifth novella is a good example of this strategy. The *desengañadora* of that evening is Laura, a widow who says the following about her married life:

Viví tan dulcemente engañada, el tiempo que fui amada y amé, de que me pudiese dar la amable condición de mi esposo causa para saber y especificar ahora desengaños; que no sé si acertaré a darlos a nadie; mas lo que por ciencia alcanzo, que de experiencia estoy muy ajena, me parece que hoy hay de todo, engañadas y engañados, y pocos o ningunos que acierten a desengañarse. (*Desengaños*, p. 262)

[I lived so charmingly deceived in the days when I loved and was loved that the kind nature of my husband hardly gave me cause to know anything about *desengaños* and share them with you today; I am not sure if I will succeed in offering a tale of disillusion to anyone, but from what knowledge I have – not having any personal experience – it seems to me that there are all sorts: deceived men as well as women, and few, if any, manage to see through the deceit.]

The happily married Laura seems an unlikely candidate to tell the harrowing tale of Inés's ordeal. But her mention of knowledge (*ciencia*) and experience (*experiencia*) is crucial, not just for this tale, but the whole collection. Lisis eventually becomes undeceived (*desengañada*) through knowledge, having vicariously lived through the experiences of the ten preceding tales of disillusion (*desengaños*).

Returning to the case of Inés, that somehow a trace of an alternative interpretation lingers is evident in the discussion afterwards, where the discussants say that although she did not deserve to be tortured, she *did* deserve to die:

pues cuando doña Inés, de malicia, hubiera cometido el yerro que le obligó a tal castigo, *no merecía más que una muerte breve*, como se ha dado a otras que han pecado de malicia, y no darle tantas y tan dilatadas [crueldades] como le dieron. (*Desengaños*, p. 289, *emphasis added*)

[and since Doña Inés, out of malice, committed a crime that had to be punished, *she only deserved a quick death*, like they punish other women who sin out of malice, instead of subjecting her to such prolonged cruelty as they did.]

The nun Estefanía also implies that Inés did wrong when she exclaims: ‘¡Ay, divino Esposo mío! Y si vos, todas las veces que os ofendemos, nos castigais así, ¿qué fuera de nosotros?’ [O, divine Husband of mine! If you punished us like this every time we offended you, what would become of us?] (*Desengaños*, p. 289). The tale of Inés’s rape is introduced and commented upon as if she were guilty of adultery, and throughout there is ambiguity, even though the spell itself is tested and found to be effective. Surely there is no better example of the dizzying narrative twists and turns that are testimony to both Zayas’s deep pessimism and her baroque mastery.

* * *

It is clear that Zayas uses magic in a variety of ways and this polyvalent use is an integral part of her project in which she plays complex games designed to elicit *admiratio*. Moreover, she taps into the contemporary epistemological uncertainty about the supernatural *sensu lato* by showing us real and efficacious forms of magic alongside impostures. In addition, the indeterminacy surrounding magic has spilled over to other aspects of her novellas. We have seen that all black magic was supposed to be based on a pact – tacit or explicit – with the Devil, and that Lucrecia is said to have the Devil on her side. What I have not discussed so far are actual manifestations of the Evil One himself, and when we look at those episodes, it becomes clear that not everything is what it seems and that the devil is often in the detail.

Chapter 4

Baroque games with the Devil

To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight.
(Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1.159-1.160)

THE DEVIL IS MENTIONED IN NEARLY ALL OF ZAYAS'S NOVELLAS, ALTHOUGH HE ONLY makes a physical appearance in three.¹ In the other instances, the word 'demonio' is used to refer to hideousness, imps, evil in general and sinful thoughts, especially about suicide. In this, Zayas is far from unique and the malleability of the concept of the Devil is typical of her time. The Devil, like the witch, has a long history and has changed considerably over time, although he is also notoriously slippery, 'a loose assembly of images united by their negative relationship to God'.² His name 'Satan' is derived from the Hebrew for 'adversary', while his cognomen 'Lucifer' (bearer of light) hints at his status as a fallen angel, who became the Prince of Darkness. In his archdiabolical capacity he is also known as Beelzebub, from the Hebrew for 'lord of the flies' (a Philistine god). Early Christians rebranded pagan gods and spirits as demons and made the Devil their supreme commander, thus creating a mirror image of the celestial hierarchy. The Evil One was thought to dwell in the hearts of men, implanting evil suggestions in them and inciting them to heresy and apostasy. According to St Thomas Aquinas the Devil could kindle wicked thoughts, but not force individuals to sin. In popular literature and on stage he was often nothing more than a crafty but ultimately gullible trickster. In the atmosphere of confessional strife of the early modern period this aspect waned and the Devil ceased to be a laughing matter. Satan became an all-powerful lord, raging against his imminent defeat and promoting large-scale apostasy, leading to tens of thousands of executions of women thought to be in league with him. At the same time, as a correlate to a more internalised style of devotion – usually associated with Protestantism, but also affecting Catholics, as is clear if one reads St

¹ The Devil is usually referred to as 'demonio' and sometimes as 'diablo'. Six out of ten *Novelas* mention him, and nine out of ten *Desengaños*.

² Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Tudor and Stuart England* (Stroud: History Press, 2000), p. 12.

Ignatius de Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* for example – the Devil became more exclusively associated with wicked thoughts, temptation, and religious doubt. In the end, the belief faded away – more so in Catholic countries than in Protestant Northern Europe and the United States (see Muchembled) – and the Devil has fared less well than God in our modern age, despite the ubiquity of evil.³

4.1 Ugly devils

Perhaps the least acceptable mention of the Devil in Zayas's work, certainly the most distasteful in our eyes, is the comparison between Black people and the Devil. In 'El prevenido engañado' Fadrique follows Beatriz, with whom he is in love, to find her going to the stables where she speaks to a Black young man with whom she has an affair. The young man, Antonio, is dying from sexual exhaustion and berates his mistress for her wanton behaviour. He is described as being as ugly as the Devil: 'Parecía en la edad de hasta veintiocho o treinta años, mas tan feo y abominable que no sé si fue la pasión o si era la verdad, le pareció que el demonio no podía serlo tanto' [He seemed to be no older than twenty-eight or thirty, but he was so ugly and repulsive – I don't know whether it was because of Don Fadrique's shock and rage or because he really looked like that – that it seemed to him that the Devil could not be more hideous] (*Novelas*, p. 309). Pérez-Erdélyi sees this episode as an example of Zayas's 'novelística picaresca-cortesana'. In her study she contrasts Castillo Solórzano's women, who move up in the world and become 'aburguesada' [bourgeois] and 'acortesanada' [courtly], with some of Zayas's noblewomen, like Beatriz, who become 'apicarada' (picaresque).⁴ More important, Zayas deliberately – baroquely – uses the contrast between the whiteness of Beatriz – she is said to have 'blanquísimas manos' [very white hands] – and the blackness of the African slave: 'pareciendo en la hermosura ella un ángel y él un fiero demonio' [she, in her beauty, looked like an angel, whereas he looked like a fierce Devil] (*Novelas*, p. 309). The same contrast crops up in 'Tarde llega el desengaño', where Jaime has locked up his wife Elena in a kind of kennel following a false accusation by his

³ For more on the devil, see Darren Oldridge, *The Devil. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the Present*, transl. by Jean Birell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); and Jeffrey Burton Russell's trilogy: *Satan. The Early Christian Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); and *Mephistopheles. The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For a Spanish perspective, see Francisco Flores Arroyuelo, *El diablo en España* (Madrid: Alianza, 1985).

⁴ See Mireya Pérez-Erdélyi, *La pícaro y la dama. La imagen de las mujeres en las novelas picaresco-cortesanas de María de Zayas y Sotomayor y Alonso de Castillo Solórzano* (Miami: Universal, 1979).

Black slave, whom he then dresses up in his wife's fineries and jewels, offering her the place of honour at his table. Like Beatriz, Elena has beautiful white hands in which she carries the skull of her murdered lover and from which Jaime makes her drink: 'Traía en sus hermosas manos (que parecían copos de blanca nieve) una calavera' [She carried in her hands (which were as white as snowflakes) a skull] (*Desengaños*, p. 237). A moment later, the Black slave enters:

La otra que por la puerta salió era una negra, tan tinta, que el azabache era blanco en su comparación, y sobre esto, tan fiera, que juzgó don Martín que si no era el demonio, que debía ser retrato suyo. (*Desengaños*, p. 237)

[The other woman who came in through the door was Black, so dark that jet was white in comparison, and in addition, so fierce-looking that Don Martín reckoned that if she were not the Devil herself, she was his spitting image.]

What is evident is the author's desire to shock the audience and to create a topsy-turvy world, a narrative chiaroscuro contrasting black and white, nobility and servility, good and evil, all the while complicating matters by making the stable boy Antonio the voice of morality, persuading his mistress to give up her vice and find a husband.

¿Qué me quieres, señora? ¡Déjame ya, por Dios! ¿Qué es esto, que aun estando yo acabando la vida me persigues? No basta que tu viciosa condición me tiene como estoy, sino que quieres que, cuando ya estoy en el fin de mi vida, acuda a cumplir tus viciosos apetitos. Cásate, señora, cástate, y déjame ya a mí, que ni te quiero ver ni comer lo que me das; morir quiero, pues ya no estoy para otra cosa. (*Novelas*, p. 310)

[What do you want from me, my lady? Leave me alone, for the love of God! What is this? I'm at death's door and still you come after me? Is it not enough that I am in the state I am in on account of your vice? Why do you want me, about to breathe my last, to satisfy your vicious appetites? Get married, my lady, get a husband and leave me be, because I don't want to see you, nor eat the food you bring me; I want to die, since that's all I'm good for now.]

With this, Zayas deftly adds another twist to the tableau: the devilishly hideous Black servant Antonio is a virtuous victim, whereas the angelic, beautiful, noble white Beatriz is a depraved sexual predator.

4.2 Evil inspirations

Apart from the epitome of ugliness, the Devil is often referred to as the generic source of evil. In 'Amar sólo para vencer', Esteban dresses up as Estefanía in order to court Laurela, making the narrator comment that thus 'el demonio teje sus telas' [the Devil

weaves his webs] (*Desengaños*, p. 299). In ‘Mal presagio casar lejos’, Blanca finds her husband in bed with his page, engaged in ‘tan torpes y abominables pecados que aun el demonio se avergüenza de verlos’ [sins so vile and abominable that even the Devil would blush on seeing them] (*Desengaños*, p. 361). In some instances men are said to be as bad as or worse than demons, as in ‘La fuerza del amor’, when Laura, before setting out to the *humilladero*, rages about her abusive husband: ‘eres hombre, cuyos engaños quitan el poder a los mismos demonios’ [you are a man, and the deceit of your kind makes the very Devil seem powerless] (*Novelas*, pp. 363-64). Even though Laura’s rage can be construed as feminist, calling wicked men demons was not that unusual. Covarrubias’s definition of ‘demonio’ reads: ‘Al hombre malo y perverso suelen decir que es un demonio, por imitarle y tener su condición’ [Evil and perverse men are often called devils, because they imitate him and have the same nature]. In Tirso de Molina’s *El burlador de Sevilla*, Don Juan is constantly given diabolical features: his body is glowing with fire and at one point he is referred to as Lucifer. But it is not only men who are accused of being diabolical, and when Laura is about to relate the story of Inés, she refers to the Devil when she denounces women who avenge themselves on their husbands’ infidelities by having affairs themselves: ‘no puedo imaginar sino que el demonio las ha propuesto este modo de venganza de que usan las que lo usan’ [I can only imagine that the Devil suggested this vengeance to those who carry it out] (*Desengaños*, p. 263). Sometimes it is not clear whether the Devil is behind an action or whether it is God, as when in ‘El traidor contra su sangre’ Alonso, having killed his sister and beheaded his wife, flees to Genoa, where he is caught stealing silk stockings ‘persuadido del demonio o que Dios lo permitió así’ [persuaded by the Devil or because God permitted it] (*Desengaños*, p. 397). This is another example of Zayas’s strategic narrative indeterminacy, as discussed at the end of the previous chapter (see 3.6).

There is no such lack of clarity when it comes to Isabel’s rage when she has been raped by her best friend’s brother in ‘La esclava de su amante’. In her ‘furor diabólico’ [diabolical fury] she attempts to kill Manuel with his own sword. In ‘La más infame venganza’, Juan avenges the dishonour of his sister by dressing up as a woman and entering the house of the perpetrator and raping his young wife Camila at knife point. She realizes that resistance is useless: ‘no tuvo fuerzas para defenderse, y si lo hiciera, estaba ya tan resuelto y vencido del demonio, que la matara’ [she lacked the strength to defend herself, and even if she had, he was so determined and possessed by the Devil, that he would kill her] (*Desengaños*, p. 193). Like her attacker, her husband Carlos too is

possessed by the Devil and decides to poison his innocent wife: ‘vivió poco más de un año, al cabo del cual reinó en Carlos el demonio y la dio un veneno para matarla’ [she lived little more than a year, at the end of which the Devil reigned in Carlos and he gave her poison in order to kill her] (*Desengaños*, p. 195).

The Devil as the ultimate inspiration for evil is described most elaborately and vividly in the closing tale of the *desengaños*, ‘Estragos que causa el vicio’, where Dionís goes on a murdering rampage after he has been led to believe that his wife has committed adultery.⁵ In some respects the story is reminiscent of Lope de Vega’s *Los comendadores de Córdoba*, as Montesa amongst others has pointed out, but there are some crucial differences. First, Dionís is set up to believe his wife Magdalena has betrayed him, while in Lope’s play the adultery is real. Second, Dionís is himself guilty of adultery with his wife’s half-sister Florentina, while Lope’s Veinticuatro is everything but an adulterer. In Zayas’s tale the two women are raised together and when Dionís courts Magdalena, Florentina falls in love with him. After the wedding, she seduces him and for four years they have an affair. Dionís promises to marry Florentina should Magdalena die. Florentina’s servant then concocts a plan to make this happen, comparing her ruse to King David’s sending Uriah the Hittite to a certain death so that he could marry Bathsheba.⁶ She will arrange it so that it looks like Magdalena is cheating on her husband with the result that Dionís will kill her. The trap works, but things spin out of control and in his wrath Dionís puts everyone in the household to the sword. Florentina is the only one who manages to escape because a Black slave stands between her and the raging Portuguese nobleman. She is found badly wounded in the street and taken in by the Spanish Gaspar, to whom she tells her story.

When she relates what happened, Florentina calls the maid who came up with the plan ‘la atrevida mujer, en quien pienso que hablaba y obraba el demonio’ [the intrepid woman, in whom, I think, the Devil spoke and worked] (*Desengaños*, p. 494). When she puts the plan into action, Florentina says that the maid carried out the ‘oficio de demonio’ [the Devil’s work] (*ibid.*). Both of them are thus caught in Satan’s web: ‘todas seguíamos lo que el demonio nos inspiraba’ [we all did what the Devil’s inspired in us]

⁵ At the end of the *Sarao*, Lisis changes her mind about marrying Diego and, either sarcastically or as a slip of the tongue, calls him Dionís, the most murderous of all murdering husbands. See Mary Ellen Kohn, *Violence against women in the novels of María de Zayas y Sotomayor* (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994).

⁶ O’Brien (*Women in the prose*) claims, not all too convincingly, that the girl is raised in status because she knows the Biblical story so well and sees it as a form of cross-class mobility.

(*ibid.*). In fact, the entire house seems possessed by the Evil One: ‘el demonio que ya estaba señoreado de aquella casa’ [the Devil, who had already taken possession of that house] (*Desengaños*, p. 496). When Dionís is about to kill the malevolent maid, she exclaims: ‘La muerte merezco, y el infierno también’ [I deserve to die, and to go to hell] (*Desengaños*, p. 498) and appears to have no faith whatsoever in the salvific power of confession. Instead, she commends her soul to the Devil: ‘Recibe, infierno, el alma de la más mala mujer que crió el Cielo, y aun allá pienso que no hallará lugar’ [Hell, receive the soul of the wickedest woman ever created by Heaven, and I don’t think there will even place for me there] (*ibid.*). When he thinks he has killed everyone, Dionís lets himself fall on his sword – just as Saul does in 1 Samuel 31 – and like the maid, he commends his soul to the Devil: ‘Se dejó caer sobre la espada, pasando la punta a las espaldas, llamando al demonio que le recibiese el alma’ [He let himself fall onto his sword, making the point stick out of his back, calling on the Devil to receive his soul] (*Desengaños*, p. 499).

William Clamurro has argued that Dionís is a ‘monstrous double’, both an adulterer and an avenger, and therefore he must kill the one who has stained his honour – whether adultery was committed or not – as well as himself.⁷ The honour code is taken to its logical, blood-splattered conclusion. What is more, both Dionís and the maid show a blasphemous disregard for the possibility of redemption. Both were possessed by the Evil One, and in the case of Dionís it is clear that the thought of suicide was suggested to him by the Devil (‘insistido del demonio’).

This association between self-murder and the Devil is made apparent in two other tales. In ‘La inocencia castigada’, when Inés finds herself immured and is standing in her own excrement, she is no longer plagued by lewd dreams or asking to be killed for having been wicked, but instead she complains bitterly about her innocence (see 3.4). In her worst moments, she confesses to having suicidal thoughts: ‘muchas veces me da imaginación de con mis propias manos hacer cuerda a mi garganta para acabarme; mas luego considero que es el demonio, y pido ayuda a Dios para librarme de él’ [many times I have fantasized about using my own hands to strangle myself, but then I realize it is the Devil and ask God’s help to get rid of him] (*Desengaños*, p. 286). The Devil as the

⁷ See William Clamurro, ‘Madness and Narrative Form in “Estragos que causa el vicio”’, in *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 219-33.

inspiration for suicidal thoughts also plays a role in ‘El castigo de la miseria’, which warrants a longer discussion.

