Against *Gracias*: The Poetics of the Erotic Gift in Early Modern Spain

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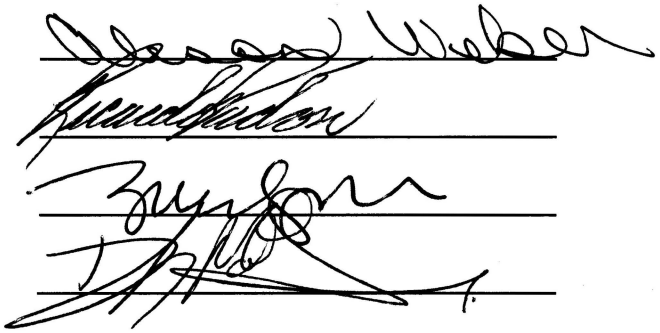

Abstract

The present study highlights literary representations of gift objects and gift exchanges, engaging the early modern discourses of love, sex, marriage, and courtship with recent scholarship on gift theory, social capital, and the *novella* genre in order to explore the points of tension between anxious reciprocities and unequal power relationships within the Spanish Baroque imaginary. Góngora's *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* foregrounds how discourses of courtesy and courtliness become juxtaposed textually with notions of obligation, debt, and gratitude. In this erotic exchange, the gift of male sexual restraint is equivalent to the gift of female sexual consent. In Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea*, the *quid pro quo* is interrupted by a rival suitor whose flashy New World wealth eclipses the impoverished poet's gift of romantic verse. Society's usual collective willingness to "misrecognize" gifts as spontaneous gestures with no strings attached, loses its tenability here. The female protagonist's agency in the gifting game proves limited as her entire community—in this case, parents, servants, friends, neighbors—all work to sell her off to the highest bidder. Each love gift is exposed as somehow self-interested, which ultimately arouses suspicion and cynicism around all amorous exchange in the text. For author María de Zayas, the crumbling of the gift's façade means increased knowledge and power for women. In fact, she claims that women should not participate in socially-constructed, gendered expressions of *gracias* if those very expressions only work *against* women. Her social critique of female powerlessness at the hands of violent and irresponsible males gives the thesis its primary title: Against *Gracias.* The final author studied in this project, Mariana de Carvajal, continually references courtship gifts between men and women in her amorous tales, yet, in

comparison with de Zayas, erotic gifts serve the more innocent purpose of nurturing the amorous bonds between lovers. Nonetheless, Carvajal's representation of gift exchanges also rehearses dominant ideologies of gender, social class, and ethnic and religious difference, which in turn shows how gifts can be marked as strategic and self-interested tools for the social elite.

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Introduction: Gifts, Gender, and Amorous Anxiety

The courtly lover Don Quijote sends a steady stream of romantic gifts to his lady Dulcinea. He sends love letters, lyric poetry, and reports of feats performed in his beloved's honor. He bequeaths to her cash money and dispatches the many *gigantes, follones y malandrines* that he vanquishes to Toboso. The mad knight imagines his paramour reciprocating these lavish gifts by embroidering a garment for him in delicate golden thread, or generously rewarding his emissaries with costly jewels. In Don Quijote's worldview, the amorous bond with the lady Dulcinea is made manifest through a prescribed exchange of love gifts. Traditional gift objects such as hand-stitched textiles or lofty love poems function as symbolic gestures, punctuating the language of courtship that overlays the lovers' erotic intimacy.

The unique significance of a gift is dictated by the circumstances in which it is given. Amorous gifts in particular may take on multiple meanings, especially considering the rigid social codes of love, sex, courtship, and marriage under which love tokens are often exchanged. Timing, setting, and execution all dictate whether a freshly plucked posy may be taken as an accolade or an insult. In the case of *Don Quijote,* once Sancho Panza realizes his master's supposed princess is really a burly field hand, the squire becomes anxious that she will scorn "los ricos presentes que vuestra merced le ha enviado, así el del vizcaíno como el de los galeotes" (I, 25). Sancho fears the peasant woman will be offended and angered by an incongruous gift. More importantly, he worries that the knight's subjugated emissaries themselves will balk at finding the so-called lady in her natural habitat, feeding livestock or threshing grain. Sancho knows instinctively that a gift incompatible with the recipient's social status will fail. Society,

including the intended recipient, will ultimately reject an uneven exchange as humiliating and unfit. Thus, the context of the gift act—social class, degree of intimacy, mental stability, etc.—directly affects the outcome of the exchange. The ostentatious love gift of subdued minions falters in Sancho's mind because the success of the offering will depend to a great extent on the social status of the woman receiving it. When the amorous exchange includes a pack of violent ruffians, everything hinges upon whether the envoy is received by an ideal noblewoman capable of bearing its grandeur (and danger), or by a country wench as yet untrained in coordinating her courtly champion's spoils.

The social practice of gift exchange may at first appear to be a simple equation of *quid pro quo*, a dualism of gifter and giftee in a vacuum. Yet for centuries, writers have recognized that gift giving is more complex and dynamic than the mere reflexive exchange of mathematically equivalent values. Foundational philosophical treatises outlining giving and receiving, such as Seneca's *De beneficiis* or Cicero's *De Officiis*, meditate upon gift exchange as an eternal cycle of human interaction that cultivates social, political, and personal bonds. Marcel Mauss's attempt to theorize a universal "total practice" of the gift remains a foundational text in the discipline of sociology. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's essays on kinship problematize the gendered exchange of women as gifts in societal networks. The example of females traded by their menfolk through exogamic marriage practices informs my discussion of the gift rituals specific to early modern courtship, especially in terms of the gifting agency of females, whose ability to participate fully in society becomes marred through their objectification as the ultimate gift between males. In early modern cultural studies, the historian Natalie Zemon Davis has explored instances of the gift in praxis, positing that the meaning and

value of gifts in early modern European societies changed over time as gift registers became overburdened with obligation and self-interest. In the unique context of love, sex, and marriage, the well-being of entire communities can hinge upon the erotic gifts exchanged between courting lovers. For example, in the case of Mariana de Carvajal's "El esclavo de su esclavo," the war or peace between nations is determined by a child princess's choice of suitor. Once abducted and taken to Algiers, the ten-year-old Matilde of Catalonia craftily navigates Muslim courtiers' courtship gifts and marriage proposals, managing to maintain her Spanish Christian identity while simultaneously placating the Algerian court and bringing peace to Barcelona and Algiers. The white roses Matilde accepts from a disguised Christian noble thus disclose more than her amorous favor; the courtship gift also significantly reaffirms her religious, ethnic, and national loyalties.

Universal narratives on the gift, from the fateful Apple of Discord myth to the sentimental *The Gift of the Magi*, express the inherent irony of gifts and the paradoxical implications for givers and receivers alike. Like theoretical and historical gift exchanges, gift instances taken from literature can beget tragedy, generate sympathy, or expose absurdity. In order to understand and explain what the gift does and what it means in baroque Spain, I examine instances of gifting from Spanish verse, novel-in-dialogue, and novels of courtship. In the case of erotic gifts in particular, queries into the cultural discourses of love, gender, and power will give nuance to the broader aspects of the gifting theme. Moreover, through a comparative and thematic approach to the gift, we glean a method of giving, which in turn helps to discern the ways in which gift objects are imbued with cultural context. Finally, it is crucial to look into folk tales, retold myths, and short stories when attempting to recover female voices within the poetics of erotic

gifting. For, as Natalie Zemon Davis points out in *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*, "the woman's complaint is found in stories, rather than treatises or essays" (78).With this methodology in mind, I seek to explore and problematize the literary theme of erotic gifts exchanged between courting men and women.

When is a gift "free," if ever? What is at stake when a gift is given? What do the terms *gratitude, (un)grateful, gracious, gratis, grace* signify in the context of early modern Spain? Who benefits and how? What is lost? The present study seeks to examine how relationships change when a gift is accepted or refused, how social status and wealth contribute to expectations between gift givers, as well as how courtship rituals affect the gifting register. Furthermore, this study considers the expectations and obligations that lie behind the performativity of amorous exchange, as well as how gift dynamics engage cultural anxieties regarding clan dominance and political power. Does gender affect the gift act? In the realms of sex, love, and marriage, is a promise a promise? Is an erotic gift a stable signifier of devotion or passion between lovers? How do gifts function within a Neo-Platonic worldview, or alongside the delicate sensibilities of *fin amour* between individuals? And, to put it bluntly, what is the difference between paying a prostitute and "winning" a courtesan? To a great extent, cultural discourse determines what a particular gift signifies on the gifting spectrum. A gift can range from successful to failed, a giver's motives from innocent to malicious, the execution of the gifting exchange from transparent to enigmatical. Additionally, the ritualized performances and strategies underlying gift giving beg new questions about the gift's perceived spontaneity, that is, hidden agenda. Thus, by plotting the exchange's contextual elements upon a matrix of intention, reception, and overall outcome, we may discern a particular gift's complexities.

Reading gift theorists' and historians' work in tandem with literary sources from seventeenth-century Spain, I intend to construct a particularly Spanish theory of the gift. Throughout this investigation, broad concepts of giving and receiving taken from European philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and economics will serve to anchor my theories and interpretations of the gift specific to early modern Spain. Notions of courtliness, politesse, and largesse will be contrasted with notions of obligation, debt, and interest, all under the auspices of exploring and defining the value of a quintessentially erotic gift. By inquiring into the function of the love gift in particular, I will build a foundation for future theories of the gift in a broader Spanish context, and I encourage critical strides toward a more historicized notion of the gift in early modern Spain. In this vein, I have included close readings from diverse genres in early modern Spanish literature: Luis de Góngora's ornate lyrical poem, the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*; Lope de Vegas's prose novel-in-dialogue, *La Dorotea*; and courtship novels by María de Zayas and Mariana de Carvajal. My interpretations of the gift acts in these texts address the overarching question: *What does the gift do?* Answers are found in the interplay of early modern erotic discourse, Spanish social protocols and material culture, as well as the creative power of diverse Spanish writers. Through their representation of gifts, we delve into the context and subtext of amorous exchange between lovers, the first step in assembling a greater poetics of the gift in early modern Spain.

The poetics of the gift: both theoretical studies and literary forms

The Oxford English Dictionary defines *poetics* as "the creative principles informing any literary, social or cultural construction, or the theoretical study of these; a theory of

form." I use the word *poetics* in two ways when I refer to "The Poetics of the Erotic Gift" in the title of this dissertation. First, I mean the theory of form behind gift giving; the creative principles that inform gift exchange; gifting protocols; the language of gift exchange; the gift as an idea. This use of the term denotes a prescriptive function, the way gifts *should* act, and the ways in which people *ought* to give and receive them. In a sense, they are the rules of the gifting game, the precepts that guide the act. In addition to its formal precepts, a complete definition of gifting poetics must encompass gift exchanges in praxis, the ways in which people actually give and receive gifts on an everyday basis. Thus, the poetics of the gift refers to a theory of exchange based on concrete social practices as well as abstract principles. A critical interpretation of any gift exchange must therefore take into account both the formal protocols behind gifting—often taken for granted as status quo—and the subsequent expectations that surround gift exchange in practice. The present study theorizes the gift through multiple case studies, comparing specific instances of gift giving in order to elucidate how social protocols, romantic relationships, and material objects function within their cultural context.

Secondly, *poetics* refers to literary forms themselves; the tropes identified within literary representations; metaphors and symbolism and their analysis; the decoding and reconstructing of meaning in the text; the process of hermeneutics. How is the gift represented, and why? What is the context of the gift exchange? What is the subtext of the gift act? What is paradoxical about the gift? The poetry, prose fiction, and prescriptive literature examined in the following chapters all contain specific examples of courtship codes and erotic exchange. Each text rehearses certain aspects of early modern gifting principles and practices. I interpret these texts using the tools of literary criticism,

with a view to understanding amorous gift exchange and outlining a greater theory of the gift in early modern Spain. Thus, my objective is not to reconstruct concrete instances of historic gifts in seventeenth-century Europe; rather, I am interested in the way writers of early modern Spanish fiction portray basic human exchange through the language of erotic gifts. On the most fundamental level, amorous gifting is a poetic performance: he gives her a flower, she gives him a kiss, they are united. Nevertheless, a whole gamut of early modern ideologies surrounding love, gender, and power echoes deeply through such an exchange. My close reading of canonical and non-canonical texts will demonstrate the different ways in which a rudimentary *poetics* of the erotic gift functions within the text.

Defining the (erotic) gift

A gift cannot be solely defined as an object. Instead, a range of gestures fall under the definition of a gift, particularly an amorous one. Considering the complex codes of Neo-Platonism, chivalry, and courtesy, as well as gender dynamics, social stratification, and each pair of lovers' idiosyncrasies, the definition of an erotic gift ranges from a romantic song to costly jewels, from a well-timed glance to intense melodramatic disdain, even public humiliation or fatal illness. During his exile in the Sierra Morena, Don Quijote carves laudatory poems into the tree trunks of the surrounding forest so that Dulcinea's name can live on in eternal fame. While his amorous words may only endure as sentimental graffiti for bemused passersby, the knight has successfully executed the courtly lover's most basic erotic gift offering: immortalizing the beloved's name in verse. Thus, the *quid pro quo* of erotic exchange can include intangible expressions of devotion as well as more concrete gift objects.

I use the term *erotic* in its broadest sense to define erotic gifts: "of or pertaining to the passion of love; concerned with or treating love; amatory." Although synonyms for *erotic* are used throughout the dissertation—amorous, amatory, love—, the term *erotic* is particularly useful since it encompasses the sexual side of passion and the possibility of sexual intimacy. Nonetheless, an erotic gift is not necessarily sexual; the nuance of the term *erotic* merely hints at the possibility of sex, going one step further than more chaste synonyms such as *love* or *amorous*. Additionally, social context and degrees of intimacy define the erotic aspects of a love gift. An object may be gifted to a stranger as an unabashed erotic invitation rather than as a sign of familiarity. Moreover, since young, unmarried women are rarely tasked with the management and circulation of costly material goods, they are instead expected to reward generous male beneficiaries with sex, the erotic gift par excellence. The use of the term *erotic* qualifies this aspect of amorous exchange. Furthermore, the term *erotic* includes the fleshly manifestations of passionate love: the electrifying thrill of giving and receiving love tokens, the ecstasy of heightened emotion, the excitement of the chase, the sensuality of coquetry and arousal, the voluptuousness of foreplay. The erotic gift may also be coercive in nature: the covetous old man bribing the young girl with toys and sweets. Some gift acts are more slyly licentious. The amorous tales of María de Zayas, for example, are packed with the gendered double standard of fickle male lovers and the wretched undone ladies who have innocently given away their all. Finally, the erotic gift can be venereal in nature. After Estefanía Caicedo weds, robs, and abandons Campuzano in *El casamiento engañoso*, the unfortunate gentleman is left to flail feverishly, hallucinating in his sickbed: the lady's final farewell gift to the soldier is syphilis. Examples from seventeenth-century literature

show that gifts between lovers, whether spontaneous or elaborately crafted, often act to punctuate erotic passions. However, examples of unrequited love (gifts) abound as well, as in the case of the syphilitic solider who learns his love lesson too late, or the double-crossed victims of Zayas's cruel playboys.

The present study situates all erotic exchange within the broadly defined social institutions of love, sex, courtship, and marriage. In *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature*, Catherine Bates insists on the changeable and multivalent nature of these amorous institutions and practices. For Bates, love and courtship must be understood as a set of semantically slippery behaviors that fundamentally obscure motive and meaning:

> The words 'courtship' and 'to court' could as readily describe liaisons of the most egregiously lascivious kind as the most upright and exemplary relationships because 'courting' simply meant going through the motions, putting on an act, playing the part, and showing the rest of the world that one knew and understood the rules of social and amorous etiquette. Whether suitors were sincere or not is neither here nor there, for, as a kind of *behavior*, 'courting' uniquely problematizes the relation of sincerity to appearance, and makes the 'truth' of a courtship-situation difficult, if not impossible, to judge. (44)

Spanish courtship practices may not have formally taken their cue from discourses of courtly love, or *fin amour*, yet notions of courtliness and courtesy echo overwhelmingly throughout several examples of amorous exchange in early modern Spanish literature. In the *Polifemo*, refined courtiers pursue an exalted *belle dame sans merci*; in *La Dorotea*, the protagonist is courted as more of a Neo-Platonic form than a real woman; in Mariana

de Carvajal's courtship novels, requisite performances of courtesy and *obligación* burden lovers as well as their extended communities.

Early modern love may prove slippery and difficult to interpret, as Bates claims. However, some historians of early modernity waste no time categorically denouncing the ubiquitous rhetoric of courtly love as detrimental to women's experience. Margarita Ortega López states in *Historia de la mujeres en España*:

> El amor cortés para las mujeres no fue positivo. La mujer era un ser débil, indefenso, necesitado de protección, al que había que vigilar y guiar, en suma, las mujeres acababan pareciendo seres inferiores. La dama sólo debía de ser bella, su inteligencia no se tenía en cuenta. Este ideal cortés se utilizaba para desprestigiar a las mujeres al darles esta inferior consideración y para justificar las multiples relaciones extramatrimoniales. Teóricamente el amor caballeresco era una relación platónica, pero cada vez se defiende menos que esto se cumpliera y, por el contrario, se considera que era el pretexto para justificar una relación carnal. Fue una trampa para las mujeres . . . . (190)

We must keep in mind both Bates's semantic warning and Ortega López's gendered implications regarding early modern amorous exchange as we approach an interpretation of Spanish courtship gifts.

Baroque overload: *desengaño*, *obligación*, and the rhetoric of excess

If Renaissance humanism, religious reform, and imperial expansion characterize sixteenth-century Europe, then the Spanish term *desengaño* epitomizes seventeenth-century Spain's economic decline and curtailed social mobility. Jeremy Robbins defines

desengaño as "the profound, almost existential, realization of the absolute vanity of human values and possessions" (17). Historically, the combined epistemological impact of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and the encounter with the Americas sent early modern Europe reeling into a cultural malaise. Spanish kings continued to grasp mechanically at global hegemony despite repeated crises of famine, revolt, and bankruptcy (see Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598-1648*). Imperial clout waned, however, and the traditional image of an indomitable, ordained Castilian superpower underwent a "profound, almost existential" (Robbins 17) crisis of value in which Iberian potency ebbed away. Northern Europe, France, and England begin to overshadow Castilian cultural hegemony and economic control. Ironically, the increased opportunities for global wealth and power within a robust, transnational network of venture capitalism left Spain alienated and anxious. According to Robbins's notion of *desengaño*, however, once the absurdity and "vanity of human values" have been fully contemplated, a subsequent "realignment of priorities" occurs and one becomes progressively more prudent, tolerant, and resigned to one's practical realities (17). However, while Robbins illustrates several good examples of this Neo-Stoic position in literature, history, and the arts, copious cultural examples remain that show no sign of Neo-Stoic resolution. Instead, a rhetoric of excess and superfluity pervades baroque culture, as do examples of striving and straining against the grain to advance socially or economically. Social networks in particular are burdened with exhausting displays of courtesy and other obligatory social protocols that continually indulge the opportunistic, the materialistic, and the mundane.

Resigning oneself to present circumstances was one reaction to *desengaño*, and Robbins makes an excellent case for Spanish baroque fatalism. Yet acceptance was not

the universal reaction to deterioration and strife. A different kind of pragmatism sought solutions to the problem of scarcity by way of capitalistic ideologies of wealth and the infinite potential for return on investments. Far from stoically accepting scarcity as a reality, the highly stratified society of baroque Spain rather compensated for loss in the expressive forms of the gratuitous, the superfluous, and the excessive. A contagion of public excesses attempted to mask material lack and political impotence: Philip the Pious and his royal retinue paraded endlessly through Madrid's main plazas; Philip IV subsidized lavish theatrical spectacles; and Rome consecrated the colossal Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in 1626. Such shows of excess inspired a false sense of value, not just economic, but also psychic and spiritual. Indeed, economic trends of scarceness—and the subsequent financial reliance on credit, speculation, and interest—mirror this perceived overflow while paradoxically belying its inner void.[1] Cultural expressions such as religious art, secular theater, and intellectual wit also conceal and reveal the Spanish Empire's failed imperial project as it played out on a global stage.

I argue that a heightened sense of *obligación* pushed Spaniards to perform excessive largesse as well as gratuitous indebtedness to one another, setting the scene for anxiety over potential manipulation and deceit at the moment of gift exchange in particular. In terms of early modern gift practices, notions of evaluating worth and deserving or owing favors proved unstable, as evidenced by cultural discourse around surface appearance versus authenticity. As social norms around worth and value faltered, and as unquestioned assumptions about meaning and knowledge proved problematic, the

[1] See Elvira Vilches, *New World Gold: Cultural Anxiety and Monetary Disorder in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

demand to conform to collective displays of excess and ostentation increased.[2] Spanish society sought to mimic elite modes of behavior against a backdrop of national decline. The rising middle class and floundering noble classes clung to aristocratic appearances and the currying of favor.[3] In terms of exchange, a rhetoric of excessive obligation began to burden the gift register as well as the market system. As capitalist notions of potentially infinite credit, future profit, and exponential interest incorporated themselves into the early modern worldview, seventeenth-century Spanish society echoes the cultural expressions of superfluity and ostentation even as intellectuals, pundits, or artists questioned their value.

Between the feudal and the capitalist spirits: Iberian early modernity

In *Imperial Leather* Anne McClintock describes the cultural construct of charting an 'anachronistic space,' or accessing the historic past by traveling to a particular destination resonant with that past. Likewise, in *Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea*, the Spanish chronicler and moralist Antonio Guevara (1481-1545) expresses his preference for an idealized anachronistic space, the *aldea*, or rustic village, where the meaning and value of social practices such as courtship rituals and gift exchange are clear, fixed, and universal. Writing in the early sixteenth century, Guevara holds up the space of the *aldea* as a feudal ideal to be preferred over the more modernized and devious *corte*; anxieties abound for the urban courtier enveloped in the constant competition of

[2] See J.H. Elliott, "Self-Perception and Decline in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain," *Spain and its World: 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, 241-261).
[3] See Charles Jago, "The 'Crisis of the Aristocracy' in Seventeenth Century Castile," *Past and Present* (1979): 60-90.

performing conspicuous consumption, striving to appear wealthy in order to generate social mobility and individual prestige. Word and deed are less slippery in the *aldea*, however, a place untainted by metropolitan diversity and intrigue. Humble villagers can be counted on for aid and guidance, whereas the obscure machinations of the *corte* make it difficult to predict outcomes, forge expectations, or trust others. At the same time, the *corte* overflows with learned *sprezzatura* and studied *sinceritas*, such that these qualities grow ironic and empty. Guevara states that the stylish courtier is not free to be his own person since he must out of necessity "belong to others" through obligation and currying favor (Davis 73). The overwhelming and even sinful displays of modern excess can be avoided altogether by escaping back into the wholesome *aldea*, an Arcadian anachronistic space where present day dissimulation and deceit give way to the old feudal values of mutual trust, loyalty, and transparency.

The author and intellectual María de Zayas (1590-1661) is nostalgic for an idealized medieval past—specifically the historical period of Ferdinand the Catholic's reign—when noble males showed themselves citizens and soldiers, ready to perish defending and championing their female counterparts (*Desengaños* 505). In reality, however, this allegedly simpler world merely recalls a feudal ideology analogous to the zenith of Spanish imperial power in the early sixteenth century, before titles of nobility were openly sold off, and before foreign banks underwrote transnational military missions at Habsburg behest. Zayas implies that traditional gender roles were easier to discern in the past, while modern gender roles had become overly flexible and devoid of meaning. Specifically, Spanish males lacked the vigor necessary to nourish civic duty and

the requisite sense of social justice.[4] Instead, the new tendency to avoid manliness in favor of plundering and abandoning women increased, while female social worth became blurred by economic scarcity and delusions of social mobility. Zayas responded to the social anxiety over waning masculinity and the mistreatment of women by voicing a call for reform, as did the prescriptive literature of her day (*espejos de príncipes*, conduct manuals, advice books). Given the social and economic upheaval brought on by global capitalism and new encounters with the Other, warnings of the perils of naïveté and strategies for success abounded. The explosion of behavior treatises points to a crisis of values in which *ser* and *parecer* were becoming interchangeable, and the prudent citizen looked to inform him- or herself on the appropriate ranges of taste and decorum. Though neither Zayas nor Guevara wrote prescriptive literature per se—María de Zayas penned *novellas* of courtship and Antonio de Guevara published chronicles and essays—, both were critical of what they perceived to be modern excesses; each longed for a simpler world, whether in the mode of *beatus ille* or *ubi sunt*.

As the discourse of excess expanded into the arena of everyday social practices, the burden of indebtedness forced individuals to perform enhanced *gracias* in order to maintain their personal bonds. Social critiques of baroque excess clamored against these overblown "gracias," which were not just a trend, but an ideology that sought to compensate for scarcity through the performance of wealth and status. To appear elite, one had to display generosity and means, as well as equivalent (or superior) appreciation for (and reciprocation of) any and all exchanges. The pressure to give more than one had, to reciprocate with more than what was initially given, to give in excess, and to give

[4] See Elizabeth Lehfeldt, "Ideal Men: Masculinity and Decline in Seventeenth-Century Spain, *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 (2008): 463-491.

beyond one's means, was palpable. Just as emergent capitalist notions of credit and interest promoted speculation and overspending, the social obligation to repay favors in excess burdened the gift register as well as the social bonds it nourished. As the cultural contagion of excess spread, Spanish discourses denouncing usury, interest, and moneylending rose to stem the tide of superfluity. Contemporary intellectuals such as Quevedo, Cellorigo, and the *arbitristas* decried the increasingly popular practice of sanctioned usury, citing theological as well as economic arguments against it.

Mariana de Carvajal's *Navidades de Madrid* (1663) depicts a wealthy household celebrating the yuletide with continuous feasting and gifting. The highly stylized elegance and civility associated with the aristocracy forms the setting for a primarily gift-driven plot: gifting creates a sense of obligation to reciprocate, and that obligation in turn creates opportunities for more gifting. The constant flutter of gift exchange between fictitious, generous aristocratic characters permits every giver to surprise and delight his or her gift recipient through elaborate displays of abundance and largesse. Nonetheless, gift exchange between the moneyed elite is represented as self-conscious and anxiety ridden: neighbors fret over what to give one another for Christmas; two gentlemen concur that, as men, they are obliged to give gifts to women; and all gift recipients consistently over-give and over-reciprocate, "cuidadosos de prevenir regalos" (17), "enviándole muchos regalos y mayores agradecimientos" (19), and "No hay palabras con que encarecer los aplausos y agradecimientos que todo dieron a su bizarría y liberalidad" (275). In the same vein, the required gratefulness that must be shown to a gifter is clearly prescribed, especially for women, and especially if they are being courted. Leonor's character in the *Navidades* almost agrees to an unsuitable marriage simply because she

feels obligated to repay an attentive gentleman for his superfluous Christmas gift. Thus, we see how the frenzy of gifting and obligating others may delight recipients, but it also binds them, creating a deep debt of reciprocity.

In Carvajal's stories, both men and women maneuver gift debts cautiously, yet it would appear that women bear a more oppressive burden of obligation as their gifting agency consistently proves more limited than men's. Again and again, male suitors perform liberality and agonistic gifting and the lady finds herself constrained and easily conquered by trifles, reciprocating with coerced, gendered "gracias." In this way, amorous gifts function to lay claim on a woman, the gift objects themselves somehow marking male territory simply by virtue of being given. The requisite *gracias* on the woman's part may range from polite verbal thanks to amorous preference, to erotic commitment or even sexual arrangement. Thus, women compensate for their lack of equivalency with men in the gifting game by performing increased tractability and deference to male wishes. Margaret Greer and Elizabeth Rhodes point out that the meaning of the term *gracia* in seventeenth-century Spain meant "producing a favorable impression," as well as signifying "thanks" or "gracefulness" (*Exemplary Tales* 40). Excessive amorous gifting to women and the subsequent social pressure to then reciprocate gifts in excess triggers gendered anxiety over erotic giving. Females in particular become ensnared in the trap of exhibiting skewed, gendered *gracias* under the double obligation of their gift debt as well as their sex.

Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (1611) has two separate entries for *gracia* (one social, the other theological) as well as a third entry for *Gracias*, the Three Graces. The allegorical handmaidens of Heaven represent the tripartite circle of giving,

receiving, and reciprocating, as well as the harmonic synergy of all three elements. Covarrubias's exegesis summarizes Aristotle's, Seneca's, and Cicero's interpretations of the allegorical image and the multivalent terms of *gracias* from Antiquity. Additionally, Covarrubias chooses to emphasize the requisite performance of gratefulness when receiving gifts, and feigned modesty when giving them, as elements essential to gift exchange: "de la gracia que recibieremos, hemos de dar muchas gracias, y reconocerla manifiestamente, y del beneficio y gracias que nosotros hicieremos, hemos de olvidarnos, por no dar en rostro con el al que le recibe" (Covarrubias 929). As we turn now to the founding principles of modern gift theory in anthropology and sociology, let us keep in mind Covarrubias's quintessentially early modern obligation to show gracious deference and copious gratitude when giving or receiving gifts.

Toward an anthropology and sociology of the gift

The theoretical literature on gift giving is extensive; however, there are certain major approaches that are fundamental for my arguments. The function of the gift may include the (re)distribution of wealth, the maintenance of peace, the establishment of rivalries, and the forging of solidarity and family ties. Gifts can work to define, challenge, or confirm social status among groups or individuals. On the most basic level, the purpose of gift exchanges is to nourish social bonds. Nevertheless, the motivating factors behind gifts range widely from pure and spontaneous disinterest to self-interested, strategic deception. In terms of gifts and social mobility, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital expands upon sociologist Marcel Mauss's treatment of reciprocal exchange. Rather than emphasizing the cyclical nature of gift giving, Bourdieu demonstrates that

hierarchical matrices of social status affect the meanings behind gifts. In terms of social practice, Claude Lévi-Strauss's notion of woman as gift complicates the gifting paradigm further, especially in the realm of courtship, since a courted woman becomes complicit in her own exchange as an erotic object.

The French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) is recognized as the distinguished father of Gift Theory, the first to generalize upon the nature of the gift in society. In an attempt to understand social groups and their practices in an overarching, universal way, Mauss yokes ethnographic studies of certain American Northwest, Polynesian, and Melanesian indigenous communities together with ancient Roman, Germanic, and Hindu legal documents, ultimately to comment upon contemporary European society. In doing so, he lays the groundwork for Claude Levi-Strauss and cultural anthropology's formal categorizing of human behavior and practices across social groups. Marcel Mauss's classic, *The Gift* (originally published as *Essai sur le don* in 1925), examines how gift exchange functions in social orders, not just as a series of mechanical rituals, but rather as a vital moral system that creates and maintains interconnectedness between individuals and groups, as well as between the gods and the other. In his essay, Mauss outlines the spirit of gift giving by problematizing the binaries of donor/recipient, altruism/strategy, and obligation/volition, and by exploring the themes of honor, generosity, motive, and power central to the gift exchanges of what he terms "archaic societies." In carefully exploring and documenting the practices of American Northwest and Pacific Islander cultures alongside legal documents from ancient peoples, Mauss fits together the armature of what is understood as a "total gift system," a set of universal truths from which contemporary thinkers might extrapolate solutions to current

social problems. Given Mauss's formation under his uncle Emile Durkheim (a founding father of the discipline of sociology and a great proponent of the socialist state), critics have been tempted to attack *The Gift*'s moral conclusions and Mauss's subsequent call for increased human solidarity, thereby brushing aside his original efforts at scientific objectivity. Nevertheless, the themes broached in Mauss's early twentieth-century study on "primitive cultures" remain the classic starting point for even the most recent academic studies on gifts.

In the first pages of *The Gift* Mauss outlines his method of investigation into archaic societies. He proposes a series of comparisons between discrete groups, describing each one in turn before attempting any generalized conclusion. Necessarily each description can be only partial. However, the objective is to explicate, to the best of Mauss's abilities, these societies as systems of "total services," that is, social groups whose practices overlap in the religious, personal, economic, moral, relational, juridical, political, and familial realms. Furthermore, Mauss complicates the notion of exchange by insisting on the double nature of gifts, "in theory voluntary, in reality [they are] given and reciprocated obligatorily" and "apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless restrained and self-interested" (3). However, these two poles of liberality and obligation are consistently reconciled, gifts stemming not only from burdened contractual agreements but also from free choice. Furthermore, within a "total" gift system the exchange of goods and services does not work to generate an accumulation of wealth among certain individuals, as in the market system; rather, gifts serve to create and maintain more general ties that will endure among the whole community. Mauss sees a circulation of social energy throughout the entire collective, as in the *kula* (trade circle) of

wealthy Melanesian pearl fishermen: “The recipients of one day become the givers on the next . . . Numerous objects are solicited, asked for, and exchanged, and every kind of relationship is established outside the *kula*, which, however, always remains the purpose, and the decisive moment in these relationships” (22). In this ritualized cycle, the system of giving, receiving, and reciprocating takes on various forms: refusing to ask for food, “throw[ing] down the object to be given at the feet of his rival and partner,” and even “leaving without having anything to exchange” (22). According to Mauss, “the aim of all this is to display generosity, freedom, and autonomous action, as well as greatness” (23) even as these displays are simultaneously marked by the ethnographer as “mechanisms of obligation.” To be sure, the people involved in this exchange are not merely trading shells or bracelets but rather performing social status, magnanimity, and pride. The total exchange system reinforces societal values and defines groups via the pantomiming of those values and definitions through object exchange. The objects are symbolic, and the circle of trade acts as a dramatic allegory of universal social interchange.

From these observations, Mauss attempts to formulate a logic, a “rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, [that] compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated” (3). This particular element of reciprocity fascinates Mauss most and propels his investigation (7). Among the Maori (Polynesia), for example, it is the *hau*, the energy or force within objects themselves, that compels the gift to be reciprocated and that compels the receiver to render anew, passing on the *hau* of the received object, often on pain of ill health, ancestral curses, or fatal warfare (11). However, the agonistic *potlatch* tradition of the indigenous American Northwest proves to be the pinnacle of the gift exchange frenzy: “It is a competition to

see who is the richest and also the most madly extravagant" (8). The objective is not exclusively to exchange valued goods (including family members), but rather to receive *mana* through honor and prestige, and, under pain of losing that *mana*, to reciprocate accordingly. However, reciprocity becomes complicated, since any attempts at immediate gain are scorned in the *potlatch* ceremonies. This highlights the participants' consciousness of the rules of the game (how to give, when to receive), as well as their notions of honor and honorable conduct made manifest in their collective ritual of obligatory competitive giving. The theory of obligation becomes the law in praxis. Furthermore, for Mauss, it is in the *potlatch* where institutionalized reciprocation finds its ultimate expression: the destruction of one's own possessions "so as not to give the slightest hint of desiring your gift to be reciprocated" or of desiring gifts from others (37). This bold (gratuitous?) display of wealth, self-sufficiency, honor, and power is pushed to agonistic limits as clans toss valuable goods and tools into the sea and set fire to their homes and food supplies in an effort to outdo their equally over-generous fellow clans.[5] The quantity and quality of objects "given away," or annulled, symbolize the quantity and quality of a tribe's superior status and dominance, if only for the remainder of a loop in the circle of *time*, another concept crucial to the gift, as we will see below in the discussion of Bourdieu.

Mauss continues his discussion of totalized social phenomena by turning to ancient Roman, Germanic, and Hindu legal practices. He claims that people give of themselves when they give objects to others, which written laws consistently recognize

[5] In present-day Valencia, Spain, the *Fallas* celebration sees millions of euros go up in smoke as neighborhoods vie for the most madly extravagant display of symbolic status, as performed through the destruction of their costly goods by fire.

and respect. Mauss traces "a very solid chain of facts" (72), which moves from an emphasis on the spirit within certain gift objects—the Maori *hau* of traded foodstuffs, or the annihilated house of a tribal chief in the *potlatch* ceremony—and gives way to the legal rights of the person as separate from the object, as evidenced by Roman legal documents. Here people and objects become the moral and legal focus of written law, perhaps leaving the *spirit* of the gift unofficially behind. Still, Mauss maintains that even after legal codes and market systems begin to dominate socioeconomic exchanges, the gift register continues to exist alongside these institutions. Gifts still seem to join people and objects in intimate ways, supplementing, sometimes bypassing, and often intersecting law and market. Additionally, people give of themselves when they give *things*, which the law recognizes, respects, and reflects. Therefore, the *spirit* of the gift has not disappeared at all, even if the written law does not include it explicitly. Mauss's archeology of the market system, however, will lead to his disputed moral claims about the aspects of archaic societies that ought to be recovered, namely, generosity and a sense of community. Mauss's conclusions call for strong human alliances rather than the commercial isolation typical of the modern individual.

