Creating with Anger: Contemplating Vendetta. An Analysis of Anger in Italian and Spanish Women Writers of the Early Modern Era

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CREATING WITH ANGER: CONTEMPLATING VENDETTA.
AN ANALYSIS OF ANGER IN ITALIAN
AND SPANISH WOMEN WRITERS OF THE EARLY MODERN ERA

By
LUISANNA SARDU CASTANGIA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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CREATING WITH ANGER: CONTEMPLATING VENDETTA. AN ANALYSIS OF ANGER IN ITALIAN AND SPANISH WOMEN WRITERS OF THE EARLY MODERN ERA.

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In the vast gamut of human emotions, anger is one of the most complex, provocative, and enduring. From Greek philosophers working in antiquity to today’s most recent theories on emotions, most scholars agree that anger has a multifaceted nature. This near universal agreement across the barriers of time and geography stems from the following facts: in order to exist, anger involves the participation of other emotions; anger does not have an opposite; anger leads an individual to engage in an act of self-analysis and in an evaluation of other individuals; and, finally, anger inspires action to right a wrong that has been perceived as injustice. This sense of perceived injustice is what leads to the creation of vendetta for the women writers I analyze in my dissertation. They achieve their vendetta through their act of writing, as they themselves often assert. Like all vendetta, theirs grows from a sense of constant injustice and systematic subjugation. Unlike traditional vendetta however, these women, because of their status within society as women, could not take direct action to right these perceived wrongs. Their need for revenge therefore had to be fulfilled entirely through the written word, with their poems, plays, novels and short stories serving as the vehicles through which their anger could be delivered. This dissertation investigates the connection between anger and the act of writing. Specifically, it attempts to explore how anger served as a vital catalyst that prompted early modern women writers to engage in the act of writing.
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INTRODUCTION TO DISSERTATION

In the vast gamut of human emotions, anger is one of the most complex, provocative, and enduring. From Greek philosophers working in antiquity to today’s most recent theories on emotions, most scholars agree that anger has a multifaceted nature. This near universal agreement across the barriers of time and geography stems from the following facts: in order to exist, anger involves the participation of other emotions; anger does not have an opposite; anger leads an individual to engage in an act of self-analysis and in an evaluation of other individuals; and, finally, anger inspires action to right a wrong that has been perceived as injustice. This sense of perceived injustice is what leads to the creation of vendetta for the women writers I analyze in my dissertation. They achieve their vendetta through their act of writing, as they themselves often assert. Like all vendetta, theirs grows from a sense of constant injustice and systematic subjugation. Unlike traditional vendetta however, these women, because of their status within society as women, could not take direct action to right these perceived wrongs. Their need for revenge therefore had to be fulfilled entirely through the written word, with their poems, plays, novels and short stories serving as the vehicles through which their anger could be delivered.

This dissertation investigates the connection between anger and the act of writing. Specifically, it attempts to explore how anger served as a vital catalyst that prompted early modern women writers to engage in the act of writing. In a larger context, it seeks to ascertain how the texts of some early modern women writers affected their audience. In order to do so, it is important to gain an understanding of the role of emotions as tools of persuasion in the act of writing. The effort to persuade an audience has constantly been a primary concern of writers. My dissertation
focuses on the production of Gaspara Stampa (1523-1553), Isabella di Morra (c.1520-1545), María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-1661), and Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán (1618-1684). I seek to explain the process through which these early modern women writers worked to affect the minds and judgments of their audiences.

Each woman author wrote of her personal experience with love and pain, hopes and dreams, and her relationship to her geographic setting or the people in her life. Anger was the catalyst that provoked these women to write. It was the driving force that compelled action, and through which they hoped to affect the minds of their readers. Through their writing, which was compelled by their anger, they spoke of myriad other emotions, including love, longing, fear, abandonment, and a sense of loss. These women experienced and wrote about a broad range of emotions which were equally important as anger; these emotions shaped their identities and their understanding of their world, while anger itself was the emotion that provoked these women to take action, and write. Through their work, these women engaged in a series of critical analyses of themselves, as well as the individuals and circumstances that determined the course of their lives, including their lovers, fathers, or their community. Of the myriad of emotions expressed in their work, anger, in particular, is the emotion that pushes each author to constantly and consciously view their circumstances through a confrontational lens and often see others as their opponents or rivals. Many theories on emotions have suggested that the manifestation of anger as a self-evaluation involves as well the analysis of one’s opponent.

According to Plato, humans have a need to see those whom they perceive as rivals forced to endure the same humiliation or to experience the same fear that they provoke in them. This allows us to confirm that we are in a better position than our opponents by comparison. Similarly, the early modern women writers that I analyze in my dissertation demonstrate this kind of
comparison between themselves and the societies in which they lived. Their work suggests that they possessed both a constant awareness of themselves as female writers, as well as a cognizance of their opponent, often identified as the patriarchal misogyny of their time. Their writings are indeed addressed to different male figures who serve, at least in part, to embody the patriarchal members of early modern society. The anger expressed in their writing often leads directly to a desire for revenge, expressed as a desire to reinstate balance in the women writers’ life, or a desire for justice.

In antiquity, both Plato and Aristotle highlighted the role of anger as a necessary tool to maintain balance and stability in society. However, throughout both antiquity and much of the Middle Ages, women’s anger was relegated to a separate sphere from that of men. The anger of women was widely viewed during antiquity as uncontrollable and irrational, a result of a feminine nature that was considered inherently weak and overtly emotional. Women’s anger was perceived as lacking any degree of justice and unjustifiable, a cause of embarrassment and shame for themselves and their families. On the contrary, men’s anger was understood as a process of rational decision-making, justified by political and military necessity, and as a tool used to restore order within a community and earn them respect in the eyes of society. The inherent misogyny contained in this viewpoint was a widespread commonplace in the classical and the early modern era.

Greek and Roman ideas on women’s emotional inferiority contributed to the formation of medieval thought on women, and shaped early modern perceptions of femininity. In my dissertation, I argue that this misogynistic view of women’s emotions, particularly that of anger, is demonstrable untrue. Instead of being irrational, overly emotional, and potentially dangerous, the anger expressed in the writings of the early modern women authors analyzed in this work is a just and reasoned response to their perception of the injustice of their circumstances. By writing
reasoned, persuasive verses that used anger as a catalyst, these women writers sought to affect their audience’s judgment. Through their writing, these early modern women writers helped their audiences gain a greater insight into the root causes of their anger, and to understand that their anger was not grounded in their natural disposition as women, but that it was inspired by an awareness of their standing within society. For women, education and writing became the tools through which they argued against misogyny, worked to affect their audience’s judgment, and took part to the literary discourse of their time. Women began to exercise what the Aristotelian tradition reserved to men only, namely, the *ars oratoria*, or the art of persuasion.