4.3 The Devil vanishes in ‘El castigo de la miseria’

We have already encountered the fraudulent magician and his demon Calquimorro – in reality a cat with its tail on fire – in ‘El castigo de la miseria’ (see 3.1). Marcos engaged the magician’s services because he wanted to find out what had happened to the money Isidora had stolen from him. After the sham ceremony, which scared him a great deal, he is taken to court and everyone has a good laugh about the prank that was played on him. Marcos is angry and wants to kill the false magus and then himself: ‘estando Don Marcos tan corrido que quiso mil veces matar al encantador y luego hacer lo mismo de sí’ [Don Marcos was so angry that he wanted to kill the enchanter a thousand times over and then do the same to himself] (*Novelas*, p. 287). He cannot bear the shame of his humiliation. To add insult to injury, when he comes home, he finds a letter from Isidora in which she mocks him cruelly. This causes such a shock that he falls ill with a fever and dies a few days later. Isidora gets her come-uppance when she is robbed of the money she stole, and ends her days begging on the streets of Madrid. In the first edition of the *Novelas*, however, Marcos does not die of a shock-induced fever, but he hangs himself. After receiving Isidora’s letter, he leaves the house and when he gets to a bridge, he meets his marriage broker Gamarra, who asks him where he is going. Gamarra then confesses he is about to hang himself because he has been found stealing from the Duke of Osuna. He offers Marcos some of his rope and together they go ahead and carry out their plan. A man lying asleep underneath the tree where they want to hang themselves overhears their conversation, but he only sees Marcos, who appears to be talking to himself or to someone invisible. He runs off to alert the authorities and when they arrive on the scene, they find the lifeless body of Marcos dangling alongside an empty noose, ‘por donde coligieron, junto con lo que el hombre decía que oía hablar y no ver quién, que era el demonio que, por desesperar a don Marcos, había venido con aquel engaño’ [this, as well the man’s testimony of having heard him speak to someone he couldn’t see, made them conclude that it was the Devil who had come up with this trick to make Don Marcos despair] (*Novelas*, p. 290 footnote 56). In subsequent editions this passage was eliminated, although there are a few exceptions, such as the pirated edition printed in Barcelona in 1646. It is not immediately clear why Zayas chose to write the Devil out of her story. As Alicia Yllera pointed out in a paper dedicated to the

two endings of the story, the novellas of the 1637 edition were ‘de nuevo coretas, y enmendadas por su misma autora’ [corrected and amended by the author herself], so it is possible that Zayas herself was persuaded to alter the ending, possibly out of fear for censorship, as Sandra Foa appears to suggest: ‘Given the Inquisitorial religious climate of the age we may therefore conjecture that, although the preliminaries to the two editions are identical, María de Zayas was persuaded to alter the *desenlace* of the second edition prior to its republication’ (Foa, p. 78). Yllera, however, ends her article with the suggestion that ‘la autora suprimiese este final por razones más literarias que morales, no deseando castigar tan duramente a su personaje’ [the author suppressed this ending for reasons that were more literary than moral, not wishing to punish her character so harshly].⁸ Current scholarly consensus agrees with this point of view. Greer, for instance, writes:

Zayas’s decision to excise the original ending of *El castigo* should not be attributed to institutional, religious censorship, but to her own authorial recognition that removing literal intervention of the Devil better centred don Marcos’s guilt where she wishes to situate it – in the personal, freely assumed sin of overweening lust not for women but for wealth. (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 249)

After all, Zayas had already been granted a *licencia* for the version in which the original ending appeared, and compared to the alleged good deed by the Devil in ‘El jardín engañoso’, or other more scandalous episodes such as the homosexual scene in ‘Mal presagio casar lejos’, or the interracial sex referred to in ‘El prevenido engañado’, the passage in question seems rather inoffensive; indeed, it can easily be read as instructive. As with Inés in ‘La inocencia castigada’ and Dionís in ‘Estragos que causa el vicio’, the urge to commit suicide is inspired – in the etymological sense of the word – by the Devil: it is the Evil One who whispers these thoughts into their ears and implants in them the idea; and Heaven’s loss is the Devil’s gain. Although as a suicide Marcos is damned, a dispensation is obtained to bury him in consecrated ground, an action censured by the narrator: ‘ésta es la vanidad del mundo, honrar el cuerpo aunque el alma esté donde la de este miserable’ [such is the vanity of this world, that they honour the body even if the soul is where this poor wretch’s is] (*Novelas*, p. 290 footnote 56).

Like Greer Olivares opines that Marcos ought to die because of his avarice and not after he has been cheated by the Devil, having already been cheated by Isidora. The same

⁸ Alicia Yllera, ‘Las dos versiones del *Castigo de la miseria* de María de Zayas’, in *Actas del XIII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (Madrid: Castalia, 1998), p. 835.

emphasis on a moral lesson comes through in Paul Scarron's French adaptation, analysed by Serrano Poncela. In this version, Marcos travels to Barcelona where Isidore, Augustinet and Inez are about to board a ship. The miser, followed by Isidore and Augustinet, is thrown overboard together with a chest containing his valuables. Desperate to cling on to his treasure, Marcos drowns. The Frenchman also leaves out references to latrines and *Amadís*, but elaborates the scene in which Marcos discovers he has been deceived by Isidora. Furthermore, Zayas's false magician becomes a Jew and a usurer. In addition he adds comments about Spain, comparing it negatively to France. His tale is more moralistic and the sympathy we might feel for Marcos in Zayas's novella disappears.⁹

Olivares further suggests that Zayas eliminated this negative reference to the Devil because she wants to present him in a good light. One of the good deeds he claims for the Devil is the conversion of Juana in 'El desengaño amando', although I have argued above that the situation is more complex than that, and that God uses the spell to save Juana's soul (see 3.3). The second good deed by the Devil supposedly occurs in 'El jardín engañoso'. The Spanish editor writes: 'Con punzante ironía, Zayas tal vez quería representar al demonio con mayor sentido de bondad y "caballerosidad" que los mismos caballeros de su época' [With sharp irony Zayas may have wanted to show the Devil as being better and more 'gentlemanly' than the gentlemen of her period] (*Novelas*, p. 98). I cannot agree with this point of view, however, because while it is true that Zayas clearly relishes the opportunity to shock her readers and is a master at transgressive scenes full of unexpected points of view, I believe it is wrong to think that Zayas wants to paint a positive picture of the Devil. Instead, I contend that she subtly highlights his deceptive nature (for more discussion, see 4.5).

As for the reasons of Zayas's decision to excise Marcos' suicide, I would say that the passage is simply superfluous to the plot. To begin with, Marcos has already had the thought of killing the fake magician and then himself when he left the judicial hearing. And when in the original ending he leaves his house after receiving Isidora's hurtful letter, he has already made up his mind to hang himself (see 3.1). The Devil just gave the last push by handing him a piece of rope, but before doing so, the Devil-as-Gamarra embarks on a long-winded story about a double crime that detracts from the main story

⁹ See Segundo Serrano Poncela, 'Casamientos engañosos (Doña María de Zayas, Scarron y un proceso de creación literaria)', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 64 (1962), 248-59.

– he gambled away the Duke of Osuna’s money and then stole from him to make up for his losses. Although strictly speaking Zayas rewrites the ending, in fact, all she does is simply erase the episode, replacing the paragraph by one short sentence: ‘en pocos días acabó los suyos miserablemente’ [and within a few miserable days he was dead] (*Novelas*, pp. 288-89). In my mind, the only successful element of the elided passage, and therefore a loss, is the uncanny touch of the empty noose.

4.4 The Devil bites the dust in ‘La perseguida triunfante’

The Devil makes a more permanent appearance in the longest of the novellas, a hagiographical tale called ‘La perseguida triunfante’. It tells the story of Beatriz, an English noblewoman who marries Ladislao, the king of Hungary. Her brother-in-law Federico lusts after her, and when her husband is away he attempts to seduce her. She refuses his advances, and in order to prevent any further mishap, she puts him in a golden cage where he is well looked after, but cannot get to her. When the king’s return is announced, she lets Federico out. He wastes no time in telling his brother that Beatriz tried to seduce *him* and that when he refused, she put him in a cage. Without checking the story, Ladislao orders that his wife be taken to the woods and killed, Snow-White style. She convinces her executioners to spare her life and they gouge out her eyes instead. No sooner have they left than a mysterious lady appears and restores Beatriz’s eyes. After wandering around in the forest, she is taken in by a Duke. Meanwhile Federico is on her trail when he meets ‘un hombre vestido a modo de escolástico, de horrible rostro’ [a man dressed like a scholar with a horrendous face] (*Desengaños*, p. 436). The stranger claims to be a magician who will help him on condition that he does not tell it to anyone, not even his confessor. It is, of course, the Devil himself, the übermagician. He gives Federico a magic ring with strange inscriptions, which he uses to gain entrance to the palace where Beatriz now lives in order to slip treasonous letters in her sleeve. The travelling doctor then announces himself at the Duke’s court with the message that a plot against his life has been hatched. The letters planted on Beatriz are found and she is taken to the place where she first met the Duke. There, she finds her royal clothes from Hungary waiting for her. Federico is hot on her heels and when he catches up with her, he tries to rape her, bragging blasphemously that ‘aun el Cielo no es poderoso para librarte’ [not even Heaven has to power to save you now] (*Desengaños*, p. 445), but a fierce lion suddenly appears and attacks him. Not much later, Beatriz is found by the German Emperor and his six-year old son, who takes an immediate liking

to her. The emperor persuades her to come home with him and look after the boy. But disaster strikes again when Federico sneaks into the prince's bedroom and stabs him to death, leaving the blood-stained knife next to Beatriz, who is unceremoniously taken away to be beheaded. Her mysterious protectress appears once more to save her life. After that, she decides to live as a hermit. A number of years pass before the mysterious lady reveals herself to be the Mother of God, who tells her protégée to don male attire and heal the sick. Beatriz's fame as a healer spreads and she is summoned to come to the Hungarian court where Federico is gravely ill. When she is about to administer her medicine, she makes him confess his sins. Initially, he leaves out his treason, but when she insists that he risks losing not only his life, but also his soul, he confesses it all, much to his companion's displeasure. 'Más importa el alma y la vida' [One's life and soul are more important] (*Desengaños*, p. 464), Federico tells his master. The king weeps, but then Beatriz appears dressed in the same clothes she wore all those years ago when she was taken to the woods. The Devil realizes his game is up: '¡Venciste, María, venciste! ¡Ya conozco la sombra que amparaba a Beatriz, que hasta ahora estuve ciego!' [You've won, Mary, you've won! I now realize who the shadow that sheltered Beatriz was and see that I have been blind all this time!] (*Desengaños*, p. 465), whereupon he departs, leaving the obligatory thick – and presumably foul-smelling – plume of smoke behind. The king is eager to have Beatriz back as his wife, but she refuses, saying that she has found 'el Esposo celestial' [the celestial Husband]. Impressed, the king follows her example and abdicates to enter a monastery. He sends for Beatriz's sister who marries Federico and together they will reign over Hungary.

Scholars have given a variety of possible sources for the story. Langle de Paz claims that the heroine of the tale was modelled on Beatriz de Aragon (1457-1508), the daughter of Fernando I, King of Naples, who was queen of Hungary. Others have suggested a connection with the Portuguese noblewoman Beatriz da Silva, the foundress of the order of the Immaculate Conception.¹⁰ Edwin Place, in turn, suggests the tale is based on 'The Jewish Kazi and his pious wife', one of the stories in *One Thousand and One Nights* (see O'Brien, *Women in the prose*). That may be an old version of the same type of legend, but it is an unlikely direct source for Zayas's version. Enríquez Salamanca, Barbeito Carneiro and O'Brien have all suggested that 'La perseguida triunfante' is a

¹⁰ See Teresa Langle de Paz, 'Beyond the Canon: New Documents on the Feminist Debate in Early Modern Spain', *Hispanic Review*, 70.3 (2002), 393-420; and Eavan O'Brien, 'Personalizing the Political'. See also Montesa.

retelling of the story of Genevieve of Brabant, who was likewise falsely accused of adultery.¹¹ The problem with that suggestion is that the earliest Spanish translation of the legend appears to be from 1726.¹² Matos-Nin (*Lo sobrenatural*) locates the origin of the tale in the fifth of the *Cantigas de Santa María*, which relates the story of Beatriz, the wife of a Roman Emperor, who is nearly raped, first by her brother-in-law, then by the brother of a Duke, who rescues her after the emperor decided to have her killed, and lastly by a Syrian sailor.¹³ This story may in turn have been the basis for Timoneda's twenty-first *Patraña*, which Foa cites as the source of Zayas's *desengaño*. In his version, Geroncia, who is married to the King of England, first has to fight off her brother-in-law, then one of the would-be executioners and finally the brother of the marquis of Denia, who has taken her in after she was almost killed. Elements of both versions are evident in Zayas's rendition. Timoneda's story mentions both England and Hungary and has Geroncia and her husband Marcelo abdicate in order to end their days in separate monasteries 'a do acabaron sus días muy sanctamente' [where they ended their days very saintly].¹⁴ The subject matter of the fifth *Cantiga* does not follow Zayas's tale as closely as Timoneda, but it does mention king Alfonso X 'el Sabio' – the supposed author of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* – according to whom the thick forest of men's hearts are teeming with lions of cruelty, wolves of deceit, bears of malice and snakes of wrath.¹⁵ As a self-avowed avid reader, it is quite possible that Zayas was familiar with both the *Patrañuelo* and the *Cantigas*. What is interesting is that Zayas, as is her wont, has taken a relatively well-known story and complicated and elaborated it (for more discussion, see 3.5). Things becomes even more entangled when we read that Beatriz is said to have written down her own story before she died, and that the narrator, Estefanía, says she read the manuscript herself when she was in Italy with her parents,

¹¹ See Carneiro (*Mujeres y literatura del siglo de oro*); Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca, 'Irony, Parody and the Grotesque in a Baroque Novella: "Tarde llega el desengaño"', in *María de Zayas. The Dynamics of Discourse* (London: Associated University Presses, 1995), pp. 234-53; O'Brien, *Women in the prose of María de Zayas*; O'Brien, 'Locating the Diary of Persecuted Innocence: María de Zayas's Adaptation of Hagiographic Historias', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 87.3 (2010), 295-314.

¹² See Magdalena Maurici Frades, 'Genoveva de Brabante: génesis del personaje y su lugar en la historia de la edición', *Bulletin hispanique*, 110.2 (2008), 573-600.

¹³ See Alfonso X, el Sabio, *Cantigas de Santa Maria* <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~mmlcsm/cantigas/cantigas_index.html> [Accessed 11 February 2017].

¹⁴ Juan de Timoneda, *El patrañuelo*, ed. by Rafael de Ferreres (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), p. 208.

¹⁵ A similar reference is made in 'La inocencia castigada'. No one has ever found the source and it is generally assumed that Zayas made the quotation up (see Greer, *Baroque Tales*; Grieve; and O'Brien, 'Locating').

which is often taken to be an autobiographical interpolation by Zayas (see 1.1). Zayas's version is seven times as long as Timoneda's, and a noteworthy addition is the Devil.

The miraculous restoration of the eyes seems to be original and occurs in neither Timoneda nor the *Cantigas*. The event fits well with the hagiographical subject material and a similar miracle occurs in Ribadeneira's *Flos sanctorum* where the Scottish Brigid refuses to marry anyone else except her Celestial Lord, and in order to ward off potential suitors she asks God to make her ugly, which he obligingly does by bursting her eye. Her father then allows her to enter a convent, but when she touches the altar, something wondrous happens: 'el ojo de la virgen quedó sano y su rostro tan hermoso como antes' [the virgin's eye was made whole and her face as beautiful as before].¹⁶ Ribadeneira's collection of hagiographies was one of the most important of the early modern period in Spain and was first published in Madrid in 1599 – and reprinted in 1601, 1604, 1616, 1651 and 1675 – and it is more than likely that a voracious reader like Zayas was familiar with these tales.

In the scene where Federico gives his soul to the Devil, there appears to be a confusion of traditional elements. In the classic Faustian scenario, a man thirsting for knowledge trades in his afterlife in paradise for fleeting earthly prowess by making a deal with Mephistopheles. Or we have Cipriano, who yearns for wisdom and desires Justina. But here it is the *Devil* who presents himself as a doctor with a love for learning, while Federico is reduced to a lust-ridden, vengeful man.

Soy, para que no estés suspenso, un hombre que ha estudiado mucho todas las ciencias, y sé lo pasado y por venir, porque soy mágico, que es la facultad y ciencia de que más me precio, pues con ella alcanzo y sé cuánto pasa en el mundo. (*Desengaños*, p. 436)

[I am, not to keep you in suspense, a man who has studied all the sciences and I know the past and the future, because I am a magician, which is the faculty and science I prize above all, because with magic I know everything that is going on in the world.]

There is never an explicit mention of a pact, but the text does say that Federico is 'embelesado' [spellbound] and that the ring with the secret marks has magic power: 'obrando en él la fuerza del encanto' [with him being under a spell] (*Desengaños*, p. 438). The salvific dangers of allying oneself with the Devil are severely underplayed in this rendition of an old hagiographical tale, and the Devil has been brought in, it seems,

¹⁶ Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Vidas de santos. Antología del Flos sanctorum*, ed. by Javier Azpeitia (Madrid: Lengua de Trapo, 2000), p. 142.

merely to highlight male perfidy. Federico becomes *all* men, and he is not driven by a thirst for knowledge but by his relentless concupiscence. Even if he has not made an explicit pact, he is in league with the Devil by relying on black magic, but he never pays for his lustful crimes nor for his diabolical alliance. It suffices for the Devil to acknowledge the Virgin's superiority and for Federico to admit to his guilt. In a warped way, his pernicious persistence pays off when he marries Beatriz's sister, who is 'no menos hermosa que su hermana' [no less beautiful than her sister] (*Desengaños*, p. 466), and ascends to the throne of Hungary.

The story is told by a nun who says that 'me sacrificué desde muy niña a Esposo que jamás me ha engañado ni engañará' [Ever since I was a very young girl, I have dedicated myself to a Husband who has never deceived me, nor ever will] (*Desengaños*, p. 409), but the novella is not about a husband's infidelity, but rather about his rashness to believe slander and, more important, about male lasciviousness and persistence. As Estefanía reminds her audience, the aim of the novella is to offer a *desengaño*, humorously threatening the men that if they are not 'chastised' by her tale, they are welcome to come to her convent, where she will hand them over to a dozen of her fellow nuns, 'que será como echarlos a los leones' [which will be like throwing them to the lions] (*Desengaños*, p. 410). What is highlighted too is the protective, motherly presence and power of Mary, who is referred to as 'Madre de Dios' eight times in the novella, and a ninth in connection with Beatriz in the frame narrative. In accordance with her Lacanian interpretation of Zayas's oeuvre, Greer sees the tale as a progression from the house of the Father to the house of God, the convent: a feminine space, outside of the Symbolic Order. This is why we never hear what goes on inside the convent, since language and the Symbolic Order are inextricably linked and what goes on outside of it cannot be expressed by language. On a moral level, the story is much more pessimistic. Federico is not punished for his deal with the Devil and gets more or less all he could ever want. However, whether in the end, his pact will come to haunt him and the Devil will claim his soul, we do not know. The same salvific uncertainty marks the next novella to be discussed, in which the Devil has the last laugh.

4.5 The Devil's purported magnanimity in 'El jardín engañoso'

The closing tale of the *Novelas* is 'El jardín engañoso', which takes place in Zaragoza where Jorge and his brother Federico court the two sisters Constanza and Teodosia.

Constanza accepts Jorge's courtship, albeit reluctantly; Teodosia, however, loathes Federico and is secretly in love with Jorge. Out of spite, she tells Jorge that Constanza does not love him but his brother. In a jealous rage, Jorge kills Federico and flees. During his absence, Constanza is courted by the impoverished nobleman Carlos, who feigns a mortal illness to win her affection. The trick works and they are married. Then Jorge returns to town and starts courting Constanza with renewed vigour, but she refuses his advances. Her sister falls ill from envy and Constanza suggests that Jorge marry her, but he rejects the proposal and becomes ever more adamant. In her exasperation and not without sarcasm, Constanza exclaims that if he can produce a spring garden in the heart of winter, she will give in to him. 'Éste es el precio de mi honra; manos a la labor, que a un amante tan fino como vos no hay nada imposible' [This is the price I put on my honour; now, get to work, since for a genteel lover like you, nothing is impossible] (*Novelas*, p. 527). Jorge is distraught, realising Constanza has asked for the impossible, but then he meets a mysterious stranger who rebukes him for his 'lágrimas femeniles' [womanly tears] and offers his assistance. '¿Qué puedes tú hacer cuando aun al demonio es imposible?' [What can *you* do what even the Devil cannot accomplish?] (*Novelas*, p. 528) comes Jorge's reply, to which the stranger retorts: '¿Y si yo fuese el mismo que dices?' [What if I were the very same you mention?] (*ibid.*). Jorge asks him for his price, and the answer is as expected:

Pues, mándame el alma – dijo el demonio – y hazme una cédula firmada de tu mano de que será mía cuando se aparte del cuerpo, y vuélvete seguro que antes que amenezca podrás cumplir a tu dama su imposible deseo. (*Novelas*, p. 528)

['Well, promise me your soul,' said the Devil, 'and sign this contract saying you will be mine when your soul leaves your body, and rest assured: before the sun goes up you will be able to accede to your lady's impossible demand.']