Nevertheless, in order to avoid reducing the "logic of the gift" to a simple alternative to the market system, Mauss continuously points out the complex power dynamics at play in gifting: "The unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it . . . Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it" (65). The issues of honor, pride, and self-respect never fall away completely, whether in the *potlatch*, within the *kula*, or at the local soup kitchen. Furthermore, Mauss points out that the unilateral gift

carries much psychic weight for the recipient, even as it simultaneously elevates the donor, whether consciously or unconsciously. Indeed, "[t]o give is to show one's superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, *magister*" (74). Each gift gesture invites yet another in order to maintain fair exchange. Givers, receivers, and reciprocators vie for a friendly indebtedness to one another, in which every gift gesture logically produces another one, thus reinforcing crucial social relationships over the *longue durée*.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, while deeply indebted to Mauss, attempts to attenuate the latter's tendency to romanticize archaic societies. In *The Logic of Practice,* Bourdieu builds upon Mauss's sociological project by continuing to emphasize the inherent power dynamics in the rhythm of gift and counter-gift. Bourdieu revises what he sees as Mauss's sentimental claim that "each gift invites another," instead maintaining that any gift necessarily *demands* another, obligates a guaranteed return, regardless of how spontaneous or free the initial gesture may appear to be. Accordingly, gift giving proves a risky business for Bourdieu, since gifts "owe their infinite complexity to the fact that the giver's undeclared calculation has to reckon with the receiver's undeclared calculation, and hence satisfy his expectations without appearing to know what they are" (*The Logic of Practice* 204). Each player is constantly guessing and anticipating the other's next move. The array of interlocking discrepancies in meaning and motive between "undeclared calculations" on either side of the gifting equation contribute to Bourdieu's definition of the social *habitus*. On a more general level, this working definition of *habitus* may be expanded to include not just the "misrecognition" of motive and mentality in gifting, but also the overlapping and sometimes conflicting distinctions between what humans think, what they say, and how they act. Bourdieu's

habitus is best described, then, as a set of internalized norms, both prescriptive and descriptive, which are determined by social and historical contexts, and which govern human behavior in general, even as they contradict one another.

This underlying matrix of rules and assumptions is critical for advancing Bourdieu's "economy of practices" and for explaining the social dynamics of power. To begin with, the many unspoken constraints and expectations within the *habitus* framework render null any possibility of a spontaneous gift act. Bourdieu agrees with Mauss that social obligations affect decision and action, but he collapses the two poles of self-interested strategy and disinterested generosity into a "double truth" that reveals the essential rivalry at the heart of exchanges. If Mauss recognizes the agonistic and competitive elements of *potlatch* practice, Bourdieu extends this observation to other non-destructive forms of gift giving, maintaining that the desire for humiliation and even annihilation of the other proves to be the driving force behind all gifting. The function of the gift is to affirm superiority over others, obliging them, subjugating them. Personal freedom is merely an illusion in the realms of giving and receiving, but that very illusion facilitates an otherwise brutally economic or coldly calculated exchange. "Gift exchange is one of those social games that cannot be played unless the players refuse to acknowledge the objective truth of the game . . . and unless they are predisposed to contribute . . . to the production of collective misrecognition" (105). The artifice or illusion of free volition allows the gift exchange to happen; givers and recipients overlook any evidence of strategy and refigure gift practices as spontaneous acts of good will.

In Bourdieu's theory, different types of capital—economic, symbolic, social, cultural—influence other people and achieve specific objectives (e.g., economic capital buys goods and services, symbolic capital purchases prestige and respect). Furthermore, these distinct categories of capital are liquid and can be transformed into one another. Through gift giving, for example, economic capital (money or goods) is turned into social capital (trust, alliance) or symbolic capital (social status). These differentiated types of capital work to the advantage of those who possess them. Though it may be tempting to define capital simply as varied forms of power, Alan Smart reminds us that power has the ability to *command* action, while capital merely *induces* action. "Even in the very broad sense in which Bourdieu conceives capital, it does not include everything that involves power. The authority to command the action of other people should not be confused with the ability to induce them to act in particular ways through the utilization of resources available to the agent" (394). In the end, different kinds of capital work in different domains: capital can be as tangible as hard currency (economic) or as ephemeral as etiquette (symbolic). The rhetorical aspects of each type of capital hold sway in their given arenas (academic, familial, etc.) and work to affirm, challenge, or manipulate the relations between people. As one party's capital increases, another's may decline, become stabilized, be transformed, depending on the circumstances and the players involved. An example of this shifting power dynamic can be found in the terrain of giving, receiving, and reciprocating.

Drawing on Mauss's work, Bourdieu declares that the recipient of a gift becomes subordinated to the giver. However, Bourdieu underscores the aggressive and calculated nature of the gift: a donor's gift immediately changes the power dynamic, obliging the

recipient. The gift debt represents increased social capital for the donor (expectation for return, etc.), but differs from a financial debt, or the simple exchange of money for goods of an equivalent value. Moreover, Bourdieu posits deferral as the key to the misrecognition that masks the aggressiveness of the gifting game. Deferral allows for the specific paradox in which a *subjective* truth (no expectation for return) co-exists with an *objective* truth (potential social benefits). The space and time between one gift act and another elides this paradox and creates the illusion of spontaneity and free will. Reciprocation, therefore, must be substantially deferred (if recognized at all), and the giver's expectation for a return must be passed over in silence. "It is all a matter of style," says Bourdieu, "the lapse of time . . . allows the deliberate oversight, the collectively maintained and approved self-deception, without which the exchange could not function" (105). Obliging is masked as altruism. Furthermore, the intent to pay back with an immediate equivalent return is universally met with scorn (as when, for example, I attempt to re-gift to you the very same *tempranillo* that you presented to me only yesterday). This constraint of requisite delay between gift and counter-gift make clear the strategy, but also the artifice, implicit in the performance of the gift.

The necessary lag time between initial gift and counter-gift proves fundamental to Bourdieu's notion of social capital in particular. In the performance of socially negotiated relations, the aforementioned illusion of freedom must necessarily accompany social strategy, mitigating the strategy's brutality (Mauss's original notion). Here the element of performance is accentuated. Alan Smart claims that the essential misrecognition by both donor and recipient functions to negate the coercive content contained within the gift act (395). Instead, the form of the exchange is emphasized, as if the performance were

unintended. Even if obligations or social bonds are the real content of the gift act, as Bourdieu suggests, why should we then disregard completely the form of the gift practice, especially as Mauss sought to always reconcile the two? The coercion must be tempered; it cannot be explicit in the giving and receiving performance; making strategy explicit would constitute a failed gift, essentially a bribe (Smart 396). The gift performance must be a competent one, replete with *sprezzatura*, and even then, in the vague realm of social capital, there are no guarantees for success. Obligation and personal ties are measured socially, not economically. Strategies of self-interest must remain implicit, never explicit. Thus, the form of the gift act functions as a tool and an artifice. The veiled interests misrecognized by the gifting performance become tempered by the passage of time (397).

This lapse of time expands conceptually in *Given Time* (1992) by Jacques Derrida, who suggests that a true gift must necessarily defy reciprocity altogether. In fact, Derrida criticizes Mauss for analyzing "everything but the gift" (contract, obligation, calculation) in his discussion of cycles of exchange in *The Gift*. For Derrida, the gift must exist within as well as outside social confines: "the gift must keep a relation of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation of familiar foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is the impossible" (7). Social rules and expectations thus annul the gift act. "For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, countergift, or debt... For there to be a gift, *it is necessary* [*il faut*] that the donee not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt" (12). Derrida insists that neither the giving nor the receiving subject should be *aware* that a gift act is taking place; they must both experience a kind of radical

forgetting, more profound than the act of repression, for even repression carries a subconscious burden. Thus, any recognition of the gift act will obligate both social subjects and confuse/annul the gift and its meaning. "*The gift* ought *not to appear as a gift*," ought not to signify any type of exchange between subjects who might potentially subject one another. In tandem with work done by Heidigger, Husserl, and Levinas, Derrida claims that "the question of the gift should therefore seek its place before any relationship to the subject, before any conscious or unconscious relation to self of the subject" (24). A deeper investigation into the ontological position of the gift must be reserved for another time; however, such a study would perhaps touch on Levinas's ideas regarding the trauma of individual subjectivity as *preceding* social ties rather than *maintaining* them, as Mauss and Bourdieu have argued.

As we have seen, it would be simplistic to call the rhythm of gifts and counter-gifts mere manipulation. Mauss has emphasized the "social lie," or "transmutation" that includes both obligation and freedom in the sociological paradigm of the gift. Additionally, it would appear self-conscious givers can never be completely *dis*interested or completely *self*-interested within the confines of a gift act; Derrida has called this "the impossible." Even so, in "Gifts, Bribes and *Guanxi*: A Reconsideration of Bourdieu's Social Capital," Alan Smart concludes that gifts create and maintain relations between givers. He claims that these social bonds have the potential to become useful resources later on, but that the constant flux of different types of capital is also part of a subtle game of chance which provides no guarantees. The emphasis placed on the gift act as a kind of social performance will be most useful for studying early modern literary

instances of giving, especially as cultural studies on the epoch often highlight the uses of artifice and rhetoric inscribed therein.

Toward the Spanish gift: love in Arcadia, the metropolis, and abroad

Modern theoretical studies on gifts are useful for lending nuance to case studies of gift acts in early modern Spanish literature. Especially when attempting to recover the voices of women, which are often harder to hear, anthropological and sociological works serve as a bridge for making connections between literary texts, social practices, and cultural ideologies. As I work toward a greater poetics of the gift in early modern Spain, beginning with the present investigation on erotic gift objects within multivalent contexts, I find it useful to think of a gifting spectrum on which to locate a particular gift or gift act. The gift theorists above would most likely admit to every gift being both disinterested and self-interested to some extent, so I will discuss each gift and its unique context of exchange as a point plotted upon this range of intentions and desired outcomes, between the diminishing poles of disinterest and self-interest. Moreover, in constructing a greater theory of the gift, I seek to explain some of the tensions in early modern discourses of love, gender, and power. To that end, the primary texts herein serve as case studies of erotic exchanges and the amorous codes that inform them, such as Neo-Platonism or courtesy. The problem of gender and the *querelle des femmes* undergird each case study, though texts come from diverse genres and time periods.

In the first chapter, "Gifts of Milk and Honey: Wooing Galatea in Luis de Góngora's *Polifemo*," the ekphrastic quality of Góngora's lyric verse reifies erotic gifts. The suitors Polyphemus and Acis vie for Galatea's amorous favor, each offering the

rustic gifts typical of the pastoral mode (milk products, fruit, honey), but each uses different strategies of courtship in his attempt to win the lady's hand. While the one-eyed monster, Polyphemus, domesticates his brutishness with amorous song and vain preening, Acis stealthily offers anonymous gifts and then hangs back, letting the lady's curiosity (and Cupid's arrow) do the matchmaking work for him. The young demi-god is analogous to moisture in the text (froth, foam, dew, thirst), which is mirrored in his erotic gifts of whipped butter, moist almonds, and oozing honey. As the love scene between Acis and Galatea escalates, their prolonged exchange of courtesies and polite restraint create a poetic accumulation of erotic play. Additionally, the *Polifemo* echoes the rustic 'milk and honey' of Antonio de Guevara's idealized Arcadian *aldea*, especially as the downy youth wins out over the coiffed nobleman in the end. Thus, the *locus amoenus* of pastoral myth serves as a backdrop for idealized gifts between lovers, while the chapter itself engages with how social status, gender, and love affect the gifting register.

In Chapter Two, "God's Gift: Neo-Platonic Love in Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea*," we move into the realm of the urban *corte* where love and courtship are depicted as elaborate rituals that involve extended households. The race for Dorotea's amorous favor plays out through the discourses of Neo-Platonism and failed material love gifts. Although the gifting/courting rivalry between the poor poet Fernando and the wealthy *indiano* Bela (the metropolitan versions of Acis and Polyphemus) takes center stage, the ongoing drama between Dorotea and her mother, her maidservants, and her lady neighbors is equally fraught with gifts, bribes, and sighs. In the end, Dorotea's gifting agency is drained away by her shifting sexual status; as her beauty fades leaving her bereft of social and symbolic capital, the witty and beloved lady is confined to the

gendered *estrado* for consumption by male suitor-spectators. Thus, baroque discourses of Neo-Platonic love, amorous loyalty, and the power of gold are revealed as the empty signposts of social dysfunction and gender bias.

The third chapter, "Feigning *firmeza*: Gendered Gifts in María de Zayas" considers the author's social critique of gendered difference as illustrated through her amorous tales in the anxious and ultimately empty exchanges between lovers. A close reading of two tales from the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and the frame story spanning both volumes of *novelas* charts the course of women who unwittingly bequeath their amorous constancy to undeserving and irresponsible men. Using the wildly popular genre of the courtship novel as a mouthpiece for her critique as well as her creativity, Zayas rejects the collective expectations for women's performance as docile, deferential beings whose constant curtsies and domestic tasks relegate them to gendered obscurity and cultural illiteracy.

Finally, Chapter Four, "White Musk Roses, Silk Stockings, and Bergamot Pears: "Classy" Love Gifts in Mariana de Carvajal's *Navidades de Madrid*," examines the way gift exchanges rehearse dominant ideologies of gender, social class, and ethnic and religious difference. As with the aforementioned chapter on Zayas, two amorous tales and the overarching frame story serve to illustrate how a language of erotic exchange engages with early modern Spanish ideologies and social practices. The representation of women's social and cultural subjugation is more subtle in Carvajal, who uses the genre of the courtship novel to craft an entertaining, didactic conduct manual for a declining baroque aristocracy in need of noble advice. Also particularly intriguing is Carvajal's depiction of race and ethnicity in all three examples, whether tangentially related to

courtships or crucial to the erotic plot. Whiteness, Empire, and masculinity perform the gratuitous excesses of a Spanish nation in decline, overcompensating for weakened political and economic power.

In outlining what is given, reciprocated, and owed in these examples, the present study demonstrates how disinterestedness, liberality, and free volition give way to the heavy social burdens of obligation and coercion in the amorous registers of early modern Spain. And although the dissertation will end on Carvajal's aristocratic and imperialist note, it begins now with an idealized, pastoral courtship on the sunny shores of Spanish Sicily.

~

BENEDICK:

But till all graces be in one woman,

one woman shall not come in my grace.

—Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*

Chapter One

Gifts of Milk and Honey: Wooing Galatea in Góngora's *Polifemo*

Recent criticism on *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* (1612) focuses on how Luis de Góngora's formal, linguistic innovations surpass intertextual antecedents—Ovid, Marino, Carillo—and on how the sublime power of jealousy destroys all, including poetry itself (Wagschal 169). As the poet Góngora sought a place for himself in the literary world of his day, the figure of the shunned, all-seeing Cyclopes proves an apt metaphor in the controversial *culterano* poet's self-fashioning (Friedman 68). Moreover, reading Góngora against both ancient and modern renditions of the Polyphemus myth, critics such as Edward H. Friedman and David Sharp recognize in Góngora's exquisite style the aesthetic, and eventually academic, elements of the Baroque, such as an engagement with discourses of abundance and superfluity in both content and form. In "Ideologies of Discourse in *Polifemo*," Friedman draws attention to the poem's multivalent overflow and abundant excess, claiming that binary opposites such as "profusion and lack" become (con)fused in the text, which then destabilizes linguistic signs for the purpose of creating increasingly figurative language:

> Sicilian abundance, abundance in nature, abundant beauty and exaggerated ugliness, abundance of possessions, mercantile abundance, an abundance of

> words, of images, of figures, of connections, of linguistic and semantic metamorphoses: this is what the poem is about. . . . It is about profusion and lack, and about the relative nature of signs. (Friedman 75)

Nonetheless, rather than depth of feeling, extended metaphor, or extreme contrast, I am struck by the *Polifemo* as an early modern Spanish cultural artifact that foregrounds courtliness and courtesy in the realm of the erotic. First, the ancient tale of a violent love triangle between Acis, Galatea, and the Cyclopes, Polyphemus, rehearses some of the universal rituals of courtship between men and women, such as male bravado and female indifference. However, Góngora's depiction of the courtship between Acis and Galatea—the entire middle third of poem, roughly 20 stanzas—develops an erotic plotline distinct from previous versions of the myth, in which Galatea merely complains to Scylla of Polyphemus's cruel jealousy. The "Spanish Homer" not only refigures the original *Metamorphoses* tale in the exquisite *culterano* style, he also adds a sensual love story that stands on its own, replete with titillating voyeurism, erotic gift debts, and sexual intimacy. Therefore, rather than emphasizing the historic poet's self-fashioning as a misunderstood monster or highlighting the sublime violence of unbridled human emotion, I propose re-reading the *Polifemo* as a narrative of anxious amorous intercourse, laden with early modern notions of excess, abundance, and gratuitousness in the realm of the erotic and the poetic. Acis and Galatea's amorous exchanges are punctuated by a language of erotic gifts ranging from the material to the metaphysical, all of them underscored by discourses of gratuitous courtesy, abundant generosity, and most importantly, subsequent *obligación* or *gratitud,* owed in the form of excessive *gracias.*

The *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* has an extension of 63 stanzas written in tight *octavas reales*. The first 21 stanzas set the pastoral scene by evoking the rustic Muse, trumpeting the patron's name (Conde de Niebla), and then describing Sicily, its inhabitants, Polyphemus and his lair, the sea sprites, and especially the beautiful Galatea. The second 21 stanzas detail Galatea's siesta in the shade, the erotic gifts Acis leaves for her there, and the pair's consummation of their love. Finally, the last third of the poem recounts the fateful discovery of the amorous pair *in flagrante delicto* by the Cyclopes, who has been fine-tuning his (evermore ironic) love song to the nymph; the enraged rival destroys Acis's body and the youth metamorphoses into the Sicilian stream that bears his name. The present study will outline the following elements of erotic exchange in the text: (1) the courtship gifts offered by a variety of male suitors; (2) the lyrical eroticization of the gifts objects, the pastoral landscape, and the love scene; (3) the representations of the (silent) courted woman by both the poetic voice and the suitors' laments; specifically, (4) the function of the nouns *gracia* and *Gracias*, as well as the adjectives *ingrata* and *agradecida*, all of which mark Galatea in the poetic text.

Displaying *Gracias*, early modern style

The first several stanzas of the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* consist of an *ex-ordio*, a *dedicatio*, and some ornate descriptions of the island of Sicily and its monstrous inhabitant, the Cyclopes, Polyphemus. The thirteenth stanza of the poem presents the object of the Cyclopes's affections, the lovely Galatea, whom the poetic voice describes by using an image of the Three Graces, or *Gracias*. The sea nymph is thus endowed with

unparalleled grace and beauty via the figurative loveliness of the Graces of classical mythology:

> Ninfa, de Doris hija, la más bella,
> [Polifemo] adora, que vio el reino de la espuma.
> Galatea es su nombre, y dulce en ella
> el terno Venus de sus Gracias suma.
> Son una y otra luminosa estrella
> lucientes ojos de su blanca pluma:
> si roca de cristal no es de Neptuno,
> pavón de Venus es, cisne de Juno. (Stanza 13)

The *culterano* (con)fusion in the last line of the stanza juxtaposes Venus, goddess of love, and Juno, goddess of marriage, since Venus's attribute is the swan, while Juno's is the peacock. Góngora has swapped the birds in "pavón de Venus es, cisne de Juno" in order to make Galatea's sparkling eyes and pale skin a mix of the two divine females and their figurative qualities. This final line has often been cited by critics in order to illustrate how the mismatched attributes of each goddess create a typical baroque paradox (which goes further than the renaissance examples of "icy fire" or "living death"). However, it should be noted that the Three Graces appear in Góngora's text as attributes of Venus ("sus Gracias suma"), though the trio is also associated with the Hesperides, who dance hand in hand around the sacred apple tree in Hera's Garden to the West (of Greece, that is, in Iberia, or Tartessos). Therefore, not only are the two Olympian goddesses and their respective attributes, including their allegorical attendants, scrambled in order to describe the lady's overwhelming loveliness, but the Three Graces themselves are collapsed into

one ("el terno Venus de sus Gracias suma") to approximate the height of Galatea's beauty. Whether she is meant to be painted as particularly gracious or grateful in nature, or, more likely, as particularly gifted—by the gods, as in her beauty—, the ancient triad of young maidens, along with the primary pagan goddesses of beauty, love, and marriage, become subsumed in the intellectualized portrait of Góngora's Galatea.

The image of the Three Graces folded into one in the beauty of the sea nymph impels the reader to pay close attention to the subsequent expansion of the conceit, yet the poetic content proves a heady riddle that once solved depicts no more than two sparkling eyes and soft, white skin. After waiting breathlessly to see how "bella," "espuma," "Galatea," and "Gracias" will come together, the result yields only the portrayal of her eyes and skin, as well as superfluous, ingenious poetic repetitions of the same image, using allusions to mythology, color, and light. Galatea proves a poetic archetype, another *belle dame sans merci*, in this case fashioned by obscure metonyms. Her eyes shine, and she is white. Perhaps this love object would have a bright, airy quality, then, if not for the final comparison to Neptune's rocky reefs (also white, but not soft or lightweight). The "roca de cristal" becomes a sea pearl in the next stanza, whose whiteness fails to match that of Galatea's snowy brow and is thus relegated to hang from the lady's mother-of-pearl earlobe. After two richly graphic *octavas*, still all we know about Galatea is that she is superlatively shining and white. She is identified with two types of large violent bird (swan and peacock), as well as a hard, dangerous reef and a shiny seashell. Góngora's representation of the beloved lady proves highly intellectualized. Galatea is no longer the vexed, tearful narrator of her own tale of woe, as in the *Metamorphoses*; the comely sea nymph is now primarily an archetype or an idea, if

attended by much abstracted imagery. As mentioned above, however, what remains in the wake of her *culterano* portrayal includes the trace of the gift exchange cycle, as folded into the allegory of the Three Graces.

The Spanish term *Gracias* appears in Covarrubias's *Tesoro de lengua castellana o española*, published just one year prior to the circulation of the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*. Separate from the term *Gracia* in a social or material sense, and separate from *Gracia* in a theological sense, the longest of the entries on *Gracias* in Covarrubias narrates the allegory of giving, receiving, and reciprocating as outlined by Seneca the Younger in Book I of *De Beneficiis*. The ancient Roman philosopher explains the meaning behind the allegorical image of maidens dancing in a circle, interpreting for the reader the personification of the human cycle of gift giving. Covarrubias paraphrases Seneca in his 1611 entry, yet he also adds his own interpretations of the maidens' stances and gestures in order to extend the allegory and to delineate some of the gifting protocols particular to Spanish society. I have italicized Covarrubias's embellishments below in order to show that his hermeneutics emphasize the obligation to be manifestly, outwardly grateful for gifts received, as well as the social protocol of showing humility, guilelessness, and constancy when giving and receiving gifts (and in perpetuity!):

> GRACIAS, fingieron los poetas haber tres doncellas dichas Gracias, y con el nombre Griego . . . , *charités*, . . . , *a laetitica*, la una se dijo Aglaya, la segunda Thalia, y la tercera Euphrosine, hijas de Jupiter, y de Eurynomes, y segun otros de Venus y Bacco. La razon que hubo para que fuesen tres, es, porque la una hace la gracia, y da el don la otra le recibe, y la tercera vuelve la paga del beneficio recibido. Pintabanlas jovenes doncellas, porque la memoria del beneficio recibido

> por ningun tiempo se ha de envejecer, riendose, por el gozo, contento, y alegria, con que hemos de dar, y como *las dos dellas esten vueltas de rostro* para quien las mira. *La otra esta de espaldas, dandonos a entender que de la gracia que recibieremos, hemos de dar muchas gracias, y reconocerla manifiestamente, y del beneficio y gracias que nosotros hicieremos, hemos de olvidarnos, por no dar en rostro con el al que le recibe:* estan desnudas, porque lo que se da ha de ser *sin cobertura, ni disfraz, pretendiendo interiormente en nuestro animo alguna recompensa*, estan todas tres trabadas de las manos, dando a entender que el hacer gracias, y recibirlas entre los amigos, *ha de ser con perpetuidad, y con una trabazon indisoluble, acudiendo siempre en las ocasiones a lo que obliga la amistad.* (Covarrubias 929, emphasis added)

The addenda to Seneca's exegesis in Covarrubias's definition sheds light on early modern notions of the *Gracias*, namely, their potentially performatory aspect. Moreover, the obligation to give and receive "con perpetuidad, y con una trabazon indisoluble, acudiendo siempre en las ocasiones a lo que obliga la amistad" has a legally binding ring to it. The call to give without wishing for any recompense also presses its suit here, emphasizing the evils of keeping score or trying to elicit return favors from friends, even though return favors are also paradoxically "lo que obliga la amistad."

Obligating the *regalada*, heckling the *ingrata*

The gift register's burden of *obligación* is inscribed within the definition of *Gracias* in Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*. The obligation to give and reciprocate happily, without ulterior motives, also appears in Acis and Galatea's love

(gift) scene in the second third of the *Polifemo*. First, however, we must return to the image of a silent, supremely beautiful Galatea and her rejected suitors' inflected impressions of her. For example, the rendering of Galatea as "ingrata" to male love offerings marks her as indifferent, even mean-spirited, in the following stanza. The nuance of *obligación* in Covarrubias's Three Graces definition seeps into the poetic representation of Galatea, who ought to be grateful for the gifts offered her, especially being all graces in one. The allegory of the *Gracias* dancing in an unbroken gifting chain echoes in their quotidian counterpart, the social practice of gift exchange between men and women: the *regalada* 'regaled, wooed' should show sufficient appreciation for her suitors' presents. Yet the concept of obligatory gratefulness becomes gendered in the realm of sex and courtship, for women's erotic capital differs from men's, which means her reciprocated *gracias* can never be equivalent to his original gift:

> Invidia de las ninfas y cuidado
> de cuantas honra el mar deidades era;
> pompa del marinero niño alado
> que sin fanal conduce su venera.
> Verde el cabello, el pecho no escamado,
> ronco sí, escucha a Glauco la ribera
> inducir a pisar la bella ingrata,
> en carro de cristal, campos de plata. (Stanza 15)

Here the woman is characterized as an emotion found in others. She is the "Invidia de las ninfas," the "cuidado de [cuantas deidades]," and the "pompa" of a sea-faring Cupid. Yet the lady is absent. Galatea only appears in the text as secondhand information, an object

contemplated by multiple subjects. In this first third of the poem, the lady's absence is mirrored in her lack of substance—bright eyes, white skin, and little else—and in her objectification by others. The poetic voice deems her "la bella ingrata" in the penultimate line of the above stanza, but such a referent alludes to disgruntled male suffering rather than to any intrinsic characteristic of the lady.

Young and wealthy Palemon presents himself and his gifts to Galatea, but to no avail: "mas en la *gracia* igual, si en los desdenes / perdonado algo más que Polifemo" (Stanza 16, emphasis added). Neither suitor falls "en la gracia," or curries favor, with Galatea. She scarcely hears Palemon's voice and the sea nymph flees, light as a feather: "calzada plumas, / tantas flores pisó como él espumas." The lady's "Gracias" in Stanza 13 have become her good graces, or personal preference, which she may give or take at whim. Covarrubias defines the term *gracia* as:

> GRACIA Latinê gratia, tiene muchas y varias acepciones. Alguna vez significa el beneficio que hacemos, o el que recibimos, y asi decimos, yo os hago gracia de tal y tal cosa y el que recibe la gracia la acepta por tal, oponese en cierta manera a justicia, porque lo que yo os hago por justicia y tela de juicio, ni grado ni gracias. Estar en gracia de un señor tenerle el Señor en buena opinion, y estar dispuesto para hacerle merced en las ocasiones. Tener gracia, tener donaire y agrado. Dar gracia a una cosa, darle buen talle y espiritu. *Caer de su gracia, quando un señor desfavorece al que fue privado. Caer en gracia del mismo señor, haberle dado gusto*. . . ." (Covarrubias 929, emphasis added)

The lady opts not to bestow her favor on any suitor, however, instead running fleetly away in the seventeenth stanza. The men decry her refusal to reciprocate their gifts by labeling her as "ingrata" and by strategizing new ways to ensnare her:

> Huye la ninfa bella; y el marino
> amante nadador, ser bien quisiera,
> ya que no áspid a su pie divino,
> dorado pomo a su veloz carrera;
> mas, ¿cuál diente mortal, cuál metal fino
> la fuga suspender podrá ligera
> que el desdén solicita? ¡Oh cuánto yerra
> delfín que sigue en agua corza en tierra! (Stanza 17)

The imagery of the fatal viper recalls Eurydice's death on her wedding day, thus foregrounding the lechery of the suitor desperate to delay the fleet-footed nymph by biting into "su pie divino." Moreover, the imagery of the "áspid" alongside the "dorado pomo" in the text recalls mythical Atalanta's "veloz carrera," as well as the serpent and apple imagery from the Garden of Eden (and from Hera's mythical golden apple tree guarded by a snake-like dragon). The poetic voice thus fashions the suitor as a proverbial snake in the grass—one of Góngora's leitmotifs—, specifically one who seduces through temptation using the apples of immortality. These foreboding images of death, trickery, and the Fall will find their lighter double in Acis's successful courtship strategy of leaving anonymous gifts for Galatea while she sleeps. Accordingly, the poetic voice hints at the folly of such dark thoughts and threatening images in the final lines of the stanza,

lamenting the ineffective strategy of Palemon, figuratively rendered as foolish and animalistic ("¡Oh cuánto yerra / delfín que sigue en agua corza en tierra!").

Galatea, apple of Sicily

Critics have been baffled by the sudden cataloguing of Sicily's wealth in the eighteenth and nineteenth stanzas of the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*, as the descriptions seem to pull back from the amorous plotline. However, I propose reading the stanzas as further representations of Galatea's characteristics. The lady is catalogued within the records of Sicilian abundance, and thus become metonymically appropriated as autochthonous to the island. The two stanzas to which I refer have several functions. First, they name the food products yielded by the island's pastoral abundance; to wit, wine, fruit, wheat, and sheep. Then, the text repeats this list in a different order, refiguring the food items and the farmers who harvest them, except that in this second list, the food item of fruit has been conspicuously left out: to wit, wheat, sheep, and wine. Instead, the last lines of the second stanza allude to the universal love and worship of Galatea as a local deity. Consequently, the text renders Mediterranean bounty in such a way as to include Galatea in its catalogue, simultaneously linking the nymph with fruit, a crop that forms part of the Sicilian agricultural abundance harvested by men:

> Sicilia, en cuanto oculta, en cuanto ofrece,
> copa es de Baco, huerto de Pomona:
> tanto de frutas ésta la enriquece,
> cuanto aquél de rácimos la corona.
> En carro que estival trillo parece,

a sus campañas Ceres no perdona,
de cuyas siempre fértiles espigas
las provincias de Europa son hormigas. (Stanza 18)
A Pales su viciosa cumbre debe
lo que a Ceres, y aún más, su vega llana;
pues si en la una granos de oro llueve,
copos nieva en la otra mil de lana.
De cuantos siegan oro, esquilan nieve,
o en pipas guardan la exprimida grana,
bien sea religion, bien amor sea,
deidad, aunque sin temple, es Galatea. (Stanza 19)

Galatea exists as an item listed in the cornucopia of natural products that Sicily provides to its inhabitants. The nymph is thus labeled as telluric, part of the land itself, but she also becomes Sicily's attribute, just as birds may be the attributes of goddesses. Galatea is an intellectualized image, but she is also a thing here; not a person, not even a thing personified. Rather, she is objectified in the text as fruit, described in a language of paradox and possession that further absents her essential nature as an individual. Apart from her starry eyes, Galatea is faceless. According to the text, she is also a deity without a temple. Much like the primordial goddesses of the void—Nyx, Nemesis, Ananke—Galatea is detached and out of reach; yet like these female figures she is also local, even provincial, for she is also the apple of Sicily, the trophy of the island, and presumably, will be plucked. The allusion in Stanza 18 to the Roman goddess of abundance, Pomona,

who scorned her many woodland suitors until Vertumnus tricked her into loving him, may foreshadow the pastoral lady's seduction by a wily lover.

The earthy, overflowing qualities of Galatea appear refigured in the "[cuerno] de la Copia" (Stanza 20) that farmers, shepherds, and laborers empty "entero, / sobre la mimbre que tejió, prolija, si artificiosa no, su honesta hija." The image of the simple, hard-working farmer's daughter sits in stark contrast to the overpowering earth deity to whom all men gift their first fruits. While demi-gods vie for Galatea's *gracias* by promising her their kingdoms and spoils, mortal men literally dump their goods upon the shore to her, "el margen donde para / del espumoso mar su pie ligero [de Galatea]." This copiousness of giving becomes dangerous in Stanzas 21 and 22 when the island metaphorically burns in a strange, love-struck silence: "Arde la juventud" (21). The fields and hills have been abandoned in favor of gratuitous displays of gifting, but neglect has led to violence: "nocturno el lobo de las sombras nace. / Cébase. . . ." (22). The dry, hot disorder recalls the earth's crust scorched by Phaeton's fall, as well as Ceres's vengeful drought and famine after the rape of her daughter Proserpina. The first third of the *Polifemo* ends on an ominous note with disturbing omens, bloody remains, and the poetic voice's demand that Love restore order. To that end, the middle section of the poem tightens its focus around the actions and thoughts of Galatea herself, who, after evading predators all morning long sinks down exhausted upon spongy turf.

So far, we have seen the courted woman as a mere void masked by ornate language. The poetic voice describes her as shiny, lovely, white, and *ingrata*. Sicily catalogues her, sea-gods heckle her, and mortal men worship her with excessive sacrifices. Additionally, she is a very fast runner. In fact, she is likened to a "corza" in

Stanza 17, due to her fleetness of foot, which evokes the nimble white hind sacred to Artemis, or any legendary beast hunted by heroes. In fact, the entire poem may be an ode to venery for the Conde de Niebla, who is poetically glimpsed at the opening of the *Polifemo*: "peinar el viento, fatigar la selva" (Stanza 1). In any case, all Sicily seeks Galatea's *gracias*, seeks to be in her *gracia*, and to receive *gracias* from her. Gods and men give her gifts in order to tempt her and to obligate her reciprocal thanks, whether in the form of divine blessing or amorous favor. However, the second third of the poem details the movements of the lady in a series of close-up images. Rather than resentful, secondhand accounts ("bella ingrata") or objectifying metonyms (Sicily's fruit), the reader is now privy to the nymph's intimate activities in her secret hiding place. There, her beauty proliferates in the usual images of light and shade, of alternating greenery and whiteness, and in comparisons to the whiteness of jasmine flowers and snow:

> La fugativa ninfa, en tanto, donde
> hurta un laurel su tronco al sol ardiente,
> tantos jazmines cuanta hierba esconde
> la nieve de sus miembros, da a una fuente.
> Dulce se queja, dulce le responde
> un ruiseñor a otro, y dulcemente
> al sueño da sus ojos la armonía,
> por no abrasar con tres soles el día. (Stanza 23)

We are set squarely in the Mediterranean *locus amoenus*, complete with green grass, shade-bearing trees, melodious birdsong, and a pleasant body of water. The stifling, burnt landscape of the previous stanzas contrasts sharply with this cool, moist setting where

peace and solace are found. As Galatea's burning "soles," or eyes, finally close in sleep, nightingales coo softly in the stillness.

It is unclear whether Acis has tracked her or come upon the nymph by chance. In any case, the male's hot, dry aspect (polvo, centellas) complements Galatea's cool, moist aspect (jazmines, nieve) when the youth arrives sweating and thirsty at the crystal spring at the hottest time of day:

> Salamandria del Sol, vestido estrellas,
> latiendo el Can del cielo estaba, cuando
> (polvo el cabello, húmidas centellas,
> si no ardientes aljofares, sudando)
> llegó Acis; y, de ambas luces bellas
> dulce Occidente viendo al sueño blando,
> su boca dio, y sus ojos cuanto pudo,
> al sonoro cristal, al cristal mudo. (Stanza 24)

The new suitor supercedes Glaucus's "Verde el cabello" from Stanza 15 with dry "polvo el cabello," marking Acis's telluric quality, reinforced in the next stanza by his landlubber parentage, a faun and a nymph (Stanza 25). Most importantly, in the final half of the above *octava,* a titillating moment of tension occurs due to extreme hyperbaton. Acis sees the nymph "al sueño blando" (Stanza 24) and suddenly, at the start of the next line, "su boca dio," giving the impression that he has moved to kiss the sleeping nymph. However, it is rather to the "sonoro cristal," or the stream, that he gives his lips in order to quench his midday thirst. Thus, Acis's manly form crouches at the water's edge, a voyeuristic position that gives him a strategic advantage from which to give "sus ojos

cuanto pudo" to the lady's motionless form, "cristal mudo." In this moment of magnetic stillness, Acis is able to drink with his eyes locked on Galatea. To be sure, she is described shortly thereafter as "El bello imán, el ídolo dormido, / que el acero sigue" (Stanza 25). Attracted as he is to Galatea, however, Acis's courtship gifts will not involve singing songs (Polyphemus), offering rides (Glaucus), or berating the love object with catcalls (Palemon). The young demi-god has a more prudent strategy, which involves leaving erotic gifts that will make the lady come to him.