According to Thomas Aquinas, anger does not have a specific opposite correlate, in the same way that love and hate, or happiness and sadness have. Instead, anger involves the interaction of several opposing emotions, and it is therefore a mixed emotion. Because anger can be understood as a desire for revenge, it also usually comprises hatred, which manifests as the desire to harm another individual, and, therefore, contains evil intent. However, according to Aristotle anger also often involves a desire for revenge, which, falls under the umbrella of justice because it is derived from the desire to right a perceived wrong, and, therefore, anger can also be said to contain positive intent. Early modern women writers express the duplicitous nature of anger in their writing, as they often wish evil upon their opponents, while simultaneously demonstrating a desire for justice by invoking their audience’s attention and explaining their point of view. Although they could not achieve vengeance through physical force, they quenched their thirst for justice by writing, hoping that they would invoke the sympathy and compassion of their audience. By affecting the thinking and the minds of both their female and male readers, they hoped to make society understand and appreciate their educational prowess, and their desire for recognition in the literary world a world traditionally dominated by men.
From antiquity to the early modern period, the woman’s role was considered fundamental only because of her function as “container” in the constitution of a family and in the reproduction of the human species. Her physical and psychological inferiority was justified scientifically and medically during antiquity. Her body, perceived as the incomplete form of the male body, was object of intense scrutiny. A woman’s body could provide nourishment to a fetus, but only because it was believed the female form was composed of cold and wet matter, and that it was dominated by water (phlegmatic), which were functionally similar to soil, nourishing a seed. Antiquity viewed the female body as a sponge, soft and absorbent. It was thought to be imperative that a woman’s womb should remain moist, for its moisture anchored it in place, in her body, and prevented it from “wandering” throughout the body, which was a fate that was believed to be lethal. This understanding of a woman’s biology was translated by antiquity into a general understanding of a woman’s role in society. Women, it was believed, were incapable of controlling themselves, and the “wandering woman” was believed to be as dangerous to the stability and wellbeing of society as the wandering womb was to the health of a woman. It was therefore considered necessary to restrain women, both physically and intellectually, from engagement in public life.

Classical thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Galen, and Seneca, and so on, were in agreement that while anger in general could have devastating consequences for society, the anger of women was particularly destructive. The intense scrutiny and control exerted over the bodies and minds of women resulted in centuries of appropriation of women’s emotions, and consequently, resulted in a double standard in understanding the role of emotions in a community. These beliefs continued through the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Interpretations of the Bible by Christian
theologians caused to be categorized as one of the seven deadly sins, along with greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony.

Despite the longstanding tradition of restraining women physically and intellectually, increasing access to education allowed women throughout the middle and early modern era to gain a greater understanding of their social status. The burgeoning of Humanism, which led to the translation of Latin literature into the vernacular, helped to speed the process of women’s awakening and self-evaluation. This access to education allowed women to respond to the misogyny of their era, which they perceived as unjust, by means of written word. Additionally, access to education allowed women to have the opportunity to read and learn about the manner in which society viewed their bodies and their emotions. With this new knowledge, women used the written word to fight back, and to attempt to reinstate a sense of balance by affecting the judgment of their readers.

The present introduction aims to offer a general explanation of my subject and the theoretical framework I intend to utilize. Differences and connections between the authors’ lives and literary genres will be presented and developed in the chapters that follow in order to create a broader contextual subtext for the representation of anger in the authors’ works, and their subsequent ability to affect their readers.

In the first and second chapters, I present a synthesis of the perception of anger in ancient philosophy and its foundations in Greek thought. Then I present how the Greek and Latin idea of anger and emotions influenced early modern philosophy, and ultimately, I will inform my reader on the development of the most recent scholarship on affect theory and its understanding of anger and emotions. David Konstan argues that Greek literature provides a measureless body of data for
researching emotions, suggesting that literary texts are “real communicative products that depict and induce emotional response, often across cultural and historical periods.” (12) By analyzing Greek philosophical literature on emotions, I will attempt to shed light on how the social hierarchical order of Aristotle’s time developed. This order encompasses relations between master and servant, husband and wife, and individuals and their subordinates within society. Greeks did not conceive of emotions as internal states of turmoil, but rather as tools from which to derive their interpretations of other individuals’ actions, words, and thoughts. Therefore, in the analysis of emotions, the art of persuasion was central in literature, as well as in the *ars oratoria*, political gatherings, and any verbal interactions. Aristotle wrote his *Rhetoric* and *Nichomachean Ethics* conditioned by the social community in which emotions operated.

Anger, for instance, is derived from what *we think* is an intentional offense or slight. Aristotle argues that anger can have beneficial effects and can work harmoniously with reason. By analyzing the social aspect and persuasive role of emotions, my dissertation will examine how the representation of anger in the texts of early modern women writers recalls the Aristotelian idea of anger as desire for vengeance. While Aristotle’s perception of revenge involves physically harming those who have caused a perceived slight, early modern women writers used the act of writing itself to embody and fulfill their desire for vengeance. Stampa, di Morra, Zayas, and Guzmán’s reaction against the misogynistic norms of their time, that is, their act of writing, represents their ability to carry out their vendetta.

Anger, understood as pertaining to both reason and passion, is a complex emotion that undergoes further complications during the early modern period. During this time, the tension between reason and passion experiences sudden shifts away from traditional systems of thought. These shifts result from growing criticism of Aristotelianism, constant disagreement with
Scholasticism, and the fractioning of religious beliefs, among other things. The theory of humors of the Hippocratic Galenic medical tradition fed most of the discussion surrounding emotions during the early modern era. Among the popular treatises of the time was Juan Luis Vives’ *De Anima et Vita* (1538, Book III). Anger is given special attention in Vives’ work. According to Vives, anger is caused by an insult or an affront, and can take the form of horrible physical effects on men (*Passions*, 74–75). Interestingly, Vives offers a vast range of examples of anger, asserting that this emotion has “a gamut of cases drawn from the history of culture and from empirical observations from daily life.” (Fantazzi, 310–312) The social dimension of emotions continues to be the primary object of analysis in the study of emotions.

Another dominant contribution to the study of emotions is René Descartes’s *The Passions of the Soul* (1649). In his treatise, the philosopher explains “the manner of the soul’s actions and the passions in the body” (325). Descartes firmly believed that the soul is the mind, the only pure cognitive element, and the body is an unthinking device enslaved by emotions, which he called passions. In regard to anger, Descartes, like others before him, stated that anger involves the interaction of other emotions, including fear, and that anger itself can differ depending on one’s individual personality. Additionally, Descartes’ concept of anger grows from his observation of others, and of his social sphere, thus continuing the tradition of linking the study of emotions with social realities.

The manner in which emotions are shaped by contact with others is the subject of Sara Ahmed’s study on the individual and collective response to social and political events. How do emotions circulate from one body to another? How does anger “stick” to other bodies? When does anger move into public domain? Ahmed answers these questions by criticizing how pain becomes a measure of truth in feminism (172–178). According to Ahmed, women’s suffering, caused by a
male dominated society, provides the foundation for feminism. In order to avoid the fetishization of pain, Ahmed suggests the importance of learning how to read pain in society. According to Ahmed, “responding to pain depends on speaking about pain, and such speech acts are the condition for the formation of a ‘we.’” (174) Pain therefore becomes a communicable affect by means of language. The lyrics and short stories I will analyze in my dissertation narrate a “pain” that cannot be reduced to one person’s story. Rather, they allow us to connect with each author on a very direct and personal level.

Stampa’s use of the pronoun “voi” (you plural), di Morra’s emphasis on “tu” (you singular), Zayas’s stress on violence on women, and Guzmán’s analysis on exposing physical appearance, lay out the conditions for the formation of “we.” The response to pain, and the subsequent call for action, involves anger. The representation of anger in these women’s texts moves outwardly by means of language. The moment anger becomes communicable, it moves outwardly to the public domain; more specifically, to the reader. Breaking from the Aristotelian definition of anger, Ahmed asserts that anger does not necessarily call for revenge (174). However, I believe that the women writers I selected to analyze in my dissertation contemplate vendetta and achieve it through the act of writing itself. Vendetta, which emerges from anger, is early modern women writers’ form of reaction to what they perceive as an unjust slight against their character: the dominant early modern belief in women’s inferiority.