Jorge signs away his soul without hesitation and the next morning he dresses up and confidently walks over to the garden that has miraculously sprung up in front of Constanza's house. When she sees him and the enchanted garden, she faints. When she comes to, she begs her husband to kill her rather than allow him to lose his honour. When Carlos understands what has been going on, he offers to kill himself instead, thus allowing his wife to keep her word and Jorge to claim his unjust reward. Jorge witnesses this gallant display of self-sacrifice and absolves Constanza from her promise, after which he grabs his sword, ready to kill himself. He has lost his desire for Constanza and realizes that he has forfeited his eternal salvation to boot. At that point, the Devil

appears, waving the contract in the air. While one would expect him to rub his hands in glee, Zayas makes him do something extraordinary. The Devil literally shouts out ('y dando voces, les dijo'):

No me habéis de vencer, aunque más hagáis, pues donde un marido, atropellando su gusto y queriendo perder la vida, se vence a sí mismo, dando licencia a su mujer para que cumpla lo que prometió; y un loco amante, obligado de esto, suelta la palabra que le cuesta no menos que el alma, como en esta cédula se ve me hace donación de ella, no he de hacer menos que ellos. Y así, para que el mundo se admire de que en mí pudo haber virtud, toma don Jorge. Ves ahí tu cédula; yo te suelto la obligación, que no quiero alma de quien tan bien se sabe vencer. (*Novelas*, p. 532)

[You won't defeat me, whatever you do, because when a husband, riding roughshod over his desire and wishing to end his life, overcomes himself, giving his wife permission to fulfil her promise, and a mad lover, compelled by this act, forfeits the reward, which costs him no less than his salvation, as you can see in this contract here, which says that he has offered his soul to me, I refuse to be outdone. And so, in order that everyone be amazed that I can have virtue too, take this, Don Jorge, here is your contract back; I will not press my claim seeing as I don't want the soul of anyone who is able to conquer himself so well.]

Upon this, he disappears with the obligatory loud bang and fetid smell, and with him, the magic garden. Jorge marries Teodosia and they live happily ever after. No one finds out that he has killed his brother until the story is written up by Teodosia after his death.

'El jardín engañoso' is an adaptation of a tale from Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (book X, story 5).¹⁷ The original story is set in the Friuli – a region in my mind forever associated with Ginzburg's *benandanti* – where Dianora is courted by Ansaldo, who enlists the help of a local magician to create a garden. The next day, when she informs her husband of what happened, he tells her to keep her word and give herself to Ansaldo. Moved by his integrity, Ansaldo relinquishes his prize and the men become good friends. The magician dismantles the garden and leaves the region.

In the introduction to her translation, Patsy Boyers states that the tale is 'a prototypical masculine story' (Zayas, *Enchantments*, p. xxiii) which is subtly subverted by Zayas. She gives other examples of stories that Zayas adapted from other sources, like 'El verdugo de su esposa', which has echoes of 'El curioso impertinente' and *El médico de su honra*

¹⁷ Brownlee (*Cultural Labyrinth*) adds that variations on the theme can be found in Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* and Boiardo's *Orlando Furioso*.

(see 5.2.2), whereupon the critic and translator concludes: ‘This conscious pastiche technique of reworking recognizable motifs is fundamental to Zayas’s feminization of Golden Age literature and to her resoundingly modern feminist message’ (Zayas, *Enchantments*, p. xxiv). I agree that especially in the *Desengaños* Zayas writes about women, from the perspective of women and in defence of women, although I maintain that her feminist message is rather compromised by her baroque contradictions and her conflicted attitude to gender relations and the causes of societal chaos, and it is hardly ‘resoundingly modern’; nor is it clear what is so typically masculine about the story. Moreover, there is nothing remarkable about Zayas’s procedure per se, which I would hesitate to call ‘pastiche’. As discussed above, Zayas draws from a large well of stories that were reworked, copied, adapted and altered according to suit the tastes of a nation, a period or an author. What is interesting about Zayas’s project is that she turns fairly straightforward Renaissance models into complex baroque narratives, full of indeterminacy, contradiction and polysemy (see 3.5).

Greer analyses the story as a reversal of the expulsion from Paradise and the garden as created by carnal desire and the Devil. O’Brien disagrees with Greer and sees the Devil’s garden as a spectacular, artificial recreation of the Garden of Eden, but not its inversion.¹⁸ But Greer’s point goes beyond what the garden consists of and focuses on the narrative events that have been changed. Where in Genesis Cain slays Abel *after* their parents have been expelled from the Garden of Eden, Jorge kills his brother *before* the Devil’s creation of a false paradisiacal garden. And rather than ending his days like Cain, a marked and restless wanderer on the face of the earth, Jorge embarks on a happy, connubial life. Commenting on the supposed happy ending, Greer poses the question: ‘Why would Zayas thus subvert her own subversion of the patriarchal narrative?’ (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 141) and suggests: ‘Perhaps because her complicity in the ideological structure of that society made it possible for her to criticize its effect on women but not re-imagine it beyond the realm of theory and fantasy’ (ibid.). I think this is an important insight, and it is one of the reasons Zayas cannot be called a fully-fledged feminist according to Lerner’s definition (see introduction). Moreover, I think the ending is not the unqualified happy ending Greer seems to suggest it is. Friedman labels Jorge’s marriage a travesty of the sacrament of matrimony and of the didactic function of literature; he emphasizes furthermore that there is a friction between

¹⁸ See Eavan O’Brien, ‘Games in “The Garden of Deceit”: A Seventeenth-Century Novella by María de Zayas y Sotomayor’, *The Modern Language Review*, 104.4 (2009), 955-65.

resolution and expectation, between causal structure and moral plane, adding that this may be a message in its own right.¹⁹ The ending is deceptively idealistic and seems to lack any sense of justice. Brownlee ('Postmodernism') posits that in both Boccaccio and Zayas what is at stake is linguistic integrity – keeping one's word – but adds that the author of the *Sarao* 'understands the paradigmatic function of Boccaccio's tale in terms of pre-and postlapsarian language' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 97). In Boccaccio's 'prelapsarian' version referentiality triumphs and keeping one's word leads to reward; this is problematized in 'El jardín engañoso'.

Zayas has considerably complicated the story by doubling up the protagonists, giving Jorge a brother, whom he kills, and Constanza a sister, who betrays her sister and who is one of Zayas perfidious females, like Inés's sister-in-law in 'La inocencia castigada' and Florentina in 'Estragos que causa el vicio' (see O'Brien, *Women in the prose*). Like 'La perseguida triunfante', the story is said to have been written down by one of the protagonists, Teodosia. But if this is the case, then the transmission must have undergone serious mediation, since the story as told by Laura exposes all of Teodosia's flaws and takes a different perspective (see Friedman, 'Constructing Romance'). What is more, the story is the only one in the collection that does not claim to be verisimilar, something Cardaillac Herмосilla has interpreted as representing Zayas's rejection of magic as deceitful (see 1.3.4):

No quiero, discreto auditorio, venderos por verdades averiguadas los sucesos de esta historia; si bien todos son de calidad que lo pudieran ser, matar un hermano a otro, ni ser una hermana traidora con su hermana, forzándolos al uno celos y al otro amor y envidia, no es caso nuevo. (*Novelas*, p. 512)

[Genteel audience, I don't want to sell you the events of this story as verified truths; even though they are such that they might well be, since for a brother to kill his brother or a sister to betray her sister – one being driven by jealousy, the other by love and envy – is nothing new.]

The aim of the story is to be exemplary, 'pues el decirla [la maravilla] yo no es más de para dar ejemplo y prevenir que se guarden de las ocasiones' [since if I tell the tale it is to hold up an example and give a warning to be wary of what may happen] (*Novelas*, p. 513). But what purports to be a tale of warning against jealousy and treason between

¹⁹ See Edward Friedman, 'Constructing Romance: The Deceptive Idealism of María de Zayas's *El jardín engañoso*', in *Zayas and Her Sisters, 2: Essays on Novelas by 17th-Century Spanish Women* (New York: Global Publications Binghamton University, 2001), pp. 45-61.

brothers and sisters, turns out very differently. This supposedly exemplary tale, adapted from Boccaccio, is transformed into a complex novella with an up-ended morality. Once again, the reader has been wrong-footed and the story is not what it appears to be.

This deception goes deeper than has hitherto been discussed by critics, and in my view almost everyone has been led up the garden path with regards to the Devil's purported good deed. Zayas replaces Boccaccio's magician with the Devil, but there is no narrative reason for this. She makes use of magicians and necromancers elsewhere, so why would she have recourse to the Devil here? Zayas's version has profound salvific implications for Jorge and for the message of the story as a whole. Let us return to the key scene of the story. When the Devil returns Jorge's contract, he claims he has been impressed with the willingness of the two rivals to sacrifice themselves and says he does not want to be outshone. The audience is duly blown away by this oxymoronic demonic good deed and rather than discussing the morality of the fratricide, they debate who has been the most magnanimous: 'unos alegaban que el marido, y otros que el amante, y todos juntos que el demonio, por ser en él cosa nunca vista el hacer bien' [some argued that it was the husband, others that it was the lover, but then all agreed it was the Devil, because it was unheard of for him to do a good deed] (*Novelas*, p. 534).

Like the discussants of the *sarao*, modern critics have not failed to comment on the Devil's purported altruism. Vasileski writes that: 'María de Zayas hace que el mismo demonio tenga un momento de arrepentimiento y una acción noble en "El jardín engañoso", tal vez implicando que aún para la personificación del mal habrá oportunidad de salvación' [María de Zayas makes even the Devil have a moment of repentance and commit a noble act in 'El jardín engañoso', perhaps implying that even for the personification of evil there will be an opportunity for salvation] (Vasileski, p. 36). This demonic good deed is often seen as unique in Spanish literature, at least according to Krabbenhoft,²⁰ Brownlee and Paun de García, with the latter writing: 'muy consciente de esto, declara que su versión del pacto roto es original, nunca oído, ni leído antes, y me figuro después' [very conscious of this, she declares that her version of the broken pact has never been heard or read anywhere else before, nor afterwards, I imagine] (Paun de García, 'Magia y poder', p. 52). Williamsen claims the story can be

²⁰ See Kenneth Krabbenhoft, *Neostoicismo y género popular* (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 2001).

read as a revisionist myth that challenges the fundamental opposition between good and evil.²¹ O'Brien calls it a thought-provoking and theologically subversive case of injustice that Teodosia's marital happiness is due to an uncharacteristic volte-face of the Devil as it 'represents the ultimate baroque equivocation: the Devil unexpectedly supplants God as an agent of good' (O'Brien, 'Games in the Garden', p. 1016). Friedman is less extreme and calls the Devil's action a performance against type. Matos-Nin (*Lo sobrenatural*) asserts that the soul of Federico has no worth for the Devil and that the latter mocks him for his inconsistency and failure to keep his word. She goes even further and suggests that the Devil, as a fallen angel, has honour: 'Para las personas de esta época, el diablo es el ángel caído que posee ciertos poderes inherentes a su creación divina y, como tal, también tiene honor' [For people of this period the Devil was a fallen angel who has certain traits inherent to his divine creation and, as such, he also has honour] (Matos-Nin, *Lo sobrenatural*, p. 43). This goes against all demonological treatises of the period, however, and reflects a poor understanding of the nature of Satan and must be discarded as an explanation of his behaviour.

My own reading of the ending is rather different. Let us review the facts. Laura announces the story to be about hatred between siblings. Teodosia lies to Jorge about her sister's affection and he kills his brother. When he returns from exile, he ends up striking a deal with the Devil to win over Constanza. When she asks her husband to kill her because she would rather that than lose her honour, Jorge makes up his mind to kill himself instead. Thus he is prepared to pile up one damnation upon the other by contemplating suicide and dying an unconfessed death having signed away his soul in order to commit adultery with the woman for whom he has murdered his own brother. Ostensibly, this chain leading straight to eternal hellfire is broken by the Devil's unusual decision to tear up the contract. We are told that Jorge marries Teodosia, who, not unlike Federico in 'La perseguida triunfante', seems to be rewarded for her treachery by becoming the wife of the man she loved all along. 'Vivieron muchos años con hermosos hijos, sin que jamás se supiese que don Jorge hubiese sido el matador de Federico. Hasta que después de muerto don Jorge, Teodosia contó el caso como quien tan bien lo sabía' [They lived many years and had beautiful children, without anyone ever finding out that Don Jorge was the one who had murdered Federico; until after the death of Don Jorge,

²¹ See Amy Williamsen, 'Engendering Early Modern Discourse: Subjectivity and Syntactic Empathy in *Al fin se paga todo*', in *Zayas and Her Sisters, 2: Essays on Novels by 17th-Century Spanish Women* (New York: Global Publications Binghamton University, 2001), pp. 33-43.

when Teodosia told what had actually happened, being in full possession of the facts] (*Novelas*, p. 534).

And they lived happily ever after... Or so it would seem. But in fact, Zayas is crucially silent about how Jorge dies – or Teodosia for that matter. Does he repent at death's door and commend his soul to God? Or has he forgotten all about his multiple sins and die unconfessed? The tale, in salvific terms, is open-ended and, for all we know, the Devil has the last laugh when he drags his victim off to eternal hellfire having, in addition, hoodwinked a good deal of people, making them think he is actually capable of doing good. After all, why should anyone trust the Arch-Deceiver and Father of Lies? When Laura introduces her tale, not only does she indicate that she does not expect us to believe everything, she also points at 'otras secretas causas' [other secret causes] that would explain the Devil's seemingly incredible action:

Ni lo hallo muy grande en que el demonio, por llevar cautivos a su temerosa y horrible prisión, con apariencias falsas dé al entender que gusta de hacer lo que los hombres desean. Lo que más es de admirar que haya en él ninguna obra buena, como en mi maravilla se verá. Mas para eso puede haber otras secretas causas que nosotros ignoramos. En esto no os obligo a creer más de lo que diere gusto. (*Novelas*, pp. 512-13)

[Nor do I find it too much to believe that the Devil, in order to take people captive and drag them to his terrifying and horrible prison, uses false appearances to suggest that he likes to do what people want him to do. What is more amazing is that he should be able to do good, as you will see in my tale. But there may be secret causes that we don't know about. In this, I don't oblige you to believe more than you please.]

She puts her finger on it when she writes that the Devil uses false appearances to make people believe that he does their bidding only to carry them off later to a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Rather than the oxymoron it is often taken to be, the supposed good deed is a deceptive act of subterfuge and double bluff on the Devil's part, not unlike what happens to Paulo in *El condenado por desconfiado*, where the hermit is tricked by the Devil – appearing to him as an angel – to believe he has been damned, causing him to give up his saintly life. Zayas, then, plays a magisterial game of contradictions here. In a story that is not supposed to be taken at face value, the purported aim is diverted and the end deceptive. We find ourselves lost in a narratively constructed maze where what you read is not what it seems (*lo que lees no es lo que es*).

The apparent fairy-tale endings of 'La perseguida triunfante' and 'El jardín engañoso' are deceptive. Federico and Jorge are tricked by the Devil and lulled into a false sense of

security. And if they are not, the message is all the more devastating. At least if they fall into the Devil's snares, they will get what they deserve and at least there is justice, even if it is in the after-life. Should they get away with diabolical pacts and fratricide and see their perfidy rewarded, then there really is no justice in this world *or* the next, and no hope for anyone, especially women.

* * *

The Devil takes on various guises in Zayas's novellas. Distasteful, but not unsurprising for the period, are the references to Black people as devils. The most interesting aspect in those stories is the baroque chiaroscuro, the opposition between black and white, good and evil, saintliness and sin, and above all the moral inversion of making Antonio the Black stable boy a pious victim of his depraved white mistress. In addition we have also seen the Devil as the inspiration to do evil, often linked to suicide. A more traditional, personal, Devil makes his appearance in three novellas, in two of them striking a deal with one of the protagonists. In both cases Zayas is silent about the eventual fate of the character in question. Rather than seeing this as an oversight, even less an oxymoronic good deed, I analyse this silence as strategic and an important aspect of the author's aim to introduce indeterminacy in her work. We are led up the garden path and Zayas plays a clever and baroque game with the Devil.

So far I have discussed episodes containing magic and the Devil, but to fully understand the deployment of the supernatural *sensu lato* in the work of Zayas, we must now turn to other events, some of which clearly pertain to the order of miracles, while others are neither diabolical nor miraculous, but are nevertheless supernatural and, more important, imbued with a sense of the uncanny.

Chapter 5

Uncanny Miracles

Como doña María se vio desamparada de este público, agudizó en sus novelas la nota de lo novelesco; quiso cazar el público popular que busca interés, drama, aventura en la novela. Las *Novelas amorosas* son la obra verdaderamente literaria, fina, artista, de doña María; a partir de este volumen, todo lo que viene es de folletín popular. (Azorín, *Los clásicos redivivos*, p. 72)

[When Doña María saw she had lost favour with this audience, she began to emphasize the melodramatic tone of her work; she wanted to court the popular readership, who look for excitement, drama, and adventure in a novella. The *Novelas amorosas* are Doña María's truly literary, refined and artistic work, all that follows is but pulp fiction.]

APART FROM BEING MARKED BY INDETERMINACY, ZAYAS'S WORK IS OFTEN SEEN AS transgressive, and this in turn is tightly linked to the sensationalism she so clearly espouses. In her novellas we have fathers murdering sons, husbands and brothers slaughtering their wives and sisters, a murder seen through a keyhole, women dressing as men, men dressed as women, a man making love to his page and cruelly mocking his wife when she walks in on them, a woman lusting after other women and a noblewoman who uses a Black stable boy as her sex slave until he dies from exhaustion (see 4.1). Goytisolo categorised such scenes as 'puro gusto de chocar' [a pure desire to shock] (Goytisolo, p. 19) and they made scholars like Ticknor and Pfandl knit their puritanical brows in disgust (see 1.2). In their introduction to a study dedicated to the cultural and literary context of Zayas, Irene Albers and Uta Felten mention the author's transgressions of morality (homosexuality, adultery), of the social order (transvestism, inversion of gender roles) and of religious taboos (necromancy, pacts with the Devil).¹ The latter, however, are not discussed in any of the articles, even though, as I have shown in the preceding chapters, there is plenty to say on the subject. In addition to magic and the Devil, there are a few further categories of the supernatural *sensu lato* that are present in the novellas. One is the supernatural *sensu stricto*, since the author includes three miracles in her work. Two of these are fairly standard, but the third goes beyond the purely hagiographical and introduces an eerie quality. Another category is the

¹ See Irene Albers and Uta Felten, *Escenas de transgresión. María de Zayas en su contexto literario-cultural* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009). They add that transgression does not mean subversion and make the point that her work is full of contradictions and that it mixes genres.

uncanny or the fantastic. In the course of the collection we are confronted with disembodied voices, the undead and incorruptible cadavers. None of these occurrences are obviously miraculous nor preternatural, but rather they seem to foreshadow a Gothic aesthetic.