Gifts of milk and honey

Acis's amorous offerings to the nymph are pastoral foodstuffs, namely, almonds, butter, and honey. The three items also come giftwrapped, so to speak, in white wicker, green reeds, and well-wrought cork. They are oily, creamy, and viscous, respectively, and the lyrical descriptions of Acis also become progressively softer and dewier as he begins his seduction of the sea nymph. After the hypnotic imagery of the prior stanzas, the rich, saturated *octava* below successfully eroticizes the young man's moist, quivering love gifts in verse:

> El celestial humor recién cuajado
> que la almendra guardó entre verde y seca,
> en blanca mimbre se lo puso al lado,
> y un copo, en verdes juncos, de manteca;
> en breve corcho, pero bien labrado,
> un rubio hijo de una encina hueca,
> dulcísimo panal, a cuya cera

su nectar vinculó la primavera. (Stanza 26)

These lines indicate the aforementioned ritual agricultural sacrifices to Galatea heaped upon the shores by Sicily's inhabitants, only this time in extreme close-up. The demi-god Acis offers gifts similar to those of his rival, Polyphemus, who boasts of fruit, honey, and sheep for making milk products. However, those descriptions come at the beginning of the poem alongside an eerie portrayal of the Cyclopes's lair and frightening appearance, and repeat themselves at the end of the poem in Polyphemus's strange love song. In both cases, the Cyclopes's courtship gifts seem more distant and theoretical than these sparkling offerings laid out before the lady in her highly eroticized *locus amoenus*.

The hunter Acis opts for stealth and patience rather than brute force in his courtship of Galatea, but he should not be construed as passive. No longer thirsty, the steaming youth splashes water onto his heated brow. According to the text, "al arroyo da las manos" (Stanza 27), just as he had given his lips and eyes in the prior stanza. The poetic voice thus renders the demi-god as giving in the text, especially with parts of his body. In equally voluptuous terms, the young man cools his face crouched between two myrtle trees, whose drooping branches are covered with frothing foam: "entre dos mirtos que, de espuma canos, / dos verdes garzas son de la corriente." The repetition of green and white imagery connects snowy Galatea on the grass to the pair of frothy myrtles, sacred to Venus, between which the lover sates himself. The imagery has a sexual connotation. We are lulled into the voyeuristic intimacy of the scene as soft breezes pull "vagas cortinas de volantes vanos" around the sleeping beauty. Even after Acis has laid his amorous offerings out for the beloved in Stanza 26, an entire stanza follows recounting how he refreshes himself between Venus's myrtle trees as zephyrs freshen

Galatea's "cama de frescas sombras" (Stanza 27). The scene is gentle, soothing, and deeply sensual.

When Galatea wakes up and senses another's presence, her first instinct is to bolt. Yet her skittishness melts away as soon as she notices the gifts left for her. She feels a drowsy dread, "temor perezoso" (Stanza 28), that impedes her usual flight from predators: "grillos de nieve fue, plumas de hielo." This icy, fearful imagery continues in the rendering of the lady as an "estatua helada" (Stanza 29) pondering the meaning of the glistening, rustic gifts. As she pauses, frozen, the *regalada* begins to soften toward the anonymous giver who has respected her vulnerability and chosen not to violate her peace. Such a gift necessarily demands appropriate reciprocation. Acis's gifts—and his exemplary, gentlemanly behavior—merit requital on the lady's part. In fact, the poetic text explicitly states that the grateful nymph owes him "su deidad culta," which is to say, her entire divine self:

> Fruta en mimbres halló, leche exprimida
> en juncos, miel en corcho, mas sin dueño;
> si bien al dueño debe, *agradecida*,
> su deidad culta, venerado el sueño.
> A la ausencia mil veces ofrecida,
> este de *cortesía* no pequeño
> indicio la dejó—aunque estatua helada—
> más discursiva y menos alterada. (Stanza 29, emphasis added)

The list of freshly gathered gifts is repeated here, yet the giver is conspicuously absent and the lady becomes intrigued. Acis's gifts affect her and invite (demand?) a response. It

is unclear whether the poetic voice reasons that Galatea must reciprocate with her whole divine being, or if the lady decides on the counter-gift herself ("si bien al dueño debe, agradecida, / su deidad culta"). In any case, the reward for Acis's gifts and the respect he has shown Galatea's sleep is to be her godhead. The worth of the lady's return gift (herself) far outweighs the value of the original amorous gift, which amounts to the extra ingredients for a bowl of porridge. Moreover, it should be noted that Cupid has not yet arrived on the scene. Therefore, Acis's strategic gifting has singlehandedly slackened Galatea's resolve in the extreme: she is entertaining notions of giving herself over to an anonymous voyeur.

Hemos de dar muchas gracias, y reconocerla manifiestamente

Covarrubias's rendering of the allegory of the gift cycle cited above shows a pronounced concern for reciprocating *gracias*, or gifts, with "muchas gracias, y reconocerla [la gracia original] manifiestamente" (Covarrubias 929). In the *Polifemo* the female figure reciprocates love gifts by giving herself to a disguised male suitor, precisely because he is disguised. If young Acis had openly attempted to exchange nuts, honeycomb, and a pat of butter for sex, his amorous gifts would have been met with scorn. However, his offerings bait the lady's curiosity and inspire her desire. She recognizes the gift giver's restraint, and so judges that the gifts cannot be from the Cyclopes, "ni a otro feo / morador de las selvas, cuya rienda / el sueño aflija" (Stanza 30). While Galatea attempts to determine the identity of the gentle and courteous giver, Cupid appears. He aims to make an example of the lady's amorous scorn by transforming her single lady status into the "ostentación gloriosa, alto trofeo" to hang upon the tree of love.

Cupid shoots and scores, felling the "monstruo de rigor, la fiera brava" with an arrow to her white breast (Stanza 31). Upon the arrow's impact, Galatea looks longingly at Acis's gift offering, not due to the intrinsic value of the objects themselves, but because she longs to know the name of her lover. Stanza 32 shows Galatea's confusion and indecision melt away to reveal action: Galatea loves the gift-giver and so goes to find him:

> Llamáralo, aunque muda, mas no sabe
> el nombre articular que más querría;
> ni lo ha visto, si bien pincel süave
> lo ha bosquejado ya en su fantasía.
> Al pie—no tanto ya, del temor, grave—
> fía su intento; y, tímida, en la umbría
> cama de campo y campo de batalla,
> fingiendo sueño al cauto garzón halla. (Stanza 32)

Although the nymph appears in tighter focus in this section of the poem, the reader must still fill in the details of her impressionistic description (white, shining, fleet, mute). Nonetheless, this is the third time Galatea's foot has been mentioned explicitly in the text—aside from and in addition to the act of treading flowers or fleeing—, and more references follow. In the above *octava*, her course is steadier: she is no longer the hunted, but rather the hunter. Cupid's arrow becomes the brush that paints her lover's portrait in her mind's eye, and Galatea appropriates love's arrow in order to enter the "campo de batalla" on the offensive. Laid out on love's battlefield, Acis pretends to be napping; he is now Galatea's double, performing the same mesmerizing vulnerability that generated the

initial erotic exchange. Now it is Galatea's turn to experience the voyeuristic amorous encounter.

Just as Acis drinks in Galatea's still form in the shadows of the *locus amoenus,* so does Galatea circle, like a bird of prey, over the outline of Acis's body. Galatea undergoes the transformation from the hunted to the slain—by Cupid's arrow of love—and finally to the hunter and a metonymic quiver full of arrows: "carcaj de cristal, si no aljaba" (Stanza 31). If erotic gifts have softened the lady toward the giver, then Cupid's arrow emboldens her to seek him out. The next three stanzas (33-35) mark the structural midpoint of the tale, yet they do not attempt to pause or stop. Instead, these stanzas read as syntactically unbroken, in the sense that the end of each *octava* is marked with a comma rather than a final period as in the rest of the poem. The breathless, quickened pace lends a contradictory urgency to Galatea's cautious footsteps:

> El bulto vio, y, haciéndolo dormido,
> librada en un pie toda sobre él pende
> (urbana el sueño, bárbara al mentido
> retórico silencio que no entiende):
> no el ave reina, así, el fragoso nido
> corona inmóvil, mientras no desciende
> —rayo con plumas—al milano pollo
> que la eminencia abriga de un escollo, (Stanza 33)
> como la ninfa bella, compitiendo
> con el garzón dormido en cortesía,
> no sólo para, mas el dulce estruendo

del lento arroyo enmudecer querría.
A pesar luego de las ramas, viendo
colorido el bosquejo que ya había
en su imaginación Cupido hecho
con el pincel que le clavó su pecho, (Stanza 34)
de sitio mejorada, atenta mira,
en la disposición robusta, aquello
que, si por lo suave no la admira
es fuerza que la admire por bello.
Del casi tramontando sol aspira
a los confusos rayos, su cabello;
flores su bozo es, cuyas colores,
como duerme la luz, niegan las flores. (Stanza 35)

The pace slows only at the end, like Galatea's footfalls, as the nymph pauses to take in Acis's manly beauty, which is as textually paradoxical as Galatea's was in preceding descriptions: his hair catches the afternoon sun, while other parts of his form remain hidden in shadow. Soft down blooms on his manly body and face, signaling the youth's impending sexual maturity and virility.

Acis has carefully set the scene, and Galatea is now caught in his erotic trap. Stanza 36 likens the youth to a venomous snake lying in the open meadow. Nonetheless, Love's poison is already at work on the lady: "bébelo Galatea, y da otro paso / por apurarle la ponzoña al vaso." The cunning young man waits, trying to determine the nymph's will and preparing to pounce: "lince penetrador de lo que piensa." Thus, he is

not entirely the hapless sleeping beauty's double, but rather the watchful ("Argos es siempre atento"), penetrating strategist of hearts who lures the lady by pretending to be inert. The ruse recalls how Zeus seduced Hera by pretending to be a wounded cuckoo bird in a thunderstorm, showing his true form only once he was safely nestled in the lady's compassionate arms. An ironic inversion of this imagery plays out in the above stanza (33) in which Galatea hovers over the young man as though she were Zeus's attribute, a mighty eagle, poised to strike. Thus, when Acis finally presents himself to Galatea and kisses her ivory feet, she is in no position to argue, just as Hera could not resist Zeus's divine thunder and finally succumbed: "Menos ofende el rayo prevenido, / al marinero, menos la tormenta / prevista le turbó o prognosticada" (Stanza 38). As she helps Acis to his feet, the adjectives that describe Galatea are as follows: "Más agradable y menos zahareña . . . dulce ya concediéndole y risueña" (Stanza 39). Immediate yonic imagery gives way to a second *locus amoenus*, "Lo concavo hacía . . . a un fresco sitïal dosel umbroso," this time with "verdes celosias unas hiedras, / trepando troncos y abrazando piedras," a botanical version of prior serpentine imagery. The pair reclines while two lascivious doves alight upon a robust myrtle and begin to moan. Far from desiring to sleep at this point, the two youths unite and give "paces no al sueño, treguas sí al reposo."

Climax: the woman as gift

As the love scene between Acis and Galatea escalates, their prolonged exchange of courtesies and polite restraint creates a poetic accumulation of erotic foreplay. In Stanza 41, once the couple is supine, Galatea playfully rebuffs Acis's advances, causing

him to suffer. The male is overwhelmed, tormented by the lady's "cristal" and "pomos," just as Tantalus is tortured in the underworld by his futile yearning for fruit and water forever out of reach:

> El ronco arrullo al joven solicita;
> mas con desvíos Galatea suaves,
> a su audacia los términos limita,
> y el aplauso al concento de las aves.
> Entre las ondas y la fruta, imita
> Acis al siempre ayuno en penas graves:
> que, en tanta gloria, infierno son no breve,
> fugitivo cristal, pomos de nieve. (Stanza 41)

The dodging and parrying between the lovers is reminiscent of the "love as a battlefield" motif, as well as the more abstract back-and-forth aspect of the gifting game. Acis has initiated a flurry of erotic exchange that peaks with the goddess's requited desire: she leads him to their third and final bed. No longer sleepy, the pair continues their amorous *quid pro quo* upon nature's silken carpet in the shade. The penultimate line of verse states: "en tanta gloria, infierno," a clever homophone containing *Tántalo ría (en) infierno*, which renders Acis as happy in his torment. Galatea's elusive whiteness and "snowy apples" prove irresistible to Acis, who finally dares to "al clavel . . . le chupa carmesíes" (Stanza 42). At the same instant, Cupid permits the parallel moaning doves to "juntar de sus dos picos los rubíes." The beautiful tangle of lovebirds, blossoms, gems, fruit, and water finally "llueven sobre el que Amor quiere que sea / tálamo de Acis ya y de Galatea." This middle section of the *Fábula* climaxes with Acis and Galatea's sexual

union, as well as an abundant conglomeration of poetic devices and figures: personification, anthropomorphism, sensory imagery, metonym, metaphor, paradox, word play, hyperbaton, asyndeton, and enjambment, to name the most obvious.

Therefore, with the help of Cupid's arrow, Galatea makes a present of herself to Acis in order to repay his courtesy and politeness: "la ninfa bella, compitiendo / con el garzón dormido en cortesía" (Stanza 34) and "al dueño debe, agradecida, / su deidad culta" (Stanza 29). Moreover, her counter-gift to the youth is paid on his terms: he has solicited her amorous favor and affection, so she yields to him sexually. Her erotic capital is thus paid out in sexual intimacy, although her gift may be misrecognized as requited love by both the lovers and the reader. Acis's pastoral love gifts of milk and honey thus are revisited upon him in the fecund form of the sea nymph's body, the living nectar and ambrosia of the gods. Galatea is identified as the soft, shining, white gift object par excellence. To be sure, the milky-white quality of Galatea's body is reflected in the etymology of her name, which means 'milky' and 'white' in Greek. According to Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*:

> GALATEA, nombre de Ninfa, o pastora, muy celebrado entre los Poetas. La primera a quien se dio este nombre fue a Galatea, ninfa marina hija de Nereo y de Doris, dicha asi de la blancura de la leche a quien fue comparada de . . . *gala, lac* . . . , Galatea. Virg Egl 7 . . . . Nuestro poeta Castellano no le quitó la blancura comparandola a la nieve, pero notola de cruel y desamorada a la pastora deste nombre, diciendo.
>
> *Mas elada que nieve Galatea.*
>
> (883, emphasis in original)

Garcilaso de la Vega is the quoted "poeta Castellano," and the endecasyllabic "Mas elada que nieve Galatea" comes from his first Eglogue. Covarrubias uses Garcilaso's hispanized Petrarchan poetics to emphasize the "cruel y desamorada" aspect of the archetypal ice queen, conceived of as particularly "Castellan[a]" here. The etymological epithets for Galatea—white, milky, smooth, soft—thus become her primary and defining characteristics in the Spanish lyrical tradition, although new approximations—snowy, ivory, light, feathery—simultaneously construct a new, particularly *culterano* representation of the beautiful lady in exquisite baroque style. She is perhaps coldly cruel, unloving, and specifically Spanish, but Galatea also becomes sensual and tangible, if objectified and silent, in Góngora's rendition of her myth.

Perhaps even more interesting, however, is the etymological connection between the name *Galatea* and the Spanish word for *regalo* 'gift.' The sea nymph Galatea is not just literally and semantically "milky-white," she is also the prized "suave y gustosa" gift object to be given away. Covarrubias surmises in his definition of *regalo* that the soft, smooth qualities of lactose products such as milk and butter inform the root of the Spanish word for 'gift,' just as these same qualities undergird the ancient name of *Galatea*:

> REGALO, trato real, y regalarse tener las delicias que los Reyes pueden tener a rege. Sin embargo desto me parece averse dicho del nombre Griego . . . , *gala lac, porque los antiguos tenian por suave y gustosa comida todo lo que se hacia de la leche, y hoy me parece propiamente podemos llamar regalo la manteca del ganado y las demas cosas que se hacen de la leche.* Regalado, el que se trata con curiosidad y con gusto, especialmente en su comida. Regalon, el muchacho

> regalado de sus padres: regalador el amigo de agasajar a otros: regalillo, por otro nombre manguito en que las damas traen metidas las manos, aforrado en martas, o en otras pieles. Regalarse la nieve, derretirse. (1253, emphasis added)

Hence, Góngora's *Polifemo* represents the nymph Galatea as a milky-white gift object to be given, but, paradoxically, she is also the giver of that same "suave y gustosa" present. If the gift giver is also the object given, however, then a sort of inbreeding of person and object has taken place across the boundaries of gift exchange in the text, truncating the balance between the two people involved in amorous exchange. The woman who gives herself and her body rather than an appropriate counter-gift of equivalent value does so due to a lack of gifting agency, a lack of anything else to give. In exchange for Acis's trifles, Galatea has no choice but to be complicit in her own objectification as an erotic gift, because the gendered gifting protocols demand it: "al dueño debe, agradecida, / su deidad culta" (Stanza 29). In this way, the text's "linguistic and semantic metamorphoses" (Friedman 75) change Galatea into the reified woman as gift to be exchanged. As she presents her love gift, then, the lady's act of giving is simultaneously the act that cancels her out.

In the text's erotic *quid pro quo*, female sexual consent is rendered as equivalent to male restraint. In other words, in exchange for reining in his amorous desire at the outset of the exchange, Acis ends up with Galatea's sexual consent, buying her cheaply, in a sense. The male gives what quite literally "propiamente podemos llamar regalo [o sea] la manteca de ganado" (Covarrubias 1253), and his return is the "suave y gustosa" abundance of the nymph herself, an item of supposedly equal worth. The lady sells herself short, however, as the *gracias* due her admirer grossly outweigh the rustic

presents initially offered. Galatea's icy Castilian whiteness will quench Acis's thirst in exchange for food products and good manners, but the price is her loss of self, already absent in the lady's lack of gifting agency that demands her all for his nothing.

Competing courtesies: the paradigm of the love triangle

The myth of Acis, Polyphemus, and Galatea shows how men in particular offer erotic gifts to women in order to stimulate feminine erotic interest. The agonistic posturing between males competing for female attention builds to a bloody climax in the final section of Góngora's *Polifemo,* as in the original ancient telling of the myth, demonstrating how the drama of courtship can explode when rival suitors of differing social caliber and symbolic capital offer love gifts to the same woman. Specifically, the poetic voice depicts male rivals' ephemeral as well as concrete offerings—some in magnified, Technicolor detail—as well as each rival's strategy for success in his courtship of the lady. Acis triumphs in love through a rhetoric of gifts and silence but is ultimately destroyed by his rival. Polyphemus's gift offerings are similar to those of Acis (fruits, milk products, divine lineage) though the Cyclopes's strategies for attracting the lady are different—brooding and boasting over gifts and silence.

In the opening section of the *Polifemo,* Stanzas 10 and 11 describe in intricate lyrical detail the contents of Polyphemus's purse: rowanberries, pears, chestnuts, quince, apple, acorns. Yet these stanzas are flanked by frightening and lugubrious impressions of the giant's lair, his body, and his effect on others. He is described as "sin aseo" (Stanza 8) and "mortal horror" (Stanza 9), and he makes "bárbaro rüído" (Stanza 12) "que no debiera," which causes mortals and gods to flee. Then, the description of the grotesque

suitor becomes abruptly eclipsed by the narrative depicting Acis and Galatea's love idyll for exactly 30 stanzas, the equivalent of half the poem. Nonetheless, the Cyclopes figure returns and voices his own refiguring of Galatea's charms along with the enumeration of his own riches and (ironic) manly attributes. After poetically conjuring the sea nymph as knitting at the bottom of sea among the grinding noises of clams moving in the tide (Stanza 48), Polyphemus renders his eye(s) as udder(s) that weep as abundantly as his flocks spurt milk, his solitary eye becoming a somewhat unfortunate phallic symbol (Stanza 49). Then, he lists his honey supply, his divine pedigree as a son of Neptune, his girth, height, good looks, and recent decline in murderous activity, all in hopes of convincing Galatea to choose him as her amorous partner (Stanzas 50-54).

The last four stanzas of Polyphemus's lament (55-58) tell a story within a story: how a Genoese sailor found himself shipwrecked upon Sicily's shore and how Polyphemus took him in, fed him, and heard his story, in exchange for which the Cyclopes was bequeathed an exotically hewn bow and arrow from the East Indies. Polyphemus's embedded tale consists of four *octavas*, two of them syntactically unbroken and ending with a final period, then two more syntactically unbroken and ending with a final period. The technique of stanza enjambment produces the same effect as Galatea's (syntactically unbroken) trot to find Acis in Stanzas 33-35; namely, it evokes the sensation of directed movement through space toward the object of desire. The difference here is that Polyphemus is boasting of his worldly possessions in order to impress and even coerce Galatea materialistically. He connects himself to Malaccan kings when he announces he will bestow their luxury item upon the sea nymph, just as the sovereign before Polyphemus had given the ceremonial weapon to an Asian deity:

‘arco, digo, gentil, bruñida aljaba,
obras ambas de artífice prolijo,
y de Malaco rey a deidad Java
alto don, según ya mi huésped dijo.
De aquél la mano, de ésta el hombre agrava;
convencida la madre, imita al hijo:
serás a un tiempo en estos horizontes
Venus del mar, Cupido de los montes.’ (Stanza 58, emphasis added)

In addition to styling himself as a generous and wealthy monarch, Polyphemus poetically transforms Galatea into a bedecked huntress of love, parallel to a Javanese goddess, when he offers her the rhinoceros horn weapon as an erotic gift. However, the Cyclopes’s ode to Galatea’s beauty turns out to be an ode to his own attributes and material goods (symbolic and economic capital). The first three stanzas of Polyphemus’s song invoke the lady’s beauty and ask her to come forth, three more stanzas list his monetary assets and divine parentage, and three more describe his physical and moral characteristics. The final stanzas discount the lady altogether as they launch into a self-absorbed narrative on homosocial gift exchange with a stranger. In the final stanza (above) of the mise-en-abîme, Polyphemus declares that Galatea will be superior to both Venus and Cupid once she possesses his stately bow and arrows. The love gift is unique, precious, and exotic. It also connects the Cyclopes to a mercantile cosmography outside of and separate from the Arcadian setting of the poem. He fashions himself as an international player, well-versed in cosmopolitan exchange and well-connected in the modern world. Additionally, the critic Robert Jammes has emphasized love’s humanizing effect on Polyphemus, a

monster who sets aside his usual cannibalism in favor of erotic dandyism. Stanzas 51-53 outline his showy self-promotion ("que tanto esposo admira la ribera / cual otro no vio Febo, más robusto" [Stanza 51]), as well as his tragic poetic pose ("y en los cielos, desde esta roca, puedo / escribir mis desdichas con el dedo" [Stanza 52]) and vain primping ("que espejo de zafiro fue luciente / la playa azul, de la persona mía" [Stanza 53]). He yearns to be a Renaissance man, courtly, creative, and tasteful, yet his pretentions prove ironic and even farcical. Galatea wants no strange weapon gifted by a monster, but rather the sensual simplicity of the young and stealthy Acis.

The pastoral love gifts offered by Acis and, to some extent, the fruits offered by Polyphemus, mirror the pastoral milk and honey of Antonio de Guevara's idyllic *aldea*, demonstrating how the rural-pastoral trumps the urban-pretentious when it comes to erotic gifts in a rustic setting. More specifically, the downy, earthy youth Acis wins out over the newly-coiffed nobleman (son of Poseidon) in the contest for Galatea's amorous favors (think Cowardly Lion with braids and bows in his mane). The Cyclopes attempts to domesticate his brutishness with poetry and preening, yet Acis triumphs in obtaining the lady's favor through a rhetoric of innocence and simplicity. Additionally, the hot, dry Mediterranean setting privileges the thirst-quenching elements that constitute Galatea—soft, milky, juicy (fruit-like), icy—as well as Acis, whose dewy characteristics increase the closer he gets to winning Galatea. The oozing qualities of his eroticized love gifts invoke the nymph's erotic desire in an idealized natural realm where frothy, foaming moisture is worth more than blatant economic capital or social status. Both suitors offer pastoral riches, but the Cyclopes enumerates his flocks, lands, strength, and pedigree in order to make the lady covetous of his wealth. He fails to realize that cupidity will never

triumph over Cupid's arrow in Arcadia. Acis's sensual offerings are worth more to Galatea than power or poetry because they are accompanied by restraint and symbolic intimacy. Moreover, when contrasted with the giant's awkward and dissonant love song, the effect of Acis's suavity becomes even more visceral and compelling.

And yet… What if we were to invert the dynamic? What if the unkempt, animalistic Cyclopes were really the country cousin, foolishly dolling himself up for courtship? Perhaps his outlandish souvenir from abroad merely proves his provinciality, rather than his worldliness. To be sure, the Cyclopes is neither an urban Genoese merchant nor a cosmopolitan Malaysian king. Additionally, Galatea reasons that the mysterious gifts left quietly by her bedside could never have been offered by such a beast; he surely would have taken violent advantage of her while she slept: "cuya rienda / el sueño aflija" (Stanza 30). Thus, the text confirms Polyphemus's identity as a reclusive cannibal, occasionally overheard singing creepy love songs to himself. Lyrical grinding clams and one-eyed udders aside, however, the monster's amorous verses end abruptly when he annihilates Acis with a boulder. The 63-stanza poem comes to a close over the youth's liquid smithereens pouring forth from underneath Polyphemus's "escollo fatal" (Stanza 63). The foreboding and macabre omens from prior stanzas find their outlet in this instinctive, primordial act of violence by the Cyclopes.

Furthermore, if Polyphemus is the more brutish and dull-witted of the suitors, perhaps Acis is not as transparent as he seems. At times, his behavior echoes that of Machiavelli's prudent and modern prince who hangs back and bides his time, anticipating the moves of the opponent or prey in order to strategize his future actions. Acis is compared to "oculto / el áspid" and "lince penetrador" during his seduction scene

(Stanzas 37-38), which animalizes him and likens him to his licentious rivals (Palemon, Polyphemus). Moreover, we know that Acis only pretends to sleep, conniving to trap the unknowing nymph once she has come close enough to him: "bárbara al mentido / retórico silencio que no entiende" (Stanza 33). He uses unctuous gifts to bait Galatea and then reels her in by playing dead. Still, the lady esteems the giver's "cortesía" and feels excessively indebted to him well before Cupid appears to make the love match official. Once stricken by love, therefore, the nymph will mirror Acis's performance of civility, "urbana al sueño," and will inevitably concede her spoils to the victor.

Thus, the artful courtier's *sprezzatura* wins out over the Cyclopes's impotent Neo-Platonic lyricism and self-involved preening. In the final analysis, young Acis is a prudent man of action: he hunts, sweats, drinks, observes, gives, waits, pretends, baits, strategizes, analyzes, charms, convinces, kisses, advances, and, finally, gets the girl. Polyphemus merely announces himself in the hopes that love will somehow work in his favor. In this way, Acis's calculated industriousness trumps the reactionary naïveté and passivity of Galatea's other suitors, including the Cyclopes. Even if Acis ends up blotted out by a jealous rival, his story dominates the text and moves the amorous plotline. Góngora certainly may have chosen to title his poem the *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* (rather than that of *Acis* and Galatea) merely to distinguish it from his good friend, Luis Carillo y Sotomayor's *Fábula de Acis y Galatea*, published posthumously in 1611 and decidedly an influence on, or perhaps even the inspiration for, Góngora's own version of the myth.

Gifts get girls

The aim of this chapter has been to bring together several elements of my proposed thesis that the early modern gifting register was burdened with excessive debt and obligation in Spain. So far, we have seen some of the ways in which gifts function within erotic exchange, whether the gifts are social status, sexual intimacy, or green almonds; how setting, plot, characters, and even gift objects themselves can become eroticized; in Góngora's case, through a poetics of abundance and abundance of poetics; how women are implicated in their own objectification when they silently give themselves as gifts, and thus; how amorous gifting agency is gendered to women's detriment and to men's advantage; the function of the nouns *Gracias, gracia,* and *regalo* as well as the adjectives *ingrata* and *agradecida (grata)* in describing the silent, courted woman.

Theoretically, social cycles of giving are fair and balanced. They are meant to nourish personal and amorous bonds. However, the value of a gift clearly depends upon its social and gendered context. In seventeenth-century Spain, *gracias* meant both 'gift' and its complement, 'thanks.' Just as *huésped* signifies both 'host' and 'guest' in an attempt to even the semantic playing field and create equality, the word *gracias* leaves room for society's collective misrecognition of the gift as spontaneous, benign, and fair, while simultaneously creating gifting loopholes that accommodate discourses of power. For the moment, it is the female figure in particular who is obliged to repay male *gracias* with her much more effusive female *gracias* in the realm of sex and love. She pays with her body and with herself as the ultimate obligatory payback for gifts rendered. Perhaps the representation of beautiful women as infantilized *ingratas* is just a poetic

extrapolation by disappointed males who see all females as gold-diggers, by definition grateful for anything offered. It may also be that unmarried women are easily (mis)construed as materialistic because of their very real neediness in early modern society; without the right to property or possessions, women had no clout or collateral in the gifting game and were forced to sell themselves for virtually nothing.

In the following chapter we will again explore how two lovers enact amorous exchanges through a language of gifts. However, we will also discover how their urban social networks—friends, neighbors, family, servants—become entangled in the erotic gifting inscribed in early modern courtship practices. The commonplace of the woman as trophy to be both conquered and won over, often with the help of her closest confidantes, reflects how the objectification of the female, "más dura que marmol," may serve as the link that connects female social oppression to the notion of woman as gift.

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Chapter Two

God's Gift: Neo-Platonic Love in Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea*

The sociologist Marcel Mauss claims that gift exchanges work to reinforce social hierarchies through the cyclical performance of giving, receiving, and reciprocating meaningful gifts. For Mauss, gifting practices reaffirm social status within communities and strengthen social bonds between individuals. Nevertheless, this idealized equation in which gift acts perfectly mirror the complex social realities between givers and receivers may be oversimplified. Depending on its context, a gift object may be perceived alternately as indicating largesse, bribery, fair exchange, or weighty obligation. Additionally, factors such as economic status, social convention, and gender hierarchy play into the hermeneutics of the gift, creating a matrix within which the significance of gift giving continually changes. Furthermore, the performative nature of gifting may conceal (or reveal) the expectations of the players involved. In the case of gifts exchanged between lovers, a detailed literary analysis may just as readily uncover deception and coercion as magnanimity and selflessness, or a mix of motives that depend on the specific context of the gift act.

For example, the gift exchanges between lovers in Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea* (1632) are not easily decipherable. Rather, a detailed explication reveals certain anxieties around the meaning of wealth, social status, gift objects themselves, and the amorous assets, or "capital," of the characters involved. The significance inherent in love gifts and the social ties they reinforce becomes blurred, not only in the romantic experiences between lover and beloved, but also in the everyday experiences of the couple's social network of family, servants, friends, guests, and mutual acquaintances. All the characters

in the novel-in-dialogue use gift acts to perform love, power, even annihilation; however, each gift given may be interpreted within its set of circumstances as a mixed message, not a simple symmetrical representation of social relations. The love gifts exchanged in *La Dorotea* show how the performance of generosity, reciprocity, equality, and personal trust falter and eventually founder.

The obligation/degradation stage of gift theory is particularly useful when examining how specific love gifts function within the social circles to which they belong. As explained by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Logic of Practice*, any gift given necessarily degrades the recipient by creating an immediate gift debt between giver and receiver (105). The obligation to reciprocate the gift in the future implicitly ties the recipient to the giver, for better or worse. Moreover, the gift giver always proves superior to the receiver, since the display of gifting is an expansive one, expressive of power, possibilities, and general largesse. The only way to repay the debt of obligation is to give a counter-gift, often with interest, but generally this reciprocity is performed and experienced as spontaneous and socially fluid. As Alan Smart notes, gifting necessarily depends on certain constraints of the "form of the gift: unconditional offer of a prestation in which explicit recognition of instrumental goals is excluded from the performance" (397). Thus, the social practice of gifting depends upon restraint rather than open manipulation or transparent motives that might be considered inappropriate or untenable. Instead, participants in a gifting exchange misrecognize the *quid pro quo* of the gifts' degradation and obligation, thereby performing and experiencing spontaneous generosity and disinterested good will. This gifting performance appears to strengthen and even preserve the interpersonal bonds of trust that

maintain social relations over the long term. A gift exchange, nonetheless, is a performance, and must be viewed as such.

In terms of erotic gifts (love gifts, sex gifts, courtship and marriage gifts), displays of gifting may denote personal trust between lovers, but the rituals and expectations that surround romantic gifts are complex and can affect the social bonds in question. Moreover, erotic gifts can take many forms. Though we may think of jewelry for the lady or a token kiss for the champion as standard erotic gifts, the emotion and intention behind these conventions is critical to understanding how gifts function. In the case of *La Dorotea,* the ambiguous marriage status of the eponymous protagonist leaves her socially and emotionally vulnerable, and imbues the love gifts surrounding her with a heightened sense of anxiety and instability. How exactly should she receive golden rings from a stranger, if at all? What do her promises of romantic devotion signify if she gives them to more than one suitor? How do multiple marriage offers affect Dorotea's family? Does she have any choice in the matter of a marriage partner? Is she deceitful? Is she subversive? Certainly her unstable civil status makes Dorotea's position vulnerable to coercion, but her situation can also be manipulated to her advantage. For this reason, the usual gifting misrecognition, or concealment of blatent *quid pro quo,* becomes more complicated in *La Dorotea*: the lady is permitted to keep a lover, but must also be courted by another against her will. In any case, the gifting performance is a fundamental social practice, acted out as a scripted ritual in which participants play a prescribed role, if only to buy time onstage in order to enact another kind of exchange behind the scenes. In Lope de Vega's novel-in-dialogue, the dynamics of erotic gifting engage the entire cast of characters, each one becoming a unique component in amorous gifting rituals. Moreover, the Renaissance discourse of love

nuances this dynamism still further as players make choices about how to think, speak, and act within the context of the gifting game.

The discourse of Neo-Platonic love, so popular in medieval and early modern intellectual circles, overlaps with the obligation/degradation stage of gift theory, especially when we contemplate the amorous advances of the ideal courtly lover. Traditionally, the love gifts from a gallant to his lady are well-deserved due to the same virtuous qualities (honor, chastity, purity) that paradoxically prevent her from reciprocating the lover's advances. In addition to her discretion and her many virtues, or perhaps because of them, the lover then regards the lady as an incarnation of divine Beauty, or Ideal Platonic Forms. The enamored courtier thus experiences the beloved as a representation of heavenly perfection. This copy of ideal beauty elevates the mind and soul of the courtly lover, engaging his noble intellect. As a courtier and a gentleman, he already possesses the capacity for soulful love, as well as the sensibilities refined enough to appreciate beauty, virtue, and formal perfection. Therefore, in theory, when the genteel lover gazes upon his beloved's spontaneous beauty, the contemplative processes within him function as a Neo-Platonic ascent of the soul. Just as ancient thinkers may have meditated upon a world of abstract forms wherein existed the ideal form of a table, or the mathematically perfect form of an isosceles triangle, so too could a Renaissance thinker meditate upon Beauty as a Perfect Idea. Similarly, in the Neo-Platonic (Christianized) notion of the contemplative life as a path to understanding, one experiences Perfect Beauty as a divine "gift" from God, the progenitor of Perfect Forms. The discrete gentleman lover accepts the heavenly gift of Perfect Form via his own private contemplation and spiritual ascendance, and remains respectfully grateful for such a rich gift.

Gratitude for intellectual stimulation, however, does not seem to be enough in itself. Rather, the courtly lover's gratefulness becomes the sign which necessitates in him a counter-gift (a rose, a poem, a golden ring). Having been moved by his meditations on Formal Beauty, and his soul having been elevated by them, the lover wishes to acknowledge Beauty by somehow reciprocating the original gift. In this way, the Neo-Platonic lover is compelled to enter into a gifting discourse with Beauty. Yet he attempts reciprocity via the beloved lady, a mere copy of Beauty, and not necessarily the conscientious creator of an erotic mental high. Therefore, in this so-called exchange, the lover mistakenly bestows his gracious counter-gifts upon the gift itself—the lady and her earthly beauty—rather than upon the originator of the gift (Ideal Forms, or God). In gifting to the lady, then, the lover displaces his desire to interact with Beauty onto the erotic gifts that he then bequeaths to the lady herself, thus mistaking any kind of real reciprocity with higher Beauty. He floods the beloved with gifts and promises as recompense for a physical beauty over which she has no control, thereby engaging her in a gifting game that she never initiated. One of the cruel paradoxes of Neo-Platonic love is that the lady can never reciprocate appropriately in this *quid pro quo* equation, for she is ironically outside the Neo-Platonic gifting game altogether. Only the male courtier experiences the genteel and rarefied courtly love that grows out of appreciating ideal abstract forms. The lady is merely an earthly vessel through which the Neo-Platonic lover, alone, contemplates ideal beauty.