In the third chapter, I analyze a selected number of Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s Petrarchan sonnets. Stampa’s poetry is not simply an example of the Petrarchan themes of unrequited love and abandonment of the self, as many noteworthy scholars highlighted in the last thirty years. Rather, Stampa’s performances become a social and cultural commentary on a woman’s offended honor, which she seeks to restore in the eyes of her audience. Stampa’s anger
continuously calls for her audience’s attention, and this makes her poems less an example of self-expression and more of a strategic literary device that aims to reach “outside” the reader. I argue that emotions lead to a response in the reader. As Émile Durkheim puts it, emotions find a way into us and “organize themselves within us; it thus becomes an integral part of our being and […] this is elevated and magnified” (14). Emotions are not only a force that originates from an individual body; they also hold social body together.

In the second part of the third chapter, I analyze Isabella di Morra’s sonnets. Her lyrics reveal a desire for revenge interlaced with the emotions of hope and fear. This supports the ancient and modern idea that anger involves the combination of multiple emotions. In poem VIII, the author utilizes the leitmotif of death, as she calls for the river Siri to announce her death to her father in France, “Torbido Siri […] fa’ tu noto il mio duolo al padre caro” [Tumultuous Siri (…) inform my dear father of my pain], but resentful for her father’s absence and lack of response she asks the river to agitate its waves with a cruel tempest upon her father’s arrival, “Tosto ch’ei giunga a la sassosa riva[…] inqueta l’onda con crudel procella.” [As soon as he reaches your rocky river (…) agitate your waves with a cruel storm]. In the Rethoric, Aristotle explains that when we are angry, we desire that the other person feel in return the kind of diminishment, belittlement, and offense that caused our anger in the first place. Isabella Di Morra utilizes the Petrarchan motif of the storm and tears, but she adapts it to display her desire for revenge against her father and her wish for him to experience the same “crudel procella” of which she is the victim. It can be argued that the grief portrayed in Isabella Di Morra’s lyrics is actually a camouflage for her anger. On the surface, the female poet’s collection of lyrics uses the Petrarchan melancholic model, while the subtext discloses her fear, hope and anger towards the definitions of gender of her time.
In the fourth chapter, I analyze selected short stories from María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s *Novelas Ejemplares* and *Desengaños Amorosos*. Both collections of Zayas’ short stories deal with violence, deception, abuse, rape, and murder at the hands of men. Scholars of Spanish Baroque literature emphasize that Zayas’ heroines champion women’s ability for intellectual and physical autonomy. In my study, I intend to analyze the short stories in Zayas’ collection of *Desengaños Amorosos*. Certainly, the narrative of violence is Zayas’ primary concern, and in the short stories I intend to analyze, the protagonists enact anger and subsequent vengeance in an attempt to rework the social norms of their time. As Lisa Vollendorf states in her study, María de Zayas’s purpose was “to correct the practices and structures that subordinate women to men” (43). Was Zayas’ agenda to connect with her readers by means of her characters? The discourse here is far more complex, and the standard baroque trope of linking fiction with reality plays a central role in Zayas’s push for a social change. It can be argued that, by means of her characters, the author’s message sought to warn patriarchal society against igniting the anger of women. According to Barbara H. Rosenwein, “the source of emotion, its governing laws, and its consequences are an inseparable part of the social process” (*Communities*, 2). Zayas’ characters identify how the cause and consequence of anger are woven in the social tapestry of early modern Spain.

In the fifth chapter, I analyze the literary works of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán, which offer a remarkable portrayal of the society of her time. The author’s poems have been categorized not only as *poemas de circustancias*, as they reveal significant aspects of her social and private reality, but also as witty examples of satirical and burlesque poetry. Hispanists coined the term *satirico-burlesco* to embrace most of the literary production of the sixteenth century, which indicates a lack of a clear distinction between the two modes. According to Pérez Lasheras, the burlesque emerged as a “subversion of the excessively rigid literary genres of the late sixteenth
This definition of satire suggests that any literary work that utilizes humor or wit to ridicule human weakness, a physical defect, or human institutions, has the goal of persuading the reader of the absurdity of certain social norms. A satire can evoke many emotions, varying from amusement to disdain, from scorn to anger. De Guzmán’s scholars stress that her satirical verse extends across the entire gamut of society, as she takes aim at “men (especially cuckolds) and women (fickle nuns and ageing ladies’ attempts to hold back time), as well as all social ranks from aristocrats to knaves.” (McLaughlin, 170) The witty but cruel treatment of physical defects, for example, has to be placed in the context of the misogynistic tradition of satirizing female ugliness. Undeniably, satire involves an “attack” of some sort, a definition that has been often soothed with the purpose of “correcting, exposing a defect”, with humor. By linking de Guzmán’s satirical verse to the above mentioned women authors, I aim to expose how this female poet inverts the perception of physical attributes traditionally associated with women and utilizes them against the patriarchal oriented society of her time.

Each woman author I analyze in my dissertation has, as her central aim, the goal of evoking a response, emotional and psychological in her readers. Each seeks to affect their judgement, and in so doing, to re-appropriate women’s emotions, especially anger, from the societal trappings of their place and time. The understanding and representation of women’s emotions in early modern literature was derived from the work of the ancients, and sought to minimize the role of women’s emotions in public life for fear that women’s emotions, especially anger, was dangerous and corrosive to society. My dissertation seeks to prove that early modern women authors used the written word to express their anger, and attempted to affect the judgment of their readers, leading to an enlightened understanding of the emotions of women, and the reasons behind their anger.
CHAPTER 1

Anger from Classical to Modern Authorities

Introduction

When Elspeth Probyn asks “what do we want writing to do to our audience?” (Gregg and Seigworth, 71), she appears to echo Aristotle’s aim in the Rhetoric, which is to find the best available means of persuasion, regardless of the subject. To a large extent, Aristotle’s analysis of emotions reveals that in order to capture the attention of an audience, a connection between emotion and reasoned argument is necessary. The ability to persuade is, in fact, one of the main concerns of Aristotelian philosophy, and is still of interest to the most recent scholars of emotions and affect theory. For the purpose of this dissertation I will discuss Gregg and Seigworth’s theory of affect. According to Aristotle, emotions have the power to provoke changes, and, in his words, “are the things on account of which the ones altered differ with respect to their judgment, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain: such are anger, pity, fear, and all similar emotions and their contraries.” (Aristotle, Rhetoric 1378a20–23) The ability of an author to use emotions1 to affect the judgment of his or her readers is evident in texts spanning various ages and literary genres; from Homer’s epics to contemporary affect and cognitive theory. The role of emotions in a work of art is revealed through an investigation of the social and cultural realities of the author’s life. This sort of investigation permits us to comprehend how

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1 The use of the word emotion was popularized in the eighteenth-century philosophical and literary canon, and was used to convey the concept of what modern authors understand to be psychological emotions. During Antiquity and the Early Modern era, the word passion was more commonly utilized to indicate emotion. The concept of passion was widely understood to refer to knowledge of the “self” or of the “other”. My dissertation uses the word emotion as it was understood by early modern writers, and as correspondent to passion.
each emotion is tied to an appraisal of social roles and social hierarchy as perceived and experienced by the author.