There is one further transgressive element connected to the supernatural that I have not dealt with so far, which is the author's view that free will is subjugated to astrology. Amezúa remarks upon the author's frequent use of the supernatural and marvellous, including her belief in astrology, and blames it on her female credulity. 'Confirmando esta propensión supersticiosa, doña María de Zayas cree ciegamente en los sueños fatídicos, en la influencia de las estrellas y sabiduría de los astrólogos, en el valor de los agüeros' [Confirming this superstitious proclivity, Doña María de Zayas believes blindly in fateful dreams, the influence of the stars and the wisdom of astrologers, and in the merit of omens] (*Zayas, Novelas* (1948), p. xxviii). But the profound implications of her stance on astrology have, as far as I can tell, not been analysed.

5.1 Written in the stars: astrology and the denial of free will

In her discussion of 'La inocencia castigada' Judith Whitenack refers to the notion of free will, suggesting that Inés could not have been subjected to the Moor's enchantment had she wanted to resist it. This is a problematic reading (see 1.3.3 and 3.2), but the notion that free will trumps enchantment is affirmed in other works of the period. Don Quixote, for instance, says:

Aunque bien sé que no hay hechizos en el mundo que puedan mover y forzar la voluntad, como algunos simples piensan, que es libre nuestro albedrío y no hay yerba ni encanto que le fuerce: lo que suelen hacer algunas mujercillas simples y algunos embusteros bellacos es algunas misturas y venenos, con que vuelven locos a los hombres, dando a entender que tienen fuerza hacer querer bien, siendo, como digo, cosa imposible forzar la voluntad.²

[I know, of course, that there are no spells in the world that can control a person's will, as some simple people believe; for our free will is sovereign, and there is no herb or enchantment that can control it. What some silly strumpets and deceitful rogues do is to make certain poisonous mixtures that they use to turn men mad, claiming that they have the power to make them fall in love, whereas it is, as I have just said, impossible to coerce the will.]³

² Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. by Francisco Rico (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2004), pp. 262-63.

³ Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, transl. by John Rutherford (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 180.

In seventeenth-century Spain there raged a theological debate about free will. This debate is known as the *De auxiliis* controversy, which, according to Henry Sullivan in his influential book on Tirso de Molina, is sometimes dismissed as ‘an incomprehensible quibble’ but in fact constituted ‘a crucial moment in the history of ideas and in the development of human freedom’.⁴ On one side of the debate there was the Dominican Domingo Báñez and his Mercedarian ally Francisco Zumel, who held that God foresees, predestines and causes man’s free will to perform good deeds that will bring about his redemption and who distinguished between sufficient grace, granted to everyone, and efficacious grace, leading to actual individual salvation, and who believed man could be condemned by ‘negative antecedent reprobation’, that is, the fact that God has not prevented the sins of a particular individual. In other words, God’s omniscience takes precedence over man’s free will. On the other side of the debate there was Luis Molina, a Jesuit professor at Coimbra, who believed in the doctrine of ‘simultaneous concurrence’ according to which God’s cooperation is only employed after a sin has been committed and that although God foresees everything, including conditional future contingent events, his prescience does not predetermine our acts. This ‘erects a wall of safety around human liberty emphasizing the importance of man’s personal efforts, the value of earned merits and his determination in the success or failure of grace’ (Sullivan, p. 34).

The debate was not restricted to the faculties of theology, but reached a wide audience through its inclusion in plays of the period. The contribution of playwrights like Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina was to staunchly defend free will – and their genius, to turn abstract theology into moving drama. No one is condemned a priori and there is no such thing as unmovable fate. In Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* the prophecy that Segismundo was destined to cause civil war and vanquish and humiliate his father Basilio may come true, but the latter’s imprudent desire to outwit destiny by locking up his son eventually turns him into an instrument of fate as Segismundo transforms from being a half-beast, subjected to violent passions, to a paragon of virtue and magnanimity. The stars do not lie (although astrologers can), but fate cannot coerce our

⁴ Henry W. Sullivan, *Tirso de Molina & The Drama of the Counter Reformation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976), p. 30. Sullivan describes the debate on free will as a drama played out in three acts. The first act was the debate that pitted the Protestants Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli and Calvin against Erasmus and the Catholic theologians. The second act took place in Spain and consisted of a heated debate between Jesuits and Dominicans (the *De auxiliis* controversy). The third and last act was played out in France between Jesuits and Jansenists.

free will – we have a choice in how we deal with adversity – and it is possible to reverse its effects: ‘porque el hado más esquivo,|la inclinación más violenta,|el planeta más impío,|sólo el albedrío inclinan,|no fuerzan el albedrío [because the most elusive fate, the most violent inclination, the most impious planet, only incline our will and do not force it] (ll. 787-91).⁵ In *Las cadenas del demonio* the Devil is forced to admit that ‘tiene el pecador|en su albedrío tal vez|más ancha la permisión que yo’ [the sinner with his free will is perhaps allowed much more than I] (*Las cadenas del demonio*, p. 233). And in his *La devoción de la cruz*, the siblings Eusebio and Julia, who have both committed a litany of sins, repent and are saved. At one point Julia reminds her father that ‘el hado impío|no fuerza el libre albedrío’ [impious fate does not force our free will] (ll. 588-89) and at the end of the play a miracle takes place to allow Eusebio, who has died unconfessed, to be redeemed. Tirso de Molina’s *El condenado por desconfiado* is more pessimistic and Paulo is allowed to be cruelly deceived by the Devil, who convinces the hermit that he has been condemned by negative antecedent reprobation. It used to be thought that Tirso de Molina was a follower of Molina and that his pseudonym was an homage to the Jesuit theologian, but Sullivan convincingly argues that Tirso was in fact a follower of his fellow Mercedarian Zumel, who proposed a less rigid interpretation of Báñez’s stance of free will. In *El condenado por desconfiado*, Paulo’s undoing is doubting God’s infinite mercy and not using his free will to ask for forgiveness, even when he thinks it is too late – because it never is. When the Good Shepherd comes on stage, looking for his lost sheep, he says: ‘Diole Dios libre albedrío|y fragilidad le dio|al cuerpo y al alma; luego|dio potestad con acción|de pedir misericordia,|que a ninguno le negó’ [God gave him free will and frailty of the body and the soul; and then he gave him the power to act and ask forgiveness, which he has never refused anyone] (ll. 1541-46). These plays, for all their serious theologizing, are at once gripping and express a profoundly optimistic faith in free will and God’s boundless compassion.

In Zayas this optimism is replaced by a deep pessimism. One of the narrators comes close to blasphemy when she claims that free will cannot overcome fate. Having heard the stories of two women who were murdered by their husbands, one for not telling him that she was being courted by another man and the other for telling him that she *was* (see 5.2.2), she exclaims: ‘Y cierto, que aunque se dice que el libre albedrío no está

⁵ For discussion, see Paul Lewis-Smith, *Calderón de la Barca, La vida es sueño* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1998).

sujeto a las estrellas, pues aprovechándonos de la razón las podemos vencer, que soy de parecer que si nacimos sujetos a desdichas, es imposible apartarnos de ellas' [And for sure, even though they say that free will is not subjected to the stars – since by using our reason we can overcome their influence – I am of the opinion that if we are born to misfortune, it is impossible to avoid their influence] (*Desengaños*, p. 228). A similar, albeit slightly less fatalistic, remark is made in 'El traidor contra su sangre', where the narrator states: 'aunque se dice que el sabio es dueño de las estrellas, líbrenos Dios de las que inclinan a desgracias, que aunque más se tema y se aparten de ellas, es necesaria mucha atención para que no ejecuten su poder' [even though they say that a wise man is not subjected to the stars, may God protect us from those that predispose to misfortune, because no matter how much one fears and endeavours to avoid them, one has to be extremely careful not to let them exert their power] (*Desengaños*, p. 374). And in the first line of the opening tale of the *Sarao* the narrator tells us that 'para ser una mujer desdichada, cuando su estrella la inclina a serlo, no bastan ejemplos ni escarmientos' [if a woman is unfortunate, her star being thus inclined, neither exemplary tales nor moral lessons are of any use] (*Novelas*, p. 173), which is highly ironic given that the collection is entitled *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and the whole point of the stories is to 'dar ejemplo y prevenir' [offer examples and warnings] (*Novelas*, p. 513).

Throughout the tales there are many references to the malign influence of the stars and the inescapability of fortune and fate. The word 'fortuna' [fortune] is used about fifty times in the *Sarao*, often personified and once referred to as 'cruel enemiga del descanso, que jamás hace cosa a gusto del deseo' [cruel enemy of repose, who never does anything to please our desires] (*Desengaños*, p. 232). When Laura is at the roadside chapel (see 3.2), she cries out: 'No sé para qué el cielo me crió hermosa, noble y rica, si todo había de tener tan poco valor contra la desdicha, sin que tantos dotes de naturaleza y fortuna me quitasen la mala estrella en que nací' [I don't know why Heaven made me beautiful, noble and rich, if all of this was going to be of little use against misfortune – all those gifts that nature and fortune bestowed upon me cannot liberate me from the evil star under which I was born] (*Novelas*, p. 363). Other references can be found in 'El imposible vencido', a tale about two star-crossed lovers that starts with the statement that 'los dos amantes habían nacido en la estrella de Píramo y Tísbe' [the two lovers were born under the star of Pyramus and Thisbe] (*Novelas*, p. 447). Of all novellas, 'Mal presagio casar lejos' has the largest number of bad omens and references to misfortune, as the title would lead us to expect. The tale relates what happens to Blanca and her

sisters, all of whom marry foreigners, and all of whom end badly. At the beginning of the story we learn that: ‘no les pudo prevenir el librarlas de la desdichada estrella en que nacieron [...] a la una y a la otra siguió su mala fortuna’ [this could not prevent them from escaping the unfortunate star under which they were born... all of them being followed by their bad luck] (*Desengaños*, p. 338). And later on there are references to ‘la adversa estrella con que había nacido’ [the adverse star under which she was born] (*Desengaños*, p. 348) and ‘su fatal desdicha y la estrella rigurosa de su nacimiento’ [her fatal misfortune and the hostile star of her birth] (*Desengaños*, p. 360).

Astrology and the belief in the influence of the stars was part of the Neoplatonic world-view that was being eroded in the seventeenth century. In his treatise from 1538 Ciruelo still held that:

los cielos y estrellas, alterando el aire y la tierra, también alteran a los hombres y a los otros seres vivos que moran en la tierra [...] Y el verdadero filósofo que conoce las virtudes y propiedades de las estrellas, podrá por ellas conocer los efectos sobredichos en los elementos y en los hombres [...] Y esta astrología es lícita y verdadera ciencia como la filosofía natural o la medicina. (Ciruelo, pp. 119-20)

[the sky and the stars, through changing the air and the earth also change men and other living creatures that dwell on earth... And the true philosopher who knows the virtues and properties of the stars will be able to know through them the aforementioned effects they will have on people... And this astrology is lawful and a true science, just like natural philosophy or medicine.]

This attitude had changed by the time Zayas’s contemporary Pellicer called astrology a ‘useless ability and madness’ in a letter from 11 March 1642: ‘Murió el padre Andrés de León, de los Clérigos Menores, grande matemático y astrólogo, y por esta habilidad tan inútil muy consultado en la Corte de todos los que creen en los delirios de la Astrología’ [Father Andrés de León, a minor-order priest, has died; he was a great mathematician and astrologer, and for that useless ability much sought after at Court by all those who believe in the madness of Astrology].⁶

For a long time, astrology was held in high esteem and pervaded various aspects of scientific thought, but in the period between Copernicus and Newton it lost its central role and ossified into an obsolete system of belief, which survives to this day in the form of star signs and horoscopes (see Thomas). Adorno has claimed that the decline

⁶ José de Pellicer, *Avisos históricos* (Madrid: Taurus, 1965), p. 160.

of social systems causes paranoia and the search for irrational causes such as astrology and the occult, which, in his view, explains the witch-hunts of the early modern period. Astrology was taught at the University of Salamanca, although in 1582 the Supreme Court took action to end this, presumably because it conflicted with the question of free will.⁷ What Zayas does is recycle this Neoplatonic belief to fit her profoundly fatalistic agenda, without reinserting herself into a bygone episteme. She is deeply pessimistic about the position of women within society and their power of self-determination; she acknowledges there is free will, but sees it as powerless against the crushing wheel of fortune.

5.2 Miracles and hagiography: between tradition and innovation

In the previous two chapters I have looked at episodes in Zayas that fall into the category of the marvellous order. But there are also a number of events that pertain to the miraculous order. Two of them are fairly traditional miracles that fit the hagiographical or legendary mould. In the descriptions of the miraculous, the indeterminacy so typical of the marvellous is absent; the *miracula* are described in a straightforward manner and there are no fake and funny wonders that are contrasted with haunting and very real ones. One conventional miracle is the restoration of Beatriz's eyes (see 4.4). In another novella a dead woman is resurrected thanks to the power of the Cross. Lastly, there is a miracle that has been imbued with the uncanny.

5.2.1 *A conventional miracle in 'El imposible vencido'*

'El imposible vencido' tells the story of Rodrigo, who is betrothed to Leonor and who must leave her to join the Duke of Alba, who is fighting in Flanders. While he is there, he solves the mystery of a ghost that haunts a Spanish lady called Blanca – the spook turns out to be a spurned lover who walks around on stilts, dressed in a sheet and rattling chains. Meanwhile, Leonor's parents tell their daughter that Rodrigo has contracted marriage in Flanders and they marry her off to the rich Alonso. When Rodrigo returns to Spain and Leonor sees him, she literally drops dead and is buried. In his grief, Rodrigo bribes a verger to gain entrance to the crypt and opens her tomb. He embraces his departed beloved and prays to a crucifix to restore her to him. His prayer is heard and Leonor is resurrected, although she never loses the pallor of death. The event is hailed as a true miracle. After proclaiming the banns in accordance with

⁷ See Charles Williams, *Witchcraft* (New York: Meridian Books, 1959).

Tridentine directives, Rodrigo marries Leonor, but the newly-weds face a lawsuit by Alonso. A theological discussion about to whom Leonor is rightfully married ensues. Rodrigo wins the lawsuit and for all we know they live happily ever after.

In an insightful article, Edwin Morby discusses Zayas's novella as one of the most complete versions of the *difunta pleiteada* topos (the litigation concerning a deceased woman).⁸ He refers to work done by María Goyri de Menéndez Pidal, who analyses a number of *romances* and *comedias* on the theme – including *La difunta pleiteada*, attributed to Lope de Vega – as well as various French and Italian sources, including Bandello, in which the same story is told, the basic elements of which are the following. A young woman is desired by many and gives her word to one of her suitors. Her father wants to marry her to a different, richer, young man. The suitor leaves his beloved to go on a business trip far away. During his absence the young woman is married to the party of her parents' choosing, but she dies on her wedding day. Her suitor returns from his trip, bribes his way into the vault where she is buried and tries to kill himself out of grief, but his hand is stayed by the Virgin, who resuscitates the (seemingly) dead bride. They marry, but when her first husband recognizes her, he files a lawsuit, which he loses.

There are a few notable differences between this Ur-version and Zayas's novella, the most interesting – or puzzling, given the prominence of Marian interventions in other tales and her supposed attachment to the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception (see 1.1) – is that the miracle is not performed by the Mother of God, but by the power of the Crucifix. One possible explanation could be that the narrator is male (Lope) and that Zayas 'reserves' her Marian interventions for female-narrated tales. Zayas also insists more than other sources that Leonor is truly dead, as opposed to merely appearing to be so, which is what happens in Bandello's version. The theme of the young girl appearing to be dead and buried with her lover subsequently coming to her tomb, killing himself in despair, is of course very old and is known in many variations, perhaps the scene in *Romeo and Juliet* being the most famous of all. The subject matter of Shakespeare's play might go back to Pyramus and Thisbe (see 3.5) and it is no coincidence that the narrator of 'El imposible vencido' starts his story by telling his audience that 'los dos amantes habían nacido en la estrella de Píramo y Tisbe' (*Novelas*, p. 447). In addition, Rodrigo does not commit suicide, which would be un-Christian,

⁸ See Edwin Morby. See also Nigel Glendinning, 'The Traditional Story of "La difunta pleiteada"', Cadalso's *Noches lúgubres*, and the Romantics', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 38.3 (1961), 206-15.

but prefers to have himself killed in battle: ‘si no me quito la vida, es porque soy cristiano; mas yo iré donde me la quiten los enemigos para que te acompañe en muerte quien te adoró en vida’ [if I don’t take my own life, it is because I am a Christian; but I shall go to where my enemies will take it from me, so I can accompany in death whom I adored in life] (*Novelas*, p. 475). In the frame narrative, Lisis’s betrothed Diego does the same at the end of the *sarao* when Lisis announces that she will not marry him. ‘Don Diego, descontento, con bascas de muerte, sin despedirse de nadie, se salió de la sala; dicen que fue a servir al rey en la guerra de Cataluña, donde murió, porque él mismo se ponía en los mayores peligros’ [Don Diego, distraught and mortally afflicted, left the room without saying goodbye to anyone; they say he went to serve the king in the war against Catalonia, where he died, because he put himself in the greatest of dangers] (*Desengaños*, p. 510).

As I have discussed, for most of Zayas’s novellas it is possible to suggest one or more sources, a testament to her wide reading. ‘El imposible vencido’ as well as ‘La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor’ and ‘Tarde llega el desengaño’ share elements of their plot with novellas by Bandello, and if Zayas spent her late teenage years and early twenties in Naples, it would be reasonable to assume she could read Italian (see 1.1). However, as Morby suggests, Zayas also includes elements from Spanish romances and there are echoes too of the famous legend of the lovers of Teruel, about whom Zayas’s friend Pérez de Montalbán wrote a *comedia*. Seeing as it is impossible to ascertain exactly which sources Zayas used, we should focus on what Zayas does with the tales that inspired her. She always adds her own material and in the process usually complicates the narrative, as she does with her adaptation of Boccaccio’s ‘El jardín engañoso’ (see 4.5). In ‘El imposible vencido’, not only does she elaborate the lawsuit, which Morby finds more convincing than the one in Lope’s play, but she also fleshes out the episode abroad. Sandra Foa claims that Zayas changes the story to fit her feminist agenda. While that is arguably the case with other stories – even if a baroque tendency to render her stories more complex and riven by internal contradictions is at least as prevalent – it is not clear how precisely this story has become more feminist as a result of Zayas’s additions.

Rodrigo’s adventures in Flanders are a prelude and counterpoint to the later events in Salamanca. Blanca is in love with Rodrigo, but he tricks her into marrying Beltrán, who is desperately in love with Blanca. She promises to marry Beltrán in front of a witness,

thinking he is Rodrigo, ‘quedando con esto, según las costumbres de Flandes, tan confirmado el matrimonio como si estuvieran casados’ [and so, according to Flemish customs, they entered into matrimony just as if they had actually married] (*Novelas*, p. 466). In other words, theirs is a marriage according to pre-Tridentine rites. Leonor and Rodrigo, on the other hand, rigorously and explicitly apply the procedures stipulated by the Council of Trent, like proclaiming the banns of marriage: ‘para su casamiento, demás de haberse aconsejado con teólogos y letrados, habían procedido todas las solemnidades que se requieren, como lo manda el santo Concilio de Trento’ [for their marriage, in addition to having consulted theologians and lawyers, they followed all the requisite rites, as ordained by the Holy Council of Trent] (*Novelas*, p. 481).