Such a series of missteps in love leads to entanglement in a dangerous game of erroneous gifting and false reciprocating between the lover, the beloved, her beauty, and God (or Platonic Forms), as seen in *La Dorotea* and many other works of early modern amorous fiction. Lope de Vega's novel-in-dialogue, hailed as the culmination of his artistic

endeavors, repeats the motif of gifting and counter-gifting among paramours. Lope's choice to literalize amorous exchange in the form of dialogues creates a prolonged, meditative reading of the text, which in turn allows for the development of characters' personalities and psyches, as well as their intellectual prowess. Standard archetypes and classic gift formulae would have unfolded in their usual ways in the format of a three-act play, but the five-act series of dialogues is able to accommodate a more subtle and ingenious pattern of erotic gifting. Still, heavy traces of Lope's previous poetic messages, standard theatrical plots, and stock characters imbue *La Dorotea* with a nuanced intertext from which to extrapolate still more lyric and dramatic paradigms. Thus, the novel proves worthy grist for gift theory's critical mill as characters in the novel displace and mistake gift acts between one other, culminating in the degradation and reclusion of the protagonist, Dorotea, ultimately abandoned by her suitors to suffer alone.

Money changes everything

The Neo-Platonic idealization of Dorotea's female form and the subsequent impossibility of any meaningful reciprocation on her part in the gifting game make it difficult to classify Dorotea as anything other than a *cortesana*, the female complement to the ideal male courtier, or *cortesano*.[6] However, as a female courtier, or courtesan, her personal wishes for love and companionship must eventually be set aside in order to accommodate the demands of wealth and social status. The tension between Dorotea's identity as a virtuous noblewoman and her identity as a high-class sex worker exposes the

[6] For Dorotea's classical *cortesana* antecedents, see Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *Lope, vida y valores* (Ponce: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1988).

predicament of women on the early modern marriage market.[7] Moreover, the *acción en prosa* shows how the rhetoric of the gift blurs the line between seduction and social obligation when it comes to love, sex, and marriage. In *La Dorotea* the erotic gift alternately succeeds and falters in its performance of fair reciprocity, which leaves donors and recipients mired in amorous exchanges fraught with confusion and anxiety. Additionally, although the erotic gift network is certainly complicated by the Neo-Platonic context, the more mundane factors of social pressure, economic peril, and general romantic angst also contribute to the web of giving and mis-giving. Whether the eponymous protagonist attempts suicide by swallowing her jeweled ring (an accepted and perhaps not-yet-reciprocated gift from a lover), or whether the destitute lover-bard Fernando offers up lofty erotic poems in exchange for affection, or whether the wealthy courting *indiano* Bela insists his presents are free, the drama of the gift in *La Dorotea* reflects the ideologies behind wealth, love, and gender, even as it simultaneously subverts and refigures these ideas.

In order to examine the dynamic aspects of the gift in *La Dorotea* and ground the above statements in specific examples, we must bear in mind each character's social, symbolic, intellectual, and cultural capital, as well as how these marks of status interact with the capital of other characters in the novel (for Bourdieu's discussion of personal capital, see Introduction). Each individual possesses certain assets—Dorotea's beauty and intelligence, Fernando's gift for language—whose meanings depend on the social context in which he or she is interacting. For example, Bela's economic wealth may impress the more materialistic Gerarda and Teodora, but it leaves the idealistic Dorotea completely

[7] See Carmen Hsu, *Courtesans in the Literature of Spanish Golden Age* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2002).

cold. Additionally, this ever shifting matrix of social and symbolic capital exists alongside actual gifts exchanged, so each gift object may mean something different as it passes from hand to hand, or from one context to another. For example, wealthy Bela's gold coins from the New World are a frivolous novelty gift for the lady Dorotea, but when she spontaneously decides to re-gift them to her lover Fernando, they become ironic. Dorotea's re-circulated coins are liquidated into symbolic, amorous, as well as plain monetary currency, diminishing any potential for sentimental, romantic value in Fernando's eyes.

Thus, the factors of a gift's origin, context, and timing, as well as the participants' identity, level of trust, and symbolic assets all affect a gift's value when it is given. Accordingly, the strategy of reciprocating with a counter-gift seeks to emphasize the harmonious relationship between the gifting participants without implicating them in a coldly economic *quid pro quo*. The variety of ways in which gifts can be "misrecognized" aids in the performance of equal reciprocity, though misunderstandings can arise when underlying motives are only hinted at, rather than openly declared, as in the case of *La Dorotea*. Since counter-gifts may take just as many myriad forms as the initial gifting context itself, there is infinite room for innovation in the gifting game of skill, chance, and dialectics.

A divinely perfect "gift of god"

In *La Dorotea* the protagonist herself represents the first gift, the initial impetus for her male lovers' passive Neo-Platonic ascent to spiritual perfection. Both Fernando and Bela attempt to reciprocate such an incomparable donation, but they heap their grateful counter-gifts—whether poetic words or dazzling wealth—upon the woman herself,

flooding her with social debts that she cannot afford to pay back. The men, instead of gifting back to the original donor (God, or Forms) make the mistake of bestowing presents upon the idol of Beauty. Thus, misplaced gifting leaves Dorotea overwhelmed by excessive erotic gifts and their attendant obligation to reciprocate romantically. In the case of Fernando, Dorotea fears her feminine capital of youth and beauty will never be enough to maintain his prolonged interest, whereas in the case of Bela, the formal gifts of courtship oblige the lady to her lord. The barrage of attention from symbolically and socially superior males floods Dorotea with love debts she cannot repay, putting her into a kind of social foreclosure and up for erotic auction.

Thus, in the amorous gifting game, the heroine is consistently reduced to her name, "Dorotea," from the Greek, meaning, literally, "gift of god." This is a fitting signifier for one whose female figure is presumed to mirror divine Beauty as inscribed in Neo-Platonic discourse. Still, limiting the lady to the pedestal of courtly convention only serves to set the stage for her downfall. Elevated to uselessness by the rhetoric of *fin amour*, she becomes a pawn in social negotiations, relegated to the shop window for consumption by privileged males. Even as she receives callers in her home she sits upon a literal dais, or platform, a kind of figurative pedestal from which she is told not to come down. Dorotea's wealthy gentleman caller, Bela, literally insists: "No dejéis el estrado, señora Dorotea; que no soy tan gran señor, que merezca que salgáis de la tarima: tomad el almohada" (II, v). For all Dorotea's energy and precocity, she remains immobile and helpless in a world controlled by self-interest and gendered performances. Her character embodies the scant social and symbolic capital of women whose social standing must be accompanied by an incentive to buy.

Masculine capital and feminine rhetoric

On the most basic level of exchange in *La Dorotea*, the penniless poet Fernando gains the beautiful and talented Dorotea cheaply, that is, he wins her through the basic symbolic capital of his masculinity: male worth surpasses female worth. The social status of men trumps the status of women, not only symbolically (in terms of power, respect, and prestige), but culturally as well (in terms of access to knowledge and intellectual freedom). These social and symbolic categories also overlap with social capital (social opportunities and mobility), thus it may be helpful to refer to the more general capital of masculinity, an asset particularly sought after in war-embroiled early modern Spain. As the historian Sara T. Nalle explains, the scarcity of eligible male bachelors in late sixteenth-century Castile gave way to the fashionable Italian trend of tremendous marriage dowries. Thus, the symbolic worth of males inflated dramatically while the relatively low value of marriageable daughters begged to be supplemented at astronomical rates: sometimes up to three years' salary as dowry (Nalle, unpublished). As immigration and wars took marriageable males elsewhere, the demand for men increased while the supply of women remained steady. This surplus of women and dearth of men effected new misunderstandings within the amorous gifting codes of love, sex, and marriage, reflecting greater social angst around gender roles. Indeed, the enamored women in *La Dorotea* give generously to their male love interest during the courtship ritual, their gift acts mirroring the "stimulus packages" of economic capital occurring in sixteenth-century Spain in the form of tremendous marriage dowries.

Therefore, although the relationship between the lovers Fernando and Dorotea appears to be reciprocal and equivalent—marked by an even exchange of letters, poems, affection—upon closer inspection we see that Fernando possesses a surplus of options for intimate companionship, which exempts him from conforming to the confines of conventional monogamous marriage. While Dorotea may have several suitors as well, her situation differs from Fernando's in that she is limited by and dependent upon her wooers rather than elevated by them. To begin with, Dorotea is married to a phantom: her legal husband has been overseas for several years, leaving the lady's civil status ambiguous and unstable. Additionally, the absence of a second "príncipe extranjero," who has economically maintained Dorotea's household for a time, places the lady and her family in financial trouble, to say nothing of questioning her marriageability. Nevertheless, this ambiguity is exploited by those in Dorotea's social circle who would seek to benefit from marrying her off (again) in order to establish their own places in bourgeois society. A conniving, Celestina-like friend of the family, Gerarda, as well as Dorotea's weak-willed mother, Teodora, and the wealthy suitor Bela all work to entrap and mold Dorotea into the so-called *perfecta casada*, attempting to limit her movement and identity to the confines of the conventional role of trophy wife.

Fray Luis de León's *La perfecta casada* (1583) is a behavior manual meant to guide newlywed young ladies by giving them a detailed description of the ideal wife. The model female is deferential, practiced in the domestic arts, and tireless, striving to buoy her husband's self-confidence and general contentment at all times. However, *La perfecta* is merely to be emulated, like the Virgin Mary, since, as the good friar reminds us, no mortal woman can truly be *perfecta*, and the lady Dorotea is no exception. In fact, she subverts the

traditional role by engaging in multiple relationships with her suitors; particularly in the case of Fernando, love incites her to rebel against convention and reject marriage. Still, it must be said that as Fernando himself issues or removes his shifting loyalties, Dorotea either thrives or wilts. The gentleman's amorous capital has the power to make Dorotea revert back to the submissive, resigned *perfecta* role, whether in Fernando's arms or Bela's, and whether officially married or not.

Initially, the lady has no intention of giving in to the gallant Bela's amorous advances and his attempts to domesticate her. Yet the capital of his masculinity trumps her inferior social status, especially once the poet Fernando deserts Dorotea, and her will to resist the aggressive new courtship flags. Thus, on a fundamental level, Dorotea does attempt to perform dutifully the traditional *casada* role of happy, constant companion to her lovers. Additionally, within the arenas of courtship and marriage she acquiesces to the demands of her elders, which demonstrates her dependency on authority figures for their approval and for establishing her identity. Moreover, her dexterity in poetry, music, sport, and the arts would seem to put her on par with many men in terms of intelligence and creativity, yet the lady's poetry is relegated to the private, domestic sphere, never to be published or circulated among the elite. Dorotea, though ambiguous, is not so independent or subversive that she can flout societal norms without first being bolstered by a man. Once Fernando is out of play, she consistently yields to the rhetoric of the *perfecta casada* and the advances of the moneyed Bela.

Networking Eros

Dorotea's social network benefits materially from the promised match with the wealthy *indiano* gentleman Bela, thus ingratiating him further and winning favor from the lady's intimate circle, an important aspect of conquering Dorotea herself.[8] For example, during Bela's first official amorous visit, he eclipses Dorotea's previous diamond ring, a love gift from Fernando, with two new rings from the Indies. She hesitates to accept the exotic present, but Bela refuses to take the rings back, claiming no one else would dare wear the jewels after observing how well they befit her unmatched beauty and grace. Additionally, Gerarda instructs Bela early on to buy certain goods at the market as favors for Dorotea, so that upon his arrival an assortment of silk stockings are shared out among Dorotea, the matchmaker Gerarda, and even the servant girl, Celia, who pouts until she receives a present like the other women. These seemingly small gifts ingratiate Bela (even as his servant Laurencio grumbles about the expense) and simultaneously obligate Dorotea. In being coerced into accepting gifts from a wealthy suitor (Gerarda fixed the meeting; Dorotea was not consulted beforehand) the lady is beholden to the courting gentleman. Although her reciprocation is not openly discussed at this first meeting, Bela does make allusions to bending Dorotea's will and swaying her heart: "Así se casaran dos voluntades como estas dos colores" (II, v). This poetic flourish is complemented by the luxury item he has placed in Dorotea's hands: the contrasting colors of the delicate floral pattern in a piece of silk emphasize the harmony Bela wishes to cultivate within Dorotea's social circle. He nourishes the relationships between himself and the lady's loved ones with expensive gifts objects as well as stylish and performative *sprezzatura*.

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[8] See George Mariscal, "The Figure of the *Indiano* in Early Modern Hispanic Culture," *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 1 (2000): 55-67.

Nevertheless, while the marriageable lady is defined by her immediate social circle, Dorotea's male counterpart and paramour, Fernando, moves freely between Madrid and Seville, between public and private spaces, as well as between women, using the paltry currency of his plundered lovers as necessary, specifically of Dorotea and her rival, Marfisa. Fernando suffers emotionally, just like Dorotea, but as a man he has the freedom to leave town and clear his mind, pontificate with his fellow drinking buddies, and visit old lovers on the sly to solicit their economic aid. The romantic relationship between Dorotea and Fernando is being laid low by many outside forces, but Dorotea must stay put at home and accept the romantic advances of a man she does not love, while Fernando slips away to gain sympathy, new loyalty, and jewels from Marfisa, who is glad to have him back even though he has wronged her in the past. Although we know he has only come to Marfisa's house to borrow money for his (leisure?) trip to Seville, the poet jumps into his old role of smitten paramour as soon as the lady sheds a wistful tear on his behalf.

Incidentally, Fernando's character functions only within the language of love, which he will articulate as a continuous cycle of adoration, jealousy, and vengeance. For this reason, Fernando does not evolve the way Dorotea or Bela do. He starts out—and ends up—as a brooding, sensitive poet inclined to turn whichever way love inspires him most dramatically in his song and poetry. While Fernando is physically handsome, so is Bela, thus the male characters' pleasant appearances, or natural beauty, do not affect their rivalry for the lady, since Dorotea is not a male courtier saturated in the discourse of Neo-Platonic apotheosis. The courtly love paradigm is gendered and cannot be inverted: the men are the noble poets and the movers of love. This gendering has an impact on the gift register as Dorotea, the beloved lady, is ironically absent from the Neo-Platonic gifting rivalry,

functioning as a mere reminder of the Heavenly female form. All three characters are "beautiful," but Dorotea's physical appeal is her primary capital while the men vie with each other using a different set of capital (wealth, words, sentiment). Fernando himself is privileged as "dulce" and "tierno" (IV, i), certainly requirements for the ideal courtly lover; and poet's sensibilities make him capable of experiencing the delicate nuances of spiritual and soulful love. Moreover, this sensitive status opens many doors for Fernando. Throughout the text, his rhetoric as an edgy, impulsive singer-songwriter-bard wins the admiration and loyalty of the *madrileña* ladies, who never cease lavishing favors upon him. They long to be the recipients of his amorous song, a kind of unique amorous gift that cannot be bought with ducats or jewels, and that elevates the lady's symbolic and cultural capital considerably.

The gift of poetry, the gift of fame

The social and cultural capital of fame inherent in Fernando's verses is the greatest offering a beautiful woman can hope for, precisely because poetry has the power to preserve her beauty in the form of words, even as her physical loveliness inevitably fades. Indeed, Dorotea herself muses aloud upon the sizeable symbolic capital of her immortalization in verse: "¿Qué mayor riqueza para una mujer que verse eternizada? Porque la hermosura se acaba, y nadie que la mira sin ella cree que la tuvo; y los versos de su alabanza son eternos testigos que viven con su nombre" (II, ii). The Neo-Platonic notion that Beauty intellectually elevates the lover, who then responds by crafting a virtuoso love poem, comes to the fore here in Dorotea's musings about lyric poetry. On one level, Fernando responds to God's gift of Beauty by reciprocating with his own erotic gifts of

poetic song, incidentally winning the lady Dorotea in the process. Nonetheless, the gift of Beauty originates with Ideal Forms, or God, not with Dorotea herself. Therefore, any attempt to engage in erotic gift exchanges with Beauty's earthly form (the lady) necessarily becomes complicated. In the case of Fernando and Dorotea, the female beloved senses that her lover gives too much when he bestows fame upon her, due to the fact that she has no way of reciprocating symbolically.

Indeed, Dorotea's capital appears rather scant once assessed. First, earthly beauty wilts quickly and will soon die away, as Gerarada and Teodora constantly remind her; at that point, she will no longer possess nor be able to offer up her most valuable asset. Secondly, Fernando and Dorotea's passion was presumably consummated long ago, leaving little mystery with which to fuel a prolonged erotic pursuit. According to Dorotea, then, Fernando's superior love gift of fame trumps her currency of youthful beauty. She clearly values everlasting fame in the form of poetic elegy above her meager offering of fleeting physical charms. If anyone remembers Dorotea's name after her death, she reasons, and if she is to retain any symbolic capital in the distant future, it will be thanks to Fernando's superior capital as male poet and his ability to eternalize women through his poetic craft. Nevertheless, in her love relationship Dorotea still attempts to reciprocate using the currency of her beauty, charm, and wit. The talented lady exchanges poems with Fernando, rivals him in sensibility, stimulates his interest, and trusts in their performative promises of eternal devotion.

On the other hand, Marfisa, Dorotea's foil and rival in amorous exchange with Fernando, supplements her own inferior symbolic capital (beauty, charm, wit) with economic and social capital such as loans, jewels, and favors to the male lover. If we

compare the dueling lady lovers, the intrinsic worth of Dorotea's more intangible currency is called into question, especially as she herself does not value its fleeting nature when compared with Fernando's offering of eternal lyrical fame, as discussed above. Moreover, Dorotea undoes the power of her beauty, wit, and charm within her own discourse by insisting that she has already given her best years to Fernando and that he might turn to another woman at any moment. Marfisa, who could say the same about her past relationship with Fernando, chooses not to make a show of his debt to her. Instead, she conceals the obviousness of his financial and emotional debts and performs the requisite delay necessary for successful misrecognition of amorous *quid pro quo*.

Performing *gracias* and *de nada*

Though each woman remains jealous of the other one, anxious about how her own assets and gifts will stack up against her competitor's, Marfisa wins out due to *gracia*. The graceful move of deferral, or delay, can be defined as a kind of patient silence. In order to attract Fernando's general favor, Marfisa suffers the young man's capricious mood swings and lightness of heart while continuing to give without any apparent expectation for requital. When he requests her valuables to pay for his journey to Seville, she gifts him literal *gracias* (gifts; favors) in the form of jewels and gold while doubly canceling them out: she implies through her generosity that these freely given *gracias* are really *de nada*, nothing, mere trifles of little or no value: "pero piérdanse [mis joyuelas], pues te pierdo, que eras mi mejor joya" (I, vi). In the exchange, Marfisa emphasizes the relationship between herself and Fernando, thereby downplaying the monetary value of her gifts and the bard's subsequent indebtedness to her. Moreover, she uses a depreciatory diminutive

ending to mark her most valuable possessions, "joyuelas," further misrecognizing Fernando's monetary debt to her. Through the performance of disinterested generosity and graciousness, she simultaneously elevates her capital and strengthens the bond between Fernando and herself.

Marfisa's gift is a perfect example of Bourdieu's successful misrecognition, the process by which gifting participants fail to interpret the accepted gift as a lingering obligation to reciprocate. Instead, Marfisa performs the exchange as something spontaneous and, in that moment, her gift of diamonds and gold appears trivial. This performance lessens the sense of financial indebtedness in the receiver (Fernando) while implicitly and paradoxically degrading him and holding him accountable for future recompense. Again, the key to misrecognition will be the passage of time: delay, or deferral. In this example, Marfisa does not write out an IOU with the exact figures due to her in the coming weeks. Rather, when asked for a favor *por favor*, she gives graciously with no expectation for return. Still, Fernando's spoken *gracias* (thanks; gratitude) stand as a sort of promissory note for potential future reciprocation. He, too, wants to downplay his financial debt by highlighting the more personal aspect of the relationship. For this reason, he dramatically declares that his heart and soul now belong to Marfisa, thus strengthening their symbolic and social bond: "Mi alma sale a la fianza . . . escribiré en mi corazón la escritura deste recibo, para que la cobres dél, si Dios me deja volver a verte" (I, vi). However, the young man's ironic use of specifically economic terminology reveals his motives; he pretends his words are metaphorical, but the reader may note that he has, in fact, incurred an economic debt. Finally, Marfisa hands Fernando her valuables wrapped in a cloth handkerchief, in effect covering up the monetary value of the love gift. As she

conceals or misrecognizes the young poet's financial obligation to her, Marfisa's gesture suggests the possibility of an amorous obligation rather than an economic one. An amorous debt is something the love-struck minstrel will be more likely to repay with a counter-gift, especially as he is now a penniless fugitive (or so he says) and requires jewels to fund his escape from the authorities.

Marfisa's humility is critical here. Her display of virtue demands a reciprocally honorable reaction from Fernando, who rejoins by swearing his undying love. The noble poet is not forcibly coerced, yet he finds himself bestowing amorous allegiance to Marfisa in answer to her virtuous largesse. Her show of love and trust overwhelm him into romantic requital. The rivalry between Dorotea and Marfisa serves to show female strategies for amorous success as each lady lover bestows gifts of economic capital upon the beloved male poet. Though Marfisa's initial gift of jewels is solicited by Fernando himself, Marfisa downplays their worth, and goes so far as to bestow upon him more spontaneous gifts later on, embroidering a shirt for the young poet and writing letters to him. She continues to claim the *de nada* worth of these items, thereby performing continued misrecognition in the exchange with Fernando and gently nourishing their connection through erotic gifts.

Dorotea, too, gives gifts to Fernando. In fact, the wily Gerarda complains to Dorotea's mother that the girl goes clad in animal skins and sackcloth, selling off her finer clothes and giving Fernando the money for books, jewelry, and plumes, a story confirmed by Fernando in the fourth act as he pours out his autobiography to two mysterious ladies at the Prado: "y me aseguró que sería tan mía que, quitándose las galas y las joyas con la plata de su servicio, me las envió en dos cofres" (VI, i). Thus it is revealed that Dorotea, in

a sense, "bought" Fernando at the outset of their affair, securing his fidelity with gifts, even as she claimed they were given freely in love so as to downplay his financial debt to her. Fernando, then, is no stranger to erotic gifts, and regards them as a *fait accompli*.

The agonistic gift

The erotic gifting rivalry between Marfisa and Dorotea is literalized between the two women themselves when Marfisa stops at Dorotea's door under the pretext of needing a drink of water. Given that the two women are strangers, the register is polite and solicitous at first. Nonetheless, Marfisa is clearly seeking information regarding Fernando and is therefore quick to glean any news of him from Dorotea, who eventually becomes suspicious and guarded in her conversation. The dialogue between the ladies may be read as a battle of deferential curtsies, each new compliment or nicety meant to uncover weaknesses in the rival and to expose her motives. As in any contest of witty banter, a pastime typical of the courtly class, each participant seeks to outdo opponents in rhetoric and conceits. However, this scene's unusual depiction of two women, rather than two male courtiers, artfully twisting each other's words in order to beat the other into symbolic submission, proves to be ironic on many levels. The ladies consistently downplay (or conceal completely) their own talents while simultaneously extoling the virtues of their agonistic rival, allowing for multiple interpretations of the dialogue. In this way, the insulting, self-aggrandizing (male) aspect disappears from play and the feminine rhetoric of flattery and self-deprecation reigns supreme, making for a multi-layered subtext that contorts truth into lies, and lies into truth.

The scene opens on the street with Marfisa and her servant, Clara, peeking curiously into Dorotea's open door. Marfisa calls for water in order to engage the lady of the house, and Dorotea answers with a gracious shower of compliments to accompany the gift of water, making her receiver feel more than welcome. In the course of exchanging an earthen water jug, Dorotea compliments Marfisa's "tan gentil disposición, bizarro talle, gallardo aseo y hermosa cara," and Marfisa, not to be outdone in platitudes, comments on Dorotea's "conformes palabras . . . la hermosura del dueño . . . el cuerpo y el alma" (II, iii). When Marfisa revels in the freshness of the gift of water in its earthen jug, Dorotea gallantly responds by offering several more jugs for Marfisa to take home with her. Marfisa counters with her wish to keep just the one jug as a memento, and only because it belongs to Dorotea in the first place. She pushes this compliment further by saying that she would wear the jug upon her breast if possible, to which Dorotea replies: "Mas habéis dado que recibís, aunque fuera de oro." Thus, the hostess insists on her guest's symbolic worth by emphasizing not only Marfisa's hypothetical generosity, but also by conflating her guest's symbolic worth with the economic worth of costly gold.

The polite conversation has turned from the usual host and guest pleasantries to more elevated discourse. Marfisa embellishes the small gift of the water jug, verbally crafting it into an erotic gift to be worn near her heart, the intimate place par excellence. Although Dorotea tries to downplay this generous display by elevating Marfisa's worth to that of gold, Marfisa counters by bestowing even more praise upon her hostess using the metaphor of a pearl: "Un nácar parece esta sala, y vos la perla." This genteel wit exchanged between the two erotic rivals is a series of overlapping compliments meant to annihilate the other, in effect, "killing with kindness." The competition is partially ironic,

for Marfisa has not disclosed her identity, though she knows who Dorotea is. Thus, the tension mounts when the accommodated guest turns from niceties to an altogether more direct line of questioning regarding Fernando, immediately putting the hostess on the defensive and creating a new layer of discourse in which both women impulsively lie about their identities and their involvement with the poet. The classic rhetoric of "tengo una amiga que…" invades both ladies' commentary as each tries to obtain information from the other without divulging her own identity or motivation. They vie with each other, pelting one another with a series of abrupt interrogatives, until Dorotea finally breaks, accusing Marfisa of water torture: "¿para qué tomastes el agua? Mejor era para mí, pues vos sois el juez deste tormento." She is reacting with anguish to Marfisa's inquiries into Fernando's whereabouts, his relationships, and his connection to Dorotea.

In order to save face, Marfisa then takes the conversation to yet another level, that of bold-faced lies. Having risked everything only to vex her hostess, she is forced to declare that she has never met Fernando in all her life, and that the ladies' conversation has lamentably become confused. She backpedals by citing female nature as given to sharing confidences while men are given to measuring their sword shafts: "mas no debéis de maravillaros, que, como es ordinario en los hombres, en sacando una espada para ver los filos, sacarlas todos los que están presentes, así en nosotras, en sacando una sus pensamientos, las demás desenvainan los que tienen por mejores." Her analogy of women naturally sharing their thoughts with each other in the same way men compare unsheathed blades is not lost on Dorotea, who senses that Marfisa is her rival rather than her professed friend. Dorotea parries by lying outright about having been involved with Fernando, and, perhaps in order to display how little she cares for him, decides to show her guest a portrait

of the poet, thus scorning him. However, all bets are off when Marfisa suddenly calls Dorotea's bluff, not only asking to read Dorotea's private letters but requesting the very portrait of Fernando for her own use. Dorotea cannot help but comment on Marfisa's transparent attempts to disguise her covetousness, to which Marfisa replies with soothing words and flattering compliments, but also with more questions. Dorotea finally ends the game of cat-and-mouse by claiming she is ill, and Marfisa's leaves, announcing that Dorotea's poor health and subsequent bad mood have been the cause of all the mistaken paranoia. Indeed, once Marfisa is gone, and after lamenting Fernando's inconstancy and soliloquizing on her own jealousy, Dorotea's servant Celia comments to her mistress, "Pareces loca."

The rhetorical flourishes between the ladies serve as dueling courtesies. In over-emphasizing and hyperbolizing the natural gifts of the other, the two strangers appear to be mocking one another from within the safe haven of polite convention. Additionally, the usage of expressions of affected modesty constantly undercuts each speaker's own talents, such as in the examples of "lo uno y lo otro hago mal" in reference to Dorotea's speaking and writing, or "nunca tuve más gracias que el desearlas" in reference to Marfisa not knowing how to play the harp. These self-effacing remarks also act as a defense mechanism for each lady: Dorotea shuts down the line of questioning regarding the handwriting in her love letters by saying she writes poorly. Likewise, Marfisa aborts her social session in Dorotea's parlor once she has distracted the hostess with small talk about musical instruments.

In the end, Marfisa leaves without the picture of Fernando, but she does take Dorotea's earthen *búcaro* as performative proof of the women's social bond. Incidentally,

the lowly clay vessel is replaced in the next scene when Gerarda arrives to look in on the convalescing Dorotea. The matchmaker brings from the new suitor Bela the sumptuous courtship gift of a golden *búcaro*, replete with scenes of cupid enticing the gods. To be sure, the second act ends with an Ode to Cupidity, and the natural homeliness of the clay water vessel is annihilated by the lavishness of a luxurious and erotic goblet.

Erotic excess, strategic submission

Throughout the novel, both Marfisa and Dorotea suffer Fernando's caprice and temper, though in different ways. In combating and competing with "tantos enemigos" (I, iii) in her given social circle, Dorotea's defensive strategy becomes her own metaphorical subjugation within the love relationship. The lady degrades herself by emphasizing her passivity, even to the point of humbly receiving physical slaps in the face from her jealous lover. Moreover, though she attempts to engage Fernando in rhetoric, logic, poetry, and discourse (thus elevating him intellectually, in the Neo-Platonic sense), she will often subordinate herself to his greater capacities, degrading her own symbolic value and inflating his. In one particular love letter (her response to the smacks in the face), Dorotea implicitly forgives Fernando's physical violence toward her by emphasizing her own humility alongside his greater capacity for sentiment: "Pero puedo asegurarte que quando del golpe del rostro sonó el eco en el alma, dixo ella humilde: Sufre, Dorotea, que el mismo que te ha ofendido te ha vengado; pues mayor que tu dolor será su sufrimiento" (I, v). The speaker suffers physical pain, but her personified soul here counsels her to remain humble. Dorotea martyrs herself and gives Fernando the upper hand, so to speak, in the hopes that her dedication, her forgiveness, and her humility will act as capital to garner

reciprocity. Additionally, by declaring that Fernando will suffer more, Dorotea highlights his greater capacity for sentiment and thus her greater subsequent debt to him. According to Dorotea's epistolary voice, her lover can symbolically afford to give painful, violent blows to his beloved because his own suffering, after performing violence will always necessarily trump Dorotea's pain. The giver of violence is justified in the act of gifting blows, not only by his delicate poet's sensibility, but also by his superior masculine intellectual and emotional capabilities.

Perhaps Dorotea's display of humility garners the reciprocity she wants at the moment she sends the love letter, though her performance degrades her as she literally and figuratively turns the other cheek. Her gift act of humility differs from the rival Marfisa's act of humility in that Dorotea reminds Fernando of the violence done to her in writing, much more like a notice of payment due than Marfisa's virtuous tears and graceful deference in gifting jewels. Dorotea's clever counter-gift to an aggressive exchange of violence is passive, Christ-like humility, which she hopes will elicit certain responses (peace, favor, love), but she makes the error of insisting upon Fernando's obligation to respond. Finally, in the context of Fernando's newfound ambivalence toward Dorotea at the time of his re-reading aloud of her letter, the counter-gift of passive humility in the face of violence appears forced and pathetic. Originally, when the missive was first sent, Dorotea's rhetoric may have won him over, but it falls flat when she no longer commands his loyalty. The suffering she purported to undergo as a kind of erotic gift to her lover becomes twisted and turns her into a macabre martyr for love.

But why does Dorotea prostrate herself? And why does she make a display of her magnanimity in writing? Why does she want to foreground her soul's honor and humility?

The answer lies in the dialectic of erotic gifts and the indebtedness they perpetuate (degradation). Dorotea has been caught up in a vicious cycle: her constant feelings of inferiority and personal bankruptcy stem from the insecurity caused by her overwhelming debt of love, and from the humiliating realization that she may never be able to reciprocate enough. With love comes a desire to give, a sense of indebtedness, a feeling of personal lack. But once incurred, this love debt only seems to grow: Fernando proves superior, Dorotea proves inferior at every turn, and she herself propagates the rhetoric of this imbalanced equation. As early as her first soliloquy, Dorotea seems to wring her hands and pace neurotically, well aware that her assets will cease to please Fernando in the future: "¿Para qué quiero aguardar a que te canses y me aborrezcas? ¿A qué le agraden las galas de otras, y este sayal que visto sea silicio de tus brazos y penitencia de tus ojos?" (I, iii) Here, the "galas" of romantic rivals like Marfisa threaten to make Dorotea's "sayal" into an instrument of self-sacrifice (the penitent's sackcloth, or hairshirt). Indeed, the gossips at court confirm that the mystic martyr of love has "let herself go" as she is emotionally and financially bankrupted by her love for Fernando.

Thus, in love's *quid pro quo*, Dorotea will degrade herself, become indebted by love, experience personal and emotional bankruptcy, and eventually martyr herself as an infirm love-slave, possibly driven insane by love. Indeed, she vehemently questions her mental state when she panics out loud: "¡Ay, infeliz de mí! ¿Para qué vivo? ¿Para qué solicito conservar la más triste vida que se ha dado a esclava? ¿Dónde me lleva este amor desatinado mío? ¿Qué fin me promete tan desigual locura de lo que pudieran haber merecido las partes de que me ha dotado el cielo?... No puedo más; que me veo cercada de tantos enemigos, que no podré escapar la vida si no es perdiendo el seso" (I, iii). The

speaker's sense of personal emptiness alongside her romantic desperation makes her feel she is losing her mind. She becomes a miserable slave, the very purpose of and motivation for her existence thrown into question. Moreover, she is going mad to such an extent that "escapar la vida," martyring herself through an act of suicide, becomes a very real option. This young woman's personal crisis is expressed through the obsessive questioning of her choices and motivations, as well as her insistence upon the inevitable outcome of her "desigual locura," which will be a desperate attempt to end her life in the final scene of the first act.

Dorotea feels driven mad, not only by her love for Fernando but also by the new push from family and loved ones to move on with her life. She laments her slavish dedication to love, yet unwittingly collapses her general social anxiety and fear of abandonment into the metaphor of hopeless romantic servitude. As stated above, the young lady's ambiguous civil status makes her vulnerable to impulse and error. However, it bears repeating that she has ironically given up her own "galas" in order to maintain Fernando' amorous loyalty economically. This self-inflicted blow to her erotic capital of beauty and finery now makes the lady doubly vulnerable to Bela's advances, for her amorous offerings have already diminished considerably. Indeed, Dorotea proves susceptible to stronger, more manipulative movers of action (Gerarda, Teodora, Bela) as she feels her sanity begin to slip sideways under the pressures of both passionate love and dutiful marriage.

Dorotea's crisis of meaning is a vicious cycle that stems from a crisis of value, created and exacerbated by the discourse of Neo-Platonic love as well as the ideology of the "perfect" housewife. She feels trapped, anxious, and paranoid, hemmed in on all sides by enemies, resigned to tragedy and failure. In her consummated love relationship with

Fernando, the protagonist veers from feeling humbly inferior to feeling intermittently insecure, neurotic, and finally suicidal. Her paranoia may jump from thoughts of Fernando's infidelity to apprehension surrounding her mother's economic motives, Gerarda's influence, comparison with rival women, or simply a free-floating fear of general treachery.

The gift as poison

Social pressure, shifting loyalties, and fear of deceit invade the amorous discourse of *La Dorotea*, causing the protagonist herself to become distraught at the possibility of being torn from her true love and reduced to an object for sale. When Fernando departs for Seville due to Dorotea's potential courtship with Bela at the end of the first act, the lady metonymically ends her love life by swallowing a diamond ring from Fernando in an attempted suicide. Since antiquity, the superstition that diamonds and diamond dust are lethal if swallowed has persisted. Thus, Dorotea ingests into her body the love-gift-turned-poison (*dosis*) in order to kill herself. If she cannot be with her lover, and if she is forced by friends and family to forsake him so that he then abandons her, she will choose death by poisoned gift instead. The fact that the suicide weapon is a love gift left over from the happier days of the amorous relationship reveals the changing function of any gift, which is dependent upon its context. Traditionally, a ring serves as a promise and a link between giver and receiver. In the case of a diamond ring given between lovers, this connection broadens to signify an eternal bond that transcends the mundane and the temporal. However, in Dorotea's case, once that "forever" is interrupted by her lover's departure, his past erotic gift becomes mockery, irony, and pain. Hence, the diamond ring may be

presumed lethal on both literal (physical) and figurative (amorous) levels. In Dorotea's case, the promise ring turns upon itself to become the *coup de grace* murder weapon, relieving the mad sufferings of a love-struck Dido figure.