Such an evaluation of emotions depicted through social roles is particularly striking in the evaluation of anger in early modern women’s writing. By tracing the development of anger as a literary motif, and the ways in which anger was perceived and related to principles of honor and revenge, this project aims to trail the authors’ common interest in the social dimension of emotions. This interest, first inspired by classical thinking on emotions and morality and reworked by scholars of affect theory, ultimately arrives at the concept of anger as a collective, contagious experience one that can be transmitted through the written word. The women authors I will analyze in the chapters that follow use ideas in place of bodies, and rhetoric in place of physical strength, to effectively transfer their feelings of resentment toward the trappings of patriarchal society and outward onto their reader. In so doing, they seek to inspire action by instilling in their reader similar feelings of anger, resentment, and even hate, leading to a collective experience of injustice that results in a society-wide call for balance, that is, for justice. In the present work, I intend to argue that the emotions projected outwardly in the texts of Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554), Isabella di Morra (c. 1520–1545), María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590–1661), and Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán (1618–1684) contribute to affect the minds of their readers. As with all artistic endeavors, the resulting changes in society were not immediate; but it can certainly be said that these women writers contributed to the gradual altering of perceptions of women’s emotions, and women’s roles in society at large, by laying the literary groundwork through which women could express their anger.
1.1 Emotions in Plato’s thought: Homeric *Thumos* and Reasoned *Thumos*.

In order to better understand the social aspect of emotions during the early modern era, I will start with a brief review of ancient Greek philosophy on the subject of emotion, and their use within the philosophical and literary canon of early modern women writers.

One of the first philosophers to analyze emotions was Plato. In *The Republic*, he sets forth the theory that the soul is comprised of three parts: the reasoning, the spirited, and the appetitive. The reasoning part, he asserts, should govern the entire soul, but it is in continuous struggle with both the appetitive part, which governs sensual desire, and the spirited part, which is primarily responsible for assimilating emotions. Simo Knuuttila states that in his treatment of emotions Plato does not initially consider a possible and constant harmonious balance among the three parts; instead, he separates desire and emotion from the reasoning [logistikon] (18–19). In the *Phaedrus*, Plato offers an image of this internal struggle through the allegory of the charioteer’s horses (246a–254e), where the white and obedient horse always cooperates with the charioteer on the basis of good judgment. The “crooked and lumbering” black horse, by contrast, pulls the chariot towards the delight of sexual activity and other forms of appetites, such as hunger and thirst. The tension between mind and body is further explained in Plato’s *Philebus*, where he discusses how pleasure and pain are intertwined, and how they operate in a process of disintegration and restoration, “a mixture of purely mental sensation” (72, 59d–64b).

Specifically, Socrates leads the character of Protarchus to agree with the idea that “anger, and fear, and regret, and grief, and love, and rivalry, and envy, and similar emotions, are purely mental pains” (60). At the same time, all of these emotions are accompanied by pleasure. Crucial

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2 In book IV of *Republic* Plato names the three parts of the soul *logistikon* (reasoning), *thumoeides* (spirited), and *epithumētikon*. 

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in Plato’s *Philebus* is the notion that feeling pleasure and pain involves the act of recalling physical/bodily reactions.

How does the body store memories of pleasure and pain, according to Plato? When does the body “know” about emotions? Plato differentiates the experience of bodily pleasures and pains from the act of anticipating these pleasures and pains, as “it turns out to be a different kind of pleasure and pain, namely, the expectation that the soul experiences by itself, without the body.” (*Philebus* 32c–32d, pp. 31–32) It is not the pleasant or unpleasant experience of the body that determines the knowledge of our emotions, but our ability to recognize and anticipate such experiences. According to Plato, we recognize our desires and appetites because we anticipate future experiences by means of past occurrences. In his words, “the only opinion we are left with is that the soul makes contact with the filling, and it clearly must do so through memory” (*Philebus* 35c–d, pp. 36–37). Thus, Plato anticipates a modern concept of self-consciousness (or self-awareness) aimed at emphasizing the role of memory in understanding emotions.

In the act of recognizing an emotion, the moment of cognition, or pre-emotion, is an assessment of the mutability of an individual’s life. Simo Knuutila states that the cognitive part “arouses a pleasant or unpleasant feeling and an inclination to act in a certain way” (23). Actions are therefore determined first by the anticipation of emotions, which triggers the memory of a particular experience, and finally by the mind, which is able to manipulate physical changes—such as black bile— in the body. This fundamental and close connection between mind and body by means of memory is further extended to the body of others. In *Philebus*, Plato’s example of envy and joy brings to light the essential role of “the other” as igniter of emotions. By asking, “[...] will not the malicious person display pleasure at this neighbor’s misfortunes”(48b), and continuing with the question, “[...] if we laugh about it, are we pleased or pained by it?” (49e),
Plato explains the concept of mixed pleasure, asserting that it exists at the point where pleasure and pain are interweaved, and highlights how we consciously judge others as our opponents and rivals. For instance, he defines the nature of the ridiculous as opposed to self-knowledge, stating that “[...] the nature of the ridiculous [...] is among the vices, the one with a character that stands in direct opposition to the one recommended by the famous inscription in Delphi [...] know thyself” (48c–48d). Plato seems to suggest that we need to see those people ridicule themselves in order to “know” that we are, in essence, in a relatively better position by comparison. The mixed feeling of pleasure and pain derives from a cognitive act, which will subsequently determine our future actions and decisions. This concept of defining our experience in direct opposition to other individuals is significant for understanding the social roles imposed on early modern women. In the chapters that follow, I will analyze this concept as it relates to the act of writing as a form of resistance for early modern women writers.

In Republic and Philebus, Plato writes of the connection between one individual and another, and between the individual and society as a whole. As he states in Republic, “[...] and so of the individual we may assume that he has the same three principles in his own soul which are found in the State; and he might rightly be described in the same term, because he is affected in the same manner”3 (441c–442d). The analogy between individual and city is further stressed by Plato’s consideration that in order to have a just city, just citizens are necessary. Without them, the community would be corrupted and degraded. In considering the opposition of just versus immoral citizens, Plato suggests the existence of individuals of different temperaments within the same society. Therefore, it is not simply the memories of past experiences, whether pleasant or unpleasant, that contributes to the generation of diverse emotions, but also the constant

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3 In this passage, Plato is referring to the tripartite theory of soul: the logical, the high-spirited, and the appetite.
awareness of the presence of other individuals, and of the boundaries that we establish with them. Plato and Aristotle were mainly interested in the political boundaries between a lower and an upper class, and between the individual and his subordinates. Therefore, emotions such as envy, love, grief, fear, anger, and so on are fundamental to understanding the identity of a society and its members. Anger, specifically, was understood by Plato and Aristotle as a complex social event, one with broader public and private expressions relative to other emotions.

In book IV of *Republic*, Plato dedicates a large space to the emotion of anger by postulating that it often finds expression as desire for revenge. In Homer’s *Iliad* anger appears to have a different purpose, which Plato utilizes to explain different aspects of *thumos*, the Greek word for ‘spiritedness’. Homer uses the word *thumos* when referring to a specific type of energy residing in the part of the soul aroused by what was perceived as injustice, dishonor, and grief. In the *Iliad*, Achilles manifests two different types of *thumos*. First, his anger is kindled by a slight to his honor at the hand of Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, who took as his war trophy Achilles’ concubine Briseis. Consequently, Achilles, inflamed with anger and humiliation, withheld himself from battle:

[… anguish gripped Achilles./ The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn…/ Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip, thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now?/ or check his rage and beat his fury down?/ As his racing spirit veered back and forth,/ just as he drew his huge blade from its sheath*. (*The Iliad*, Book 1, 222–228)