Then there is the episode of the fake phantom, which provides a contrast not only to Octavio’s real ghost (see 3.3), but equally to the actual miracle of Leonor’s resurrection in the second half. In Greer’s view this resurrection is a male fantasy where ideal love overcomes parental authority, civil and ecclesiastical institutions and even death itself. While the novella certainly suggests that love conquers all, albeit with a little divine help, it is not clear why this should be a particularly male fantasy, nor do I think that Greer’s statement that ‘in part or in whole, in a variety of ways, in one manner or another, every male-narrated story turns back on its narrator or narrative model to expose the psychic origins of male (mis)treatment – verbal and physical – of the women the men love and fear’ (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 198) applies to this male-narrated novella. The lover pretending to be a ghost falls into the category of comical episodes containing bogus magic, like the sham magic ceremony in ‘El castigo de la miseria’ (see 3.1). A similar story is told by Castillo Solórzano in ‘La fantasma de Valencia’. In ‘El imposible vencido’ Flanders is the locus of old-fashioned marriage rites and fake phantoms, whereas Spain is associated with Tridentine rigour and the miraculous. This contrast fits her overall xenophobic agenda and projects fraudulence onto foreigners. In the tales there are numerous references to the egregious nature of foreigners, the best example being the title and premise of the novella ‘Mal presagio casar lejos’, a tale about the misfortune that befalls three sisters who marry foreign men (see O’Brien, ‘Personalizing the Political’).

5.2.2 *An uncanny miracle in 'El verdugo de su esposa'*

A third miracle occurs in 'El verdugo de su esposa', which tells the story of Juan and Pedro, two Spaniards who live in Palermo and who are known by all – 'por antonomasia', Cervantes would have added – as 'los dos amigos' [the two friends]. After having an affair with a local woman called Angelina, Pedro marries Roseleta, but this does not stop from him regularly inviting his best friend Juan over to his house. The inevitable happens and Juan falls in love with his best friend's wife. Roseleta resists his advances, however, and when she has had enough, she tells her husband about it, showing him a love letter by Juan's hand. Stung by jealousy, Pedro arranges for his wife to promise to meet her would-be lover at a country estate so he can catch him in flagrante delicto. On the way to the tryst, Juan hears the Angelus being rung and perfunctorily recites an Ave Maria. Promptly, he arrives at a gallows where one of the hanged men addresses him and offers to go to the meeting in his stead. Juan accepts and follows him at a little distance and sees how Pedro storms out of the house, kills the hanged man and throws him down a well. When this is done, the undead man comes back to Juan to explain the miracle.

Y mira lo que los cristianos pecadores debemos a la Virgen María, Madre de Dios y Señora nuestra, que con venir, como venías, a ofender a su precioso Hijo y a Ella, se obligó de aquella Avemaría que le rezaste, cuando, saliendo de la ciudad, tocaron a la oración [...] me mandó viniese de la manera que has visto, para que tomando a los ojos de don Pedro y sus criados tu forma, lleven creído que te dejan muerto y sepultado en aquel pozo, y tú tendrás lugar de arrepentirte y enmendarte. (*Desengaños*, p. 217)

[And see what we Christian sinners owe to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and Our Lady, because coming as you did to offend her precious Son and Her, she felt obliged on account of the Ave Maria you prayed to her when they rang the bells as you were leaving the city... to send me in the manner in which you have seen, taking your shape in the eyes of Don Pedro and his servants, making them think they have left you dead and buried in that well, whilst you will have the opportunity to repent and make amends.]

Shocked and contrite, Juan leaves the scene and enters a monastery – one of the few men in *Zayas* to do so. Pedro's love for his wife turns to hatred. He cannot stand the sight of her and moves in with his former lover Angelina, who subsequently sets him up against his wife, proving herself to be a true member of the 'perfidious sisterhood'. Eventually he ends up killing Roseleta by removing a bandage around her throat so that she bleeds to death.

There can be little doubt about Zayas's sources for this novella. On the one hand it has clear echoes of Cervantes's 'El curioso impertinente', while on the other, Roseleta's death is a reference to Mencía's fate in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*.⁹ The story is preceded by 'La más infame venganza' in which Camila is courted by another Juan, but decides *not* to tell her husband about it. When he finds out anyway, he wreaks his revenge by poisoning her. She does not die immediately, but her body swells up to monstrous proportions and turns an ugly hue. Eventually a heavenly voice speaks and she gives up her ghost. The two stories form a neat pair of opposites. In the first story the woman is killed because she does not tell her husband she is being pursued by another man. In the second, the woman dies after she tells her husband his best friend is making advances. This juxtaposition is not only a clear example of Zayas's message that women are doomed unless serious changes are made to society and have little recourse except to seek refuge in a convent, it also shows how Zayas uses a baroque aesthetics in putting two irreconcilable solutions side by side. The female protagonists face a paradox, Gracián's 'monstruo de la verdad' [freak of truth].¹⁰ Zayas makes an explicit reference to this strategy when she has the *desengañadora* explain in the middle of her story:

En el discurso de este desengaño veréis, señoras, cómo a las que nacieron desgraciadas nada les quita de que no lo sean hasta el fin; pues si Camila murió por no haber notificado a su esposo las pretensiones de don Juan, Roseleta, por avisar al suyo de los atrevimientos y desvelos de su amante, no está fuera de padecer lo mismo, porque en la estimación de los hombres el mismo lugar tiene la que hable como la que calla. (*Desengaños*, pp. 211-12)

[In the course of this *desengaño* you will see, ladies, how those who were born to misfortune cannot escape their fate, which will follow them until the very end; so if Camila died for not having told her husband about Don Juan's advances, Roseleta will suffer the same fate for having warned *hers* of the temerity and effort of her would-be lover, because in the opinion of men women who speak out get the same treatment as those who keep quiet.]

There is a serious moral issue here. Juan betrays his best friend's trust by trying to seduce his wife and yet he is saved by the Virgin because he happens to have mumbled an Ave Maria when he heard the church bells ring. There is no sign of any real devotion

⁹ Blanca in 'Mal presagio casar lejos' is also bled to death by her husband and dies 'desangrada, como Séneca' [bled dry, like Seneca] (*Desengaños*, p. 364).

¹⁰ Baltasar Gracián, *Arte de ingenio. Tratado de la agudeza*, ed. by Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1960), p. 1178 <<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/arte-de-ingenio-tratado-de-la-agudeza--0/>> [Accessed 30 August 2016]. He adds: 'Unir a fuerza de discurso dos contradictorios extremos, extremo arguye de sutileza' [To unite two contradictory extremes by the power of discourse is an extreme proof of subtlety].

and he has no second thoughts about his adulterous rendezvous; instead he impertinently asks the Virgin to forgive the sin he is about to commit: ‘pidiendo a la Virgen María, nuestra purísima Señora, que no mirando la ofensa que iba a hacerle, le librase del peligro y le alcanzase perdón de su precioso Hijo’ [asking the Virgin Mary, our most pure Lady, that she ignore the offense he was about to give her and deliver him from danger and to obtain forgiveness from her precious Son] (*Desengaños*, p. 213). It is not until he has seen what happens to the hanged man that he repents and decides to enter a monastery. The Virgin is most merciful and saves a sinner even when he is not yet contrite. This may seem surprising, but, in her study of the Marian cult, Marina Warner states that this attitude is typical of the Mother of God.

The more raffish the Virgin’s supplicant, the better she likes him. The miracles’ heroes are liars, thieves, adulterers, and fornicators, footloose students, pregnant nuns, unruly and lazy clerics, and eloping monks. On the single condition that they sing her praises, usually by reciting the *Ave Maria*, and show due respect for the miracle of the Incarnation wrought in her, they can do no wrong. Her justice is her own: whatever his conduct, anyone pledged to her protection is her liegeman and she his responsible suzerain.¹¹

But while it may not be so unusual for Mary to save a rakish sinner, even if he shows no regrets and only perfunctorily offers her a prayer, the mercy shown to Juan stands in shrill contrast to the fate of Roseleta, who is abandoned by her husband in favour of his ex-lover and thereafter murdered by him. We can understand that the world is evil and that men mistreat and kill innocent women, but why would the Virgin come to the aid of a would-be sinner and not save a wretched woman? The only answer Zayas has to offer is to say that she was born under an unlucky star (see 5.1), or the old cliché that God moves in a mysterious way (his wonders to perform): ‘a Dios no se puede preguntar por qué hace esos milagros, supuesto que sus secretos son incomprensibles, y así, a unos libra y a otros deja padecer’ [one cannot ask God why he performs these miracles, since his secrets are unfathomable, and so he will save some and let others suffer] (*Desengaños*, p. 223).

Apart from the moral ambiguity of the story, there is another salient aspect I wish to discuss. As we saw, on his way to his secret meeting with Roseleta, Juan is called by a hanged man. This is how the passage reads:

¹¹ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex. The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), p. 325.

Al llegar don Juan casi enfrente del funesto madero, oyó una voz que dijo: '¡Don Juan!', que como se oyó nombrar, miró a todas partes, y no viendo persona ninguna, porque aunque ya había cerrado la noche hacía luna, aunque algo turbia, pasó adelante, pareciéndole que se había engañado; y a pocos más pasos oyó otra vez la misma voz, que volvió a decir: '¡Don Juan!' Volvió, espantado, a todas partes, y no viendo persona ninguna, santiaguándose, volvió a seguir su camino; y llegando ya enfrente de la horca, oyó tercera vez la misma voz, que dijo: '¡Ah, don Juan!' (*Desengaños*, p. 213)

[When Don Juan had almost reached that dismal gibbet, he heard a voice saying: 'Don Juan!' and when he heard his name called out, he looked around, but didn't see anyone, because although night had fallen, the moon shone in the sky, albeit wanly; he rode on, thinking he had been mistaken, but after a few steps, he heard the same voice again, repeating: 'Don Juan!' Scared stiff, he looked around, but he didn't see anyone, whereupon he made the sign of the cross and continued on his way; and when he passed in front of the gallows, he heard the same voice exclaiming for the third time: 'Ah, Don Juan!']

There ensues a discussion between the hanged man and the would-be adulterer. The hanged man explains he was innocent of his crime and confessed his sins, which is why he was saved. Critics who have written about the scene all appear to suggest that the hanged man is resurrected in order to speak to Juan and save him. Greer talks about his 'twice-dead body' when he is thrown in the well (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 263), while Brownlee writes that God has 'revived a man from the dead' so that Juan 'can elude the assassins' (Brownlee, *Cultural Labyrinth*, p. 117) and Rhodes mentions the 'miraculously resuscitated body of the thief who saves Juan's life' (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 112). Boyer ('Towards a Baroque Reading') and Ursula Jung also refer to a resurrected hanged man.¹² Closer inspection reveals that in reality something else miraculous happens. When he has caught Juan's attention, the not-yet-dead hanged man asks Juan to cut him down, whereupon Juan asks him: '¿Pues estás vivo?' [Are you alive, then?] (*Desengaños*, p. 214), to which the hanged man answers: 'Pues si no lo estuviera [...] ¿qué necesidad tenía de pedirte que me quitases?' [If I weren't... why would I need you to cut me down?] (ibid.). Juan then wants to know how come he is still alive. But the hanged man does not give a detailed explanation; he merely says that nothing is impossible for God and then refers to a miracle worked by Santo Domingo de la Calzada, who made a roasted cock and hen come back to life and sing a song to save an innocent man who had been hanged. This gives us a clue as to what happened. The story of Santo Domingo de la Calzada is told, amongst others, by Jaume Roig in his (misogynist) book

¹² See Ursula Jung, '¿La honra manchada? La reescritura de *El médico de su honra* en los *Desengaños amorosos* de María de Zayas', in *Escenas de transgresión: María de Zayas en su contexto literario-cultural* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009), pp. 159-76.

Espill or *Llibre de les Dones*, where a hanged man, who was executed on his way to Santiago de Compostela, is miraculously held up by St James.

The next Wednesday as I was leaving town, I happened on bitter company, just for me, I'm sure. Following milestones, plains, mountains and low places and crossing rivers, I went on to visit the Holy Corpse of La Calzada, a walled city. A foul and despicable innkeeper with whorish inclinations had staying at that time in her inn a band of pilgrims, old and young. One of them caught her fancy and she asked him to give her pleasure; he declined. The vile [innkeeper] put a cup in his baggage and when he went on his way she 'discovered' it missing. She had him hung for the theft. The other pilgrims in his group went on to Compostela and fulfilled their vow. On the way back, they went by just to see him hanging there, a little ways off the great road. He was alive! He said: 'Get me down from here! The Blessed Saint James has held me up.' The dastardly plot was exposed and was given further confirmation, for the pilgrims ran and put their case before the presiding judge. As he was responding to their complaint, right before their eyes, two cooked birds miraculously came back to life and began to crow loudly, both the hen and the cock. The condemned innkeeper was hanged without further ado.¹³

The initial miracle in question is therefore not a resurrection from the dead, but being held aloft by an invisible force and so escape death. However, the hanged man does reappear after he has been shot by Pedro and his men and thrown down a well, so it seems he is resurrected at this point to pass on a message of redemption to Juan, presumably to die straight after he has fulfilled this purpose, just as happens to Eusebio at the end of Calderón's *La devoción de la cruz*, when he is resurrected in order to take confession and then dies a second death. After the return of the hanged man, Juan admits that: 'La cosa más rara y milagrosa que se ha visto es ésta' [This is the strangest and most miraculous thing that was ever seen] (*Desengaños*, p. 214). He wonders whether it is a dream or a spell, but the hanged man assures him: 'No sueñas, ni estás encantado' [You are neither dreaming nor under a spell] (*Desengaños*, p. 217). A last, eerie touch is that on his way back to the city, he passes the gallows again and: 'como llegó enfrente de la horca, miró hacia allá y vio en ella los tres hombres como antes estaban' [as he was passing in front of the gallows, he looked up and saw three men hanging there, like before] (*Desengaños*, p. 218).

¹³ See Jaume Roig, *Espill* <<http://www.spanport.ucla.edu/santiago/roigsant.html>> [Accessed 23 August 2016]. The online text reads '[t]he vile *baggage* put a cup in his baggage'. I have amended this obvious error. The resurrected cock and hen were probably included in the story because of the mention of La Calzada. Santo Domingo de la Calzada was not the first to resurrect roasted fowl. In Lope de Vega's *San Nicolás de Tolentino* the eponymous vegetarian saint is offered a roast partridge and after he makes the sign of the cross, the animal gets up and flies away. The touch of the cup hidden in the baggage is of course straight from Genesis 44, where Joseph tests his brothers' loyalty to Benjamin.

Unlike the straightforward miracles related in ‘El imposible vencido’ and ‘La perseguida triunfante’ there seems to be something else going on here. The desire to write a shocking, titillating, exciting story is apparent. The secret tryst, the moon shining wanly in the sky, the bodies swaying on the gallows, the creepy voice calling out three times, all this seems designed to cause a frisson, as indeed happens to Juan: ‘Embelesado estaba don Juan oyéndole con mil asustadas palpitaciones que el corazón le daba, que le hacía temblar el cuerpo sin poder aquietarle’ [Don Juan listened to him spellbound, his frightened heart giving him a thousand palpitations and making his body shake uncontrollably] (*Desengaños*, p. 216). Zayas’s intention is not – or at least not merely – to shore up belief in Church-sanctioned miracles and give a pious account of a wonder wrought by Mary to give succour to those who venerate her, as she does in ‘La perseguida triunfante’ (see 4.4), but to turn the miraculous into something spooky and uncanny. It is this sense of the uncanny that marks the other supernatural episodes in Zayas to be discussed.

5.3 Other uncanny episodes

The Freudian term ‘unheimish’, central to his analysis of Hoffmann’s tale ‘Der Sandmann’, is often translated as ‘uncanny’, which is ‘that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar’ and now arouses uneasy, fearful horror.¹⁴ In his study of the demonic possession at Loudun, Certeau claims that the uncanny poses the question of whether the extraordinary should be considered within or outside of the nosological categories.¹⁵ Todorov also discusses the uncanny in his study of the fantastic, which he considers to be an in-between category, a suspension of judgement.¹⁶ Something out of the ordinary happens, something fantastic, and at the end of the story the reader – though not necessarily the character – needs to decide whether the event was supernatural or not. If it was, the work belongs to the marvellous, and if not, to the uncanny. Thus, the fantastic may evaporate at any moment and yet there is no reason to see the fantastic as an evanescent genre. Furthermore, Todorov posits two subgenres: the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, transl. by D. McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 124. For a discussion on the English translation of the term and its relation to its antonym ‘canny’, see Maria Tatar, ‘The Houses of Fiction: Towards a Definition of the Uncanny’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 33.2 (Spring 1981), 167-82.

¹⁵ See Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

¹⁶ See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

marvellous. In the first, the supernatural receives a rational explanation at the end. In the second, we learn it was a miracle. There is also the pure uncanny, in which extraordinary, shocking, singular, unexpected or disturbing events provoke a similar reaction to the one provoked by the fantastic. Horror, says Todorov, belongs to the pure uncanny.

In Zayas there are a few episodes that have all the hallmarks of the fantastic-uncanny. As we have seen, the author of the *Sarao* plays with indeterminacy in her magical stories, where the reader must make up her or his mind whether or not the spell cast by Lucrecia (see 3.3) or the Moorish necromancer (see 3.4) is real, regardless of the diegetical insistence that it actually happened. Depending on one's beliefs, these stories are either fantastic-uncanny or fantastic-marvellous; since either the spell is fake and there is a rational explanation for the episode – Lucrecia uses her charms, Inés merely pretends she was under a spell – or there are preternatural forces at play. Since Todorov uses the term 'marvellous' to refer to the supernatural *sensu lato*, I propose a third category: the fantastic-miraculous, to which the episode of the hanged man belongs.

In her novellas Zayas describes premonitory dreams, incorrupt cadavers, inexplicable light shining on a corpse, and disembodied voices. All of these fall outside of our ordinary experience of the world, but whether they are the work of a preternatural agent or pure miracles is not clear. Depending on where you stand, these events could be fantastic-uncanny, fantastic-marvellous or fantastic-miraculous. A disembodied voice could have a rational explanation (it is in the imagination or not in fact a disembodied voice after all), it could be the Devil's doing, or it may be a divine intervention. In a sense it does not matter, since the objective is to generate more indeterminacy and make the reader's hair stand on end.

5.3.1 *Disembodied voices*

I have already briefly discussed 'La más infame venganza' (see 4.2 and 5.2.2) in which Camila is poisoned by her husband and her body swells up to monstrous proportions as a result. Parker Aronson claims that Camila, just like Inés in 'La inocencia castigada', is metamorphized into a monster for having transgressed the gender code, although she

never explains how being raped is a transgression of the gender code.¹⁷ Vollendorf (*Reclaiming*) says Camila's swollen body extends beyond itself, turning into a grotesque, Bakhtinian, threatening body. Whatever the interpretation of her plight, Camila lies in agony for many months until finally a mysterious voice calls out to announce her death.

De esta suerte vivió seis meses, al cabo de los cuales, estando sola en su cama, oyó una voz que decía: 'Camila, ya es llegada tu hora.' Dio gracias a Dios porque la quería sacar de tan penosa vida; recibió sus sacramentos, y otro día en la noche murió, para vivir eternamente. (*Desengaños*, p. 195)

[In this way she lived for six months, at the end of which, lying alone in her bed, she heard a voice, saying: 'Camila, your time has come at last.' She gave thanks to God for taking her away from such a wretched life; she received the last rites and the next night she died, only to enjoy everlasting life.]