The lady Dorotea does not die, however, and she convalesces throughout the second act. At this time, Bela comes to pay his first formal gifting visit in order to "regalarla rica y espléndidamente" (I, vii). The protagonist is weakened, pale, and tragic looking, even as her servant Celia tries to cheer her. Dorotea is dressed in a white habit and blue scapular, reminiscent of the iconographic representations of the Virgin Mary, and everyone who sees her comments on how lovely she looks. Interestingly, however, with her hair loose about her shoulders, Dorotea is compared to the penitent Mary Magdelene in the same act. The star-crossed, hysterical Ophelia figure from the first pages of the novel has been reborn as a bedridden Catholic saint in the second act. The mystical martyr of love has been done away with for the moment, replaced by a martyr to proper marriage and family (a virgin mother), and the ingested poison dosage of diamond ring (now a failed erotic gift) has facilitated the transformation. No longer an adulterous wife, Dorotea swallows her sins, performs *la perfecta casada*, and gains sainthood through repentance, submission, and the denial of her past. As she attempts to annihilate her amorous self with this poisoned love gift, however, Dorotea sacrifices her own agency upon the double altar of passionate love and dutiful marriage. She negates her most treasured gift of romantic love, thereby emptying herself completely and becoming Bela's hollow prize. In falling under the deadly "espada de diamante," Dorotea gifts her rebellious spirit to societal norms, domestic obscurity, and psychic death.

The failed suicide attempt functions as the spiritual murder of a desperate woman. Dorotea's circumstances are grim. Her original marriage partner remains in Perú indefinitely, her poet-lover has abandoned her for another woman, and the only course of action is to accept the advances of Bela, backed by Teodora and Gerarda. All things considered, Dorotea will be required to respond to the magnanimous gallant with a worthy counter-gift: she must bequeath her person and her beauty, her only symbolic capital, to the generous stranger. However, in doing so she may be able to purge from her heart the venom of her disastrous break-up with Fernando. Dorotea's flowing tears mark the holistic flushing out of her diseased love for the young poet: "Mi amor paró en celos, mis celos en furia, mi furia en locura, mi locura en rabia, mi rabia en deseos de venganza, mi venganza en lágrimas, y mis lágrimas en arrojar por los ojos el veneno del corazón" (V, ix). In reality, she has little choice in the matter: the worth of her capital is declining with each day. The generous Bela may be her last opportunity for so high a yield in the business of sex, love, and marriage. Her spiritual death by diamond makes way for the gilded pill of Bela's courtship, as well as the New World riches that necessarily accompany him in his erotic conquest.

The gift of gold

When wealthy Bela enters into the love equation as Dorotea's new Neo-Platonic suitor, she cannot help but be "sold." The privileged male elevates the lady's status with his attentions, obliging her with impressive displays of money and gifts throughout the courtship ritual. First, however, it is Dorotea's mother, Teodora, and her neighbor Gerarda, who are symbolically bought, or won over by Bela's economic, social, and symbolic

assets. Given the unprecedented symbolic capital of the riches and wonders of the Indies in the early modern European imaginary, Bela's exotic new wealth is most likely admired not only at face value for its monetary worth, but also ogled at inflated symbolic value for its novelty and potentially endless economic return. Just as the wealth and promise of the New World dazzled early modern Europe, the attentions of Bela impress Dorotea's family and social circle. The rich suitor's mere presence unhinges Gerarda, who immediately begins to act as procuress in hopes of gaining some monetary compensation in the proposed erotic exchange and courting process. Additionally, Fernando and his manservant, Julio, discuss the arrival of the *indiano* with trepidation. Fernando contemplates imminent defeat and loss by a rival lover with infinitely more economic capital. Oddly, the "infinitely more" is elusive, for nobody can say exactly how much Bela might be worth monetarily, and we sense that perhaps actual numbers no longer matter so much as the delirious effects of Indies gold as an idea in the collective minds of Spanish society. For these reasons Fernando considers acquiescing to this vague, shifting hydra of a rival suitor altogether, even though he may consider himself to be worthier than Bela in social, symbolic, and cultural capital due to noble rank and superior skill as a poet. The symbolic inflation caused by New World exoticism puts Fernando at a loss on many levels, but most especially on an economic one.

Since the courting ritual brings rounds of *regalos* (gifts), *galardones* (prizes; favors), and general *fanfarrón* (showy display), Dorotea will act as the *regalada*, "regaled" by the formal gifting performance of her male suitor. As demanded by the conventions of courting, she must be flattered, honored, and delighted by the pretender. Indeed, the Spanish term "regalar" means "to give as a gift" or even "to give away," in addition to

meaning “to regale.” In English, one “regales” another with tales of derring-do, but this verb lacks the gifting nuance of the Spanish term “regalar.” Therefore, “regalar” can be used to mean “to woo” or “to court,” as in, “Bela regala a Dorotea,” preserving the notion that gift giving plays a significant role in the preliminaries of formal courtship. Dorotea, then, is the indirect as well as the direct object of Bela’s “regaling,” whether the gifts given are tales, money, or a golden chalice depicting Eros (II, iv). In Spanish, he may “regalar regalos” (give gifts), but he also “regala a la dama” (woos the lady), certainly one in the same in the arena of genteel courtship.

Indeed, the matchmaker Gerarda tells Dorotea’s mother that the wealthy Bela has already offered to make the gifts of an imported tapestry from England, gold jewelry, two mulatto slave girls, and thousands of *escudos* to pay for household silver. With this new flow of amorous gifts on the scene, the rhetorical questioning of wealth and status espoused in Dorotea’s first soliloquy apostrophizing the poet Fernando will now be put the test: “¿Qué riqueza que oírte? . . . Ese agrado tuyo, ese brío, ese galán despejo, esos regalos de tu boca, cuyo primero bozo nació en mi aliento, ¿qué Indias los podrán suplir, qué oro, qué diamantes?” (I, iii) The protagonist has claimed that there are no greater riches than Fernando’s voice, and that, in fact, his gifts of words are superior to Bela’s material goods. However, once Fernando departs for Seville with Marfisa’s jewels (and thus indebted to her), he abandons Dorotea and implicitly surrenders her to the wealthy stranger and to those who would profit from his erotic advances.

Once the poet has removed his favor and any possibility of reciprocity between the two lovers, Dorotea then dies spiritually and emotionally by swallowing one of Fernando’s love gifts, the diamond ring, in a suicide attempt. As discussed above, this death of the love

relationship with Fernando, symbolized by the deadly diamond, makes possible the new erotic gifts from Bela in the next act: a pair of jeweled rings from the Indies. Dorotea protests, but finally utters the conceit, “Si los anillos fueron prisión antiguamente, presas estarán mis manos de vuestra liberalidad” (II, v), acknowledging the symbolic and social capital of Bela and claiming her hands are now the “prisoners” of his largesse. In accepting Bela’s New World treasures the *regalada* simultaneously renounces her own will to live and love, having already annihilated the best part of herself using the turncoat Fernando’s erotic gift gone wrong.

Given the circumstances, the charming and witty Dorotea must backslide into a discourse of *fin amour* she does not feel, pulled there by the allure of Bela’s irresistible capital. Teodora and Gerarda facilitate the courting process between lady and gallant, but Dorotea herself will eventually yield to the allure of material goods prefigured in Fernando’s gloomy nightmare of the first act: “Al salir de la barca Dorotea y Celia cargada de oro, llegué yo a hablarla, y se pasó de largo sin conocerme” (I, iv). The fear that his lady love will inevitably be blinded, deafened, and essentially purchased with gold speaks to the pervasive power of *indiano* capital in Fernando’s worldview. Though a talented poet and noble gentleman, he knows he cannot compete economically with the wealthy gentleman’s fortunes, and he senses that the competitor’s money, status, and many presents will eclipse the tender love gifts of verse and song that an impoverished university dropout has to offer.

Seeking the (absent) soul mate

Dorotea is obligated by the gift objects which tie her and her family to wealthy Bela, even as he claims to prize the lady as she is, expecting nothing in return. This

rhetoric of wanting no counter-gift in return, of desiring contemplation of Beauty without any expectation for amorous reciprocity, is an aspect of Neo-Platonic love. Bela does not demand requital of his affection and admiration. Rather, Dorotea's requited love would simply be a bonus, as expressed in Bela's love song to the beloved lady in the second act: "De mi amor la escencia / amor sólo es; / que aún es interés / la correspondencia" (II, iii). Granted, the above is excerpted from a love text crafted in Bela's poetic, rhetorical voice. His amorous persona during courtship may be an anachronistic idealization or a mere literary convention, while Bela's real-life affairs as a hard-nosed businessman could easily put him in a different light.

Nonetheless, Bela may also be taken at his poetic word since in confidence he confesses to embracing the rhetoric of the chaste lover, meaning he claims to prize Dorotea's soul alone over a more degrading kind of erotic reciprocity. Moreover, the overseas Spaniard is confirmed as *neoplatónico* later in the text when his manservant Laurencio interprets yet another love text, Bela's highly philosophical madrigal poem written about Dorotea. The loyal servant exposes the facts in a direct dialogue with his master: "De manera que tú me das a entender que amas a Dorotea tan platónicamente, que de la belleza ideal suprema has sacado la contemplación de su hermosura" (V, i). The lovelorn gentleman assents, saying, "quererla con sola el alma es el más verdadero [propósito]." He goes on to declare that the obscure poem is actually for his own contemplation, and that Dorotea herself need not comprehend its depths. In this way, Neo-Platonic love of the beloved's soul alone excludes the earthly woman herself. Rather than establishing open communication with the lady as a fellow human, Bela verbalizes what others have whispered behind his back throughout the *acción en prosa*: "lo que ha de

entender Dorotea de mi pluma son las libranzas [facturas] de los mercaderes para sus galas." Thus, in the novel's final act, the archetypal courtly lover reduces Dorotea to the expensive wardrobe he buys for her, paradoxically privileging his own private, abstracted love above any true emotional intimacy with the lady.

This is the crux of Neo-Platonic discourse on love: the woman herself is not in the equation; she is removed and distanced. Her physical form only acts as a vessel to elevate the mind and soul of the genteel lover. Perhaps Bela finally understands this lack of presence when he confesses his symptoms of melancholy to Laurencio: "Perdido estoy de triste; no sé que tengo estos días, que no puedo alegrarme." It seems the level-headed, mild-mannered businessman has caught the Neo-Platonic love bug. The symptoms of moodiness, brooding, philosophizing, versifying, and contemplation of one's own mortality are said to be contagious. However, Bela may just be appropriating the sensibilities of the courtly lover who suffers exquisitely, as only the noblest souls can. Whereas Fernando has consistently used the language of love as an ideology and functioning *raison d'etre* since the beginning of the novel, Bela's new discretion in love changes him from an enthusiastic suitor into a melancholy philosopher whose empty love life falters before his eyes. Here, the disease of love and its symptoms of melancholy, poetry, and philosophical virtuosity elide the difference between the rival lovers: both men are engaged in the discourse of *fin amour*, the refined love of the enamored courtier who makes gifts and favors to his lady love, but who errs when seeking any real reciprocity from her. She is only a flat, faded copy of Perfection in this scheme. Therefore, the Neo-Platonic lovers' erotic gifts of trinkets, wealth, and chivalrous promises are heaped at the

foot of an idol who only hints at the abstract form of Beauty. It will be in the woman's mere humanity that the Neo-Platonic lover begins to sense her treachery.

Bribery: the failed gift

In addition to the mis-givings inherent within the Neo-Platonic paradigm, another type of tangled gift is the failed gift, which can become so awkward that it ceases to be a gift at all. Rather, it becomes the bribe, meant to stimulate the recipient's avarice in order to coerce. For example, in the third act of the novel, Fernando returns to Madrid in order to plot revenge on Dorotea's courtship with Bela. However, in the interim, the amorous gifts that Dorotea receives from Bela fall into the hands of the silver-tongued poet, for the lady is determined to retain the young man's favor and remain his priority even through bribery. Fernando later recounts disparagingly how a desperate Dorotea re-gifted him one of Bela's gold chains and some gold coinage from Mexico upon his return from Seville, presumably in order to rekindle the old amorous bond between them. However, it is clear to Fernando and his listeners that Dorotea overcompensates at that point: her failed gift of gold bilked from an unknowing Bela is not given with any kind of grace, delay, or deferral. It is not a gracious gift act performed with skillful *sprezzatura*. Rather, it is perceived as a little more than a manipulative bribe. Here, Dorotea's re-gifted New World love tokens have gone sour and ironical, leaving Fernando cold, as he states to his confidantes in the same conversation: "y como se abrasaba en mis brazos de aquellos antiguos deseos, yo me helaba en los suyos" (V, iii). Her overcompensation lacks *gracia*, and so her capital (and Fernando's interest) plummets. Her gift becomes degrading, thus weakening her social and amorous ties with her old lover. Fernando knows the gold is re-gifted and thus feels doubly

the humiliation of indebtedness, not just to Dorotea but to her wealthy *indiano* suitor as well.

It is interesting to note that although Marfisa wins Fernando over by gifting him jewels, Bela's erotic gifts to Dorotea literally slip out of her fingers and into Fernando's pocket. Just as in the case of Marfisa, Bela attempts successful misrecognition of Dorotea's indebtedness to him, but perhaps to a fault. In Dorotea's mind, Bela's gifts are expendable. This shows her disdain for him as a person, but it also demonstrates that New World gold can be liquidated and circulated carelessly, flooding the market and skewing value. Nevertheless, as explained above, Fernando finds this lowly exchange repugnant, not suited to his rank. Bela's fungible assets become cheapened by Dorotea's overuse of them, just as the relationships in this equation become cheapened by mis-giving and re-gifted bribes. Again, the context of the personal relationships is crucial here, as is the symbolic cultural matrix of class, gender, and social status that nuances the failed gift act. A few gold coins may signify a frivolous souvenir, a sentimental talisman, an exotic novelty, a fungible asset, or an unwanted invitation into a humiliating obligation.

Old gifts and new gifts: *nobleza* vs. *nouveau riche*

Although his romance with Dorotea appears to have ended, Fernando still returns from Seville to rage against his rival, Bela, and to fuel Dorotea's fires only to douse them almost immediately. He defends his own sensibilities and his immaterial erotic gifts by denigrating the lesser sensibilities and supplementary material gifts of Bela. By privileging poetry and passionate love over materially expensive gift objects, perhaps he can maintain his dignity, honor, and even the unchecked favor of the lady. Fernando acts in the role of

un noble venido a menos, in the sense that he clings to the values of an aristocratic class that privileges noble sentiment and rarefied poetic talent over *nouveau riche* aspirations. His rhetoric is anti-bourgeois, his snobbism reversed in poetic poverty's tragic favor. The lyrical excellence he prizes in his ruminations of the fifth act is the symbolic capital on which Fernando will continue to make good. For this reason, we may say his character, despite his fickleness, does not change throughout the novel: he is self-absorbed, brooding, and seems to function only within the language of poetry, love, and the passions, even when these breed jealousy and vengeance.

Additionally, Fernando berates Dorotea for "gold-digging." In doing so he joins a host of other male poets and pundits, privileging the rarefied sentiment felt by the spurned lover over the drudgery of a woman negotiating the terms of marriage and partnership. Fernando understands Dorotea's predicament, but his emotional responses prove to be alternately compassionate, disgusted, perplexed. The presence of a rival conquistador whose symbolic value or worth cannot be determined due to the exotic nature his fortunes, confounds both Fernando and Dorotea: thus, gold would seem to trump lyric excellence in the erotic gifting game, especially as foreign gold comes with a guarantee of multiplying magically over time. Bela's unfamiliar capital is electric, it may "go viral" at any moment; its real numerical value is surpassed by its symbolic interest and investment. This uncertainty is at the center of the love triangle, and it confounds amorous gifting patterns in that it confuses the *actual* as well as *potential* values of the parties involved. Thus, Dorotea remains bankrupt even as she is being fought for, Fernando's way with words wins women but cannot compete with wealth, and Bela sings amorous songs but perhaps only obligatorily as a sign of (possibly ridiculous) gentility. Moreover, it would seem that the

inflated value of Bela's capital corresponds directly to the emotional inflation of the other characters: fear, doubt, and uncertainty undermine necessity and efficacy, as evidenced by Dorotea's cynical demystification of the *tempus fugit* commonplace near the end of the novel: "¿Quién hay que sepa si ha de anochecer la mañana que se levanta? Toda la vida es un día . . . más justo es agradecer los desengaños que la hermosura" (V, x).

The competition between Fernando's aggrandizing, indulgent words of praise and Bela's tempting economic capital demonstrates the desperate situation of Dorotea, a married but "marriageable" young woman ultimately rebuffed by her paramour as covetous and thus condemned to yet another loveless partnership. In a sad twist at the novel's end, however, Dorotea's resolution to cleave to Bela, to leave behind her adolescent love and to mature into the *indiano*'s amorous partner, is met ironically with the murder of the mild-mannered gentleman. Even as his marriage day approaches, he is brutally killed by thugs on the false pretext of deceit, thus eliciting an awkward and possibly ironic period of mourning in the denouement of the text. For this reason, Bela can be classified as a frustrated character, in the sense that all his sincere attempts at happiness and a virtuous life prove to be frustrated by circumstance and outside influence. For all his economic capital there is a kind of impotence in Bela's character. He never attains Dorotea hand, or her heart; he is wounded by Fernando in a late-night sword skirmish; the manservant Laurencio nags him constantly for overspending; Gerarda uses him for money, and he is fatally rejected by the upper echelons of society as the novel ends. Ironically, Bela may be the most truly gratuitous giver of them all.

Although the status of the *indiano* and the *perulero* figures is a volatile one in early modern culture, Bela has clearly accumulated sufficient capital and clout to gain access to

the lady Dorotea. Whether her family is desperate for money or whether Bela has won them over with his affability and promises of security, there comes a point at which Dorotea concedes. Truthfully, though, she yields to him only once Fernando has left for Seville; the poet's literal departure is Dorotea's symbolic departure from her life of amorous torment. When Fernando returns, however, the enamored lady is empowered to dismiss Bela, as long as Fernando will replace the secondary suitor with his own masculine and amorous capital. Lope de Vega puts the *indiano* role into play textually while playing against it at the same time: Bela acquires capital overseas and returns home triumphant, yet in the end he is judged harshly for his questionable wealth and success. The exotic taint of the New World ultimately destroys the adventurer in the sense that his unfamiliar riches are as a siren song, ideologically rejected by the old nobility as inferior and threatening. Bela is killed over a horse that he failed to lend in a timely fashion to some acquaintances, a seemingly random and absurd way to die. Presumably, however, Bela's *nouveau riche* contributions have not made the final cut in many senses. In the end, he will never be accepted as one of the venerable old ranks of nobility, even in writing *fin amour* poetry, giving ostentatious gifts, and courting an impoverished lady of rank. The upper circles will not allow it, and Bela perishes for the petty offense of pretention.

Tangled gifts, open ends

One by one, Dorotea's men abandon her. First, there is no mention of a father figure, throwing the lady's lineage into ambiguity. Then, Teodora, Dorotea's mother, receives the official news that her daughter's husband has died in the New World. Later, Fernando "dies" in the eyes of Dorotea when he chooses Marfisa. Finally, Bela is

murdered in the last pages of the novel, his recent bout of melancholy the presentiment of his untimely death. However, *La Dorotea* should not be classified as a classic tragedy. For, if we assume that the astrological predictions of the final act are accurate (V, viii), Dorotea and Fernando will survive, each one continuing to suffer alone his or her own unlucky destiny in love. In this epilogue we may sense the shadow of the Lancelot-Guinevere-Arthur paradigm, since the husband figure dies in the end, leaving the deceitful lovers to contemplate their sins. However, none of the characters here retains the same unswerving passion and dedication to the others, but rather doubts and broods privately without expressing their negative emotions to the object of their affections. As A.A. Parker has concluded in regards to Lope de Vega's novel, "Pure, altruistic love is an illusion in practice; self-interest is the sad reality. When compelled to face the practical problems of life, the young couple's ardent love founders in mercenary greed, jealousy and vengeance. Rather than tragic in the end, *La Dorotea* is simply sad" (135).

But Dorotea's suitors are not the only people who perish in the text. In a hurry to fetch water for the fiancée who has fainted upon hearing the tragic news of Bela's death, Gerarda accidentally falls to her own death in the cellar of Dorotea's house. The protagonist foreshadows her neighbor's sudden end earlier in the act by describing the inevitable certainty of death in a conversation with Gerarda herself: "La hermosura no vuelve, la edad siempre pasa, posada es nuestra vida, correo el tiempo, flor la juventud, el nacer deuda, el dueño pide, la enfermedad ejecuta, la muerte cobra" (V, ix). The cynicism of the economic metaphors should not be overlooked here ("Our life is a hostelry, time a courier, youth a flower, birth a debt incurred. The creditor demands, illness forecloses, death collects" [trans. Trueblood].), though the emphasis is clearly on the morbid fate of all

humans. Moreover, in a world as uncertain and illusory as the one in *La Dorotea*, one never knows when and where death will appear. For this reason, it would be prudent to expect Death everywhere: "No hay cosa más incierta que saber el lugar donde nos ha de hallar la muerte, ni más discreta que esperarla en todos" (V, final scene).

The mixed messages, awkward dialogues, and botched gifts have not served to strengthen the social, symbolic, or economic bonds between anyone at the end of *La Dorotea*. Instead, gift giving proceeds throughout the novel as a social convention that becomes tangled, involving more than just the lovers, and ultimately folds the entire social network into exchanges fraught with doubt and anxiety. Therefore, perhaps Marcel Mauss is right in asserting that gift practices reflect social reality, which, in the case of Lope de Vega's novel-in-dialogue, turns out to be a confusing and deceitful reality. Gift acts between the lovers themselves and among their greater community reflect economic and social anxieties, especially when considering the different capitals of each character and their contexts within the social network of exchange. Moreover, this economic and social angst is specifically represented in the figure of Dorotea, who must cut her losses and inject herself into the economy of marriage and domesticity in order to maximize not only her family's assets but the projected long-term benefits of such a social investment. As doubt and anxiety over declining social and cultural capital—to say nothing of her waning beauty—have already caused Dorotea to feel bankrupt in her love relationship, she is left immobilized by courtly conventions, unable to reciprocate or strategize successfully in love. Thus, these literary representations of multiple kinds of gift acts between lovers demonstrate a general anxiety and confusion about values. A thorough history of the baroque worldview, therefore, must necessarily include an analysis of the anxious interplay

of performative gifting and Neo-Platonic love in the society of the time. For within this dynamic social drama lie the many failed gifts, empty words, and desperate promises inherent within the conventional social practice of amorous gift exchange.

~

—I want to do something for her, but what?

—Well, there's the usual things: flowers, chocolates, promises you don't intend to keep . . .

—Cogsworth[9]

Adoraba *sus engaños,*
aumentando en mis deseos
***sus gracias* para adorarle.**
—Lisis

Chapter Three

Feigning *firmeza*: Gendered Gifts in María de Zayas

Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea* illuminates the early modern gift-giving process by showing how the performative nature of gifts ultimately reveals anxiety and confusion about value; however, María de Zayas (1590-1661) offers a different perspective on amorous gift exchange through her decidedly feminist agenda. Although the degree to which Zayas's texts may be considered proto-feminist continues to provoke debate, I use the term to denote her explicit social critique of the patriarchal system as well as her energetic call for reform.[10] Zayas promulgates a feminist agenda in her *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* and *Desengaños amorosos* in the sense that she argues for equal opportunities for both sexes, particularly in terms of literacy, education, and legal rights. In particular, Zayas's female characters accuse men of denying women the swords with which to fight, a metonym for lawful vengeance; a man may lawfully murder his wife to restore his honor, while a woman who avenges her own honor is a murderess and a

[9] In Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, a servant advises his master on how to woo a lady with gifts, enumerating the male suitor's deliberate falsehoods as a requirement for the courting ritual.

[10] See Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). See also William H. Clamurro, "Ideological Contradiction and Imperial Decline: Toward a Reading of Zayas's 'Desengaños amorosos'." *South Central Review* 5 2 (1988): 43-50.

criminal.[11] Additionally, Zayas claims that the systematic violent oppression of women has increased since the glory days of the Catholic Monarchs, when men protected women from harm rather than turning against them within their own homes and families (*Desengaños* 505). Despite this unjust turn in the domestic sphere, however, Zayas's novellas demonstrate that women continue to perform obligation and indebtedness to males for their supposed protection. Even as males falter in their obligation to honor and defend women, females still reciprocate, albeit anachronistically, the obligatory *gracias* that society dictates.

In theory, society both values and encourages the gift of protection from steadfast males, sworn to protect females. Therefore, although the gift of sexual purity from equivalently loyal women functions as a kind of gendered *quid pro quo*, the performance of the steadfast male protector has declined, while societal expectations for the chaste and devoted female have remained intact. [12] While women's gift to men (constancy) has not changed, men's gift to women (protection), though not altogether defunct, has become twisted and crippled, as seen in Zayas' cautionary amorous tales. Consequently, not only do noble women suffer a lack of protection from their noble men, but these very same men dishonor women through deceit, neglect, and violence. This grossly uneven exchange, fostered by patriarchal social expectations and sexist gender roles, leaves women doubly vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation, even as they attempt to

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[11] In Zayas's tales, violent and vengeful women always marry back into the patriarchy in order to avoid legal action (such as Aminta and Hipólita in *Novelas ejemplares y amorosas*).

[12] For Iberian males' feminization as the perceived cause/effect of Castilian imperial decline, see Milligan and Tylus, *The Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Spain and Italy* (2010).

conform to the anachronistic *quid pro quo* of female gratefulness toward unjust men in the form of sexual constancy.

This chapter seeks to elucidate specific examples from Zayas's tales that show how the amorous gift exchanges between lovers reflect larger cultural insecurities about gender roles, the courtship/marriage process, and the shifting value of *firmeza* in seventeenth-century Spain. As in the previous chapters, I use the social practice of amorous gift giving as a lens through which to generalize more broadly about societal norms and deviance, as well as social change and reform. Whereas Lope de Vega's novel-in-dialogue, *La Dorotea*, treats multivalent gift acts between lovers and the ways in which erotic exchanges affect the greater community, Zayas's texts highlight the gendered injustices inherent within the anachronistic social codes of courtship, love, sex, and marriage. Specific insights from Zayas's fiction will serve to deepen our understanding of the *querelle des femmes* within these codes of amorous gift exchange.

Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) consist of ten self-contained love stories told by ten different party guests over the course of five festive nights. A lavish Christmastime soirée, hosted by young Lisis and her mother, Laura, forms the backdrop for the group storytelling; all the well-appointed guests participate in the *tertulias* and festivities that buttress each night's tales. Moreover, the sumptuous frame story narrates an amorous tale of its own. Amidst all the merriment of musicians, servants, and neighbors celebrating the Christmas holiday, the protagonist, Lisis, suffers physically and psychologically the lightness of heart of her suitor, Juan, who has inexplicably begun to favor Lisis's cousin, Lisarda, also in attendance at the parties. As the nights of dancing and amorous storytelling progress, another party guest, Diego, begins to favor Lisis and

finally asks for her hand in marriage. Although this irks Juan, Lisis's original suitor, everyone is contentedly paired up by the end of the five-night soirée, all grudges forgotten in the spirit of love and leisure. Upon closer inspection, however, female constancy as expressed through victimization and abjection stands out as ironic alongside males' grandstanding, false gifting, and lack of fidelity, not to mention their failure to protect anyone, let alone their devoted women.

Each of the ten tales told appears to be a self-contained narrative, although names, themes, and genres overlap, and the stories, notwithstanding their variety as well as Zayas's mastery of the novella form, can be categorized as follows: (1) two tales of gullible men deceived by sly, grotesque women are humorous and fall under the *hombre burlado* literary commonplace; (2) two stories about female vengeance show marriage as the only recourse for women forced to restore their misused honor through violence; (3) four stories about women who maintain their honor through martyr-like longsuffering also end in marriage as proof of redemption; finally, (4) two stories that end with the female protagonist entering a convent privilege women's removal from the harmful repercussions of love and marriage in a male-dominated world. This last theme of safety within convent walls as an alternative to the (nonexistent, ironic) security provided by males proves the most pertinent to the present study as it encapsulates, more than any other theme in Zayas's *Novelas amorosas*, the parallel narrative in the overarching frame story that spans all ten novellas. Incidentally, the same overarching narrative, featuring Lisis and her friends, also frames Zayas's second volume of ten novellas entitled *Desengaños amorosos* (1647), a sequel to the first volume of amorous tales published ten years prior. The following analyses will focus on the two tales of female steadfastness

unreciprocated by male loyalty in *Novelas amorosas* and will then touch on that same theme within the parallel frame narrative; for, at the close of the *Desengaños amorosos*, the female protagonist Lisis's words and deeds serve as the prime *exemplum* and overall thesis for both volumes of cautionary tales. The thematic paradigm of a female character gifting anachronistic sexual steadfastness to unappreciative male characters as a response to erotic promises and gifts plays out first in "Aventurarse perdiendo," repeats itself in "La fuerza del amor," and echoes throughout the frame narrative. In each case, the amorous debts, gifts, and promises exchanged by lovers and their social circles lend nuance to Zayas's critique of society's oppression of women.

Constancy coerced

The very first *exemplum* told at the lavish soirée in Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* elaborates the glaring double standard between female constancy (*firmeza*) and male promiscuity (*ingratitud*). Even before the female protagonist, Jacinta, appears in the story, her disembodied voice can be heard declaring its amorous constancy—and lament of male ingratitude—on the slopes of Montserrat:

> *Vine a estos montes huyendo / de que ingrato me maltrates,*
>
> *pero más firme te adoro, que en mí es sustento el amarte.*
>
> *De tu vista me libré, / pero no pude librarme*
>
> *de un pensamiento enemigo, / de una voluntad constante.* (175-76)

Lovelorn Jacinta, the poetic voice, has fled good society for the rustic respite of a shepherd's life, but she cannot free her mind of the love that obsesses her. Fearing mistreatment by a thankless suitor she runs away only to discover that her trials have

succeeded in generating more amorous devotion to him. In spite of their separation, Jacinta cannot escape her debilitating erotic obsession, "un pensamiento enemigo," or her ceaseless will to love "una voluntad constante," both of which she articulates as two versions of the same gendered ideal: unswerving female steadfastness as the ultimate erotic gift to the male.

Jacinta's pattern of fatalistic devotion to unattainable men may originate in the lady's past, as she was raised without a mother[13] and so neglected by her father that she fell into dishonor due to her own unchecked erotic desire: "nadie tal locura vio" and "deseaba imposibles" (182). In retrospect, she blames her mad yearnings on the fact that she had not been married off soon enough, an oversight of her negligent father. Under these circumstances, as a single adult woman in her family's house, Jacinta had first pined for the literal man of her dreams (she dreams of a man and falls in love with his ephemeral image). She then miraculously finds, loves, and marries his incarnation, Félix, in real life, but ultimately loses him to the wars in Flanders. Although Jacinta's dream husband is never explicitly disloyal to her in the narrative, he remains conspicuously absent in her life and prefigures the intangibility of the lady's second paramour, a dishonest suitor called Celio with whom Jacinta exchanges witty conversation and poetry in the wake of her husband's death: "con llaneza y amistad entretenía la conversación, siendo tal vez el más puntual en prevenirme consuelos a mi tristeza" (202). Celio's earnest friendship surprises and distracts the lady, whose trust is won through the gentleman's disinterested kindness and their shared enthusiasm for intellectual pursuits. In Jacinta's twofold narrative, she first passionately loves Félix, the forbidden stranger

[13] See Margaret R. Greer on the search for the (M)Other in Zayas, as well as Eavan O'Brien on mother-daughter relations in Zayas.

prefigured in her dreams. After his death, she then proceeds to love Celio, though unrequited. Thus, the tale's title, *Aventurarse perdiendo*, has a double meaning: the lady loses her first evanescent love to the battlefield, but she loses herself to love unrequited in the second case.

Due to his generous attentions, Jacinta is overwhelmed by gallant Celio and eventually confesses her crush in a clever love poem. The gentleman playfully challenges Jacinta to conceive a sonnet to a lady who looks into a mirror and is thus dazzled by the sun; therefore, Jacinta-as-author has the opportunity to craft a personalized love confession as her own witty response. In her sonnet, the Petrarchan conceit of female beauty as a blinding sun shifts under Jacinta's poetic plume, for she writes the verses about herself, the lady, dazzled in a mirror by "Celio, sol de esta edad…Galán, discreto, amante y dadivoso" (203). Celio becomes poetically constructed as the ideal lover in Jacinta's text, not just handsome and refined, but generous with his love gifts. Thus spoiled and won over by the magnanimous "sol de esta edad" reflected in the mirror, Jacinta's poetic voice comments freely on the gentleman's noble largesse, as well as her own subsequent amorous loyalty to him: "y aunque llegue a abrasarme, / no pienso de sus rayos apartarme" (203). His amorous initiative has sparked her reciprocity, though she bestows her devotion through generous words at first, rather than through deeds.

Although Celio's attributes are qualified in Jacinta's poem as "reflejos que animaron su osadía," that is, as things intangible, superficial, and barely glimpsed, Jacinta treats these reflections as true gallantry and real love, with a view toward marriage and consummation. Nonetheless, the uncovered lie remains ironically intact in Jacinta's poetic text: Celio's dazzling appearance as ideal male suitor in the mirror's background is

not a faithful representation of reality, but rather a fleeting reflection of light, akin to the illusory flickers glimpsed in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." Jacinta is firm in her fate, however, having been blinded by the "sun" (Celio) and consequently blinded by her love. She becomes fatalistically bent on her amorous attachment to Celio, just as she was bent on saving herself for her dream man in years prior. In between men, Jacinta's poetic voice incidentally claims to have been leading a carefree existence, "exenta de ofrecer a amor despojos," observing in others' reckless exploits the benefit of her own solitude. However, Celio's offerings have proved great enough to merit an amorous commitment from Jacinta, convinced by what she sees "[e]n el claro cristal del desengaño" and smitten by the attentive suitor's rhetoric of gifts and *gracias*. For this reason, she indulges her new lover as well as her own erotic desires by reciprocating with the requisite female gift of amorous commitment, or sexual steadfastness, made manifest through her erotic gift of poetry. The words in Jacinta's sonnet clearly express her thoughts and emotions, but they will also gain new power once delivered into the hands of her waiting lover.

Gracias exchanged

Celio celebrates his luck in love by offering signs of equally ardent commitment, entering into the prescribed flurry of gifts, letters, and attentions that denote a courtship. In effect, "empezó a dar color de verdadero a su amor" (204), reciprocating Jacinta's love sonnet with waves of presents, visitations, and thoughtful gestures: "Sus papeles tantos que fueron bastantes a volverme loca; sus regalos tantos y tan a tiempo que parecía que tenía de su mano los movimientos del cielo, para hacerlos a punto que me acabase a precipitar" (204). Deluged with well-timed gifts, Jacinta feels almost incapacitated by the

divine dexterity of her lover's hand. To be sure, Jacinta claims to be "ciega y más cautiva a esta voluntad" as she floats in the ecstasy of her erotic exchange with Celio, blinding "sol de esta edad." The love gifts passed between Celio and Jacinta serve to increase the intimate bond between lover and beloved, each new poem, jewel, or pledge symbolizing the crescendo in their ardor for one another. The gifts exchanged bind them together, obliging their love and commitment, "no hacía sino aumentar amor sobre amor" (204); thus Jacinta and Celio both rejoice in their good fortune and perform courtship successfully.

Nevertheless, Jacinta's unswerving devotion to Celio, as expressed explicitly in her sonnet and implicitly in her subsequent fidelity to him, will not end in the union of marriage. Celio thwarts the lady's hopes when he explains his firm intention to join the priesthood. He will remain forever unmarried, though he still offers to do "otras cosas de mi gusto" (205) should it please the lady. In other words, Celio will be a fornicating priest, unfaithful to the Church and to women. Already besotted by gallant Celio and sworn to love him, Jacinta laments her fate and becomes distressed at Celio's misrepresentation of himself as her generous suitor and loving protector. Seeing her as shrewish, however, Celio takes up with a "dama libre," ignoring his lady's fury and visiting her less and less. Unfortunately, Jacinta has been permanently dazzled by the gentleman's initial attentions and misled by his amorous gifts and vows, which have put her under amorous obligation and tricked her into giving away her heart to a deceptive suitor. Thus ensnared in the regalements of courtship, Jacinta's gendered correspondence can only be perpetual constancy to Celio; by definition, one cannot renege on sworn faithfulness. She has labored under the false impression that her erotic exchange will end

in domestic partnership, and that her constancy as wife will necessarily merit Celio's protection as her husband. As it stands, Celio offers no protection in exchange for Jacinta's resoluteness, and her reciprocation of love becomes ironic, painful, and unjust.