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The initial struggle between mind and heart leads Achilles’ *thumos* toward a violent and physical expression of rage until Athena, the goddess of wisdom and justice, stops his hand and asks Achilles to fight Agamemnon with words rather than with swords. It is notable that Achilles’ initial rage is tamed by wisdom itself, embodied by Athena. For Achilles, the tension between mind and body first finds an outlet in the desire for physical violence. Ultimately, however, this tension is quelled when Achilles’ words are powerful and wise enough to publicly wound Agamemnon’s honor in front of his peers. *Thumos*, in this case, represents a space where an individual can evaluate the many ways—physical or psychological—in which anger can be appeased. Evaluation, discernment, and decision-making follow one another in order to explain the antagonism between a king (Agamemnon) and his subordinate (Achilles). A rather different type of *thumos* is represented when Achilles’ fury is once again provoked by the death of his beloved friend Patroclus. When the invincible warrior learns from Antilochus about the horrendous death of his friend, Homer describes Achilles’ grief as follows:

[...a black cloud of grief came shrouding Achilles. Both hands clawing the ground for soot and filth, he poured it over his head, fouled his handsome face/ and black ashes settled onto his fresh clean war-shirt. Overpowered in all his power, he sprawled in the dust. Achilles lay there, fallen.../tearing his hair, defiling it with his own hands. And the women he and Patroclus carried off as captives caught the grief in their hearts and keened and wailed./ out of the tents they ran to ring the great Achilles./ all of them beat their breasts with clenched
fists,/ sank to the ground, each woman’s knees gave way⁵. (*Iliad*, Book 18, 25–36)

In the passage above, Achilles expresses his *thumos* and grief by physically railing against his body, his hair, and his face. His anguish becomes communicable as it affects other bodies and invokes the participation of the warrior’s community. Once again, the presence of others becomes necessary to aggrandize the physical and psychological expression of *thumos*. While in the first example Achilles’ anger allows space to ponder between a violent physical reaction and verbal vituperation against Agamemnon, the second instance of *thumos* appears to be circumscribed to a physical and violent outburst against oneself, which has also an affect on others. Indeed, Achilles will avenge his friend Patroclus by killing and brutally dismembering Hector’s body in front of the eyes of the Achean and the Trojan army, Hector’s subjects, and his family. If these characters are understood to serve as an audience for Achilles’ vengeance, it follows that *thumos* can be understood as a constant call for the audience’s attention; but within the story itself, it is also a form of resistance, meant to force Achilles to reject any form of submission and belittlement. By opposing and contrasting Agamemnon first, and avenging Patroclus later, Achilles can be viewed as having fulfilled his *thumos*. His constant concern with honor in the eyes of his peers compels him to do his duty as prince and warrior first, ensuring that his community sees his superiority over Agamemnon. Ultimately, however, he is left with no choice but to avenge his friend Patroclus – suggesting that Achilles is deeply unaware of his inner self, and totally consumed with the fulfillment of his *thumos*.

For Plato, *thumos* is the energy, or force, behind the individuals’ desire for justice. Although his philosophical notion of anger is certainly less intense and violent compared to the literary Homeric *thumos*, it is evident that anger played a prominent role in Classical Greek society. As a matter of fact, the philosopher highlights the role of anger and other emotions as a necessary tool to maintain balance and stability in a society. In doing so, he puts forward the idea of a temperate *thumos*, meant to secure and ameliorate the life of citizens. Plato states in *Republic* that “he [an individual] will see to his bodily condition and nurture it in such a way that he does not entrust it to the irrational pleasure of the beast, […] he will cultivate harmony in his body for the sake of consonance in his soul. […] And looking to the government within, he will guard against disturbances.” (Book IX, 591 c–592 b)

In Plato’s worldview, anger is also a “mental pain” caused by a slight and the desire for justice. Although *thumos* can occur in both men and animals, only humans have the capacity to tame anger with reason. The concept of reason was personified by Athena, whose persuasive speech tames Achilles’s anger and cause him to manifest his *thumos* by means of words (*The Iliad*, Book 1, 222–230). If *thumos* is governed by reason, then a city and its citizens can achieve a harmonious balance. Plato seems to suggest that such a moderate anger leaves space for reason and words to be employed deliberately.

As a result, it is clear that individuals can appease their *thumos* and achieve self-knowledge in the eyes of their community by utilizing words as persuasive instruments to attack, control, and influence a society (or individual within a society). In the case of the women writers analyzed in my dissertation, it is a reasonable inference that their experience of *thumos* is tamed by the act of writing, aimed at persuading and influencing their society by simultaneously entertaining and educating their audience.
1.2 Aristotle’s Philosophy on Emotions: Anger as a Rational Response

Martha Nussbaum emphasizes that Aristotle’s focus on the psychology of emotions took place after Plato’s bipartite philosophy of rational and irrational *pathos*. But Aristotle was far more focused on how an individual’s emotional judgment is formed, and how it can change. Nussbaum states that

Aristotle devotes considerable attentions to developing an account of the appetites and emotions according to which they are selective, responsive to training, and therefore able to play a constructive role in moral motivation, impelling the person toward more appropriate objects in keeping with his or her evolving conception of the appropriate. *(Fragility, 307–308)*

Aristotle’s concern with ethical issues originated primarily from the idea that emotions can influence a particular judgment, aggrandize the severity of a judgment, lessen it, or mutate it completely. It seems also clear that for Aristotle, forming emotional judgments, and being affected by them, can determine an individual’s perception of what is socially appropriate. Aristotle’s analysis of emotions takes a step away from Plato’s philosophical aim at finding the ultimate goal of human life, and adheres instead to his notion of the scientific method, or

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6 Aristotle’s scientific method, or demonstrative science combines presuppositions, observational evidence, deduction, and induction. It is from such logic reasoning that Aristotle based his philosophical and scientific treatises, often defined as the result of the law of nature.
demonstrative science. For instance, in *Rhetoric*, Aristotle begins with a systematic definition of each of the emotions, their features, and how they affect moral actions and choices. His definition of emotions is also linked to the role of the orator:

> [...] rhetoric exists to affect the giving of decisions-the hearers decide between one political speaker and another [...] the orator must not only try to make the argument of his speech demonstrative and worthy of belief; he must also make his own character look right and put his hearers, who are to decide, in the right frame of mind.” (Book II, ch.1, 22–27)

Aristotle seeks to make the rhetorician sound ethically and intellectually respectable, but he also clearly wants to emphasize the utility of rhetoric as a means of persuading an audience. In doing so, a rhetorician has to learn the psychology of various types of audiences and their beliefs, and to utilize this knowledge to argue persuasively. Undoubtedly, Aristotle’s goal was to explain how a skilled and ill-intentioned rhetorician is capable of fooling his audience. Despite the potential for abuse, it is a fact that the objective of rhetorical persuasion is to influence a kind of judgment, and to evaluate a decision. In the case of anger, Aristotle suggests that “the orator will have to speak so as to bring his hearers into a frame of mind that will dispose them to anger, and to represent his adversaries as open to such charges and possessed of such qualities as do make people angry.” (*Rhetoric*, Book II, ch. 2, 41–44) On this matter, the literary works of early modern Italian and Spanish women writers which I will analyze in the following chapters present an excellent example of rhetorical exercise aimed at convincing and changing the beliefs and judgments of male audience members about women. Emotions, as Martha Nussbaum states in agreement with Aristotle, “have a very intimate relationship to beliefs, and can be modified by a modification of belief.” (Nussbaum, 80) Thus, the emotion of anger encompasses an individual’s
perception of the extent to which it is possible to alter the opinion of others, and his perception can influence somebody else’s understanding of what causes or alleviates anger. The texts written by the women writers treated in this work intend to persuade their audience, and to provoke their readers to think about the misogynistic culture they inhabit. By prompting such self-reflection on the nature of deeply held misogynistic beliefs, it can reasonably be inferred that these women sought to alter the perceptions of their audience about women, and about the misogynistic society in which women lived. By using the written word, these women authors sought to transmit their anger to their audience in a way that could be understood. Their use of words involves first the individual perception of anger, then a negative evaluation of the offending party, and finally, a claim for revenge, through a writing style that seeks to break down the gender norms and literary canons of the time, which regulated feminine bodies and spaces.