The scene could come straight out of a classic hagiography: the martyred woman, her patient suffering, the voice from heaven announcing her death, the comforting thought of everlasting bliss after this vale of tears. In Zayan literature, there has been much debate about whether or not the author subverts hagiographies. In a much-referred-to study Grieve posits that 'Zayas invests her novellas with the formal properties of hagiography while subverting the ideology of that Church-sanctioned genre' (Grieve, p. 86). In doing so she created 'a revisionist text that subverts hagiography's patriarchal discourse' (Grieve, p. 89). Hernández Pecoraro likewise argues that Zayas foregrounds hagiography in order to subvert it. Brownlee and O'Brien, however, disagree with this view. In her discussion of 'La perseguida triunfante', O'Brien writes: 'Grieve overstates the subversive quality of Zayas's hagiographic discourse. Only through the wider effects of Beatriz's overt rejection of marriage can this denouement be considered in any way subversive' (O'Brien, 'Locating', p. 313). I concur with Brownlee and O'Brien that on the whole Zayas's novellas cannot be read as a subversion of the hagiographical genre, although it is important to acknowledge the point Grieve makes, which is that Zayas uses language and imagery that are akin to those used in hagiographies. The difference is that Zayas's women live in the real world, the *hic et nunc*, instead of the legendary days of yore (see Enríquez de Salamanca). Furthermore, Rhodes (*Dressed to Kill*) identifies Zayas's women as secular martyrs through whose broken bodies the failings of an ignoble nobility are denounced in a kind of rallying call to change the evil at the heart of the patriarchy. This denunciation through martyrdom is also discussed at length in the

¹⁷ See Stacey Parker Aronson, 'Monstrous Metamorphoses and Rape in María de Zayas', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 29.3 (2005), 252-47.

work of Vollendorf. The story of Camila is a good example of Zayas's contemporary take on hagiography, without the genre being in any way subverted. In fact, a close reading of the Ribadeneyra's very popular *Flos sanctorum* reveals just how much in common these tales have with Zayas thematically. Women are warned against the fickle nature of men who:

antes que se casen, suelen mostarse muy humanos, afables y amorosos hasta el día de las bodas, pero cuando ya tienen a sus mujeres en sus casas, múdanse de tal suerte que parecen otros y trátanlas como quieren: no sólo con malas palabras, sino con peores obras. (Ribadeneyra, p. 38)

[before they marry they usually show themselves to be very humane, affable and loving until the day of the wedding, but as soon as they have their women in their homes, they change so much they seem to be different people and treat them how they see fit: not only by using bad language, but with worse deeds.]

This is exactly what happens in 'Mal presagio casar lejos', where Blanca is courted by a Flemish prince – we never find out his name – who appears to be a paragon of virtue and courteousness, until he marries her and takes her back to Flanders. In Ribadeneyra's collection there are also examples of wanton cruelty at the hands of fathers – the Irish St Dimpna is murdered by her father who lusts after her, St Barbara is also killed by her father while St Christina is stripped naked, flogged, and cut to pieces, after which she picks up a piece of her flesh and offers it to her father. The *Flos sanctorum* should therefore be seen as an intertext rather than something that is subverted by Zayas.

Another disembodied voice is heard in 'Estragos que causa el vicio', which centres on Gaspar, a young Spanish nobleman who has followed Philip III to Lisbon and is courting four Portuguese sisters. One night, having been given a key to the back door of their house, he enters the basement and hears a voice moaning piteously. He searches everywhere to ascertain the provenance of these laments and eventually finds a hook sticking out of some loose sand on the floor. As he pulls on the hook, he lifts up the head of a dead man. He later returns with some monks from a nearby monastery and starts digging by the light of a lantern held up by one of the sisters. This experience dissuades the young wooer (*galán*) from courting the four sisters any further, interpreting the wondrous event as a warning from God. But not long afterwards, he falls in love with Florentina, who already has an affair with her sister's husband. One evening he walks down her street and finds her bathing in a pool of her own blood,

after which she tells him how her sister's husband had murdered his entire household and then committed suicide (see 4.2).

The scene in the basement is a far cry from Camila's saintly suffering and the divine voice calling her, even if Gaspar interprets the episode as a warning from God, which he then ignores. The dark basement, the eerie laments, the description of Gaspar groping around and finding a dead man's head on an iron hook, the monks digging up the corpse of a mysterious young man by the light of a lantern held aloft by one of the lascivious sisters, all this reads like an episode from Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. The scene is reminiscent of Laura's visit to the roadside chapel in the middle of the night (see 3.2) and that of the hanged man calling out to Don Juan in 'El verdugo de su esposa' (see 5.2.2). If the disembodied voice is used in a quasi-hagiographical fashion in 'El verdugo', here it smacks of the pure uncanny and looks ahead to Gothic literature. A number of critics have commented on this aspect of Zayas's work. Welles, for example, writes that her novellas 'prefigure the effects sought in the gothic novel of the late eighteenth century' (Welles, p. 304). And according to Goytisolo, her tales 'contienen, en efecto, numerosos episodios que anticipan el mundo novelesco de Walter Scott, Eugène Sue o Victor Hugo, con ahorcados, resurrecciones y criptas góticas' [contain, in effect, numerous episodes that anticipate the novelistic world of Walter Scott, Eugène Sue or Victor Hugo, with hanged men, resurrections and Gothic crypts] (Goytisolo, p. 105). Elizabeth Rhodes goes a little further and claims that, although Spain's participation in the Gothic was minimal as its experience of the Enlightenment was vexed:

the Gothic aesthetic itself may have had its origin in the agonizing demise of Europe's greatest Catholic state. Seventeenth-century Iberia provided the Gothic imagination with more than the literary lexicon of a power-hungry, perverse Inquisition, death-trap convents, sex-driven monks, malicious nuns, and an arrogant aristocracy. (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 170).

This is evident if we read Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, for example, which contains all of the above as well as incest and a diabolical pact. Rhodes furthermore points out that the rarely acknowledged source of Walpole's *Mysterious mother*, also containing incest, is Pérez de Montalbán's *La mayor confusión*. Another episode in Zayas that looks ahead to Romantic literature is the telepathic warning which Laura's brother receives when she is stumbling around in the pitch dark surrounded by rotting corpses (see 3.2). This uncanny form of communication also happens, to give but one famous example, at the

end of *Jane Eyre*, where the eponymous heroine is sitting next to a dying candle, with beams of moonlight streaming into the room, when she receives a telepathic summons by Mr Rochester, making her flesh quiver on her bones.¹⁸

5.3.2 *Premonitory dreams*

‘Aventurarse perdiendo’ opens Zayas’s collection of novellas and is a tale riddled with references to fate, fortune and the influence of the stars (see 5.1). At two crucial moments in the story the heroine has a premonitory dream, one announcing who her husband will be, the other presaging his death. In the story we are told how Fabio chances upon a young lad singing his woes on the flanks of Montserrat. The lad turns out to be a girl called Jacinta, who proceeds to tell him her story. She lived happily in Baeza until one night she had a fateful dream:

Diez y seis años tenía yo cuando una noche estando durmiendo, soñaba que iba por un bosque amenísimo, en cuya espesura hallé un hombre tan galán que me pareció – ¡ay de mí, y cómo hice despierta experiencia de ello! – no haberle visto en mi vida tal. Traía cubierta el rostro con el cabo de un ferreruelo leonado, con pasamanos y alamares de plata. Paréme a mirarle, agradaba del talle y deseosa de ver si el rostro confirmaba con él. Con un atrevimiento airoso, llegué a quitarle el rebozo, y apenas lo hice cuando, sacando una daga, me dio un golpe tan cruel por el corazón que me obligó el dolor a dar voces. (*Novelas*, p. 180)

[One night when I was sixteen I dreamt I was walking in a delightful forest, in the midst of which I found a man so elegant that he seemed to be – o, how I experienced the truth of this once I’d woken up! – the most handsome man I had ever seen. He hid his face behind a slip of his tawny mantle, decorated with silver buckles and clasps. I stopped to look at him, and since I liked the way he looked, I wanted to see if his face was as handsome as I thought. With a bold and graceful gesture I uncovered his face, and no sooner had I done so than he drew a dagger and stabbed me so cruelly in my heart that I screamed in agony.]

Not long after that, the brother of one of her friends, who had been fighting in Flanders, returns to Baeza. She sees him from her balcony and knows it is the man from her dream. They court and, predictably, she gives herself ‘body and soul’ to Félix, for that is his name, after he gave her his word to marry her.

So far, so conventional. Less usual, certainly in the context of Zayas’s novellas and something very few, if any, critics have given attention to, is the fact that Félix really loves Jacinta and even when he has the chance to marry a beautiful, rich widow, he

¹⁸ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1981), p. 401.

rejects her, after which she kills herself. Before her death, the spurned widow writes a letter to Jacinta's father telling him about his loss of honour and a duel between Félix and Jacinta's brother ensues, in which the latter is killed. Félix flees to Flanders, 'refugio de delinquentes y seguro de desdichados' [refuge for delinquents and safe haven for the unfortunate] (*Novelas*, p. 193). Jacinta's father intercepts Félix's epistles, substituting them with a fake letter announcing her lover's death, whereupon she takes the veil. In a dramatic turn of events, Félix returns to Spain, finds Jacinta, who lets him sleep with her in her convent cell, and promises again he will marry her, even proposing to travel to Rome to get a papal dispensation. Jacinta joins him on his journey and together they visit the Eternal City and are given permission to marry. On the way back, however, Félix receives a summons to fight, and honour demands that he leave his betrothed and they go their separate ways. Once back in Spain, Jacinta has another premonitory dream:

Más habían pasado de cuatro meses que pasaba esta vida, cuando una noche, que parece que el sueño se había apoderado más de mí que otras (porque como la fortuna me dio a don Félix en sueños, quiso quitármele de la misma suerte), soñaba que recibía una carta suya, y una caja que a la cuenta parecía traer algunas joyas, y en yéndola a abrir hallé dentro la cabeza de mi esposo. (*Novelas*, p. 200)

[More than four months of this life passed when one night, when it seemed that I fell into a heavier sleep than on other nights (since Fortune had given Félix to me in a dream, she wanted to take him from me in the same way) and I dreamt that I received a letter from him as well as a chest that appeared to contain jewels, but when I went to open it, I found it contained the head of my husband.]

Not long afterwards, the dream is confirmed when she hears the news that Félix has drowned. She mourns him, but, calling herself the phoenix of love (*fénix de amor*) she soon falls for a typical rogue and philanderer called Celio, who has no intention whatever of marrying her. When he leaves for Salamanca, she wants to follow him, but she is betrayed and ends up in Barcelona, robbed of all her possessions. She dresses up as a boy and makes for Montserrat, where Fabio finds her. Fabio turns out to be one of Celio's friends who wants to marry Jacinta. If she does not want to do that, she should take the veil. But Jacinta declares she is not ready to forget Celio, nor is she willing to become a nun and accept Christ as her Celestial husband, even though she knows full well what the rewards would be.

In a strange twist, Zayas ends her collection twenty tales later by addressing a certain Fabio – it's not clear whether he is the same or not – inviting him to visit Lisis, who is

now in a convent, provided he no longer has designs on her. Who is this other Fabio? The first is clearly a character in a novella who has heard Jacinta's story. The second Fabio cannot be the same, since he must be part of the frame audience, or, even more likely, outside of the frame, as it is the author of the novellas who is addressing him, not Lisis the convener of the *sarao*. And he is encouraged to visit Lisis, not Jacinta. Although this confusion might seem like carelessness, some scholars have suggested that Zayas plays a clever game in which she breaks through the frames by collapsing the three layers of narration, like she does when at the end of the *sarao* Lisis announces that she has taken up the *pen* again after all these years: 'Y como he tomado la pluma, habiendo tantos años que la tenía arrimada, en su defensa, tomaré la espada para lo mismo, que los agravios sacan fuerzas donde no las hay' [And just like I have taken up the pen again in their defence, after many years of not using one, I shall take up the sword for the same purpose, since insults create strength where before there was none] (*Desengaños*, p. 507).

Roca Franquesa ('Aventurarse perdiendo') claims the novella is based on José de Camerino's 'El casamiento desdichado', but adds that Zayas has made it a tale full of psychological value, saying her style reminds us of Romanticism and intuits and anticipates Freud and Jung. Part of this perceived psychological value no doubt resides in the two dreams of Jacinta, particularly the first. Similar comments are made by various other critics. Goytisolo simply states that the dream appears to come straight out of Freud. Barbeito Carneiro calls the dreams Freudian anticipations, while Montesa claims that they would be the delight of psychoanalysts. Paun de García ('Magia y poder'), sees Inés's lascivious dreams as having Freudian implications, while Cardaillac Hermosilla writes: 'Se ha hablado de la intuición freudiana de María de Zayas a causa de esta utilización de los sueños' [People have mentioned the Freudian intuition of María de Zayas on account of this use of dreams] (Cardaillac Hermosilla, p. 368). The same scholar links Jacinta's as well as Inés's dream, unconvincingly in my view, to the topos of 'life is a dream' (*la vida es sueño*). The (baroque) ontological anxiety and uncertainty with regards to reality and appearance is not what is at stake in these dreams. Nevertheless, as Costa Pascal points out, she does refer to Jacinto as a shadow when she says '¿Quién vio, Fabio, amar una sombra?' [Whoever saw, Fabio, someone loving a shadow] (*Novelas*, p. 180). She goes on to say that Jacinta has been seduced by her own dream.

The stabbing in the heart has also been likened to Teresa of Ávila's vision (Greer, *Baroque Tales*). This is closer to the mark, I think, although the type of ecstasy is rather different. Referring to Foucault, Uta Felten interprets the dream as reflecting the changing epistemology – Jacinta reads the world according to the out-dated episteme of analogy. She claims that Zayas was aware of this epistemological shift and argues that Zayas subversively re-establishes an obsolete episteme. I concur with the view that the Sybil from Madrid showed an implicit awareness of the changing epistemology – it is one of the main points of this thesis – and that her treatment of magic reflects this uncertainty. However, I do not believe that Zayas was aware of this and would find it difficult to accept that she uses Jacinta's dream to somehow show how her heroine is behind the epistemological times. In her extensive study of Zayas, Greer also touches upon the dream sequence and, as so often in her work, she applies Lacanian theories to explain the episode, saying that Jacinta's dream is a displacement in which she sees *herself* as the masked male stranger whom she would like to be in order to be deserving of her father's love. She calls it 'an imaginary duplication of herself as both male and female, both subject and object of desire' (Greer, *Baroque Tales*, p. 118). Greer then links this to the mention of hermaphrodites elsewhere in Zayas, which supposedly confirm Jacinta's cross-gender identification, and she adds that according to Lacan we place the object of desire in the Imaginary Order.

Aside from her Lacanian interpretations, Greer also refers to a treatise on dreams by the second-century physician Artemidorus, which she claims was very popular in early modern Europe. In that work it becomes clear that dreams were acknowledged as displacements long before Freud. In fact, there were believed to be various types of dreams. This is confirmed by Del Río, who discusses dreams in the context of divination. 'Certain dreams accurately foretell an event. Some make no prediction or make one which is illusory. Therefore one may legitimately take note of some, but not of others' (Del Río, p. 174). Ciruelo says dreams can have three causes: natural, moral and theological. Humours influence dreams too – bile makes you dream of fire, black bile about death, phlegm about 'cosas claras de agua o de babas' [clear watery things or saliva] (Ciruelo, p. 129). These humours can be influenced by external factors like changes in the air. Morally caused dreams come about if someone has occupied his or her mind with one thing all day, sometimes orderly, sometimes chaotically – we would call them day-residue dreams. Theological or supernatural causes for dreams are revelations from God or an angel who stirs man's imagination and represents what he

wants to show us. These never contain any vain images and only happen rarely and when the stakes are high. In general, says Ciruelo, not too much attention should be paid to dreams:

Y todo buen cristiano debe apartar de sí este cuidado de pensar en los sueños, porque como ellos puedan venir por muchas y diversas causas, la gente simple no acierta a saber por cuál causa vienen y el diablo, como es sutil, presto podría engañar a los que se dan de esta vanidad. (Ciruelo, p. 132)

[And all good Christians have to steer clear of this preoccupation of thinking about dreams, because they can come about for many and diverse reasons, and simple-minded people cannot know where they came from and the Devil, in his slyness, can easily fool those who are taken in by this vanity.]

Not everyone heeded Ciruelo's warning, however, and there were famous cases of political visionaries such as Lucrecia de León, some of whose dreams have received Freudian explanations. Richard Kagan, for example, calls Lucrecia's dream-substitution of her father by the king 'an almost textbook case of Oedipal displacement'.¹⁹ Most of her dreams revolve around Philip II, who is seen as the symbol of everything that was wrong with the country: a corrupt Church, oppressive taxes, a lack of justice, and a weak national defence. Lucrecia predicted the defeat of the Armada and presaged the death of the king and that of his heir apparent. She was arrested in 1590, tried by the Inquisition and eventually sentenced in 1595. She received one hundred lashes, was locked up in a religious house for two years and banished from Madrid.

Dreams, then, were much debated and of central concern in the early modern world and Zayas makes effective use of them in this novella. Unlike Lucrecia's, they are not political, but it would go too far to call them Freudian. Jacinta's dreams are strongly connected to fortune and fate and what is more, they are an effective piece of storytelling, causing a real frisson in the reader.

5.3.3 *Incorrupt cadavers*

Zayas's eighth *desengaño*, 'El traidor contra su sangre', contains a number of uncanny events. The story begins in Jaen, where don Pedro, a rich and cruel nobleman, lives with his son Alonso and daughter Mencía – as often in Zayas the mother is absent. Pedro wants his son to inherit his entire fortune and plans to put Mencía in a convent against

¹⁹ Richard Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams. Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 2.

her wishes. She is courted by the dashing and wealthy Enrique, who does not stand a chance because his grandparents are rumoured to have been mere labourers and Pedro is adamant he will not mix his blood with someone of low birth: 'teniendo por afrenta que la sangre de don Enrique se mezclase con la suya' [considering it an affront if Don Enrique's blood were to mix with his] (*Desengaños*, p. 379). But Enrique finds favour with Mencía and encourages her to escape the 'eterno cautiverio de la religión' [eternal captivity of religion], assuring her that her beauty is all the dowry he needs. Without being noticed, he speaks to Mencía through a grille every day. Before he fell in love with Mencía, however, he courted a girl by the name of Clavela, and when she finds out what is keeping him from seeing her, she decides to avenge herself by telling Alonso that his sister is being courted by Enrique. Alonso and his father plot to murder Mencía and her lover. Pedro absents himself from town and Alonso catches his sister writing a letter to her lover. He locks her up, calls a priest and forces him to hear her confession seeing as he is about to kill her. The priest tries to dissuade him, but to no avail; he then hears Mencía's confession with tears streaming down his face, after which Alonso stabs his sister multiple times. Nine hours later Enrique arrives at the accustomed meeting place when something portentous happens:

llegó a la reja y pasó y tocó en ella, y apenas puso en ella la mano, cuando las puertas se abrieron con grandísimo estruendo y alborotado con él, miró por ver que en el pequeño retrete había gran claridad, no de hachas, ni de bujías, sino de luz que sólo alumbraba en la parte de adentro, sin que tocase a la de afuera. Y más admirado que antes, miró a ver de qué salía la luz, y vio al resplandor de ella a la hermosa dama tendida en el estrado, mal compuesta, bañada en sangre, que con estar muerta desde mediodía, corría entonces de las heridas, como si se la acabaran de dar, y junto a ella un lago del sangriento humor. (*Desengaños*, p. 382)

[he arrived at the grille and tapped on it, and scarcely had he touched it when the doors flew open with a tremendous crash, and he saw that the little room was lit up brightly, not by torches or candles, but by a light that shone from within and did not leave the room. And even more astonished than before, he went to see where the light was coming from and by its radiance he saw the beautiful lady lying down on a dais, dishevelled and bathing in blood, which, even though she had been dead since noon, was still streaming from her wounds, as if they had just been inflicted, and next to her there was a lake of the sanguine humour.]