In Jacinta's conundrum, we see that a woman's lack of gifting agency places her squarely in debt to her male lover once she has allowed him to regale her publically and privately with gifts; she must remain steadfast. In comparison, a man's agency in amorous exchange allows him to initiate the amorous *quid pro quo* by using gift objects, which are in and of themselves an implicit promise to protect the regaled woman by way of the couple's pending marriage. A woman's lack of gifting agency, on the other hand, and the requirement that she merely receive gifts, curbs her creative possibilities for requital: loyalty to the male is the only gift a woman can offer to show her agency within the amorous paradigm. Therefore, a woman's erotic investment must be demonstrated through sexual constancy, while a man must show his preference by regaling the lady with gift objects and promises that put her in debt to him, in effect besieging her with erotic obligations. Furthermore, the required gift of chastity applies only to the lady; fidelity is her (gendered) erotic gift to the male in exchange for the (also gendered) safety he provides her. Thus, by way of love's discursive practices, men's amorous agency allows for promiscuity, while women's lack of agency and her required gift of constancy inhibit female sexuality. In this lopsided dialectic, Jacinta staunchly claims Celio's love and protection for herself even as he initiates new romantic relationships and expanded opportunities for erotic gifting with other women. When Celio relocates to Salamanca to continue his illicit affairs Jacinta realizes she has been wronged by him, but due to her

debt of erotic constancy, she is determined to win Celio's affection back at any cost (sex without marriage?) or perish in her attempts to remain steadfast.

Jacinta attempts to leave Madrid and follow Celio to Salamanca to coerce his loyalty, but a treacherous male traveling companion takes all her money and jewels, leaving the lady for dead in Cataluña. His cruel deception compounds the peril in which Jacinta's love has put her and underscores her innocence and wretchedness. Desperate to regain a sense of personal security, Jacinta dons men's clothes. Cross-dressing provides respite from her role as victimized female, even if she cannot shake off her erotic obsession. Lost on the back roads outside Barcelona, Jacinta eventually gains work as a shepherd on Montserrat and finds solace in her communion with the natural world. The Orphic commonplace of the pastoral lament is gender-inflected, but Jacinta's male camouflage gains her access to Arcadia. Yet even in nature, relieved of the pressure to perform femininity, Jacinta stays constant to Celio and sings of her undying love ("sin mudarse") in the face of his refusal to follow through with their union ("ingratitudes tan grandes" [175-76]). The liminal space of the pastoral mode functions as a rustic sanctuary for the world-weary Jacinta, prefiguring the tranquility she will feel upon entering a convent at the tale's end.

The lady's ritualized redemption from isolation in the wilderness is facilitated by yet another male, this time benign and reliable. Once Jacinta has revealed her true identity to the gentleman traveler, Fabio, he convinces the lovesick damsel to renounce her sufferings and place herself under the protection of a female religious order. Fabio uses the rhetoric of *noblesse oblige* to convince Jacinta to return to society, citing her social station as an obligation to live rightly rather than languishing at the periphery of

good society: “Esto te obligue, Jacinta hermosa” (208). Moreover, Fabio offers his protection and resources to help Jacinta reach her new shelter and thus stands out as an ideal male who follows his own example of *noblesse oblige*, a man who categorically advocates for women instead of exploiting them: “ayudaré como si fueras mi hermana” (209).

The relationship between Fabio and Jacinta is not an erotic one, however. Fabio breaks the typical male mold precisely because his motives are not amorous but rather “sin más interés que el de la obligación en que me has puesto con decirme tu historia y descubrirme tus pensamientos” (208). He is responding only to his manly duty to assist Jacinta in her distress. In fact, a discrete defender of damsels may be who Zayas has in mind when, in a final harangue to all men, Lisis invokes the notion of ideal masculinity, as represented by men who esteem and love women so much that they are willing to die for them, “poniendo la garganta al cuchillo, como en otros tiempos” (*Desengaños* 505). Ideal Fabio insists on aiding and protecting Jacinta, functions that her other men never performed, thereby eclipsing Félix, Celio, et al, as a “real” man, one who speaks Jacinta’s/Lisis’s language and shares her elite values of honor and steadfastness.

In her final redemption, however, Jacinta is still subjugated by a male voice and, ultimately, obliged to a male rescuer. Fabio showers Jacinta with favors because he can: “alquilaremos un coche” and “haré que Celio te visite” (209). As a wealthy and powerful male he possesses both the financial means and the rhetorical skills to coax Jacinta down from Montserrat’s edge. Furthermore, as a male, Fabio possesses greater gifting agency, which allows him to constrain a wretched woman who has nothing left to give, who lacks any collateral with which to reciprocate or resist. Jacinta has already taken her chances

and lost in love, venturing everything[14] on men who robbed, abandoned, and bankrupted her, which makes Fabio's elevated discourse of dutiful favors and *noblesse oblige* doubly compelling. Given the gentleman's "gracious" attempt to succor her, the lady will now be forever indebted to him through a gendered performance of gratitude: "quiero, si no pagar, agradecer la merced que me haces" (209). Additionally, as a woman, she is (always already) unfortunate, needy, and beholden, just as a man is (always already) symbolically privileged, due to his maleness. Therefore, in the same way that Jacinta pledges sexual *firmeza* to the treacherous Celio in response to the "color de verdadero" of his love gifts, so must she demonstrate self-effacing *gracias* in the exchange with Fabio, whom she promises to obey "en todo lo que de mí quisieres ordenar."

In the initial case of the deceitful Celio, his amorous gifts prompt constancy in Jacinta, whereas in the case of helpful Fabio, his gifts, born of pity and duty, facilitate genteel indebtedness on the lady's part. Good Fabio's noble generosity one ups the lady, his gifts degrading her in the sense that she is humbled, but the gentleman's aid also saves her by bringing her back into society and away from further harm. Jacinta is coerced by Fabio's generosity, but for her own protection and well-being, therefore the exchange is fair and her thanks to him well-deserved. On the other hand, cruel Celio's manipulation through erotic gifts and false promises ruins Jacinta, in fact blinding her to her own needs and safety. Her disloyal lover's favors have insidiously wrought the lady's demise, for she continues to render him *gracias* even in his unworthiness; Celio's promises and the lovers' hollow vows exchanged remain telling evidence of Jacinta's amorous undoing.

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[14] H. Patsy Boyer translates "Aventurarse perdiendo" as "Everything Ventured," whereas Greer and Rhodes translate it as "Taking a Chance on Losing."

In this way, erotic gifts justify the brash risks Jacinta takes to proclaim her love just as they mark her fateful choice to continue giving, heedless of the cost to herself. Regrettably, Celio's erotic gifts have activated the mechanism of female sexual constancy in the lady, even as they simultaneously elide Celio's falseness and bring about Jacinta's amorous bankruptcy. She opts to live the rest of her life resigned to loving Celio unrequited: "no porque crea que ha de ganar, que ni él dejará de ser tan ingrato, como yo firme" (210). Tenaciously upholding her end of the amorous bargain, even to her own detriment, Jacinta embodies the ideal of feminine *firmeza* all the way back into Court society, "donde hoy vive en un monasterio de ella, tan contenta que le parece que no tiene más bien que desear ni más gusto que pedir" (210). She will remain firm and devoted, her love for Celio flourishing if unconsummated. This uneven love relationship between Jacinta and Celio exemplifies the imbalance between female *firmeza* and male ingratitude.

As expected, this *exemplum* illustrating female constancy is well-received by the captive audience at Lisis's soirée, and Lisis in particular identifies with the lovelorn Jacinta in her desperate lovesickness. At the outset of the *Novelas amorosas*, Lisis attends the storytelling festivities bedridden, her stylish chaise centrally located in the midst of the party; the gathering itself has been organized in order to distract Lisis from the fevers caused by her beloved Juan's fickleness. Once the exemplary tale is over, Lisis sings a sad sonnet to entertain her guests, concluding with the Neo-Platonic flourish that "amar por sólo amar es premio honroso" (211), clearly reacting and alluding to "la firmeza de las mujeres cifrada en las desdichas de Jacinta" (212). Thus, Lisis not only mirrors the character of Jacinta in her melancholy, but her poetic text also holds up the *fin amour*

ideal of loving for love's sake. Traditionally, the courtly lover's lament issues from a male voice that designates the lady as cruel and unyielding. In Zayas's text, however, both Jacinta and Lisis "explicitly subvert the masculine poetics of love by repeatedly emphasizing feminine constancy and masculine fickleness, the reversal of the standard complaint in male-authored poems" (Greer, Rhodes 21). The prickly theme of "masculine fickleness" is precisely the dilemma tackled by Lisis in the frame narrative and by Jacinta in "Aventurarse perdiendo." In both women's stories, male fickleness is denoted by angry accusations of "*ingrato*" from female voices insisting that men's change of heart leads to the abuse and eventual disgrace of women. Moreover, male ingratitude for a woman's love gifts—or his disdain for amorous vows exchanged—demands recourse, if only lyrical and literary rather than legal. Although at first glance it would seem that a man's fickleness or promiscuity would have no bearing upon his ability to protect and defend a constant lady, these women's voices decry gendered neglect, abuse, and injustice.

Feminine *firmeza* and masculine *ingratitud*

The leitmotiv of men's mistreatment of women takes many forms in Zayas' twenty-one stories—rape, murder, trickery, abandonment—but the foremost example is established by Lisis's situation in the frame narrative and then echoed in the accompanying tales such as "Aventurarse perdiendo." Moved by the *maravillas* told at her soirée, Lisis hints at her own emotions, as well as her own judiciousness, in the poetry she recites throughout the text. Her sad sonnet sung immediately after Jacinta's trials likens her own feminine love to a "gigante armado de firmeza," whereas the male beloved in her song remains "mientras más ingrato, más querido" (211). Here, the female

poetic voice weeps without repose, accepting the impossibility of male erotic requital, yet praising the feminine act of "amar por sólo amar." Similarly, in "Aventurarse perdiendo," Jacinta complains of "huyendo de ingratitudes tan grandes," and identifies herself in the role of steadfast, disconsolate admirer: "lloro firme y siento amante" (175). These ladies have appropriated the poetic language of predominantly male-authored courtly love discourse in order to express their emotions and declare their identities as disappointed, desiring subjects in the world.

In addition, the poem Lisis recites to inaugurate her soirée prefigures Jacinta's ill-fated fidelity to Celio, as in the line, "obró mi firmeza el cielo" (171). Performed promptly at the start of the evening, Lisis's song champions women's constancy and denigrates "la ingratitud de Celio," though the name "Celio" connotes only a theoretical lover at this point, a disdainful *ingrato* male archetype in verse. Furthermore, just as love gifts manipulate Jacinta in the story about to be told, the poetic voice representing Lisis's emotions also claims: "Adoraba sus engaños, / aumentando en mis deseos / sus gracias para adorarle" (171), no doubt referring to the two-timing Juan in Lisis's own amorous tale. In this way, Lisis's opening song places the *ingrato* male lover on a pedestal, doubly degrading a female poetic voice already bereft of love and protection. Consequently, her song sets the mood for Jacinta's tale of woe in "Aventurarse perdiendo," which in turn serves to intensify the tone of Lisis's sad sonnet sung afterward. Jacinta's tale of male scorn is flanked before and after by two rueful pieces from Lisis, demonstrating the porous emotional connection between female protagonists in the alternating narratives of frame story and cautionary tale. The theme of a false wooer who promises to love, honor, and protect (and marry) repeats itself (1) in the soirée's opening scene, (2) in the first tale

told at the soirée, and (3) again within the frame story of the soirée where Lisis's lyrical utterances function as the prime example of Zayas's *querelle des femmes* alongside the other leading ladies' equally poetic protests.

Thus, Lisis pines for a fickle suitor who courts her while simultaneously courting another; even to the other party guests "les pesó de ver tan mal pagada la voluntad de la dama, y a don Juan tan ciego que no estimase tan noble casamiento" (211). The party guests, or society, attempt to compensate their lovesick hostess with gracious compliments, but she remains physically ill with fever, the painful effect of Juan's disdain and her own brute *firmeza*, until a new suitor, Diego, relieves the lady's maladies by offering himself in amorous exchange. This archetype of the gracious, brotherly rescuer, as Fabio in "Aventurarse perdiendo," becomes immediately more interesting in the frame story: the new suitor, Diego, esteems Lisis just as good Fabio esteemed Jacinta, but the bolder Diego goes a step further by initiating an erotic suit. He wants the lady to think of him as a potential love interest, not just as a Neo-Platonic, duty-bound personal attaché. Put simply, in order to win the lady's erotic *firmeza* for himself, Diego uses the conventional courtship method of gifting valuable material objects to prove his worth.

Adamant diamonds

The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* defines the term *firmeza* as "cualidad de firme," as well as "entereza, constancia, fuerza moral de quien no se deja dominar ni abatir." The Spanish word *firmeza* may be translated into English as "firmness," as well as "strength of conviction." Thus, we may say that a woman's strength of conviction in love is demonstrated through her indomitable amorous integrity,

or her sexual constancy ("entereza"). The third and final definition of *firmeza*, however, does not evoke a quality or an idea, but rather a particular physical object that represents (a woman's) amorous loyalty: "joya u objeto que sirve de prueba de lealtad amorosa."

María de Zayas's female protagonists have so far displayed unswerving steadfastness toward their wooers, exemplifying the primary definition of *firmeza* as a sheer force of will. However, Lisis appears on the second evening of festive storytelling sporting a jeweled love gift from Diego, more specifically, a diamond *firmeza*. With this gesture she announces her new preference for Diego as the ideal male lover and literally wears her erotic *firmeza* at her throat: "Estaba Lisis vestida de una lama de plata morada, y al cuello una *firmeza* de diamantes, con una cifra del nombre de Diego, joya que aquel mismo día le envió su nuevo amante" (249). Diego's showy diamond love gift supplants the intangible fidelity Lisis offered Juan in days prior, marking the new suitor's amorous territory in bold, self-promoting strokes. Not only does gallant Diego outshine Juan through his thoughtful surprises and vows of servitude to Lisis, he also bedecks her with a valuable *firmeza* that boasts his own name and erases Juan's supremacy. Similarly, in medieval courtly tournaments, a lady wore the colors of her champion or even sported his crest to publicize her preference for him. In this way, Lisis's Christmastime soirée represents an elite arena for showing off team colors and amorous loyalties. Party guests such as Diego have the opportunity to display their wealth, power, and position to Lisis's other noble invitees. Moreover, Diego's domestic staff has been entertaining Lisis's party guests with skits and dancing since the nobleman's arrival the night before; he has provided extravagant feasts on both nights thus far, and the hostess has confirmed his status by entering into courtship and exchanging amorous gifts with him.

To be sure, Lisis accepts the diamond *firmeza* "en cambio de una banda morada que ella le dio [a Diego]" (249). Thus, Lisis's purple party dress is complemented by the matching purple sash Diego wears, a love token from the lady, traded in good faith. Her band of costly cloth is the first textile given, an allusion to Lisis's potential *prenda del himeneo* should the erotic exchange come to full fruition. In any case, with Diego at her side the lady is cured of her fever and expresses a good humor, though Juan teases her with rustic songs meant to ridicule her possessiveness of him. For the first time, however, Lisis remains unaffected by Juan's abuses. She possesses a new acceptance of his *ingratitud*, for she now realizes he will never reciprocate her love. Rather, he will likely continue to toy with her emotions while regaling another woman, her own cousin and best friend, Lisarda, with erotic gifts.

> [Lisis], ya cansada de batallar con tantos desengaños y sinrazones, se determinó, pasada la fiesta de aquellas alegres noches, por no estorbar el gusto que todas sus amigas tenían en ellas, supuesto que don Juan, de día y de noche, mañana y tarde, estaba en casa de Lisarda, decirle que excusase la venida a la suya, pues sus visitas no servían mas que de amontonar tibiezas sobre tibiezas y pesares sobre pesares; y asimismo, si don Diego se determinase a ser su esposo, cerrar los ojos a los demas devaneos. (292)

Lisis discards an ungrateful suitor, her fever lifts, and Diego woos her publically. His gift of the *firmeza* represents Lisis's anagnorisis: she relinquishes the painful courtship with Juan in favor of a more promising one, definitively surpassing the sisterly affection Jacinta showed noble Fabio in "Aventurarse perdiendo."

Traditionally, a material *firmeza* is a small, flat ornament in the shape of an equilateral triangle hung upon a ribbon or chain and pointing downward. The three sides of the triangular charm represent the three aspects of the Holy Trinity, thus the ornament was originally called a *firmeza de fe* in reference to the religious steadfastness of its wearer. Various religious and military orders used *firmezas* as devotional objects in early seventeenth-century Spain, though they went out of fashion after the 1620s.[15] To be sure, when Diego gives Lisis the "firmeza de diamantes," she receives it "en cambio de una banda morada que ella le dio para que prendiese de ella la verde cruz que traía" (249), his decorative green cross being the emblem par excellence of the Order of Alcántara. In a preliminary edition of the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, Diego is indeed introduced in the text as a member of the prestigious brotherhood: "que para crédito de su nobleza honraba su pecho un hábito de Alcántara, y tan galán por sí que pudiera ser necio, si naturaleza no previniera esto, dando a don Diego con la gentileza, la discreción" (Olivares 211). The *firmeza* pendant he gives to Lisis confirms and amplifies Diego's elite status as a member of the distinguished Order of Alcántara. Furthermore, the costly diamond ornament duplicates Lisis's gift of a sash, as it must also hang about the lover's neck. The gentleman's "cruz verde que traía" upon the purple sash demonstrates Diego's social and political position, as well as his devotion to Lisis. Moreover, the "firmeza de diamantes" worn upon Lisis's body shows the suitor's sizeable economic capital, not to mention his noble largesse when it comes to courtship, love, and marriage.

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[15] Greer and Rhodes note in their *Exemplary Tales* that descriptions and images of *firmezas* can be found online at the Museo Lázaro Galdiano [http://www.flg.es/bus_listado.asp] (98).

In stark contrast to Juan's "tibiezas sobre tibiezas," Diego's *firmeza* shines brightly; though, perhaps a little too brightly. In principle, any innovative suitor may outshine a tired one, especially at the outset, when significant courting gifts are exchanged. Given the advantage of his novelty, Diego risks overdoing it when he regales Lisis with a letter-D-for-Diego incrusted with diamonds on the second night of their meeting. By offering Lisis a diamond *firmeza*, clear evidence of his unbridled enthusiasm, the eager wooer may overstate his amorous case, as well as the adamant requital he expects from Lisis. To be sure, the words "adamant" and "diamond" have the same Greek root meaning "untamable, invincible."[16] Therefore, Diego's aggressive love gift, as well as Lisis's literally crystalized "firmeza de diamantes," register as doubly indomitable. To give such a loaded, exigent gift, even on Christmas, to a lady Diego met less than a day ago, shows little restraint, as well as possible insecurities, and perhaps even desperation. Diego overcompensates for any potential shortcomings with lavishness, especially considering how speedily he gives a doubly adamant gift: the *firmeza de fe* exchanged is both expensive and erotically intimate.

Con la garganta al cuchillo

Such an extravagant gift obligates mightily, but Lisis is not in a position to refuse Diego's gallantry, particularly as Juan goads her with his comic poetry about jealous

16 "Old English (as a noun), from Old French adamaunt-, via Latin from Greek adamas, adamant, 'untamable, invincible' (later used to denote the hardest metal or stone, hence diamond), from a- 'not' + daman 'to tame'. The phrase to be adamant dates from the 1930s, although adjectival use had been implied in such collocations as "an adamant heart" since the 16th century" *http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/adamant?region=us&q=adamant*.

Menga, a clear nod to Lisis's possessiveness. She appears unperturbed only because Diego's gift and attentions steady her public persona at the soirée. Given that Lisis has been backed into a corner by the two courting men, she accepts the erotic gift of diamonds from Diego in order to fortify her own so-called *firmeza*. Strangely, however, it is unclear to whom she will finally bestow her precious constancy. Diego desires it and goes after it: he reifies female *firmeza* in costly diamonds and binds Lisis's neck up in it, a gendered complement to Zayas's ardent ideal male "con la garganta al cuchillo" (*Desengaños* 505). In the end, although the necklace may be read as a subterfuge to get Juan's attention, Lisis proves a refined young lady rather than a strategist of passions: she knows that amorous exchange with Diego will likely lead to matrimony. Thus, her subsequent submission to Diego's marriage proposal on that very night reveals the gendered predicament of a marriageable female, rather than the Machiavellian machinations of a vengeful temptress.

Nevertheless, Juan does become jealous of Diego as the new favorite. His envy is born from his wounded pride as a competing male, however, not from his amorous preference for Lisis. He exchanges words to this effect with Diego, acknowledging Lisis's change of heart, yet criticizing Diego's liberties and secrecy. Juan persists by warning Diego that it would be best if the gentlemen remained friends instead of enemies, but Diego retorts obliquely, agreeing that a poet (referring to Juan) would be a terrible enemy to have "porque no hay navaja como una pluma" (341). Thus, it is rather for Diego's effrontery that Juan challenges him, "ya no por Lisis . . . acabada es sobre esto la cuestión, sino porque sepáis que si soy poeta con la pluma, soy caballero con la espada" (342). Lisis's personal anagnorisis has become political: her preference for

Diego made manifest by the display of adamant diamonds changes the stakes for everyone involved. Diego gains confidence while Juan goes on the defensive. Lisis, nevertheless, sits quietly, wearing a chastity belt of sumptuous jewels placed upon her by Diego's erotic eagerness, surely, but also by Juan's disdain. She appears calm and collected in the face of Juan's teasing, but only because she can now hide behind her alliance with Diego. His gift of cold stones signifies the alchemy of Lisis's constancy from sworn steadfastness to Juan to coerced gratitude toward Diego.

Lisis's compliance with Diego's wishes is gendered, not vengeful or tactical, no matter what the outcome of the courtship. Constancy coerced, however, and then epitomized in precious diamonds, loses its transcendent power as an amorous ideal. Female steadfastness is reduced to a fashionable ornament to be exhibited as a social spectacle in order to enhance male status. This diamond artifice used to bind Lisis to Diego proves that the couple's connection remains inchoate and superficial. Lisis's constancy objectified and deconstructed in this way becomes ironic: the value of her *firmeza* is unstable, so its meaning shifts, like an erotic gift accepted under duress, or an unmarried girl in need of protection. In the wake of intimate gift exchange, then, the firm diamonds and the tinted sash conceal and reveal the amorous bond's empty value, a void that leaves only discomfort and uncertainty in love.

The power of love/liness

In Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, feminine *firmeza* (constancy, chastity, strength of conviction) develops juxtaposed with masculine *ingratitud* (deceit, fickleness,

promiscuity, neglect). In particular, examples in which a lady (Jacinta, Lisis) is wooed and regaled by a gentleman (Celio, Juan) only to be neglected and cast aside for another lady stand out thus far. The difference in "La fuerza del amor," a cautionary tale told on the third night of Lisis's soirée, lies in the fact that male ingratitude and promiscuity present themselves as a problem only once the lovers have been married. In this way, protagonist Laura's stalwart *firmeza* becomes an extension of the amorous constancy of both Jacinta and Lisis, compounded by the fact that Laura suffers the abuses of her husband from within the legal confines of holy matrimony.

In "La fuerza del amor," Laura undergoes the gendered double standard of constancy/neglect, though the disdain she suffers is exacerbated by her existential situation: that of the entrapped married woman. Thus, Laura's story problematizes female constancy in that once married, a woman has little recourse for undoing her vows of fidelity even if her husband is abusive to her. Additionally, "La fuerza del amor" challenges the ideal of marriage, particularly as a response to a woman's need for protection in the world, given that the worst threats may come from within the domestic sphere itself. The beautiful Laura, though regaled with amorous gifts and joined with her generous lover, Diego, in marriage, suddenly finds herself in a loveless union with no exit.[17] Nonetheless, her husband's infidelities, neglect, and physical violence toward her do not diminish her love for him. The power of Laura's love is so great, in fact, that she goes to unthinkable lengths to regain her lover's favor, just as Jacinta attempts to do, also in vain, in "Aventurarse perdiendo." However, Jacinta's defeat in love and her

[17] Many first names repeat and overlap in Zayas's tales; however, this tale, told just as Lisis announces her engagement to Diego, seems an overt warning to avoid marrying anyone named Diego, no matter how devoted a lover as he may seem at first.

subsequent retreat to a convent become Laura's ultimate triumph: her choice to enter a religious order removes her from the source of violence and abuse, and employs her "fuerza del amor" for a higher purpose.

The fairy-tale beginning of "La fuerza del amor" develops the stock theme of a blossoming romance, in which Diego is so awestruck by Laura's beauty that he pays off servants to rig a dance with her and then anguishes through sleepless nights, lamenting his powerlessness against her beauty: "todo cuanto soy he rendido a tu hermosura. Si en esto te agravio, *culpa a ella sola*, que los ojos que la miran no pueden ser tan cuerdos que se aparten, si una vez la ven, de desearla" (348, my emphasis)." Diego blames beauty alone for awakening his unchecked desire for the possession of Laura, a fact that excuses him from his matrimonial responsibilities later in the story. Thus, the drama of the tale lies in the tension between a picture perfect beginning in which Diego truly pines and Laura is touched by his suffering, and the subsequent *desengaño amoroso* in which Diego loses interest and abandons the relationship. Additionally, though smitten by Diego at first, Laura resists his advances for quite some time, deliberating with herself at length and thus contributing further to the dramatic tension in the story. Nevertheless, Laura finally gives in to the anxious suitor's onslaught of gifts in spite of herself: he lavishes praise upon her, writes songs in her honor, sings under her window, besieges her with pleas for mercy, and appeals to her sense of compassion. Furthermore, Diego puts his life at risk when Laura's brothers attack him upon hearing his serenade late at night. Fortuitously, the skirmish makes the courtship public and leads promptly to the couple's wedding day.

Although lovelorn Diego is the first to censure Laura's beauty as the cause of his woes, the narrative voice and the protagonist's private soliloquies emphasize that Laura also suffers the affliction of her own beauty. Moreover, the narrative voice insists upon the curse of the beautiful lady; Laura must pay for being so lovely by incurring misfortune: "que Laura pagase a la desdicha lo que le debe la hermosura" (346). Later, the narrative voice repeats that Laura's beauty is cursed by the debt it owes: "si Laura no fuera como hermosa, desdichada" (353). Thus, not only does Diego blame beauty alone for his initial torment, the narrator also describes beauty's debt to misfortune as the lady's cross to bear. The commonplace of female beauty as a gift from God is thus turned on its head in Laura's case. Once men become involved in the measuring, negotiating, and pursuing of her beauty, it ceases to be a divine gift and becomes commodified, condemning the lady precisely because her feminine beauty, thus converted into erotic capital, makes men covetous and sinful. Therefore, Laura's beauty is a double-edged sword that bestows symbolic and social capital on her and her social circle even as it seeks to destroy her at the hands of lascivious men.

Costly but contemptible

The noble Laura possesses all the requisites of the perfect woman (love, beauty, nobility, constancy); however, these gifts are not sufficient to hold the interest of Diego once he finally possesses that which he has worked so hard to obtain through endangering his life, paying off servants, gifting liberally. For as soon as Diego and Laura

consummate their alleged love, Diego abandons her, taking up with his old flame and scorning the attentions of his wife: "Empezó a ser ingrato, faltando a la cama y mesa, libre en no sentir los pesares que daba a su esposa, desdeñoso en no estimar sus favores" (354). The narrative voice insists that Laura has done nothing wrong, except to trust in love: "¿Qué le faltaba a Laura para ser dichosa? Nada, sino haberse fiado del amor . . . harto lo era pedir a un hombre firmeza" (353). In this way, the narrative voice leads the reader away from judging Laura too harshly as naïve or ignorant. Zayas may decry ignorant women at certain points in the text, but Laura is not one of them. Rather, her plight emanates from the cruelty of a negligent, selfish man who experiences post-coital disdain as quickly as he first suffers lust for beauty. Zayas's narrative voice announces Laura's innocent blunder: swearing eternal devotion to her husband and trusting in their mutual love.

Nonetheless, Laura is not the tragic perpetrator of her own downfall. Instead, her ideal qualities place her above reproach, which serves to highlight Diego's childish egoism and false gifting. His rhetoric of the wounded male, his artifice as the devoted lover, his daring persistence in courtship, in short, his so-called passion, reveals itself as mere grandstanding. Diego wins Laura through performative bravado, but proves ignorant of how to maintain a devoted relationship once married; his gifts cease, his attentions wander, and his promises fizzle away. The reality of male promiscuity trumps the ideal of reciprocal commitment yet again, though in "La fuerza del amor" the man's promiscuity and the woman's subsequent complaint serve to trigger physical violence against the woman. Burdened by Laura's misery, Diego chooses to annihilate her: "sacó la daga para salir con ella de yugo tan pesado como el suyo" (360). Her brothers and

father rush in to save her and to kill Diego instead, but Laura stops them from doing away with her amorous counterpart, ultimately leaving her more vulnerable than ever to pain and despondency as her aggrieved menfolk finally abandon her to her chosen fate of loving Diego. The reader may dub Laura as dysfunctional and damaged, a "woman who loves too much" and neglects her own well-being, but she has been groomed by society to embody the values of the virtuous woman, Fray Luis de León's *la perfecta casada*, who stands by her man.[18] Lamentably, however, "ni a ella le valió la riqueza contra la desgracia, la hermosura contra el desprecio, la discreción contra el desdén, ni el amor contra la ingratitud; bienes que en esta edad cuestan mucho y se estiman en poco" (353).

Thus, we arrive at the crux of Zayas's epistemological problem for women: how can women judge accurately whether or not erotic gifts and amorous promises from men are "true?" Is it possible to discern whether or not a potential mate will follow through on his performance of erotic devotion? Are there only two options, transparency or deception, or is there a spectrum for gauging men's intentions and actions? On one hand, the rationalist argument determines *a priori* that it is possible for amorous gifts to reflect transparent intent and to denote a certain outcome. A more cynical argument, based on *a posteriori* knowledge learned from experience, will say women cannot trust love gifts as true reflections of men's good intentions due to the overwhelming number of examples of trickery and deceit surrounding erotic exchange. In any case, Zayas argues that sex, love, and courtship, ensnared as they are in a language of gifts and pledges, have become a gendered social problem that needs attention. As evidenced by the case studies of Jacinta,

[18] Problematically, Robin Norwood's "self-help" sensation, *Women Who Love Too Much* (Simon & Schuster 2008), attempts to empower its female readership by designating female behavioral patterns as a prerequisite for domestic abuse.

Lisis, and Laura, only males possess gifting agency and performative power, reflecting a culture in which gendered societal expectations prohibit female activity and instead reinforce female passivity. Men retain the agency and power, then, not only in the gifting game of courtship, but also in decisions regarding their own sexual independence and greater social identity. Women remain dependent on men for physical protection and financial support, as well as any recourse for their grievances. To be sure, Laura's soliloquy echoes what can be summed up as the thesis statement of Zayas's entire novelistic oeuvre: "vanos legisladores del mundo, atáis nuestras manos para las venganzas, imposibilitando nuestras fuerzas con vuestras falsas opiniones, pues nos negáis letras y armas . . . dándonos por espadas ruecas, y por libros almohadillas" (363). Here, men's gendered gifts to women (spindles and pin-cushions) are conflated with the greater irony of women's oppression by society: the absence of legal rights for women, women's dependence on men for protection and well-being, women's illiteracy, and the (mis)education of women and girls in general, not only by their communities but by pervasive prescriptive literature such as *La perfecta casada*.

Women who give (too?) much

In fact, it is due precisely to her gendered grooming and upbringing that Laura, like Dorotea, blames herself for her victimization, and in doing so perhaps grasps at taking some agency over her perilous domestic situation. She accuses herself of believing in lies and of "loving too much," for she can see that her blind steadfastness proves

ridiculous in contrast to Diego's physical violence against her: "¡Malhaya la mujer que en [los hombres] cree, pues al cabo hallará el pago de su amor, como yo le hallo!" (364). Laura chastises herself for giving too much, loving too brazenly, and perpetuating an unjust exchange in which she gives love and constancy while Diego reciprocates with infidelity and abuse. Just like Jacinta, Laura has sworn her eternal loyalty to one partner, come what may, having trusted in the performatory gifts by which the male initiated his suit. Now she regrets having reciprocated to such an unworthy recipient, blaming herself for giving so rashly. Nevertheless, as Laura tries to gain control over her trials by taking responsibility for the abuses done to her, she realizes that she has been passive out of helplessness, fear, and her continual weakness for Diego: "¿Cómo es mi ánimo tan poco, mi valor tan afeminado y mi cobardía tanta . . . ¡Mas, ay, que tengo amor!" (364). In acknowledging her effeminate inaction and faintness of heart, however, the lady eventually encounters new resolve to move forward toward her objective: making her husband love her again.

Unfortunately, Laura's recognition of her own passivity and her subsequent renewed determination to regain Diego's erotic loyalty pushes her to rock bottom recklessness; in a drastic attempt to end her husband's abuses, she turns to the sinister world of the occult for aid. Luckily, Laura's brother, Carlos, saves his sister from herself, just as brotherly Fabio saves Jacinta in "Aventurarse perdiendo," and then facilitates the legal action a woman cannot put into motion on her own. Laura's father and brothers take her to the authorities to demand recourse for the unjust conundrum of Laura's devotion and Diego's abuse. Interestingly, Laura becomes her own best advocate once she is forced to take the stand: "que ella estaba desengañada de lo que era el mundo y los

hombres, y que así no quería más batallar con ellos" (368). Thus, Laura collects herself enough to decline Diego's questionable offer to mend his ways as he now claims to understand, presumably in a legal sense, "la fuerza de su amor" (369). Weighing her options, Laura ultimately insists on giving over her amorous *firmeza* and "fuerza del amor" to God, "amante más agradecido," one sure to compensate her better than "un ingrato" for her trouble (369). Clearly, it is Laura's "fuerza," or strength of conviction and character, that helps her execute this narrow escape from a chilling union of virtuous woman and immoral man. In Zayas's other tales, male ingratitude may be violently punished by female vengeance ("La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor," "Al fin se paga todo"), but men are rarely taken to task through legal action for their abuse of women. Surprisingly, then, in "La fuerza del amor," Laura ends by dictating her demands to judge and jury, choosing her own path in life away from her deceiving husband, "para valerse de las miserias a que las mujeres están sujetas" (368) and improving her lot under the protection of a female religious order.

Throughout "La fuerza del amor," Zayas's thesis becomes particularly pronounced due to repeated incursions of the narrative voice. Placed squarely in the middle of a volume of seemingly unrelated stories, this story's narrator appears bolder and more confident in her signposting for the reader. According to the text, a featureless party guest named Nise recounts "La fuerza del amor" on the third night of storytelling, yet the force of her narrative voice surpasses the other storytellers' as the so-called Nise often interrupts her narration to question and comment upon the plight of women (which is the cruelty of men). Moreover, the female protagonist within Nise's story, Laura, also pauses several times to soliloquize, creating a more self-conscious, theatrical narrative,

but also a more didactic text. Zayas's narrative layering here prefigures the omniscient, extra-diegetic, third-person narrator of romantic rants and realist novels, with her parenthetical value judgments and rhetorical questions to the reader. As the texts attempt to unravel the problem of men's false gifts and the feminine correlative of subsequent over-gifting, both the *Novelas* and the *Desengaños* repeatedly critique society's gendered status quo at all narrative levels using a cacophony of voices. For example, the same critiques broached in Zayas's prologue to the *Novelas* echo from Laura's mouth in the form of indirect commands and bold declarations in her finest soliloquy. She rehearses the tenets of Zayas's argument, stating: (1) that women be more discerning and less gullible: "somos [las mujeres] las más perdidosas y las más fáciles de engañar," (2) that men educate themselves better: "si entendierais que también había en nosotras valor y fortaleza, no os burlarais como os burláis," (3) that men and women have equivalent faculties: "¿El alma no es la misma que la de los hombres?" and, finally, (4) that women deserve the same autonomy, education, and power that men enjoy, yet men continue to oppress them: "imposibilitando nuestras fuerzas con vuestras falsas opiniones, pues nos negáis letras y armas" (363-64). Zayas's agenda could not be any clearer; these texts are meant to instruct the reader on men's systematic oppression of women, as expressed in her prologue: "¿qué razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y presuman que nosotras no podemos serlo? Esto no tiene, a mi parecer, más respuesta que su impiedad o tiranía en encerrarnos y no darnos maestros" (159). It would seem that until these grievances are rectified, women would do well to address the first dilemma by being less credulous and more wary of men's gifts, promises, and performance.