Aristotle’s notion of emotions as instruments of persuasion has been topic of discussion among authors and philosophers, during the early modern era as well. An example of Aristotle’s influence is Giasone Denores (1530–?) and his Discorso (1587). Denores’s writings are an expression of Counter–Reformation culture, and resemble Aristotle’s concept of *ars oratoria*. On this matter, Denores argues that poetry was rhetorical because it was capable of moving the reader and the listener to moral action. Specifically, in his own words, poetry should be considered political because the aim of poetry is “to inspire virtue in the souls of the spectators and auditors, to the common benefit of a well ordered republic.”  

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7 Denores states that “essendo la poetica, come è anco la retorica, soggetta alla filosofia morale e civile, e da essa ricevendo ogni sua più regolata produzione, que’ più svegliati governatori della repubbliche […] hanno con prudentissime ordinazioni procurator […] che tutte però finamente risultassero a lor beneficio e a conservazione di quella tal ben formata repubblica.” Iason Denores, *Discorso intorno a’ que’ principii, cause, et accrescimenti che la comedia, la tragedia et il poema heroic ricevono dalla philosophia morale, civile, e da’ Governatori delle Repubbliche*. Padova, appresso Paulo Meieto, 1587. (no page) source digitized by Google.
interests of their authors. If the poet does not subordinate or contain pleasure within the role of moral education in a text, he is simply a false rhetorician, who aims to deceive his audience with sophisticated, but superfluous words. I argue that the writings of the women authors I analyze can be considered political, as their common goal is to provoke the souls of their readers in order to benefit women in early modern society, by advocating for equal education and eradicating misogynistic beliefs. However, women sonneteers did not aim to impart a “moral” lesson to their audience (by the standards of their time), but rather, to persuade their readers.

Regarding this notion of imparting a moral lesson, I agree with the concept of poetry espoused by Giovanni Battista Guarini (1538–1612) in his treatise on the defense of poetry. In it, Guarini argues that the aim of a poet is not to imitate the good, but rather, simply to imitate well. Such imitation uses pleasure, but it will also purge (purify, cleanse) and placate the passions. It does not necessarily convey moral education. Both Denores’ and Guarini’s positions stimulated a major literary debate near the end of the 1500s on the mixing of genres, and on the role of morality in literature. This debate grew from a common concern that reading could compel or motivate the reader into pursuing immoral behaviors. Therefore, Denores’ and Guarini’s discourses go beyond a battle of literary genres. During the early modern era, the firm belief that the representation of emotions in literature could lead to change and provoke the reader’s mind to action shed light on the connection between human impulses and the act of reading, and, in a larger sense, between human emotions and the arts. For instance, the famous anecdote of Daniello Bartoli’s (1608–1685), also cited in Nicolas Perella’s The Critical Fortune of Battista Guarini’s Il Pastor Fido (1973), describes the consequences of reading Il Pastor Fido. In his words, “quelle due infelici sorelle, le prime che lessero una tal famosa tragicomedia pubblicata pur allora alle stampe [Il Pastor Fido], fatte alla prima lezione si buone maestre di
Certainly Bartoli’s anecdote emphasizes what was believed to be the weakness of women’s nature, but he also brings to light the widely held notion that words can have an irresistible persuasive power. In so doing, he highlights the ability of the written word to affect the reader, and prompt them to action, for better or for worse. Additionally, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino (1542–1621) feared and condemned the seductive language of Guarini’s *Il Pastor Fido*’s because he feared how it could affect the reader, and their moral behavior. In fact, he accused the poet of having done more harm to Christendom with his blandishments than Luther with his heresy, clearly demonstrating the power words can have to affect the minds, and even, the actions, of their readers. There are numerous women writers who exemplified the power of words to change and criticize their society, above and beyond those I analyze in my dissertation. To take just two other examples from the early modern period, Arcangela Tarabotti and Juana Asbaje argued persuasively for women’s right to read, to write, and to inveigh against anyone.

8 “two unfortunate sisters, the first to read that famous tragicomedy [Il Pastor Fido], who at the first reading became such good mistresses of impurity that they immediately opened a school, transforming their house into a brothel and advertising themselves as whore.” (32–33).

The idea of emotion as a powerful tool of persuasion and anger as a complex emotion are further explained in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. According to Aristotle, should an individual decide to avenge his or her honor based on their perception of an injustice, their anger will leave space for pleasure because:

anger may be defined as an impulse, accompanied by pain, to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or towards what concerns one’s friend [...] it must always be attended by a certain pleasure – that which arises from the expectation of revenge. For since aims at what he thinks he cannot attain, the angry man is aiming at what he can attain, and the belief that you will attain your aim is pleasant. (*Rhetoric*, Book II, Chapter 2, 32–42)

In his explanation of emotions Aristotle, like Plato, spends a great deal of time analyzing anger, and finds that it is accompanied by a desire for justice. Anger involves pain and also pleasure, which derives from the desire to avenge the slight that has been suffered. Accordingly, the desire is accompanied by the expectation of its attainment. The expectation of a possible fulfillment of revenge gives us pleasure.

The entire process, beginning with an evaluation of what or who caused anger, moves through the perception of the pain caused by the slight, and finally culminates in the contemplation of vendetta. This process reveals a rich cognitive web relevant to understanding the representation of anger in the texts of the women writers that I will examine in this document. It is important to comprehend the link between anger, vendetta, and pleasure, as it is tightly connected to an evaluation of social roles.
David Konstan states that anger is “a complex social event that takes a considerable measurement of judgment to recognize” (43). Emotions in ancient Greece were not understood as an inner state, but rather an external condition that was open to interpretation. Words, acts, purposes, and expectations would allow access to the interpretation of emotions and to the opportunity to influence the emotions and the judgments of others. Compared to our modern, and more internal, perception of emotions, the Greeks conceive of emotions as outside events, open to the participation and opinions of others. This is exemplified by the fact that a central feature of Aristotle’s thought on anger is to analyze one’s own reaction in conjunction with an analysis of the response of other’s. Similarly, the works of the early modern women analyzed in this dissertation demonstrate the presence of self-evaluation, followed by an evaluation of others; in particular, of the men to whom they dedicate their works.

With regard to analyzing the emotion of anger, Aristotle states: “here we must discover (1) what the state of mind of angry people is, (2) who the people are with whom they usually get angry, and (3) on what grounds they get angry with them” (*Rhetoric*, Book II, 1378a). In this passage, Aristotle neatly outlines the three aspects of anger’s cognitive part. Aristotle argues that one’s emotional response can be an intelligent reaction, open to reasoned persuasion. If Aristotle’s point is correct, it can be inferred that many early modern women writers are not prey to some irrational behavior, as they were often accused by the misogynistic beliefs of their own time, but, rather, that the act of writing is a response to their perception of unjust offense, and, therefore, can be understood as a form of reasoned persuasion. Aristotle suggests that while

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10 In the following chapters we will see how the emotions expressed by the women writers become part and they are also affected by the literary canon which they use in their poetry. I argue these women authors are affected as writers and readers, because, as Judith Fetterly argues, in order to read works of literature which were written for a predominantly male audience, female readers unconsciously have to forget they are female and to read as if they
some emotional actions are dictated by impulse, others can be controlled, and must not be considered so mindless.\footnote{On this matter, it is important to make a distinction between voluntary and involuntary act. According to his theory, Aristotle accepts that emotionally driven actions exist, and they are called involuntary. A voluntary action is whatever is done knowingly.} Therefore, some emotional reactions are cognitive and open to moral education, or, as in the case of most of the early modern women writers whom I will analyze later in this work, to a re-education of the audience.