Enrique is shocked and his body is shaking, even more so when her hears Mencía voice telling him she has already been dead for nine hours, and warning him to make his escape as his life is in grave danger. No sooner has she finished speaking than the doors slam shut. Out in the street, Alonso and an accomplice, who have not heard a thing,

ambush Enrique and stab him more than twenty times, leaving him for dead. By the intervention of the Most Holy Mother of God, though, he gets better and enters a monastery, where he has a beautiful tomb built for his beloved. When her body is brought over a year later, many people claim that her wounds are still bleeding and that she is as beautiful as the day she was murdered:

habiendo muchos testigos que se hallaron a verle pasar, que, con haber pasado un año que duró la obra, estaban las heridas corriendo sangre como el mismo día que la mataron, y ella tan hermosa, que parecía no haber tenido jurisdicción la muerte en su hermosura. (*Desengaños*, p. 385)

[there were many witnesses who saw her being carried past and, although the building work had lasted a year, blood was still flowing out of her wounds like on the day when she was killed, and she was so beautiful that it seemed death had no jurisdiction over her beauty.]

Alonso is sentenced *in absentia* to be beheaded and flees to Naples, where he strikes up a friendship with a ‘wild priest’ named Marco Antonio (see 1.1), who has something devilish about him and sets Alonso up to do horrible things. Alonso falls in love with the beautiful and young Ana and marries her. They seem happy for a while and have a son. But eventually he begins to have regrets. Goaded on by Marco Antonio, he decides to kill her. The friends bury her head in a cave in the port and dump her body in a well. They flee to Genoa and are captured as they are trying to steal a pair of silk stockings, having been inspired by the Devil. When they are sentenced to death – Alonso will be beheaded, Marco Antonio hanged – Alonso says that two months previously he had dreamt that his sister was threatening him with a knife. When the news of his death reaches his father during a card game, he continues to shuffle the deck and comments: ‘Más quiero tener un hijo degollado que mal casado’ [I’d rather see my son beheaded than unsuitably married] (*Desengaños*, p. 398). But fate soon catches up with him and he dies a few months later, leaving all his wealth to his grandson.

Like in ‘Aventurarse perdiendo’ this novella mentions the influence of fate a fair few times, although it is not as important a Leitmotiv as it is in Jacinta’s *historia calamitatum*. Likewise there is a premonitory dream in which Alonso sees the sister he killed brandishing a knife, in a reference to both his impending death and the two women he murdered with a knife. It is also worthy of note that Mencía’s lover Enrique is one of the few good men in the novellas, like Félix in ‘Aventurarse perdiendo’ (see 5.3.2), the marquis in ‘El desengaño amando’ (see 3.3) and possibly Martín in ‘La burlada Aminta’.

True, both Enrique and Félix court other women before they meet the protagonist, but their intentions are honourable and both women refer to them as ‘esposo’ [husband]. Félix and Jacinta, and Enrique and Mencía are star-crossed lovers. The men are helpless when it comes to saving the women they love, and Enrique suffers the same fate as many of Zayas’s heroines: he is nearly killed by his lover’s jealous brother and enters a monastery. Furthermore, the heroine of both ‘Aventurarse perdiendo’ and ‘El traidor contra su sangre’ are reluctant to take the veil, one because she simply refuses to be Christ’s bride and the other because she wants to escape the ‘eternal captivity of religion’.

It is clear that Zayas knew Calderón’s *El médico de su honra*, as three of the protagonists have the same names and roles: the father/king Pedro, the lover Enrique and the innocent sacrificial victim Mencía. Both Mencías – like Blanca in ‘Mal presagio’ – are allowed to confess their sins to a priest before they are murdered, and both die in pools of their own blood. But where Calderón can be said to criticise the honour code by showing its lack of logic and its brutality, Zayas is ultimately more interested in female victimhood, although the title of the novella also refers to another important theme, namely the obsession with pure bloodlines.²⁰

The fantastic-miraculous scene in which Enrique comes to the grille and the doors fly open with a crashing noise after which he sees his beloved bathed in a mysterious light is one of Zayas’s more successful scenes in which she skilfully mixes hagiographic imagery with a sense of eerie contemporality. Zayas’s tales share with hagiographical accounts the incorruptibility of the dead bodies. In her excellent study on the female body in Zayas, Rhodes discusses how Inés (‘La inocencia castigada’), Beatriz (‘La perseguida triunfante’), Blanca (‘Mal presagio casar lejos’), Roseleta (‘El verdugo de su esposa’), Elena (‘Tarde llega el desengaño’), Magdalena (‘Estragos que causa el vicio’) and Mencía (‘El traidor contra su sangre’) all radiate and become beautiful in death. The thrust of Rhodes’s work is to argue that Zayas uses the wrongs heaped on women to highlight societal wrongs and she sees these radiant corpses as symbols: ‘By trespassing the threshold that rightly separates life and death, these undead corpses point to the

²⁰ It used to be believed that Calderón supported the intransigent honour code as exemplified by plays such as *El médico de su honra*, *El pintor de su honra*, *El alcalde de Zalamea* and *A secreto agravio, secreta verganza*. For a discussion on the topic, see Manuel Delgado’s introduction to *La devoción de la cruz* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000). Not all critics share these insights, though. Amy Williamsen (‘Challenging the Code’), for example, claims that Calderón’s staunch support of the honour code may explain his lack of universal appeal.

behavioural boundary wrongly crossed by the living and are cautionary voices from heaven' (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 112). According to the critic, the point is not that dead women are the most beautiful, but that God marks the body of the wrongly tormented woman with what the world most esteems: beauty. Post-mortem loveliness is a form of poetic justice; their physical appeal does not speak about God's gain, but of humanity's loss, but 'although the final beauty of Zayas's dying and dead women is supernatural, it does not follow the pattern of hagiography. Martyred saints in early modern hagiographies may die in blazes of light and pools of flowing blood, but they are not stunningly beautiful in death' (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, pp. 113-115). This is not quite true, however, as there are hagiographical stories where a martyr's body is incorruptible and beautiful in death. The Dutch St Liduvina, for example, suffered horribly throughout her life and was ugly. First she breaks her leg skating, then she develops a huge abscess from which worms crawl, after which her right arm rots away, but when she dies at last, her body becomes beautiful: 'Su cuerpo, que en vida estaba feo y lleno de llagas, quedó entero y hermosísimo, y el rostro con tan rara belleza que ningún pintor le pudiera formar tan gracioso' [Her body, which when she was alive had been ugly and covered in sores, was made whole and very beautiful, and her face had such a rare beauty that no painter could have made it look prettier] (Ribadeneyra, p. 187). As I discussed above (see 5.3.1), Zayas updates hagiographies by writing about martyred contemporary women, and I concur with Rhodes that she also politicizes them by exposing the deep flaws of Spanish society, but I disagree with her interpretation that beauty in death is a form of divine retribution or a reminder of what they lost.

5.4 Ideology & literary context

In this last section I would like to expand our view and look at the ideological stance that comes through in Zayas's work, which in turn will shed a different light on her feminism. I also propose to examine the literary context in which she was writing by assessing the link that has been made between her tales and the so-called *relaciones de sucesos* as well as the post-Cervantine novella tradition, both in Spain and abroad. It is only by doing this that we can truly understand the role of the supernatural in her oeuvre.

5.4.1 *A reactionary feminist*

Throughout her oeuvre it is clear that Zayas aligns herself with dominant political order, praising the Count of Lemos, speaking highly of the King and supporting the Inquisition (see 3.2). In addition, there are classist elements in her novellas, exemplified by the following rant she puts in the mouth of one of her narrators, who rails against the indiscriminate use of the noble titles ‘Don’ and ‘Doña’.

Porque nadie hace ostentación de los ‘dones’ como en España, y más el día de hoy, que han dado en una vanidad tan grande, que hasta los cocheros, lacayos y mozas de cocina le tienen; estando ya los negros ‘dones’ tan abatidos, que las tabernas y fruterías son ‘doña Serpiente’ y ‘doña Tigre’ [...] Que no ha muchos días que oí llamar a una perrilla de falda ‘doña Jarifa’, y a un gato ‘don Morro’. Que si Su Majestad (Dios le guarde) echara alcabala sobre los ‘dones’, le había de aprovechar más que el uno por ciento, porque casas hay en Madrid, y las conozco yo, que hierven de ‘dones’, como los sepulcros de gusanos. (*Desengaños*, p. 350)

[Because no one makes such ostentatious use of the title Don as they do in Spain, and especially nowadays, and people have become so vain, that even coachmen, lackeys and scullery maids use it, the blackened title of Don having become so degraded that it is used in taverns and fruit stalls by people calling themselves Doña Snake and Doña Tigress... Not so long ago I heard a lapdog referred to as Doña Gorgeous and a cat as Don Whiskers. If His Majesty (may God protect him) would tax the titles of Don, he would increase his revenue by more than one percent, because there are houses in Madrid, and I have been there, that are crawling with Dons and Doñas, like worms in a tomb.]

In ‘Amar sólo para vencer’ Esteban introduces himself as ‘Estefanía’ without the ‘doña’ and then jokes about ladies calling their pet ‘doña Miza’ [Doña Pussycat] and so on. Later he (she) sings a ballad about Spain’s decline, saying France robbed Spain of its valour and Spain France of its fine clothes, and suggesting that the use of ‘don’ ought to be taxed and the monies distributed among the poor. A very similar joke is reported by Barrionuevo, who mentions a funny pamphlet written by a ‘projector’ (*arbitrista*). These men were known for their often outlandish (although sometimes also perceptive) proposals to remedy the failing Spanish economy.²¹ Zayas is even more aggressive when it comes to servants. In ‘El castigo de la miseria’ Marcela suggests to take Marcos to a magician either to be rid of him *or* because she was a maid (‘por ser criada’), implying her slyness and willingness to cheat her master (see 3.1 and 3.6). At other points Zayas – or at least, one of her narrators – is downright scathing about servants:

²¹ See for instance John H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain 1469-1716* (London: Penguin, 1963; repr. 1990) and *Spain and its World 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Porque los criados y criadas son animales caseros y enemigos no excusados, que los estamos regalando y gastando con ellos nuestra paciencia y hacienda, y al cabo, como el león, que harto el leonero de criarle y sustentarle, se vuelve contra él y le mata, así ellos, al cabo, matan a sus amos. (*Desengaños*, p. 508)

[Because servants are domestic animals and inexcusable enemies, seeing as how we waste and give away our patience and our wealth, and in the end, just like the lion turns on the lion tamer who raised it and brought it up, and kills him – because that’s what they do – in the end they kill their masters.]

Apart from lambasting servants, Zayas blames the general effeminacy of men for Spain’s woes. This echoes what Maravall found in his study of the baroque in Spain. He relates how Francisco de León, the prior of Guadalupe, scoffed at ‘los hombres convertidos en mujeres, de soldados en afeminados, llenos de tufos, melenas y copetes’ [men turned into women, soldiers into pansies, full of hot air, with their long hair and quiffs].²² He also mentions Suárez de Figueroa, who wrote about the ‘mariquillas de ahora’ [poofters of today] and said that ‘la vanidad de músicas y bailes entretiene los afeminados, y los hace vagar al afeite del rostro, al enrizo de los cabellos, al adelgazar la voz, a los melindres y caricias femeniles’ [the vanity of music and balls that those pansies entertain themselves with leads them to use make-up on their faces, curl their hair, speak in a soft voice and adopt effete affectations] (quoted in Maravall, p. 95). Zayas equally says that: ‘en todos los tiempos han sido los hombres aficionados a melenas, aunque no tanto como ahora’ [men have always preferred long hair, but not as much as these days] (*Desengaños*, p. 298). In tune with these diatribes, Zayas has a narrator launch into a philippic against men.

¿De qué pensáis que procede el poco ánimo que hoy todos tenéis, que sufrís que estén los enemigos dentro de España, y nuestro Rey en campaña, y vosotros en el Prado y en el río, llenos de galas y trajes femeniles, y los pocos que le acompañan, suspirando por las ollas de Egipto? De la poca estimación que hacéis de las mujeres, que a fe que, si las estimarais y amarades, como en otros tiempos se hacía, [...] y en particular el del rey don Fernando el Católico se hacía, donde no era menester llevar a los hombres ni maniatados, como ahora [...], sino que ellos mismos ofrecían sus haciendas y personas: el padre, por defender la hija; el hermano, por la hermana; el esposo, por la esposa, y el galán por la dama. (*Desengaños*, p. 505)

[Where do you think this lack of zest that you all have comes from, allowing foreigners to enter Spain, our King on a military campaign and you in the Prado or the banks of the river, dressed up in effeminate clothes, and the few who do accompany him, sighing for

²² Quoted in José Antonio Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1975), p. 94.

the fleshpots of Egypt? It stems from the lack of appreciation you have for women, because I swear, if you would appreciate and love them like they used to... especially in the days of King Ferdinand the Catholic, when there was no need to force men or handcuff them... as they would offer their wealth and their person, the father to defend his daughter, the brother for the sake of his sister, the husband for his wife, and the lover for his lady.]

It may be clear that this hankering for a golden age of gender relations is at odds with what Boyers has labelled Zayas's 'resoundingly modern feminism' (Zayas, *Enchantments*, p. xxiv). Unlike modern feminists, however, her pro-woman didacticism is not aimed at dismantling the patriarchy. Instead, she defends women's intellect and 'aims to correct the practices and structures that subordinate women to men' (Vollendorf, *Reclaiming*, p. 17). On a more general level, the decay in gender relations reflects the societal chaos and turmoil of the mid seventeenth century. According to Rhodes, Zayas sees marriage as a metonym for the Spanish empire, 'the safeguard of the nobility's perpetuity with honour and purity of blood' (Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 39). Furthermore, as Channon-Deutsch has pointed out, Zayas shows insight into the notion that systems of power and control in the private sphere are reflected in larger political spheres (see 5.3.3).

5.4.2 Zayas and the *relaciones de sucesos*

In addition to her feminism, Zayas is known for her transgressive prose and her desire to shock and titillate. This was to some extent part of her strategy to drive home her pro-woman message and may have been influenced by the emerging popular press.

Zayas courts and astonishes her public in a manner reminiscent of the broadsides on Catalina de Erauso, with their tabloid aesthetic. Zayas's tales include cases of witchcraft, prophetic dreams, miracles, supernatural apparitions, miscegenation, and homosexuality. The most extreme violence enters her text under the aegis of inspiring *admiratio* and cementing the texts' didactic message. (Merrim, p. 74)

Merrim is not the first to link Zayas to the then-emerging popular press. Ettinghausen too suggests that Zayas may have been influenced by the news she read.²³ Brownlee, who refers to Ettinghausen in her work, calls Zayas an 'accomplished marketing strategist who manages to captivate readers with notably divergent alliances – conservative and radical, sentimental and sadistic – eluding censorship while cashing in

²³ See Henry Ettinghausen, 'The News in Spain: *Relaciones de sucesos* in the Reigns of Philip III and IV', *European History Quarterly*, 14 (1984); 'Sexo y violencia: noticias sensacionalistas en la prensa española del siglo XVII', *Edad de Oro*, XII (1993), 95-107; 'The Illustrated Spanish News. Text and Image in the Seventeenth-Century Press', in *Art and Literature in Spain: 1600-1800. Studies in honour of Nigel Glendinning*, ed. by Charles Davies and Paul Julian Smith (London: Tamesis, 1993), pp. 117-33.

on the “tabloid” craze that gripped Spain in the seventeenth century’ (Brownlee, ‘Genealogies’, p. 192). The ‘tabloids’ and ‘broadsides’ referred to are the *relaciones de sucesos*, news pamphlets printed on two or four folios which were bought by middlemen and blind pedlars, who sold them on the streets and at fairs. Thematically, they dealt with a wide variety of subjects, ranging from serious news items about war or royal visits to stories about comets, egregious murders, unlikely love stories written in verse or detailed descriptions of the witches’ sabbath, as is the case in the *Relación de Logroño* (see 2.4). They survive in ‘daunting profusion’ (Ettinghausen, ‘The News in Spain’, p. 1) and were probably read out by semi-literate readers to a miscellaneous group of hearers, literate and illiterate alike, thus creating a fascinating mix of oral and print culture. The same applies to the *Avisos* or newsletters written to individuals whose authors expected them to be read out too. ‘Digo esto, por los que *escucharen* o leyeren mis cartas’ (*emphasis added*) [I say this for those who might *hear* or read my letters] (Barrionuevo, *Avisos*, 3 October 1656). Like the *relaciones*, the *Avisos* are full of stories about royal visits, military victories, heinous murders and rape, topped off with a large helping of xenophobia. Pellicer, who wrote his newsletters in the 1640s, for example, reports the story about a foreign soldier who steals large sums of money and runs off with a nun three times, each time involving a different nun and a different soldier.

Apart from suggesting a general influence of these *relaciones* on Zayas, Ettinghausen, Merrim and Brownlee do not offer concrete examples. However, I have found a few of her novellas recycled as *relaciones de sucesos*. The first is the story of a woman forced to drink from the skull of her lover, killed by her husband (see 4.1). This tale is sometimes said to be taken from Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*, although I have suggested that Zayas probably could not read French and that Bandello is a much more likely source (see 1.1). In 1722, this story, with a few minor alterations, was printed in Lisbon, claiming to be a true story. The front page of the *relación* reads as follows:

Nveva relacion, y curioso romance, en que se refiere, y da cuenta de las aflicciones que passo una señora, natural de la ciudad de Ostia, en Italia, por averle una Negra, inducida del Demonio, levantado un testimonio, diziendole a su Señor, que su esposa cometia adulterio con un primo suyo sacerdote, por lo qual combido el marido de dicha Señora a comer a su casa al Sacerdote, al qual mato y se le saco la calavera, y con ella le daba de

beber a su muger. Con todo lo demas que se vera el curioso Lector. Sucedió este presente año de 1722.²⁴

[New relation and curious romance in which it the story is told of the afflictions suffered by a lady from the city of Ostia, in Italy, on account of a Black woman, who, inspired by the Devil, gave false testimony, telling her Master that his wife was committing adultery with a cousin who was a priest, after which the husband of said Lady invited the Priest to dinner, killed him and kept his skull, from which he gave his wife to drink. This and more the curious Reader will read. It happened this very year, 1722.]

Another example of a *relación de sucesos* that shares too much with one of Zayas's tales to be coincidental is a short account in verse of the brothers Fadrique and Joseph who fall in love with the sisters Constanza and Theodosia. Fadrique loves Constanza, but she has already given her heart away to Joseph. In a rage Fadrique murders his brother, hides his body in a well and flees to Italy. After fourteen years he returns to court Constanza, who in the meantime has married a certain Carlos. He strikes a deal with the devil to create a garden to win over Constanza.²⁵ Not only do we have the same plot and some of the same names (the sisters Constanza and Theodosia as well as the husband Carlos), the *romance* – unfortunately I have only been able to find the first half – is in effect called *Jardín Engañoso*, exactly like we have it in Zayas (see 4.5).