Devil's advocate

The theme of women's subjugation by men extends from the content of the cautionary tales into the tale's actual narrations, and finally into the overarching frame narrative itself. Lisis sings sad love songs night after night at her soirée, yet once she is engaged to be married to Diego, she claims someone else wrote them, concealing her amorous melancholy from others. Lisis's newfound *firmeza* falls under suspicion as a promise potentially feigned; the symbolic bankruptcy of a female without a male to support her has perhaps coerced brash measures. Moreover, her wedding to Diego is set for a week hence, on the *Día de la Circunsición,* a bleak day to "sujetar su cerviz al himeneo" (Olivares 445); the connotation of male castration juxtaposed with an insecure, overcompensating bridegroom bodes ill. Furthermore, the impotence of male sword rattling leaks from the cautionary tales into the frame narrative, especially as Diego conquers Lisis not through physical prowess or a triumphant duel against Juan, but rather through sumptuous feasts, costly gifts, and, frankly, excellent timing. Although the lack of physical violence between men may be read as progressive, it may also cast doubts onto the manliness of both men's swords, not to mention their metonymic plumes. The uncertainty reflected in men's performatory bravado and women's coerced subjugation point to a crisis of values in which deceit, false gifts, and appearances function as markers of larger societal insecurities around gender roles, courtship, and the shifting value of *firmeza*.

On the very last page of the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares,* one final gift is given, though it may be best categorized as a party favor rather than a gift. After the tenth and final tale is told at the soirée, Lisis offers a jewel to whomever can argue the winning

case for the most "discreto" character in "El jardín engañoso," to wit, the husband, the lover, or the devil.[19] Juan, gifted as he is in all things, successfully argues that the devil acted mostly nobly and honorably in the story, Lisis's prize of the jewel thereby going to him, though he promptly hands it off to his paramour, Lisis's cousin. In the final exchange of the soirée, therefore, we see Juan advocate for the devil, then win the prize for devilishness, and finally re-gift Lisis's party prize to her very rival, "dando a Lisis no pequeño pesar" (534). This innocent though simultaneously fiendish gift circulation is the inverse of Bela's dirty New World gold in *La Dorotea*, gifted into his rival Fernando's hands by the eponymous female protagonist. In Dorotea's case the re-gifted gold booty reveals her amorous duplicity, thereby rousing humiliation and scorn in Fernando and leading him to abandon Dorotea definitively as he feels doubly "kept" by both the woman and her lover. In Lisis's case, Juan's re-gifting literalizes the direction in which love (and jewels) flow, toward a rival and away from Lisis, bankrupting her still further in love. In the first case, the secondary recipient of the gift is humiliated; in the second case, the original giver is humiliated. Both botched re-gifts underscore the need for misrecognition in the gifting game: each gift must appear to originate from the giver or the gift fails. In each case, however, the ironic value of the re-gifted item serves to wound further a degraded female protagonist coerced into mis-gifting by an overly generous suitor.

Zayas's gift: the message in the medium

[19] The guests do not argue whether or not the wife character acted discretely (which she did). No one argues the case for her, nor is that presented as an option, as pointed out by H. Patsy Boyer in the introduction to her translation of the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (page xxii-xxiii).

The anachronistic but persistent irony within amorous gift exchange points to a fundamental problem in the erotic gifting game: the gendered nature of gifts. Supposedly, men protect and defend women, and therefore women are obligated to be gracious, constant, and devoted to men, masking the debt between the sexes. However, this implicit debt owed to men (women's amorous steadfastness) in exchange for protection becomes not only void in Zayas's worldview but doubly dangerous for females, as males are often the perpetrators of abuse and neglect. The unfair equation between males and females has several ramifications. First, violence against women occurs between husband and wife within the domestic sphere, traditionally a female sanctuary. Additionally, there is an incongruity in ideas about obligation and gratitude that lets men off the hook, yet simultaneously obliges women further (hence the poetic shift from *ingratas* to *ingratos*), thus we see a double standard that allows promiscuity for males but not for females. Finally, women suffer a double bind which tethers them to men economically, legally, and logistically, yet endangers them with neglect and misery.

Zayas addresses the above effects of gendered social expectations implicitly in her texts. Her critical voice becomes quite explicit, however, when detailing their discriminatory cause, as in her prologue, "Al que leyere": "Porque si en nuestra crianza, como nos ponen el cambray en las almohadillas y los dibujos en el bastidor, nos dieran libros y preceptores, fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y para las cátedras como los hombres, y quizá más agudas" (160). In parallel fashion, Laura apostrophizes an oppressive patriarchal system detrimental to women's lives and liberties during her principal soliloquy in "La fuerza del amor": "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 ruecas, y por libros almohadillas" (364). Women thus deprived and coerced into subservience, it comes as no surprise that their gendered gift of *firmeza* has become ironic, an empty signifier, just like "sincerity" or "value."

Zayas is critical of the shift into the void and so pushes for the reform of the rights and education of women. Of course, in true baroque fashion, she trumpets her message in particular asides to the reader, but she hides it as well, in twisting byzantine plots and page-turning dramatic suspense. The author conceals her gift of knowledge within the form and structure of her "entretenimiento honesto," delighting the reader with her many fictions; however, Zayas also reveals didactic, *a posteriori* wisdom with her energetic exclamations for reform, even when such zeal emerges carefully gift wrapped and politely misrecognized by the author herself: "no con obligaciones de hacer buenas Novelas, sino con muchos deseos de acertar a servirte" (161). It would be unseemly to beat readers over the head with their obligations to civic duty or social justice. Nonetheless, Lisis receives and interprets Zayas's subtle gift of knowledge and exits the patriarchy at the end of the *Desenganõs*, opting for the *libros* of the gynocentric convent rather than for the conventional *ruecas* and *almohadillas* of feigned female *firmeza* and empty erotic exchange. Whether or not Lisis truly liberates herself from patriarchal precepts by removing herself to a convent remains to be seen. In the end, however, the safe space Zayas has created in her fictions, between the pen and paper of female authorship, may prove to be the most feminist haven of all, a place to question, challenge, and rework women's role in society.

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Women have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes and business and politics. —*Virginia Woolf,* A Room of One's Own

If they can't raise my interest then I

Have to let them be.

—*Madonna*, Material Girl

Chapter Four

White Musk Roses, Silk Stockings, and Bergamot Pears:

"Classy" Love Gifts in Mariana de Carvajal's *Navidades de Madrid*

In her article entitled "Romance of Courtesy," Shifra Armon categorizes Mariana de Carvajal's *Navidades de Madrid* (1663) as an upper-class guidebook for obtaining aristocratic social objectives. More than just frivolous entertainment for the leisured classes, this set of eight framed novellas functions as a *claro espejo* outlining effective protocols for social success. In particular, certain prescribed elite behavioral strategies such as *discreción* can enhance social standing and lead to happy outcomes such as marriages between noble families. Thus, the *Navidades* may be read as a conduct manual for courtly, courteous, and courting readers, and most especially for an aristocratic female readership. Each courtship novel contained in the *Navidades*, including the frame story, rehearses the plotlines of young nobles behaving and marrying well, giving and receiving courtship gifts as prescribed by their elders and by social convention. Seventeenth-century female readers would have been able use the examples from the *novelas de cortejo* in order to maneuver courteously through life, in much the same way that male readers used normative precept literature such as *El cortesano* or the *Galateo español*. Critics hail courtship novels as "more representative of women's experience" since they readily identify aspects of female subjectivity suppressed or ignored by

dominant hegemonies; the text tends to depict female characters as active agents in their own destinies rather than two-dimensional *perfectas casadas* (Armon, *Picking Wedlock* 192). Nonetheless, I maintain that female characters remain consistently coerced into gendered erotic exchanges and unequal power relationships, especially among the nobility, due to a socially-constructed, specifically female sense of obligation. Thus, women find themselves complicit in their own exchange as gift objects between powerful families or political allies in order to maintain aristocratic social hegemony.

The early modern cultural historian and literary critic Catherine Bates insists that the anxious ambivalence of lovers' words and gestures is critical to understanding early modern courtship. She explains that the discourse surrounding courtship "derived its fantasy and eroticism from a central uncertainty. And when the relations between men and women are seen as being something uncertain, something open to interpretation, then those relations become a particular focus of attention and anxiety" (90). By definition, courtly love and courtship depended upon the fine line between sensual and rational love, or the blurred boundaries between *buen amor* and *loco amor*. Cryptic erotic exchanges reveal the ambivalence between carnal lust and spiritual esteem, just as the giving of a gift is inscribed within the multivalent nuances of courtesy and can be interpreted in several ways. The final chapter of the present study returns to the discursive site of courtliness, courtesy, and courtship, as interrelated social practices that function through a language of gifts. In *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature*, Bates specifically equates gift exchange with the *quid pro quo* intrinsic to courtship. She posits that the strategy, suspense, and uncertainty inherent in gift giving echo the ambiguities central to courtly love and courtship:

> [C]onsider the presentation of courtship in literature not as the symptom of closed-off, irreversible, and mechanical rituals, but as a living and ever-changing exchange of human desires . . . the structural ambivalence that is intrinsic to the courtship situation. Courtship is manifestly a social transaction—one which involves a complex interplay of giving and receiving, offering and responding, asking and replying. (12)

Both gifting and courting involve a "highly complex, almost choreographed routine of proposal and response (13)." And with each gift, or kiss, or deep sigh, "the complex social interplay of debt and gratitude that exists between the individuals involved" becomes more prolonged and more dynamic.

Hence the need for a didactic manual. The plotlines in *Navidades de Madrid* replay exhausting exhibitions of courtesy, sometimes repeating the exact wording of a particular thought or action, such as "Estimó la demostración, y quiso darlo a entender," in regards to reciprocating an erotic gift from a lover (21, 69). The stylized representations of certain behaviors support Armon's thesis that the *Navidades* is a courtly behavior manual meant to groom young ladies for aristocratic adult life. For example, when two young ladies vie for Jacinto's amorous preference in "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)," the wealthy widow Leonor is eventually dismissed as overzealous and therefore uncouth in her erotic approach, whereas noble Beatriz's violent rejection of Jacinto's love gifts stand out as exemplary. Through her use of appropriate female decorum, the lady negotiates the gentleman's amorous advances, carries the day, and marries the eligible bachelor, but only after tearing his gift offerings to pieces or hurling them to the ground in prudent repudiation first. The performance of

spurning Jacinto's attentions at the outset of the courtship only inspires him to love Beatriz more, cementing their amorous union at the end of the story and thereby proving that disavowal should be the noblewoman's first move in the erotic gifting game. Whether Beatriz's behavior is coldly calculated or passionately spontaneous (or both), her attention to modesty and decorum, her "su calidad y virtud" (Carvajal 176), inform her actions and her amorous triumph. These practical examples of a kind of female version of *sprezzatura* inform readers' ideas surrounding social and amorous behavior. In this way, Carvajal's representations of amorous exchange say much about how notions of social class and aristocracy are constructed in early modern Spain, as well as how gender, love, and power are inscribed upon everyday social practices such as courtship and gifting.

Material girls, living in a material world

Navidades de Madrid has been classified as both didactic and entertaining. Additionally, while the text emphasizes the correct protocols for courtship, it simultaneously details the material nature of gift objects in their cultural context. One of the most alluring aspects of Carvajal's work resides in the detailed rendering of everyday objects such as furniture, clothing, and food. The overarching frame story in particular lingers over the physical characteristics of material objects, not only those exchanged between lovers but also those present in the frame setting of an aristocratic home in the exclusive part of Madrid near the Paseo del Prado. Lush, elaborate descriptions of jewelry, clothes, accessories, and painted and sculpted images transform the frame story's domestic spaces, interior gardens, and piles of Christmas gifts into textual *naturalezas*

muertas. These ornate depictions of physical things bring the minutiae of everyday objects and practices to the fore, making *Navidades de Madrid* a rich text from which to glean insight about gift objects themselves, as well as how the objects function within their social and amorous contexts. The following analyses of courtship practices will therefore cluster around close readings of certain erotic gift objects, from food to flowers to fine homespun textiles.

Similar to the narrative structure of Zayas's festive storytelling soirées, the *Navidades* consists of a cornice, or overarching frame story, in which a different party guest recounts a tale to the whole party over several successive evenings. In the *Navidades*, however, all the guests are members of the same household belonging to the recently widowed Lucrecia and her son, Antonio, heir to the family fortune. Their six tenants, spearheaded by Leonor's mother, Juana, attempt to cheer the mourning mother and son at Christmastide with merriment and feasting. Just as in Zayas's stories, the mother figure is quite prominent and participates actively in the party planning, matchmaking, and lively entertainment. Aside from the two widows (Lucrecia and Juana) and their single children (Antonio and Leonor), two young Castilian ladies and two young Basque gentlemen board at this large property near the Paseo del Prado in Madrid. Although one lady, Gertrudis, and one gentleman, Vicente, have already begun a courtship, the remaining characters will be paired up in the text over the course of the holidays with much matchmaking assistance from the two matrons (Lucrecia and Juana). Initially, this proves complicated as Enrique, the second Basque gentleman, and the dashing young master of the house, Antonio, have both been smitten with the lovely Leonor for some time. Two years prior, Enrique had even asked for Leonor's hand in

marriage, but had been turned down by the girl's mother, Juana, under the pretext that Leonor was still too young.

Nevertheless, Christmas being the perfect opportunity for lavish displays of gift giving, the lovestruck Enrique uses this pretext to redouble his efforts, commissioning four extravagant platters of holiday treats for Juana and Leonor. The ornate foodstuffs and expensive gift objects come heaped upon enormous silver trays:

> en una, una costosa y bien aderezada ensalada, con muchas y diversas yerbas, grajea y ruedas de pepinos, labrada a trechos de flores de canelones y peladillas. Otra con un castillo de piñonate, torreado y cercado de almenas cubiertas de banderillas de varios tafetanes. En otra venía una torta real, poblada de mucha caza de montería, tan imitados los animales que parecían vivos, con sus monteros apuntándoles con ballestas y arcabuces, lebreles y sabuesos adornados de tejones y cascabeles. La última fuente venía colmada de guantes, chapines, rosarios de alcorza, con otras diferencias de peces, tortugas, encomiendas, pastillas…, con tanto oro y ámbar que dejó admirado a don Vicente [su amigo] la costosa curiosidad (18-19, ellipsis in the original).

However, it is not the intricacies of the gift objects themselves that stand out here but rather the shocked reaction of the regaled lady Leonor. The young woman is so overwhelmed by the excessive nature of the amorous gift that, according to the omniscient narrator, it would have been possible to make the match between her and Enrique at that very moment, had it not been for the girl's secret love for Antonio: "estimóle en tanto que, a no estar prendada de don Antonio, fuera posible hacer el casamiento" (19).

There are several possibilities for explaining such a rash reaction on Leonor's part. One, she is attracted to the gentleman's wealth and would therefore marry him based on his Christmas gift of salad, cakes, and stocking stuffers. Two, the girl is ignorant of the practices of erotic exchange in courtship situations as she is virtually a shut-in, and, ambushed by the gratuitous display anxiously offers herself in marriage. Three, it was common practice in the early modern era for women to agree to marriage when presented with food and trinkets. Four, Leonor has not gotten a Christmas gift for Enrique, and, in a panic, would give him absolutely anything in order to compensate for the oversight. In any case, it is unclear if the reaction is naïve or covetous on Leonor's part, or whether it merely stands as hyperbole from the narrative voice (which is unlikely since this type of exaggeration does not exist elsewhere in the text). The best explanation may include elements from all of the above scenarios, yet one thing is certain: excessive gifts require excessive gratitude, and they additionally incur a subsequent gift debt. Enrique's gift act triggers Leonor's overwhelming sense of obligation as well as her (questionable) strategies of reciprocity.

The multiple silver platters represent what Enrique has to offer his potential marriage partner: a life full of finery, status, and power. Not only will the Basque gentleman's future wife enjoy the choicest and freshest array of foodstuffs available, she will also enjoy the plentiful financial and social resources that make gifts like costly produce and extravagantly crafted sweets possible. The candied representation of a castle, "castillo de piñonate," evokes the gallant protection Enrique's nobility can provide, while the "torta real, poblada de mucha caza de montería" mimics the aristocratic pursuit of sport and leisure. Aside from the allegorical nature of gifts' images, Enrique may also

boast of being well-connected, for the silver platters heaped with goods are a commission from his aunt who resides at the elite Concepción Jerónima monastery above the Paseo del Prado. The display of family wealth is literally paraded across the Prado on silver platters, which speaks to Enrique's social network, which includes not one but many elite nobles who implicate themselves in his pretensions of marriage. Even Vicente, who is presumably familiar with his best friend's social status, marvels at "tanto oro y ámbar [de] la costosa curiosidad."

Nonetheless, Enrique may preempt Juana, Leonor's mother, as it is her turn to *regalar* the guests by serving dinner and entertaining them that evening. He may have erred on the side of presumptuousness, despite the latitude of the Christmas season. Acting as her daughter's proxy, Juana navigates the rich and precious gift by opting to share it immediately with the other guests, and in this way avoids addressing Enrique's amorous suit directly. Instead, she honors her hostess by sharing the wealth: "Pues quédese para el regalo de mi señora doña Lucrecia" (21), a curious re-gifting that subtly snubs Enrique and favors Lucrecia (and her son Antonio). Enrique has bestowed gifts on the lady in charge of the evening's festivities, in effect attempting to share the logistical burden of providing for the whole household. Yet he unintentionally one-ups the gift recipient by contributing so overzealously to something meant as her opportunity for liberality and lavishness. Enrique's gift is too much; perhaps for this reason Juana merely engages in polite but insignificant small talk with him, reenacting her first oblique refusal to his request to marry Leonor two years prior. Juana had explained, when Enrique first solicited the ladies' favor: "que no trataba de casarla hasta concluir con un pleito que tenía, y esperaba la merced de un hábito; y aparte de estas cosas, no la casaría con

forastero, por que no se la quitara de los ojos al mejor tiempo" (15). Thus, Juana "prudently waits to marry off Leonor until she has augmented her daughter's eligibility with a knighthood . . . . By keeping Leonor's options open until her credentials improve, Juana parlays her daughter into an advantageous engagement with their noble proprietress's son and primogenitor, Antonio" (Armon, *Picking Wedlock* 123). In the end, even if Leonor considers courting Enrique for his luxurious, allegorical gift to her on Christmas Eve, the girl's mother has other matchmaking strategies in mind for her only daughter, machinations reminiscent of Teodora's matronly ultimatums to Dorotea in Lope de Vega's eponymous novel-in-dialogue. In both cases, the mother figure intercedes on behalf of her courting daughter, a parent's worldly experience and practical wisdom trumping the naïveté, or the poor judgment, of youth.

Con gusto y con reputación

The successful suitor Vicente echoes his Basque countryman's gesture of generosity by sending gifts to Gertrudis on Christmas Day. He states to his friend in regards to his reasoning: "a dos hombres como nosotros toca por obligación, estando en una casa adonde todas son mujeres solas, aunque ricas, hacer demostración de Pascua" (17). The two Basque gentlemen seek an opportunity to display their affections as well as their sizeable means, yet both are self-conscious and reflective before making their move, invoking the courtesy befitting their rank as their means to an end. Perhaps under the additional auspices of offsetting Gertrudis's obligation to provide provisions for the merriment that evening, or perhaps simply wanting to encourage her on her given day for entertaining: "le pareció a don Vicente enviarle algunos regalos, y con la licencia de

Pascua, como por aguinaldo, en una curiosa bandeja le envió búcaros dorados, guantes de ámbar, bolsos estrechos y otras niñerías. (21).” The second Basque gentleman has more success than Enrique with Leonor and Juana, as Gertrudis appreciates his amorous demonstration and, what’s more, is free to make it known: “poniendo cuatro lienzos de Cambray en la bandeja, le envió a decir que por ser labor de su mano se atrevía (21).” Vicente’s requisite offering and Gertrudis’s requisite reply bond the couple further as they dance the steps of courtship through an intimate interplay of gifts.

An amorous bond does not end with call and response, however, just as the cycle of gifting is not complete after merely giving and receiving: Vicente must acknowledge and reciprocate the lady’s attentions in some way, and the tension of the courtship builds as he prepares his reciprocation. Quite sure of himself, the gentleman chooses a delightful if superfluous enactment of his love. Tying the four handkerchiefs from Gertrudis around his limbs and head, Vicente hobbles into the ladies’ drawing room claiming to have been attacked. After exclaiming surprise, the shrewd women quickly see his figurative, amorous meaning and the group exchanges comedic zingers to the tune of, “Luckily, we have a surgeon in the house,” “Gertrudis, come cure this invalid,” “Where does it hurt most?” “My heart,” “Ah, then, rest assured, the wound is not fatal,” and “Well, if I’m cured by an angel, then, truly, my health will be miraculous” (22, my translation). As evidenced by the group’s shared witty banter, laughter, and creativity, Vicente’s and Gertrudis’s amorous relationship is a successful *fait accompli*. Vicente’s superfluous performance simply seals the deal and the courtship progresses publically, approved by all. Hence, it is not necessarily appropriate to “give big,” as in Vicente’s piles of food and trinkets. Enrique, more sure of himself than his overly generous countryman, knows

when to give “niñerías” to his lady love, as well as when and how to embellish their amorous narrative for everyone’s amusement.

It should be noted that the excessive gifts and displays of love from the two Basque gentlemen are gendered. No one reciprocates Enrique’s over-the-top gifts on silver platters—the group simply absorbs the resources and moves on. Similarly, Gertrudis returns Vicente’s favor with the intimate gift of handmade hankies, but she does not regale him with Christmas gifts when his turn comes to tell a tale and give the feast. In fact, Vicente provides breakfast and dinner for everyone on his given day, as well as the evening entertainment: “les envió [a todas] don Vicente unos hojaldres de mano de la tía de su amigo, y roscones y quesadillas dos cajas, y otros dulces, diciéndolas que por fruta de Pascuas se atrevía a darles tan breve desayuno. . . . tratóse de cenar, y don Vicente las regaló con muchos y sazonados platos” (43, 46). Vicente was therefore correct in his initial supposition that “a dos hombres como nosotros toca por obligación” (17). The males provide the resources, even when they are among other wealthy nobles, that is, noble women. Thus, Vicente proves generous because he can be and ought to be. Through his wealth, his amorous requital from Gertrudis, and the festive Christmas season of gifting, his avenues for openly displaying his attributes become multitudinous. In contrast, Enrique sadly observes that the two matchmaking mothers, Juana and Lucrecia, have already set the courtship stage for their children, Leonor and Antonio. He has gambled and lost in the ambiguous and ambivalent game of courtship, a game of strategy as well as chance. Fortunately, however, Lucrecia takes Enrique aside and explains that Gertrudis’s friend, Lupercia, is actually in love with him. His noble prudence leads him to settle gladly for Lupercia since Leonor is no longer an option.

Shifra Armon highlights Enrique's exemplary *discreción*, comparing his thought process to Gracián's gentlemanly maxims: "Enrique's ability to transform an apparent defeat into victory by redirecting his courtship toward the more readily available Lupercia recalls Baltasar Gracián's strategic pragmatism: 'Pero el discreto luego ve lo que se ha de hazer tarde o temprano, y execútalo con gusto y con reputación'" (126). In order to perform *sprezzatura* successfully, the courteous man employs strategies of *discreción* happily and nobly, "con gusto y con reputación."

The amorous gifting between lovers now rises to a crescendo with all participants, including the widows, enacting a kind of agonistic competition of ostentation and luxury. Emboldened by love, Enrique kicks off the games sending Lupercia his first courtship gift. Having visited her uncle and gotten the necessary blessing for the union, Enrique is no longer concerned with fancy foodstuffs for his future wife: "le pareció a don Enrique enviarla a su esposa (como ya la miraba, con ojos de amante) algunos regalos" (69). That very morning, he announces his intimate intentions to Lupercia by sending her an opulent gift basket. First of all, the basket itself is a luxurious work of art, "un azafate de enrejada plata," but the *pièce de résistance* is an ermine fur with gold-plated head, hands, and feet (see images of ermine furs in "Ermine and pearls: a visual index," page 180). Moreover, Enrique sends a courteous message that flatters the whiteness of Lupercia's skin as well as the delicacy of her hands: "diciendo que guardara las manos en aquel armiño, porque temía que [si] no se derritiera la nieve al calor de los bien encendidos braseros de la señora doña Lucrecia (69)." Fittingly, Enrique includes the name of their matchmaker in his utterance, grounding the reality of his and Lupercia's romance in the everyday surroundings of their shared home in Lucrecia's house.

Ermine and pearls in exchange for "cosas de su servicio"

Like Gertrudis, Lupercia responds with intimate handmade textiles, an appropriate countergift from a woman to the man courting her. However, Lupercia's countergift is even more intimate than Gertrudis's handkerchiefs. She dispatches a pair of handmade stockings and a *bigotera*, a small hairnet for holding moustaches in place (a common accessory for men in the early modern era). Additionally, the narrator uses stock phrases of amorous response for Lupercia's reply: "Estimó la demostración, y quiso darlo a entender . . . le envió a decir que por ser de sus manos se atrevía" (69). The exact words were used to narrate Gertrudis's prior erotic exchange with Vicente (21), which gives hope for Enrique and Lupercia, since their friends' courtship, expressed using the same wording, has proven triumphant. Moreover, Lupercia embellishes her response to Enrique with a pointedly erotic message, "que le prometía guardarlas [las manos] para emplearlas en cosas de su servicio" (69). Lupercia promises to do as she is told by her lover, keeping her hands in his muff, then hastens to add that from now on she will use her hands exclusively for things in Enrique's service. The double and triple entendre is potent. Not only does Lupercia put herself generally at Enrique's service, ready to aid or assist him if necessary, she also alludes to her own domestic material goods of stockings, moustache holders, and other fine handicrafts to be added to Enrique's household once the two are married. If there are other things for which Lupercia might use her hands in Enrique's service, once they are married, the narrator does not say.

As it is Lupercia's turn to regale the household that evening, then perhaps the lady opts to flaunt her luxurious engagement present in public, much like Zayas's protagonist

Lisis with her diamond *firmeza*. In any case, Enrique thanks Lupercia for the stockings and intimates that he is in fact wearing them at that very moment. The exchange of erotic gifts unites the lovers on their path to marriage. Hoping to move her own matchmaking plans along, Juana ponders the love gift of stockings aloud, subsequently ordering Leonor to give Antonio not one but two pairs of silk stockings that Leonor has made. Now that Enrique's erotic interest is happily employed elsewhere in Lupercia, Juana feels free to pursue her own daughter's alliance with young Antonio, son and heir to the household. Leonor complies, if mildly mortified, and Antonio's mother urges him to return the gift of stockings. The two mothers act as puppeteers, prodding their children through the protocols of courtship, Juana herself suggesting the requisite gift item to be exchanged out loud in front of the whole party. Antonio's countergift, however, is quite original, and therefore trumps the luxury items exchanged up until this point. Due to his noble prudence and passionate love for Leonor, the young and fairly silent master of the house holds the plum of love gifts in his amorous hand.

Two years prior, when Leonor and her mother first install themselves in his house, Antonio commissions a secret portrait of Leonor to be painted furtively while she attends early morning masses with her mother. Given the parental prerogative to keep Leonor locked away from society, Antonio pines for the girl as early as the fifth paragraph in the *Navidades*:

> [E]staba don Antonio tan triste con el mucho recato y encierro de doña Leonor que, por aliviar parte de su amorosa pena, pagándole francamente a un diestro pintor le obligó a que madrugara entre dos luces para hallarse en los Carmelitas Descalzos, porque doña Juana y su hija iban a oír la primera misa. Acudió los días

> que bastaron para conseguir su diligencia y como la descuidada doncella, por no haber gente en la iglesia, se destapara, tuvo lugar de copiarla tan perfecta que don Antonio se volvía loco de contento de ver a su hermoso dueño, tan imitado que parecía que respondía con los graves y divinos ojos a las quejas que le daba por su mucho encierro (15).

Over two years and 50 pages later, then, the gallant lover bequeaths to Leonor the very same portrait as his first courtship gift to her, but not just the painting itself. The portrait comes with several ropes of gold chain and pearl pendants fastened to it by a thick sash: "[A]brió un escritorio y sacando cinco vueltas de cordón de oro en que estaba asido el retrato a una colonia y unas arracadas de perlas, lo puso en una salvilla (70)." The whole conglomeration of gift items functions as a kind of posh, oversized charm bracelet, replete with gold chain, a portrait of the lady, pearl pendants, and a big bow. Not only is Antonio's love gift to Leonor economically valuable, it is intimate and thoughtful.

The young master's gift trumps the costly goods exchanged in courtship up to this point. Enrique's heaping silver platters, his silver gift basket and its gold-plated ermine fur may boast of wealth and class, yet Antonio's gift successfully reveals a deep affection and devotion for its recipient, in addition to displaying the giver's elite status. Enrique bestows gifts that shock and intimidate with their ostentation, while silent Antonio, only when pressed to do so, offers a warm, tender-hearted gift that demonstrates his ability to think outside the gift box, as it were, delighting all present, including the lady, through his originality and creativity. Moreover, the commissioned portrait acknowledges Antonio's amorous vulnerability in the courtship exchange, and simultaneously downplays the luxury items literally hanging from the object itself. In terms of

presentation—for gifting is always a performance—Antonio uses a series of understatements and overstatements to downplay the material richness of his gift offerings while highlighting their sentimental value. At the outset of the exchange, Antonio accepts Leonor's gift of homemade stockings with exaggerated thanks, commenting that "todo lo que yo hiciere será poco para premio que merece tanto favor" (70). Nonetheless, he does just that when prompted by his mother to reciprocate, but calls his own gift "esta niñería," misrecognizing its literal and figurative value. In this utterance of extreme litotes, Antonio downplays a portrait that will most likely hang upon the very walls surrounding everyone present and be passed down for generations to his and Leonor's noble progeny. The gift is decorative, indulgent, and excessive. It shows a special admiration for Leonor's individual physical beauty, as well as a wish to preserve the memory of the joined noble lineages for posterity.

In terms of his gifting performance, Antonio prolongs the gifting moment by giving the object not to Leonor directly, but first to his mother, who has insisted on polite reciprocation of the stockings. The young man's rhetorical "Mire vuesa merced si puedo atreverme a dar esta niñería" creates suspense and draws his mother into the performance as she is truly surprised by the unexpected portrait (70). Antonio laughs good-naturedly over the sleep he lost, emphasizing his amorous passion over the price tag in his courtship performance: "No me costó poco desvelo tener esta dicha para consolar las penas que su dueño me da." The gallant lover is displaying more than pedigree through his gift act. He also displays his willingness to acknowledge and sacrifice to love, not in a performative way that alludes to future wedded bliss, but in a deeper, more spiritual way that shows his proven long-term commitment, gentlemanly patience, and unswerving loyalty. The

notable silence regarding the gold chains and pearl pendants seals the deal in terms of Antonio's victory in the gift giving game and his success in the courtship of Leonor. In the end, Antonio's erotic gift triumphs as the ultimate understatement.

The frame tale of the *Navidades de Madrid* is a textual mine rich with erotic gifts. Although the stories told nightly by the characters themselves are more plot driven and less detail-oriented in terms of material goods exchanged by courting lovers, two of the tales stand out for their representations of erotic gifts. The first, "El esclavo de su esclavo," is a byzantine and *morisco* tale told by Enrique on the last night of Yuletide. Although critics claim that the second tale in question, "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)," is superior to the others due to its length and development, I cast my vote for the *novela bizantina a la morisca*, "El esclavo de su esclavo." Daring chases on the high seas, illicit unions, secret identities, racial cross-dressing, and the sultan's breathtaking palace replete with Christian slave girls, flowering orange trees, and tinkling fountains fuels the novelistic imagination. Amidst the ambiance and action of the tale, there is one, single love token exchanged by the courting lovers: a bunch of white musk roses, given by a disguised Christian nobleman to a captive Christian princess of the sultana's retinue (see page 182 for an image of a musk rose). One on level, the lover gives a bunch of everyday roses, spontaneously plucked from the gardens around the palace to decorate for the sultana's evening fête. On a political level, however, the white flowers symbolize the inevitable union between two Catalan lineages. The poetic words that accompany his erotic invitation and her amorous response reveal still more interpretations.

El engaño *a la morisca*

When Christian nobles are held captive in Algiers, more is at stake than at the usual Christmastime soirée in the metropole, which heightens the novelistic drama considerably. Briefly, an illicit union between a noble lord and the Count of Barcelona's sister produces a secret princess, Matilde, who must be hidden away and brought up by servants. As a young girl, she and her guardian are kidnapped by Algerian pirates off the Catalan coast, and an *Abencerraje*-like adventure ensues. Matilde is sold to the sultana, while her guardian is sold to the Algerian Moor, Audalia, who confesses that he and his wife Jarifa wish to convert to Christianity and move to Spain. Unfortunately, the well-meaning Moor is subsequently captured in Spanish territory by Feliciano, a Catalan courtier. The Moor and the Spaniard become friendly, both being noblemen, and Feliciano eventually releases Audalia so that he may wed his beloved Jarifa in Algiers, the Moor swearing eternal servitude to Feliciano and peace with Barcelona. However, a jealous pasha kidnaps Feliciano anyway, eventually selling him in Algiers to none other than Audalia, who recognizes the Catalan lord. The two begin to plot a daring escape to Spain.

As the conspirators make their plans they inform Matilde's guardian, who tells Feliciano that Matilde is actually a princess and the daughter of Catalan nobles. Upon seeing Matilde's portrait and learning her true identity, Feliciano confesses his love for the girl to Audalia, enlisting the good Moor's aid in wooing Matilde, just as Feliciano had helped him win Jarifa. Audalia dresses the Spaniard in "galas a la morisca," passing him off as Mustafá, a long-lost cousin returned from Spanish captivity. In this guise, Feliciano publically woos Matilde as one of the sultan's retinue, though the girl is covertly

informed beforehand of Mustafá's true religion, nationality, and social status. As the evening's courtly revelries begin, many of the Moorish suitors desiring lovely Matilde's hand become irritated by Mustafá's fine credentials and potential courtship of the Christian slave girl. Nonetheless, Matilde and Feliciano are able to exchange erotic double entendre in the midst the entire Algerian court. Not only does Feliciano-cum-Mustafá impress all present with his brilliant dancing and singing, he successfully woos and wins Matilde, who then placates the sultana by agreeing to marry the handsome Moorish stranger and convert to Islam.

While speaking Arabic, flaunting Moorish garb, and garnering a royal post from the sultan, Feliciano also wins the young Matilde with a song, a dance, and a bunch of wildflowers. As a gardener passes by with the "ramilletes, tomó Feliciano uno de cándidas mosquetas (99)" in order to use it as a prop for the dance he requests from the musicians: "un canario a la morisca, porque Mustafá quería danzar en presencia de los reyes." As he dances and sings with roses in hand, Feliciano makes his amorous suit clear to the courtly spectators, but especially to Matilde, through his words:

Estas flores son pintura
de vuestra hermosura y gala:
a la mosqueta se iguala
vuestra cándida blancura.
Presagio es de mi ventura,
cuando os pido que troquéis
conmigo la Fe, y veréis,
cristiana, pues ya os adoro,

que estimo en vuestro decoro

lo mucho que merecéis.

(99-100)

Fred Astaire could not have played it better. Not only does the poetic voice equate the blossoms with the girl's beauty, elevating both, he distances himself from the lady through his own proximity to the flowers, then brings her paradoxically nearer as he approaches to give them to her. Additionally, the whiteness of the roses equals Matilde's "cándida blancura," a nod to her Christian purity of blood and noble Catalan lineage, a social and cultural legacy that Feliciano also possesses. The poetic voice calls the happy coincidence between the blooms and the lady a good omen for his amorous prospects; the metaphor thus gains prophetic power and marks the victorious outcome of the poet's erotic quest. The epithet used to imply intimacy, "os pido que troquéis conmigo la Fe," invites the addressee into an erotic *quid pro quo* where the two lovers will "swap faith," which is to say, be united under their shared Spanish, Christian, and aristocratic values. The poet's voice predicts that the lady will soon see how much he already loves her ("ya os adoro"), and how he has always loved her. Since their origins are one in the same, predating this first encounter, the couple's preexisting cultural heritage binds them still further. Feliciano ends by emphasizing Matilde's "decoro," letting her know that he is privy to "lo mucho que merecéis," i.e., her high rank and true identity as a princess of the court at Barcelona. Thus, Matilde's noble qualities—beauty, whiteness, Christianity, worthiness—are echoed in the person of Feliciano and poetically embodied in the musk roses. The intimate bond between two Spanish nobles in dangerous foreign territory is

initiated, developed, and symbolically represented through an everyday bouquet of white flowers.