Anger, in Aristotle’s analysis, is also listed as one of the principal causes of enmity, as “enmity and hatred should clearly be studied by reference to their opposites. Enmity may be produced by anger or spite or calumny” (Rhetoric, Book II, ch. 3). Aristotle indicates that both enmity and hatred are to be evaluated in opposition to an individual or group, which supports the idea of constant awareness and resistance to the other. The aim of anger is to cause another to feel and understand the very same pain they have caused you, while the aim of hatred is simply to inflict harm. In contrast with anger, Aristotle suggests that hatred is directed towards groups and classes. Anger’s object of interest is mainly individual as “it concerns oneself […] and must always be felt towards some particular individual” (1378b). In the case of the women writers I analyze, their anger is directed toward an individual and further addressed to a group, which is often their patriarchal community. Anger is therefore a mixed emotion, meaning that it involves the interaction of other emotions, such as hatred and fear. Examples of how anger interacts with other emotions can be found in the poetry of Gaspara Stampa and Isabella Di Morra. The emotion of anger present in their texts hardly operates as a single passion, but rather, it were men. The female reader is “immasculated” (not emasculated) as she learns to think and read and write like a man. Does this affect the performance of their writing? Yes, absolutely, because women writers have to presume that their readers are both male and female. While men did not need to do so. A clear example of this “effect” is how women sonneteers used Petrarchism. The problem is always the same, women writers write in a gender to which they do not belong. Nevertheless, as the male authors did, they nurtured the same desire of artistic immortality.
encompasses other emotions which are ignited by external causes. By adding other emotions to anger, these women authors could intensify the representation of anger in their works, disrupt accepted notions of women’s behavior and women’s proper place, and challenge their readers’ knowledge of gender. In so doing, they exemplify the Aristotelian idea of understanding emotions that is, to understand who their audience is, and also the wide range of emotions their audience may be feeling, allowing the writers to be crafty in their efforts to manipulate, or affect, the emotions of their readers.

1.3 Aristotle on Women’s Emotions: the Man/Woman Opposition and Women’s Anger

Aristotle offers a scientific explanation for the physical and psychological inferiority of women by grounding his analysis in a study of their initial conception. In *De Generatione Animalium*, he affirms that during the act of procreation, the male semen seeks to impose its structure on the female counterpart. If it succeeds, a male offspring is produced; otherwise a female, or deficient progeny, will be born. Aristotle explains that insufficient heat can be an obstacle to the male semen’s victorious result, as female nature is notoriously cold and moist (766a–767b). If this is the physiological explanation of women’s physical and psychological inferiority, Aristotle analyzes the social role of women in his time in *Politics*. For Aristotle, it is clear that men are by nature superior to women because “the male is ruler and the female subject” (1254b, 13–14) and, “the temperance of a woman and that of a man are not the same, nor their courage and justice, […] but the one is the courage of command, and the other that of subordination” (1260a, 20–24). In the passage above, Aristotle suggests that justice is a twofold

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12 I discuss this in chapter 3
concept, depending on who passes judgment. Did men and women have a different sense of
game from one another in antiquity, and therefore, a different perception of anger? For the
ancient Greek, man’s idea of justice consisted of a delicate balance between people who were
superior or inferior, politically and military, for instance, as in the relationship between
Agamemnon and Achilles. For women, the idea of justice was interwoven with a more physical
dimension of honor, as it resided in their untainted body. Since the desire for justice can be
translated as the attempt to reinstate the pre-slight original balance, it seems obvious that only
men could achieve justice and avenge themselves politically or militarily, and thereby re-
establish the original balance between the two parts. Women could not satisfy their desire for
justice, because once physically dishonored, the original balance could never truly be restored. It
seems that unevenly distributed power could be counterbalanced or avenged only by means of
physical strength, wealth, or political status, which were qualities not entirely accessible to
women in ancient Greece. That is, women could not experience the pleasure of revenge as
explained by Aristotle, because pleasure coincided with the expectation of a possible concrete
fulfillment of revenge. Therefore, in ancient Greece, men and women’s deployment of anger and
their relative perceptions of revenge were asymmetrical.

Aristotle explains such asymmetry in *Politics*, where his concept of a woman’s role is
firmly circumscribed to the domestic space of her house. Aristotle explains women’s social role
by comparing their status to that of slaves, and their presupposed social inferiority. Aristotle
states that “there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. [...] And all possess the
various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the
deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority” (Book I, 1260a, 8–12).
That is, while women possess reason, they cannot exercise any form of authority, and therefore,
their voices did not have a place in the political and military administration of a city. It is clear that Aristotle recognized women’s faculty to think and make decisions, but he seems also to believe that women’s thoughts were dictated by a lack of control over their emotions. Firm in the belief that the natural order of things was the hierarchical order decided by the principle of nature, Aristotle affirms that in such order, women’s natural condition is one of physical and psychological weakness.

Irrationality and excessive emotional response to events were often the ways in which women’s anger was depicted in ancient literature. One of the most prominent examples is Euripides’ tragedy *Medea*. Having fallen in love with Jason, Medea, princess of Colchis, betrayed her country and her father to help Jason with the Golden Fleece mission, in exchange for his promise to marry her. During Jason’s mission to pursue the Golden Fleece, Medea demonstrates a profound knowledge of unguents, healing oils, poisoning potions, and other medical remedies. Plotting and scheming only to please Jason, Medea flees away with him to Corinth and has two children. Medea’s complexity and multifarious nature explode in a response considered to be overly emotional, and excessively angry; responses thought to be typical of women, at this time. Betrayed by Jason because he consents to marry Glauce, daughter of Creon, king of Corinth, Medea poisons Glauce’s wedding dress and kills the sons she had with Jason. Medea’s response to Jason’s slight has often been defined as irrational, but a deeper analysis of Jason’s words can lead to a different interpretation. Jason harshly berates Medea, telling her:

> it is not now I first remark, but oft ere this, how *unruly a pest is a harsh temper*. For instance, thou, hast thou but patiently endure the will of thy superior, mightiest have remained here in this land and house, but now for thy idle words wilt thou be banished. Thy words are naught to me. Cease not to call Jason the
basetest of men; but for those words thou hast spoken against our rulers, count it all again that exile is thy only punishment […] thou wouldst not fore go thy silly rage, always reviling our rulers, and so thou wilt be banished. Yet even after all this I weary not of my goodwill, but am come with thus much forethought, lady, that thou mayst not be destitute nor want for aught, when with thy sons, thou art cast out. Many an evil doth exile bring in its train with it; for even though thou hatest me, never will harbor hard thoughts of thee.” (Euripides, Medea)

In the passage above, Jason defines Medea’s anger as unruly, silly and composed of a harsh temper. Additionally, he suggests that she should patiently endure the will of the king of Corinth. Because Medea’s response to Jason’s slight was to verbally attack him and his future wife, Glauce, she is punished by exile. Additionally, Medea’s nurse describes her mistress as evil, asserting: “dreadful is her wrath.” If we are to agree with Aristotle, Medea’s uncontrollable anger is a result of her weak and womanly nature. Although Medea demonstrates many instances of cleverness and knowledge in the art of medicine and science, her dishonored pride could not possibly be reinstated to the original balance between herself and Jason. For this reason, the outcome of her vendetta is only death and destruction: Jason’s offspring, his future bride and the King of Corinth have been murdered. Jason has nothing left. This brings to light another important point about asymmetry in the anger of men and women. While men’s anger was often defined as a reasoned emotion, and while men could achieve and take pleasure in their acts of revenge which brought things back to their original orderly balance, women’s anger could only lead to chaos, death and destruction. Therefore, women’s display of anger, irrespective of their social role as queen, princess, slave, or servant, was considered puerile, unable to follow reason, and unfit for any form of rational decision making within a community. As Aristotle states in
Politics, silence, rather than voice, is a virtue appropriate to women because “silence gives grace to woman” (1260a, 28–29).