Another *relación* relates the story of Casandra, who is kidnapped by Turks, taken to Constantinople, returns and eventually judges the case of her own abduction: 'fue Juez en su propia Causa' [was a judge at her own trial].²⁶ Like with the previous *relación*, I have only found the first half, but it corresponds neatly to and has the same title as Zayas's novella 'El juez de su causa', in which Estela ends up in Tunis and then escapes by dressing as a man and fighting for Charles V. Eventually she returns to her native Valencia to judge the case of her own disappearance. This tale in turn shares some elements with Lope de Vega's *Las fortunas de Diana*, but not the captivity by the infidels. Pérez de Montalbán wrote a play called *El juez de su causa*, which was published in 1647, but written in 1619 (see chapter 1, note 28).

²⁴ See <<http://www.bidiso.es/RelacionesSucesosBusqueda/FindEdition.do?relationCode=nrycreq8&editionCode=1&isConditionalSearch=true&isSimpleSearch=true&startIndex=1&count=100>> [Accessed 19 March 2017].

²⁵ See <http://www.bidiso.es/RelacionesSucesosBusqueda/FindCopy.do?signature=XVIII_4_1106%28115%29&isConditionalSearch=true&editionCode=bcf460069&isSimpleSearch=true&relationCode=bcfjnry&count=100&startIndex=1> [Accessed 19 March 2017].

²⁶ See <http://www.bidiso.es/RelacionesSucesosBusqueda/FindCopy.do?signature=XVIII_4_1106%2885%29&isConditionalSearch=true&editionCode=bcf460073&isSimpleSearch=true&relationCode=bcfddryl&count=100&startIndex=1> [Accessed 19 March 2017].

Yet another *relación* is reminiscent of ‘La burlada Aminta’ in that a duped woman called Antonia dresses up as a man, takes a sword and a shield (‘espada y rodela toma’) and murders her lover, after which she becomes a nun.²⁷ But there are not enough details to speak of direct influence.

The *relaciones* linked to ‘El jardín engañoso’ and ‘El juez de su causa’ were printed by Andrés de Sotos in Madrid, although unfortunately they do not have a date. Ettinghausen may be right in saying that Zayas was influenced by the sort of news she read, but it is very unlikely that she took her subject material from them directly. Especially in the case of the *relaciones* in verse, it is clear that we are dealing with recycled stories aimed at the popular market, a kind of Reader’s Digest in which a thirty-page novella is condensed in two or four sides of doggerel. Still, the fact that Zayas’s *maravillas* and *desengaños* were published in this format points to a shared public. The novella tradition has its roots in the Middle Ages when oral tales were collected by authors like Chaucer, Boccaccio and the author of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*. These were then moulded into *novelas cortesanas* in the Renaissance by writers like Bandello, Marguerite de Navarre and Timoneda. In the hands of Zayas, the stories become polysemous baroque tales full of complexity. And next, it seems, they were recycled as pulp fiction and read out to a semi-literate audience. But rather than the tales coming full circle, from oral to highly literary to semi-oral, this development must be seen in the light of the emergence of kitsch, as discussed by Maravall, who calls it: ‘una cultura vulgar, caracterizada por el establecimiento de tipos, con repetición standardizada de géneros, presentando una tendencia al conservadurismo social respondiendo a un consumo manipulado’ [a people’s culture, characterized by types, with a standardized repetition of genres, presenting a tendency to social conservatism and responding to a manipulated consumption] (Maravall, p. 184). He sees kitsch as a far cry from authentic popular culture. It is instead a creation by the elite and a substitute for the folk culture that was gradually being lost in the seventeenth century.

5.4.3 *The ‘novella craze’*

Finally, if we want to assess how unique Zayas was in exploiting the supernatural and writing transgressive prose, we should not forget that she was writing within a novella

²⁷ See <http://www.bidiso.es/RelacionesSucesosBusqueda/FindCopy.do?signature=XVIII_4_1106%28146%29&isConditionalSearch=true&editionCode=bcf4601239&isSimpleSearch=true&relationCode=bcfnrycr14&count=100&startIndex=1> [Accessed 19 March 2017].

tradition that was all the rage in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (see 1.2). Much critical and scholarly attention has gone to the huge wealth of plays that were written in Spain's Golden Age – McKendrick estimates the total number at 10,000²⁸ – but much less to the vast amounts of novellas. Many of the earlier ones were modelled on or translated from Italian sources, but it seems that in the course of the seventeenth century the production increased and the plots became more extravagant. There were many minor novella writers in the middle decades of the seventeenth century who were writing in a very similar vein to Zayas and, as Romero Díaz has pointed out, it makes sense to compare her work to theirs rather than to study it in isolation: ‘¿cómo entender la significación e implicación cultural de este género en el Barroco si sólo se estudian mujeres de forma aislada?’ [how can we understand the cultural meaning and implication of this genre in the baroque if we only study women in isolation?] (Romero Díaz, *Nueva nobleza*, p. 14). In artistic terms, the genre had probably reached its zenith with Cervantes as the later novellas lack the originality and wit of the *Novelas ejemplares*, although we should probably consider the author of *Don Quixote* as a case apart since he consciously placed himself outside of the tradition by boasting that the stories were all of his own invention (see 2.7). If Cervantes's novellas are playful, subtly critical and wonderfully aware of the plurality of discourse, some of the next generation of novella writers either wrote run-of-the-mill novellas or else seemed bent on overwhelming their readers with outlandish, extravagant stories, producing what Alan Soons calls ‘purveyed literature’ of the kind that ‘predominated without hindrance in an age of political and religious authoritarianism’.²⁹

Let us look at some examples based on summaries of plots taken from Joaquin del Val's overview of the seventeenth-century novella in Spain. There we find Salas Barbadillo's *El necio bien afortunado* (1621), which according to the Spanish scholar is a funny picaresque novel with scenes of false witchcraft. He also mentions the *Historias peregrinas y ejemplares* (1623) by Céspedes y Meneses, which are full of ‘amor y celos, voces misteriosas y espantables apariciones, como en *La constante cordobesa* en la que don Diego ve surgir de un sepulcro al padre de la mujer que ama, y el fantasma le amenaza para que renuncie a su hija’ [love and jealousy, mysterious voices and frightening apparitions, like

²⁸ Melveen McKendrick, *Theatre in Spain 1490-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Alan Soons, *Alonso de Castillo Solórzano* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), p. 76.

in *La constante cordobesa*, in which Don Diego sees the father of the woman he loves coming out of his grave and his ghost threatening him to give up on his daughter] (Del Val, 'La novela española', p. lvii). Del Val also discusses the work of Enríquez de Zúñiga and Suárez de Mendoza, who imitated Cervantes's *Persiles* and wrote elaborate novels full of kidnappings, wanderings, etc. In Suárez de Mendoza's *Eustorgio y Clorilene* (1629) a courtier enters a crypt and there follows a two-page description of the corpse of the protagonist's grandmother. Barrionuevo y Moya wrote *Soledad entretenida en que se da noticia de la historia de Ambrosio Calisandro* (1638), which is full of fights with Moors, mysterious caves, necromancers, anchorites, bandits, and so on. Despite the common taste for the sensational, though, Del Val calls Zayas 'una figura excepcional en el conjunto de novelistas de esta época' [an exceptional figure in the collection of novelists from this period] (Del Val, p. lix).

Staying closer to Zayas's circle of friends, we should not fail to mention the work of Castillo Solórzano and Pérez de Montalbán, both prolific novella writers, with the latter having a:

tendencia a lo terrorífico y desorbitado, por lo que debemos considerarlo un verdadero prerromántico. [...] Sin vacilar puede afirmarse que son las más obscenas de su tiempo, y doña María de Zayas que ha sido considerada, desde lo afirmó Ticknor, como la novelista española más atrevida, nunca llegó a escribir una monstruosidad comparable a *La mayor confusión*. (Del Val, p. lvi)

[tendency to the horrific and exorbitant, on account of which we ought to consider him a true pre-Romantic... Without hesitation we can state that his novellas are the most obscene of his time and that Doña María de Zayas, who has been considered, ever since Ticknor, Spain's most daring novelist, never managed to write something as monstrous as *La mayor confusión*.]

A brief look across the borders, moreover, makes us realize that the taste for the shocking and titillating was part of a wider trend in the seventeenth century. I have already mentioned the prolific writings of François de Rosset and Jean-Pierre Camus in France (see 1.2). Rosset wrote tales featuring incest, homosexuality, a priest accused of witchcraft, and a dalliance between a nun and a lieutenant who turns out to be the Devil. Camus is the author of hundreds of *histoires tragiques* in which he describes 'terrifying, catastrophic, dramatic or horrible situations' and tells 'bloodcurdling or monstrous anecdotes' showing 'pleasure in approaching the forbidden, with an obvious voyeurism in the case of juicy details' (Muchembled, p. 134). What is more, these authors were influenced by the emerging popular press in France, the *canards*, which

dealt with marvels, calamities, celestial phenomena and crimes that were described in gory detail (see Muchembled). Likewise, some plays in Jacobean England are equally known for their gruesome details including instances of incest. Take for example Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1632) which portrays a love affair between brother and sister, with the former eventually ripping out the latter's heart and carrying it around on stage on the point of his dagger.

* * *

In her novellas Zayas deploys the full panoply of the supernatural *sensu lato*. She evinces a deep-rooted pessimism by denying free will when confronted with the influence of the stars. And alongside fake and frighteningly real magic and diabolical trickery, she recounts miracles, some of which are infused with a sense of the uncanny. This is equally the case for other events such as disembodied voices and premonitory dreams. Although this may appear to foreshadow the Gothic, we should not forget she was very much a child of her time. Much of her more shocking material is far from unique and can also be found in the works of 'lesser' novella writers who have come after Cervantes – as well as other European authors of her time. Still, there are elements that make her work stand out. For modern audiences the most obvious one is her overtly feminist stance. Although it is not as straightforward as all that, there is no denying that she was acutely aware of the wrongs done to women and of gender as a social construct. Her supernatural episodes too add greatly to her appeal, in particular the uncanny episodes. In a shifting episteme, she uses the uncertainty surrounding much of these matters to symptomize irrational fears and express her profound pessimism. This makes her novellas eminently baroque: baroque in their fascination with the morbid and macabre; baroque in their convoluted prose and rambling sentences full of twists and turns and the occasional anacoluthon; and baroque in the contradictory positions taken up and defended, resulting in a game of false appearances and a labyrinthine narrative structure. In a sublime paradox Zayas attempts to make her readers see through deceit by deploying a highly deceitful strategy; she can be said to be *desengañar engañando* [un-deceive through deception]. Her stories are part pulp fiction, part clever composition, juxtaposing titillating tales and a critique of society, without being in any way revolutionary. They aim to shock her readers out of their complacency, while at the same time she is seemingly resigned to the impassive tyranny of fate and fortune.

Conclusion

El tremendismo, la violencia, la crueldad, que con tanta frecuencia se manifiestan en las obras de arte barroco, vienen de la raíz de esa concepción pesimista del hombre y del mundo que hemos expuesto y a su vez la refuerzan. El gusto por la truculencia sangrienta se observa en muchas obras francesas, italianas, españolas [...] es un dato común peculiar de la situación histórica del barroco en toda Europa. (Maravall, p. 335)

[The shocking, stark realism, the violence and the cruelty that manifest themselves so frequently in baroque art stem from this pessimistic view of man and the world as we have exposed it, and at the same time reinforce it. The taste for bloody gruesomeness can be seen in many French, Italian and Spanish works... and is a common feature of the historical period of the baroque in the whole of Europe.]

THERE CANNOT BE MANY CENTURIES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY THAT ARE NOT MARKED by great changes and upheavals. The seventeenth century is no exception. Especially in the 1640s, when Zayas wrote her *Desengaños amorosos*, Spain faced rebellions and uprisings on many fronts. The Dutch Revolt had been ongoing since 1568, and would result in the humiliating Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, when Spain acknowledged the independence of the Republic of United Provinces. The Portuguese rose up in 1640 and finally gained their independence in 1668. Catalonia (1640-1659) and Naples (1647-1648) also rebelled against the Crown, although these uprisings were eventually unsuccessful. And after decades of dominance on the battlefields of Europe, the Spanish *tercios* were defeated by the French at Rocroi in 1643. The Spanish empire seemed to be teetering on the brink and this led to a fair degree of soul-searching and finger-pointing. Like many contemporaries, Zayas is deeply distrustful of foreigners and heaps caustic comments on the serving classes. She blames the ails of the nation on the lack of virility of men, and projects the national and societal chaos on the domestic scene – hence the uxoricidal episodes. The ‘war of the sexes’ that is waged in the novellas is in part a symptom of everything that is wrong with the nation.

Apart from political upheavals, the seventeenth century also saw a shift in epistemology. The worldview that accepted magic and astrology as perfectly plausible explanations of phenomena was slowly being eroded. That many people still believed in witchcraft is clear when we look at the studies done by Ruggiero, Sánchez Ortega and Martín Soto, although many of those who took recourse to magic evinced a pragmatic attitude and

sometimes admitted it was all just make-belief. All the while, the most learned men of the country could not make up their minds whether or not witches actually flew to their sabbaths. Despite its bleak reputation, the Inquisition took a lenient view, both with regards to Satanic witchcraft, which the Holy Office thought was almost impossible to prove in individual cases, and to magical practices, which were simply seen as fraudulent. The supernatural itself was subdivided into two distinct orders: the preternatural – the domain of the Devil – and the supernatural *sensu stricto*, or the truly miraculous. What is more, the sense-of-the-impossible was shifting and both orders shrank while their borders were more strictly policed. Miracles were in danger of being seen as social and religious constructs, while the belief in magic generated great uncertainty. In Zayas we see the resulting indeterminacy clearly in her episodes dealing with sorcery, which is sometimes described as real, sometimes as a prank, now comical, then harrowing. Moreover, this uncertainty infects other elements of the stories where she offers her readers a number of options as to the possible causes of a given event, indicating the most likely scenario, but leaving open alternative explanations, thus planting seeds of doubt. She equally plays a baroque game of deception when she makes the Devil claim he is capable of doing good, fooling the protagonists of the story, the characters in the frame narrative and modern scholars alike. This way, and because the end, in salvific terms, is never revealed – I have called this a strategic silence – the novellas are a stark reminder of the Devil's subterfuge. Either there is justice in the afterlife and the Devil has the last laugh, or there is no justice in this life *or* the next. Her other descriptions of the Devil are more straightforward, conventional and unremarkable. He is a quasi-comical figure who disappears in plumes of sulphuric smoke when he has been vanquished by the Virgin, or a trickster facilitating the suicide of a hapless miser. The Devil takes a more abstract form when he possesses people, driving them to do evil. This is at the same time a very old notion and also typical of the gradual interiorization of evil. Sometimes the Devil is merely the epitome of ugliness, even if in one story Zayas manages to turn things on their head by making a Black stable boy a suffering saint. The indeterminacy and baroque games change to a profound pessimism when Zayas ascribes powers to the stars that, against the prevailing theology, trump free will. This does not mean she still inhabits the Neoplatonic world of Renaissance magi like Paracelsus, but rather that she uses astrology to express her fatalistic conviction that some people, especially innocent women, will suffer injustice, however ill-deserved, and that there is nothing anyone can do. Like with the Devil,

Zayas is rather conventional when it comes to miracles. The indeterminacy surrounding the preternatural episodes is absent, as one would expect, and we are not offered conflicting views of the miraculous, nor are we given alternative options, leaving room for doubt. One Marian episode, however, acquires a different flavour and becomes imbued with a sense of the uncanny when the would-be adulterer is addressed by a hanged man, swaying from the gallows by the wan light of the moon. Other episodes, including disembodied voices, the undead and premonitory dreams, share the same quality. Just as her belief in the power of the stars gives voice to her fatalism, these episodes express a fear of the irrational, a deep unease that is evoked by the no-longer-familiar, the eerie, the inexplicable. Todorov explained the fantastic as something that is in-between; at the end of the story the reader must make up her or his mind whether the event is supernatural or if there is a rational explanation. He differentiates between the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvellous, and, bearing in mind the early modern tripartite division of orders, I have suggested a third possibility: the fantastic-miraculous. Zayas never explains the uncanny and thereby creates a sense of narrative uncertainty; it is up to the reader to decide whether the event has a natural, a preternatural or a miraculous explanation. So despite her unproblematic representation of miracles, she imbues them with a new aesthetic. This is what links her preternatural and her fantastic episodes, and together they shape the experience of reading Zayas's novellas just as much as the feminist and transgressive passages.

The supernatural *sensu lato* in Zayas is a barometer of the shifting attitudes in the seventeenth century, and emblematic of the period's political and societal chaos, but it is also an attempt to shock and titillate her audience. In that respect the scenes of voodoo rape, wily witches and egregious sorceresses are on a par with Zayas's descriptions of sodomy, lesbian lust, sibling and wife-murder, and racy interracial sex that pepper her collection. With these titillating elements she sought to attract the *vulgo*, while with the clever baroque composition she aimed to please the *culto*. For the former, the main attraction of her work would have been the 'pulp fiction' aspect of her tales of gore, superstition and irrational fear. For the latter, the playful juxtaposition of opposing possibilities, the contrast between real miracles and efficacious magic on the one hand, and fake phantoms and fraudulent sorcerers on the other would have been the main attraction. That is also clearly how the authorities saw her novellas, since she received her licence to print (*licencia*) without any problems – as far as we can tell at least – and her stories were seen as well-crafted and not containing anything that ran counter to the

Faith. This way Zayas cast her net as wide as she was able to in order to spread her pro-woman message. In addition, her sheer audacity and gift for telling baroque, complex stories was proof that women, despite their humoral dispositions and supposed innate inferiority, *were* able to produce artful literature with a wide appeal.

Ever since her reappraisal in the dying decades of the last century, Zayas has been lauded for her transgressive writing, but to properly assess this, much more research would have to be done into the novelistic output of her contemporaries like Castillo Solórzano and Pérez de Montalbán. Alternatively, a comparative study could be made between her novellas and the French *histoires tragiques* by Camus and Rosset. Or else a firmer link could be established between the Jacobean theatre and the Spanish *comedias* and novellas. Her plots may be unoriginal, but then again that was the hallmark of the genre. Boccaccio, Bandello, Timoneda, Lope de Vega, Carvajal, Marguerite de Navarre, Chaucer and even Shakespeare were not out to write original plots; instead they rewrote familiar tales to suit new audiences. In this process it also becomes clear that good literature has little or nothing to do with a good plot. There is a world of difference between Bandello's and Shakespeare's rendition of the story of the star-crossed lovers from rival families in Verona, with Rojas Zorilla's *Los bandos de Verona* somewhere in between the two, even though they all essentially tell the same story. Few are the novellas by Zayas for which at least one possible source has not been found. Her typical *modus operandi* is to complicate a given story or combine elements from various sources. The result is often an elaborate tale that is full of paradox and opposition. In the process she laces her tales with the miraculous, the marvellous and the uncanny, giving voice to irrational fear, anger, frustration, fatalism and cashing in on the indeterminacy surrounding the supernatural caused by an eroding episteme. Like a true alchemist, she creates out of her recycled plots a series of novellas that are, for all their predictability, occasional clichés and rambling syntax, an exciting read.

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