Feliciano finishes his multivalent proposal, bows to the Moorish monarchs, and approaches the ladies' balcony. He kisses the bunch of white roses and presents them to Matilde with a flourish of *sprezzatura*. This performance is excessive, superfluous, and successful in every way. As a gentleman and a courtier, Feliciano must woo the princess with boldness and win her over with stylish flair. His erotic gift of garden roses must arrive enveloped in ceremony as well as panache. Additionally, Feliciano's love token is offered by his own hand *au natural*. All the gifts given in the overarching frame story of the *Navidades* are presented on trays, on silver platters, in a silver basket. Even Antonio's portrait of Leonor, "lo puso en una salvilla. Y dándoselo a su madre . . ." (70). Feliciano, however, bypasses the protocol of the *tercera*, or go-between, and addresses the lady through his own original song, dance, and a symbolic love token. His Moorish costume replaces the matchmaker as an erotic conduit, allowing the suitor *a la morisca* closer proximity to the lady than if he were in his usual garb at court in Barcelona. All of these elements inform Feliciano's aristocratic performance and elevate his materially simple gift of flowers to courtly, erotic status. The roses display his romantic interest, but the way in which he gives them signifies his nobility of class, as well as his own secret identity as a rich, white, powerful Christian male for whom courtship merely becomes another way to display his *sprezzatura* and superiority.

Parece mentira: engañar con la verdad

The young princess's counter message is equally guarded and equally telling. She accepts the flourished flowers and declares: "Moro—no puede ser *por ahora* el daros la fe que me pedís (100, emphasis added)." In Matilde's mouth, the word "la fe" becomes ambivalent. Whether she means her Christian faith, or the fidelity of love and marriage, the lady leaves space for future amorous exchange. Her refusal to her suitor is clearly temporal ("por ahora"), and therefore temporary. She continues by bestowing favor upon her suitor, if obliquely: "Bastará que os favorezo en recibir la que me ofrecéis en estas flores . . . ," stating her preference ("os favorezco") as well as the evidence for it ("recibir la que me ofrecéis"). Moreover, "la que me ofrecéis" refers not only to "la fe" of her suitor's good deed or love token, but more obscurely to "la fe" that Feliciano has bestowed upon the roses and thus upon her; namely, his kiss. The poetic voice equates Matilde with the flowers, and in kissing them, in effect, Feliciano kisses her. In pithy reply to his amorous brashness, Matilde in fact invites more amorous exchange, declares her favor for Feliciano, and even accepts his most erotic gift, the promise of intimate kisses, "cosa que no pensé hacer, pues, siendo cristiana, ni puedo amaros ni permitir que me améis." Her words belie themselves as Feliciano's poetic voice has already declared his devotion and foreseen the couple's inevitable erotic union as inscribed in the metonym of pure, white roses. Like Feliciano's message of love danced and sung through the intimate codes of poetry, double entendre, and *sprezzatura*, Matilde's words in reply to her lover either deceive or avow through their very truthfulness.

Similar to the trinkets and fine goods gifted to the ladies in the frame story of the *Navidades*, Feliciano's courtship gift of musk roses represents more than its material

value. In the case of the Basque's allegorical platters of food and accessories, for example, the offerings display in miniature what Leonor and her mother stand to gain from a strategic marriage with the wealthy gift giver. By the same token, Feliciano's flowers reflect more than Matilde's physical beauty and whiteness ("vuestra hermosura y gala . . . vuestra cándida blancura" [99]). Along with Feliciano's amorous words, the white roses indicate the lady's true identity as a Catalan princess as well as the lover's true identity as a Christian nobleman. Matilde's subsequent acceptance of the bouquet indicates her approval of the amorous, social, and political bonds formed by a union within her aristocratic clan. Although Feliciano's and Matilde's public performance appears to normalize a potential "mixed" marriage *a la morisca* between a Moorish noble and a Christian slave girl, the hoax is played for their own erotic benefit, as well as the for the amusement of their Christian allies looking on supportively from the courtly sidelines.

In the end, the band of Christians escapes from Algiers and reaches Barcelona successfully. Order is restored through Christian marriage, as well as through the Christian baptism of the renegade Moors. The adventurers preserve their experience in "una pintura en que retratara todo lo referido; y se pusiera en parte pública donde fuera vista de todos" (104), in effect monumentalizing the greater political *quid pro quo* that ultimately ends in Catalan Christian triumph. It is fitting that Enrique, who survives an epic courtship journey of his own in the frame story—wooing, gifting, strategizing—should tell this byzantine tale of derring-do. He leaves his audience with an ekphrastic description of the noble Feliciano's "gift" to posterity:

> que en lo alto de una pared se hiciera un grande nicho a modo de capilla, mandando a un diestro pintor que, tomando la medida del ámbito, retratara una pequeña imagen de la Virgen santísima de Monserrate, y que pintara a los lados a Audalia y a Jarifa con galas de cristianos, y que cupiese un mapa en que se retratase todo lo sucedido. Y que en lo alto pintase la Fama, con su trompeta en la una mano . . . (104)

Feliciano's dramatic flair for gifting and monumentalizing echoes Enrique's extravagant over-gifting in the performance of courtship. However, since Enrique tells a tale of successful erotic exchange between noble lovers, he indicates that he has, in fact, learned the importance of gift timing in the context of courtship.

What's in a name: *celos* versus *industria*

The final narrative to be analyzed from Carvajal's *Navidades de Madrid* echoes the overarching frame story somewhat more than the atmospheric "El esclavo de su esclavo" outlined above, in that the love story takes place in Castile, specifically in Toledo, between two neighboring nobles and their matchmaking parents. Critics repeatedly comment on the link between the title, "La industria vence desdenes," and the content of the story, noting that through the practice of paid skilled labor such as painting or sewing, the novella's characters overcome social disdain and preserve their family's nobility. However, due to an error in the editing of the *Navidades de Madrid*, this connection between the story's title and content is partially mistaken. Unfortunately, Mariana de Carvajal's sixth and seventh stories are printed under each other's respective titles; that is, the sixth tale ("Celos vengan desprecios") ought to be called "La industria

vence desdenes," while the seventh tale ("La industria vence desdenes") ought to be entitled "Celos vengan desprecios." There are several indicators that the titles have been mistakenly switched, whether by author, editor, or printer, although no critic has yet to document the editing discrepancy. For example, the sixth story narrates the valorous acts of a suitor in the service of his lady, including saving her life, saving her from rape, and protecting her from thieves. The lady yields and the two are married. At no point is jealousy mentioned in this straightforward love story; thus, at no point does "jealousy take revenge upon scorn" (*celos vengan desprecios*), the purported title. Rather, the suitor's vigilance and skill ("la industria") conquers a self-proclaimed single lady ("vence desdenes"), and so the tale is rightly "La industria vence desdenes." There are additional references the correct story titles within the dialogues and asides of the frame narrative as well. For example, just before telling his tale, Antonio explains: "[M]añana les he de contar un caso que un milanés me refirió estando en Salamanca, celebrando la *industria que tuvo un caballero para vencer los desdenes* de una dama" (119, my emphasis). His tale should therefore be entitled: "La industria vence desdenes."

However, the seventh tale, which the present study is concerned with, narrates young Jacinto's failed attempts to woo the shrewish Leonor. He finally triumphs in love by inciting her jealousy. In this story, the young lover states the words of the proper title explicitly—a common motif of courtship novels—in a love letter to the lady: "[C]ulpe su condición y no mi mudanza. Y pues tiene la culpa de sus celos, quédese con ellos; que *celos vengan desprecios*" (170, my emphasis). Additionally, party guests in the overarching frame tale's dialogue trade variations on clichés about "mujeres bravas" just before the shrew-taming tale (133). Later, at the story's end, "se detuvieron a celebrar la

venganza de don Jacinto," and, in passing, the text comments upon the lady's "pasados *celos*" (176-77, both my emphasis). Hence, the seventh tale should be called "Celos vengan desprecios." Thus, I shall refer to the story as it is (incorrectly) printed, but I shall also place its proper title in parenthesis immediately afterward in order to emphasize the story's main thrust; namely, that Jacinto purposely makes his beloved jealous, thereby eliminating her scorn and winning her hand, and thus proves the titular claim: "Celos vengan desprecios."

Critics rush to connect the purported title, "La industria vence desdenes," with the story's argument because several protagonists earn money, and therefore social status, through literal "industria," or manual labor. Pedro and his nephew Jacinto, as well as Guiomar and her daughter Beatriz, come from noble families that have fallen on hard times and must stay afloat by practicing a trade, painting and sewing, respectively. The story opens with the orphaned twins, Pedro and Jacinta, deciding to dower Jacinta for marriage with their parents' meager inheritance while Pedro goes to Rome to make his living as a painter and a clergyman. Jacinta marries her cousin, but he ruins them through his gambling addiction. Meanwhile, Pedro makes a fortune from 17 years of painting in Rome ("Razón es pagar es pintor" [138]) and moving up in the ranks of the church, so much so that he can now afford to lead a life of luxury in Toledo, drinking wine and entertaining elite members of society. The first ten pages of "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)" serve as a preamble to the principal love story, detailing Pedro's painterly profession and thus alluding to the shifting values of nobility, morality, and virtuousness in baroque Spain.

Sewing cassocks, silencing suitors

The character of Beatriz in "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)" proves more complex than Carvajal's other female protagonists. Unlike Leonor or Matilde, the lady weeps, pouts, and laments her fate aloud in the text, sharing her flights of fancy and her angst, much in the same way that Zayas's Laura soliloquizes in "La fuerza del amor," or Lope's protagonist wrings her hands and paces in *La Dorotea*. In Beatriz's case, the emotional outbursts stem from a frustration with her lowly economic status, a sensitive situation exacerbated in the story by her amorous competition with the wealthy widow Leonor, who openly shows her erotic interest in the male protagonist. The merry widow goes so far as to sing "unas coplillas algo licenciosas" (149) in front of everyone in order to make her position clear. When Beatriz overhears Leonor plotting to make the love match with Jacinto, she despairs, knowing that the widow's money will trump all in the unjust game of courtship. Beatriz sobs alone in her room and blames her father's negligence (he too was a gambler) for her woes: "[D]erramando copiosas lágrimas, dijo: —¡Dios se lo perdone a mi padre que tanto mal me hizo, pues falta la ventura cuando doña Leonor se atreve a competir porque tiene dinero, teniendo menos calidad que yo!" (149). Beatriz understands that she is "better" than Leonor, but she has no dowry for marriage. In fact, she and her mother sew garments for money in order to get by economically: "bordan casullas y otras cosas, y con eso sustentan una honrada familia" (144). Beatriz cannot compete with the widow's money, even if she finds Jacinto appealing. She reasons that an erotic union with the gentleman could never lead to marriage, and therefore redoubles her efforts to silence him throughout the remainder of the story.

The young man shows repeated amorous interest—singing, dancing, writing letters, confessing his love at Beatriz's window, giving her gifts—but she rejects him violently, knowing intellectually that her poverty prevents a licit amorous alliance with such a suitor. The lady rips Jacinto's first love letter to pieces and throws it back at him, refusing to be swayed by her romantic inclinations or the ambiguities of courtship. Beforehand, however, she dutifully reflects on the proper strategies for negotiating the advances of a man she can never marry, weighing the realities of her financial situation as well as the rules of discretion and propriety:

> —¿Qué puedo hacer en esto? Don Jacinto es bizarro, yo desgraciada; si le respondo, le doy a entender que estimo su cuidado; si no respondo, dejo la puerta abierta a mayores atrevimientos…¡Pues muera yo a manos de mi dolor, y no mueran en mí mis obligaciones!
>
> Con esta valiente—aunque necia—resolución, abrió la ventana, y visto la esperaba, llamándole en tono bajo, llegó a celebrar su dicha; y sin responderle, rompiendo el papel, se le tiró, diciendo:
>
> —A semejantes atrevimientos respondo de esta suerte. (150, ellipsis in original)

Since her silence might be construed as acceptance, approval, or vacillation, Beatriz takes action. Although she has amorous feelings for Jacinto, "muera yo a manos de mi dolor," she invokes "mis obligaciones" in order to silence her suitors's amorous discourse through bold rejections bordering on humiliation. She will not permit silence be mistaken for a romantic *galardón*, or gesture from the beloved. Beatriz faces her own fear and

confusion surrounding love and courtship by using her noble "obligaciones" as the impetus for action.

Other female characters in Mariana de Carvajal's courtship novels also feel the burden of "obligaciones" to propriety, though in many cases, the protocols demand compliance with male wishes. In Beatriz's case, however, her first "obligaciones" fall to propriety, rather than to her lover. In this way, she may at first seem to go against the grain of a thesis proposing that women's sense of obligation coerces them into unequal partnerships with men. However, Beatriz weds Jacinto in the end, due to the matchmaking magic of her mother and Jacinto's uncle Pedro, which ultimately leaves her locked in an unevenly yoked partnership, regarding which her mother laments: "Sólo me pesa de no tener un millón de darle [a Pedro], pues Beatriz será la dichosa" (176). Beatriz will always be the lucky one in the relationship; at once rescued by benevolent forces and made cognizant of the conjugal debt she owes Jacinto and his family for taking her on for free. Thus, the so-called female agency that Shifra Armon posits as occurring in courtship novels actually only resides in the strategic choices of the elderly matchmaking women: Juana and Lucrecia in the frame story, and Guiomar in "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)."[20] Throughout the tale, Beatriz's obligatory pride and dignity, "mis obligaciones," dictate her angry rejections of Jacinto's gifts. Interpreting these actions as greater female agency, however, overlooks the "obligaciones" that anchor Beatriz to her course. In the end, her performance of resistance proves futile alongside the

[20] Matilde may have some agency within the liminal spaces of the Mediterranean and in her shifting identity as civilian, slave, and princess, but she is only 10 years old in "El esclavo de su esclavo." Thus, like the other female protagonists in the *Navidades,* she dutifully does as her adult (Christian) counterparts tell her.

wishes of her elders. The group assures her that her marriage to Jacinto will in fact take place, and Beatriz, bedridden and feverish, yields obediently. Thus, her agency comes second to her obligation. To be sure, the frame story's party guests, who have just heard the story told aloud, applaud the lady's tenacity and dedication to decorum: "Acabado el suceso, se detuvieron a celebrar la venganza de don Jacinto, aunque no le quitaron a doña Beatriz el aplauso merecido, pues, atenta a su calidad y *obligaciones*, quiso más morir de su pena que faltar a su *decoro*" (177, my emphasis). The message is clear: when it comes to erotic exchange among the Spanish nobility, death before indecency.

His and hers hankies

Beatriz is not the only one who swoons, however. Both she and Jacinto have their share of fevers, shocks, stumbles, and anxious exchanges over one another throughout the text. One steamy day, enraged by her rival's flirtatious comments to Jacinto while the group walks through the countryside, Beatriz trips and stumbles: "Enfadóse tanto doña Beatriz de verla [Leonor] tan desahogada que tropezó de unas chinelillas que traía" (155). When courteous Jacinto runs to aid Beatriz and gently squeezes her hand in amorous demonstration, she swats him away and the young man swoons himself. Remorseful, Beatriz offers her scented handkerchief to the sensitive Jacinto: "—Este viene rociado y el buen olor le sosegará." He replies by giving her his own clean hanky to make the exchange official: "Alargó la mano el afligido mancebo, y limpiándose el rostro con él, *para reconocer si era favor* sacó el que traía en el bolsillo" (my emphasis). Jacinto uses the awkward moment (she stumbles, he swoons) to exchange material items, and in this way the youth attempts to gauge whether or not Beatriz bestows favor upon him, or just

her hanky. As the lady gives him no sign, simply taking his handkerchief without speaking, he continues his cautious advances and presses his suit throughout the day. For example, when the widow Leonor casually gives Jacinto a carnation she has picked that afternoon, he politely accepts it, but almost immediately regifts the flower to Beatriz by placing it in her chestnut curls. The indignant lady whips around, grabs the carnation, and tears it to pieces right in front of Jacinto, just as she did with his love letter, and just as she promised she would do with any "semejantes atrevimientos" (150). She knows Leonor is the original giver of the gift, which only serves to incite additional ire. Once Beatriz has hurled the flower pieces to the ground, the young man finally gets up enough courage to say to her: "Crueles son las damas de Toledo." Beatriz hotly retorts: "Y los andaluces muy atrevidos" (156). So far, the lovers have exchanged only their respective handkerchiefs, and not very lovingly at that.

That evening, Jacinto selects a special item to bestow upon Beatriz: a juicy, aromatic bergamot pear, "por ser una de ellas digna de darla a su dueño" (158). Unfortunately, the hotheaded lady assumes Jacinto's sensuous love token is another regifted amorous item from her enemy: "presumiendo que doña Leonor se la había dado, la sacó y tiró a la calle. Y sin esperar, se entró en su casa." Beatriz treats the bergamot pear as violently as she treats all her suitor's other offerings, though her jealousy toward Leonor more passionately fuels the categorical rejection of Jacinto's amorous advances. He remains unaware of her true emotions, however, throughout his subsequent approaches, amorous confessions, and dangerous fevers suffered due to Beatriz's fits of temper. Finally, when both Beatriz and Leonor are attending the young man's sickbed (Beatriz has been obligated by her mother), Beatriz acts jealously and the invalid

instantly revives, reasoning that his beloved's show of emotion proves that she cares for him. He then crafts a plan to ensnare the lady by treating her very rival as an intimate and announcing to Beatriz by letter that his marriage to the widow Leonor will be her fault, not his: "y si trato de casarme con ella, culpe su condición y no mi mudanza. Y pues tiene la culpa de sus celos, quédese con ellos, que celos vengan desprecios" (170). Jacinto strategically performs erotic intimacy with another woman in order to up the ante and call Beatriz's bluff. He hopes that by exposing her real feelings for him, the lady will be coerced into giving up her defensive performance. Beatriz rips the letter that accuses her of jealousy to shreds, of course, but she also swoons and goes into a fever, alarming the entire neighborhood, and causing Jacinto to believe that his erotic subterfuge has killed his one true love.

From *pera bergamota* to *poma engarzada*

Jacinto and Beatriz continue to argue and scold one another even as the girl recovers in her sickbed. Jacinto's uncle, Pedro, observes his nephew's passionate angst over Beatriz and decides the only way for the couple to woo peaceably is to marry. Pedro takes matters into his own hands by sending Beatriz "una piedra a modo de poma engarzada en oro asida a una bandilla . . . con otros regalos (173)." According to the text, the other ladies envy Beatriz her valuable gift, "aunque doña Leonor no presumió que llegaría a casamiento." More than just another decorative golden apple, however, the gift from Jacinto's benefactor proves medicinal: "una piedra bezal y una uña, para que se la ponga sobre el corazón." The antidotal bezoar stone and the exotic mollusk shell will cure her heart, that is, her lovesickness and her amorous fever, through their topical

application. Thus, Pedro steps in to make Beatriz well physically, as well as to make the amorous match for his nephew. When Beatriz's mother complains to Pedro that she has no dowry with which to marry off her daughter, the wealthy gentleman merely replies: "No he menester riqueza, bástame su calidad y virtud" (176). Thus, once again, the parental figures decide upon the romantic outcomes of their younger family members, as in the frame story of the *Navidades* as well as in *La Dorotea*. All versions of matchmaking elders shape the hearts and minds of their charges, often extolling the virtues of the girl next door or talking up the nicest boy in the neighborhood before the would-be lovers have even laid eyes on each other. Obedient children comply with their parents' wishes and are therefore 'good' children as well as 'good' aristocrats who act in the interest of family honor and noble lineage.

At the outset of the "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)," Beatriz believes that her poverty precludes a licit alliance with the wealthy Jacinto, which frustrates and angers the lady since her nobility of character, or "calidad," is authentically elite: "fue hija de un caballero del hábito, de lo más noble de Portugal" (144). However, the scholar, painter, and churchman, Pedro, who goes to Rome as a youth to pull himself and his family up by his bootstraps, recognizes in Beatriz the qualities of nobility, modesty, and virtue. He states to Jacinto when the youth arrives in Toledo: "Y lo mejor que tiene es el recato, porque doña Beatriz es tan esquiva que tiene fama de mal acondicionada" (144). Pedro understands through personal experience the trials of a noble *familia venida a menos*, or a fallen aristocratic family, but he also knows "una honrada familia" can be restored to its former glory in many ways. Whether the Spanish nobility paints frescoes, embroiders cassocks, or reclines in opulence, the most important

factor for choosing a bride proves to be "su calidad y virtud" (176). "No he menester riqueza," if money already abounds. Thus, Carvajal's fairy tale ending serves to fulfill the amorous fantasies of more than a conventionally aristocratic readership. Readers from a middle class background and women without large dowries can identify with the Cinderella character of Beatriz and thereby emulate her decorum in love. The irony lies in the fact that the impoverished lady refuses to be "bought" by the gifts of her suitor, but then allows herself to be sold into marriage by her mother. When the erotic exchange falls into the hands of the elders, the commercial aspect of courtship becomes misrecognized as familial duty, or "obligaciones," which de-sexualizes and de-commodifies Beatriz's end as the ultimate erotic gift to wealthy suitor Jacinto.

Catherine Bates claims in *The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature* that the social practice of courtship is chaotic, while the institution of marriage is controlled. Bates quotes Congreve when she writes: "courtship is to marriage as 'a very witty prologue to a very dull play'" (20). The practices of courtship confuse and delight due to their instability, playfulness, and creativity. Lovers become sentimental and agonistic; they make leaps of faith in order to trust their own—often out of character—anxious amorous actions. Moreover, erotic gifts and messages can have multiple interpretations once exchanged, intensifying the drama of the amorous scenarios in question. For example, a white musk rose given as a love token at a courtly ball displays male romantic interest as well as the potential for a mixed race marriage, but the same erotic gift object also signifies sexual purity, nobility of class, and the disguised religious identity of the suitor. Mariana Carvajal's courtship novels are no exception to Bates's generalization regarding the allure of courtly love plots. The *Navidades de*

Madrid depicts the excitement of the chase and the chaos of the erotic encounter. Yet, as Shifra Armon points out, the *Navidades* also rehearses the inevitable material comforts, status, and stability that noble alliances bring to aristocratic families. The exhausting exhibitions of courtesy between lovers and their closely knit communities confirms that Carvajal's readership sought examples of successful, aristocratic courtship as part of their textual instruction and grooming. In addition to serving as a courtesy manual for courtship protocols, however, the *Navidades* can also function as leisurely and literary entertainment. The precise extent to which Carvajal's novellas were read as either practical self-help treatises or wish-fulfilling escapism may never be determined. At a time when notions of nobility, literature, and money were shifting in the early modern world, the didactic aspect of the text may be read as rhetorical and literary, as well as technical and practical, rather than one or the other.

Nieves Romero-Díaz reminds us that Covarrubias himself cannot escape from the ideological conflict surrounding definitions of nobility. In her conclusion to *Nueva nobleza, nueva novella: reescribiendo la cultura urbana del barroco*, Romero-Díaz remarks that the nobility is a continually changing social group as well as shifting linguistic sign. Whereas Covarrubias begins by defining the term *noble* as "hidalgo y bien nacido" in his 1611 *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, he also adds in brackets to his definition: "Aquel es noble que, cuando no hubiera nacido noble, por sus hazañas y virtudes, no sólo llega a serlo pero a ser principio de que lo sean todos sus descendientes; y así no hay que alabarte de tu linaje, pues quien alaba su nobleza cosas ajenas alaba, no cosas suyas" (qtd. in Romero-Díaz 179). After questioning the idea of nobility as achieved through bloodlines ("bien nacido") in his bracketed pontifications, Covarrubias

merely reaffirms the cultural construct of virtue as inherited through birthright and lineage ("ser principio de que lo sean todos sus descendientes"). Likewise, Carvajal's tale "La industria vence desdenes (Celos vengan desprecios)" proves equally paradoxical. The story suggests that an artisan family can be noble in character even as they earn money through painting or sewing; yet the message is undercut by copious exposition detailing each family's conventionally aristocratic legacy: families remain quintessentially noble in lineage, just impoverished economically. Still, if the *Navidades* is a didactic manual for elite women, as Shifra Armon claims, the rules of courtship are not always consistent. Even as the author represents codified erotic protocols for courting couples, the shifting caveats in definitions of wealth, birthright, and social class allow for slippage in the amorous discourses of love, sex, courtship, and marriage.

The marriageable female characters in the *Navidades de Madrid*, however, remain consistently coerced into gendered erotic exchanges and unequal power relationships due to a socially-constructed, specifically female sense of obligation. Women's unquestioned observance of social decorum and filial obedience make them complicit in their own exchange as gift objects; young ladies are thus given and received between powerful families or political allies in order to maintain aristocratic social hegemony.

~

Pintabanlas jovenes doncellas

. . . riendose, por el gozo, contento,

y alegria, con que hemos de dar . . .

—from Covarrubias's definition of *gracias*

Conclusion: Against *Gracias*

Reading gift theorists' and historians' work in tandem with literary sources from seventeenth-century Spain, the present study has worked toward a particularly Spanish theory of the gift. By inquiring into the poetics of erotic gifting in particular, I aim to build a foundation for future theories of the gift in a broader Spanish context as well as encourage critical strides toward a more historicized gift poetics in early modern Spain. Notions of courtliness and courtesy have been juxtaposed here with notions of obligation, debt, and interest under the auspices of exploring and interpreting the value(s) of the erotic gift. The interpretations of gift acts in early modern Spanish literature and culture work to address the overarching question: *What does the gift do?* Answers are found in the interplay of early modern erotic discourse, Spanish social protocols and material culture, as well as the creative power of diverse Spanish writers. Through their representation of gifts, we may delve into the context and subtext of amorous exchange between lovers, a first step in assembling a greater poetics of the gift in early modern Spain.

The historian Natalie Zemon Davis has explored instances of the early modern gift in theory and in praxis, positing that the meaning and value of gifts changed over time as gift registers became overburdened with obligation and self-interest. Starting with

Davis's provocative premise that early modern European societies experienced a crisis of the gift when unquestioned assumptions about giving, receiving, and reciprocating became problematic, I argue that a heightened sense of obligation pushed Spaniards to perform excessive largesse as well as gratuitous indebtedness to one another, thereby generating anxiety over potential manipulation or deceit at the moment of exchange. As nascent capitalist notions of infinite credit, future profit, and exponential interest incorporated themselves into the early modern worldview, seventeenth-century Spanish society echoed the new economic discourse through cultural expressions of superfluity and ostentation, even as intellectuals and artists questioned the function of the new values. Thus, a growing rhetoric of excess pervaded early modern culture and society, weighing upon exchange networks and complicating the "misrecognition" of the politics and poetics behind gift giving. The baroque insistence on excess parallels the increasing consciousness in baroque society that no gift comes for free, and that the gifting cycle continues to signify "perpetual thralldom" (Weber, notes). In the sixteenth century, Antonio Guevara imagines gratuitousness as still possible in the rustic *aldea*, but in the seventeenth century the strategic underpinnings of the gift system have grown more apparent. The collective social blindness to gifts as obligatory and coercive gestures begins to break down. In Lope de Vega's *La Dorotea*, a willingness to misrecognize gifts is critical to the game of love; thus, the fact that gift misrecognition may be untenable leads to disappointment and sadness. In contrast, María de Zayas shows that a greater awareness of the foolishness of over-gifting is not sad, but rather paramount to women's liberation from oppressive societal norms.

Initially, I wanted to show in this investigation how disinterestedness, liberality, and free volition gave way to the heavy social burdens of obligation and coercion in the amorous registers of early modern Spain. Nonetheless, charting the arc of early modern gift practices proves more complicated than drawing a progressive line from archaic societies based on gift exchange to modern societies based on the free market system (Mauss). The gift register was not snuffed out by *laissez faire* capitalism; gifts continue to be a vital part of our "economy of practices" (Bourdieu) and have the same functions as always, i.e. to coerce, to delight, to surprise. If gift practices shifted in their meanings in seventeenth-century Spain, those anxious reciprocities were a symptom of an overall social crisis—stemming from economic crisis, obsequious social climbing, overwhelming *obligación*—and were not necessarily *caused* by a crisis within the gift register. Perhaps the gift is in a perpetual crisis.

At the outset of this investigation, I also proposed several broad, theoretical questions about gift giving. When is a gift "free," if ever? Who benefits and how? What is at stake? What is lost? In her prologue to Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*, Mary Douglas, author of *Purity and Danger*, boldly declares, "No Free Gifts," which is to say two things. First of all, "free gifts" are actually an impossibility; there are *always* strings attached to a gift, obliging the recipient to the donor. Second, there *ought not* to be any free gifts given, since the donor's unilateral move will always degrade the recipient. Douglas stresses that any gift, no matter how spontaneous or generous, necessarily puts the recipient at a disadvantage until the opportunity to reciprocate arises. In the case of courtship, however, seventeenth-century women found themselves at a double loss in the gifting game. Due to their gendered confinement to the home, the loom, and the *estrado*,

young women had limited agency within the social practices of erotic exchange. In examples from seventeenth-century Spanish literature, male suitors perform liberality and agonistic gifting while ladies are constrained and easily conquered by trifles, reciprocating with coerced, gendered *gracias* due to their uniquely female sense of obligation. In this way, erotic gifts function to lay claim on a woman, the gift object itself marking male territory merely by virtue of being given. Women compensate for their lack of equivalency with men in the gifting game by performing increased tractability and deference to male wishes. The requisite *gracias* on the woman's part may range from polite verbal thanks to a protracted sexual agreement. Females thus find themselves ensnared in the trap of exhibiting skewed, gendered *gracias* under the double obligation of their gift debt as well as their sex. Men's excessive amorous gifting to women—and the subsequent social pressure to then reciprocate those gifts, also in excess—triggers a gendered anxiety around erotic exchanges. The fact that women suffered doubly the burden of obligation by virtue of their gender has been demonstrated by all the case studies in the present investigation, leading me to conclude that *gracias*, gendered as they were, served to degrade female social status, rather than mark equivalency with male gift givers.

Fifty years after the publication of Mauss's *Essai sur le don*, Gayle Rubin presented her famous essay, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," which uses Mauss's work as a starting point for explaining how male-dominated societies exclude women from the patriarchal system and instead trade females as a commodity. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss notes in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* that in archaic societies the marriage market is often the only avenue for establishing the social

worth of females. Since clans forge family alliances through the giving and receiving of their women, females act as vessels through which mutual trust and support are maintained between otherwise disparate groups. Females' ability to participate in erotic gifting on equal ground with males is thereby reduced to silence, objectification, and compliance with patriarchal authority. The erotic gift thus misrecognizes the fact that, within the amorous equation, the woman is neither giver nor reciprocator but the very object of exchange. The trace left by the lady's gendered *gracias* within the gifting game marks her obligatory complicity in the systematic social oppression of women such as herself. Early modern discourses of love, sex, courtship, and marriage exploit gendered difference through the social practices of erotic exchange.

Gendered *Gracias*: a final analysis

Sebastian Covarrubias's multivalent term *Gracias* may be read as in keeping with ancient Greco-Roman ideologies around gift giving cycles, yet his gloss also expands upon the ancient definition in several new ways. Covarrubias's rendering of *Gracias* in the *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (1611) binds givers and receivers into a more legalistic and potentially punitive gifting arrangement. Furthermore, Covarrubias includes the prescribed melodramatic gestures—literal and figurative—that accompany a quintessentially Spanish gifting performance: the allegorical *Gracias* purposefully flaunt their faces so that their gifting transparency can be seen by all. Alternatively, one *Gracia* turns away deferentially in order to misrecognize the gift, accepting humbly any gift benefits received and all gift sacrifices made. Covarrubias also prescribes the giving of copious thanks, openly and manifestly recognizing (misrecognizing?) the social bonds

created by gifts. The prescriptive nature of the definition reveals that while gifts ought to be circulated in this allegorical way, the implication is that the gifting cycle sometimes falters and even fails completely. In the allegorical image, the *Gracias* pose in a balanced tripartite configuration within which gifts continually circulate. Nonetheless, after analyzing instances of erotic exchange from early modern Spanish verse, novel-in-dialogue, amorous tales, and courtship novels; and after ferreting out the more insidious elements of the titillating erotic gift, one particular aspect of Covarrubias's definition stands out more boldly than any other. Given the present study's declared position "against" the problematics of specifically gendered *gracias*, the definition below will be best read for its embedded visual, textual, and more general bias "against" females. The prescriptive nature of gifting weighs heavily on early modern Spain, burdening society with its superfluous excesses. Yet it must also be noted that these generous, deferential *Gracias* are all women. The *Gracias'*s gendered practices of giving and receiving are thus on display for all to critique and categorize:

> GRACIAS, fingieron los poetas haber tres doncellas dichas Gracias, y con el nombre Griego . . . , *charités*, . . . , *a laetitica*, la una se dijo Aglaya, la segunda Thalia, y la tercera Euphrosine, hijas de Jupiter, y de Eurynomes, y segun otros de Venus y Bacco. La razon que hubo para que fuesen tres, es, porque la una hace la gracia, y da el don la otra le recibe, y la tercera vuelve la paga del beneficio recibido. Pintabanlas jovenes doncellas, porque la memoria del beneficio recibido por ningun tiempo se ha de envejecer, riendose, por el gozo, contento, y alegria, con que hemos de dar, y como las dos dellas esten vueltas de rostro para quien las mira. La otra esta de espaldas, dandonos a entender que de la gracia que

> recibieremos, hemos de dar muchas gracias, y reconocerla manifiestamente, y del beneficio y gracias que nosotros hicieremos, hemos de olvidarnos, por no dar en rostro con el al que le recibe: estan desnudas, porque lo que se da ha de ser sin cobertura, ni disfraz, pretendiendo interiormente en nuestro animo alguna recompensa, estan todas tres trabadas de las manos, dando a entender que el hacer gracias, y recibirlas entre los amigos, ha de ser con perpetuidad, y con una trabazon indisoluble, acudiendo siempre en las ocasiones a lo que obliga la amistad. (Covarrubias 929)

The *Gracias* are first and foremost an allegory, a creative representation of the human cycles of giving. Yet, the present study has found gendered *gracias* and *Gracias* folded into poetic descriptions of Góngora's mythically divine Galatea, coerced from Lope's *estrado*-bound Dorotea, feigned by Zayas's diamond-clad Lisis, and successfully performed by Carvajal's child bride slave princess, Matilde. In this way, Spanish authors represent female protagonists in the same way that Covarrubias depicts the gendered *Gracias* above: "pintabanlas jovenes doncellas." Each female, whether allegorical, lyrical, or both, must be "riendose, por el gozo, contento, y alegria, con que hemos de dar," demonstrating deferential and appropriate *gracias* for her deserving male suitors. Additionally, not only the allegorical figures themselves (*Gracias*) but the gendered grateful responses (*gracias*) from women "estan desnudas, porque lo que se da ha de ser sin cobertura." The early modern heroines of Spanish literature exhibit their grateful *gracias* ad infinitum under their gendered obligation, coerced through the double burden of their sex and over-gifting males. Thus, Covarrubias's (and Seneca's) allegorical Graces are a picture of perfect feminine decorum, receiving graciously and reciprocating

modestly, yet they are simultaneously a troupe of naked dancing girls, happily acquiescing in all situations "a lo que obliga la amistad." The present study thus positions itself "against" the double standard of gendered *gracias*, "against" the injustice inherent in representations of women and gifting, and "against" the continued practice of bankrupting females through skewed cultural values and antequated social codes.

Don Quijote's own lady love, Dulcinea, ends up being somewhat less tractable than he first imagines her in the Sierra Morena. Dulcinea does not embroider silken garments for her courtly lover, nor blush when he comes in her presence. Rather, when the knight and Sancho finally come upon a donkey-riding wench on the outskirts of El Toboso, the so-called lady Dulcinea fails to manifest appropriate *gracias* for Don Quijote's many knightly services rendered. Even as he professes his soulful, Neo-Platonic adulation, she "thanks" him only to get out of her way and leave her alone: "Apártense, y déjenmos ir, y agradecérselo hemos" (II, 10). Without her ideal feminine *gracias*, the lady of Don Quijote's dreams, like Lope's Dorotea or Zayas's Lisis, becomes disappointing, ironic, and treacherously human.

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...why the Graces are three in number, why they are sisters, why hand in hand, and why they are smiling and young, with a loose and transparent dress. Some writers think that there is one who bestows a benefit, one who receives it, and a third who returns it; others say that they represent the three sorts of benefactors, those who bestow, those who repay, and those who both receive and repay them. But take whichever you please to be true; what will this knowledge profit us? What is the meaning of this dance of sisters in a circle, hand in hand? It means that the course of a benefit is from hand to hand, back to the giver; that the beauty of the whole chain is lost if a single link fails, and that it is fairest when it proceeds in unbroken regular order.

—*Seneca,* On Benefits