A similar instance that typifies Aristotle’s conception of women’s anger in classical literature is the complex character of Clytemnestra. Her revenge against her husband, Agamemnon, derives from different interpretations of justice. In the play Electra by Sophocles (c. 497–c.405 BC), Clytemnestra’s vendetta derives from a more individual perception of justice; a homicidal revenge caused by self-serving physical passion. Sophocles portrays Clytemnestra as a murderous villain. In her confrontation with her daughter Electra, during which they argue about the rationale for Agamemnon’s murder, it is evident that Clytemnestra’s motive is not the death of their other daughter Iphigenia’s who was sacrificed to the goddess Artemis by Agamemnon, in order to gain favorable winds for his navy en-route to Troy) but her adulterous affair with Aegisthus, Agamemnon’s rival. Iphigenia’s death, therefore, served only as a pretext. In the tragedy Agamemnon, Aeschylus (c. 524–c.455 BC) justifies Agamemnon’s assassination by the hand of Clytemnestra as revenge for Iphigenia’s death. It seems, therefore, that Clytemnestra’s need for vendetta is derived from Aeschylus’s dramatic representation of a pre-legal view of justice; the act of violence is caused by Clytemnestra’s motherly perception of righteousness. In Aeschylus’ words, “the case now stands where it stands –it moves to fulfillment at its destined end. Not by offering burned in secret, not by secret libations, not by tears, shall man soften wrath of unsanctified sacrifice” (68–71). Clytemnestra, princess of

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14 The italics are mine, and meant to emphasize the author’s position in the matter of Iphigenia’s death. Agamemnon’s act results in disapproval, grief, and eventually death. See translation by Herbert Weir Smyth in www.perseus.tufts.edu
Sparta, is married to Agamemnon. At the end of the Trojan War, he returns with Cassandra\textsuperscript{15} as his war trophy and concubine. Although Clytemnestra’s murderous act appears to be a response to Agamemnon’s slight to their matrimonial union, the queen invokes vendetta, to appease an “ancient feud” as she angrily states:

\begin{quote}
Much have I said before to serve my need and I shall feel no shame to contradict it/ now. For how else could one, devising hate against a hated foe \cite{1375} who bears the /semblance of a friend, fence the snares of ruin too high to be overleaped? \textit{This is the /contest on an ancient feud, pondered by me of old, and it has come, however long/ delayed}.\textsuperscript{16} I stand where I dealt the blow; my purpose is achieved. \cite{1380} Thus have I/ done the deed; deny it I will not. Round him, as if to catch a haul of fish, I cast an impassable net-fat\textsuperscript{10} al wealth of rove- so that he should neither escape nor ward off/doom. Twice I struck, and with two groans \cite{1385} his limbs relaxed. Once he / had fallen, I dealt him yet a third stroke to grace my prayer to the infernal Zeus, the / savior of dead. Fallen thus, he gasped away his life, and as he breathed forth / quick spurts of blood, \cite{1390} he struck me with dark drops of gory dew; while I / rejoiced no less than the sown earth is gladdened in heaven’s refreshing rain at the / birth time of the flower buds. (Aeschylus, 1372–1391)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{15} In Greek mythology, Cassandra was the daughter of king Priam and queen Hecuba of Troy. A common version of her story narrates that Apollo gave her the gift of prophecy in exchange of her sexual favors. Cassandra, however, refused to embrace the god of sun, and as a result Apollo gave her the curse of never being believed.

\textsuperscript{16} The italics are mine to emphasize the ancient origin of Clytemnestra’s eventual decision to commit matricide. . . . That decision predates Agamemnon and Cassandra’s affair.
Clytemnestra’s gory description of Agamemnon’s assassination reminds us of Achilles’ gruesome vengeance against Hector. But if Achilles’ horrific act seems to find a justification in service to his state, and therefore, to end the Trojan war, Clytemnestra’s violent anger at Agamemnon appears self-serving and unacceptable, as the chorus of the elders of Argos in Aeschylus’ play screams, “we are shocked at your tongue, how bold-mouthed you are, [1400] that over your/ husband you can utter such a boastful speech.” (Aeschylus, 1399–1400) Once again a double standard can be observed in the representation of women and men’s anger, and in their individual perception of justice. In fact, Clytemnestra explains the cause of her wrath by announcing to her audience: “You are testing me as if I were a witless woman. But my heart does not quail, and I / say to you who know it well- and whether you wish to praise or to blame me, it is all / one-here is Agamemnon, [1405] my husband, now a corpse, the work of this right / hand, a just workman. So stands the case” (1403–1406). According to Aristotle’s account of women’s excessive emotionality, Clytemnestra’s anger represents a woman’s illogical and rushed methods of decision making. Both Medea and Clytemnestra understand the crime they are about to commit, but they still do not constrain themselves from following through; in fact, they carefully plan their murderous acts. These women, lacking any formal legal protection, eventually act according to their own perception of justice and revenge. Only by murdering Jason’s past and future offspring can Medea re-establish the original balance by standing as the only princess available for Jason. Only by assassinating Agamemnon can Clytemnestra avenge her daughter Iphigenia and asserts herself as the only queen of Mycenae.

Compared to Plato’s view of anger, Aristotle’s focuses more explicitly on the psychological elements of this emotion, and how judgments and opinions are formed. Both philosophers agree on the definition of anger as accompanied by pain and pleasure. Aristotle,
however, further analyzes the social dimension of anger as its causes are influenced by the necessity to keep in balance an ideal hierarchical order, self-esteem, and the opinion of others. Aristotle’s idea of hierarchical order derives from a world where a sense of honor supported the political and military system of ancient Greece. The Aristotelian idea of honor, in fact, does not include a discussion of how women may perceive it, or good reputation. As the early modern period advanced, women’s view of honor and reputation continued to be ignored by scholars, writers and philosophers. In fact, the instability of women’s emotions, and how their weak nature presents instances of inconstancy and excessive passion, continued to be the primary lens through which women were viewed.

1.4. Emotions in the Early Modern Era

The analysis of emotions in the medieval and early modern period is deeply indebted to Plato and Aristotle’s thoughts on emotions. In particular, their choice of vocabulary influenced the early modern definition of emotions. During this time, the tension between reason and passion experienced long-standing shifts between traditional systems of thought, which were expressed in several ways, including a growing criticism of Aristotelianism, a constant disagreement with Scholasticism, and the fractioning of religious beliefs. The theory of humors of the Hippocratic-Galenic medical tradition provided most of the vocabulary and discussion surrounding emotions during the early modern era. Aristotle’s pathos underwent numerous renaming: passion, perturbation, affect, feeling, and so on. It was only later in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that theorists, psychologists, and philosophers began to draw a line of distinction between and among all of these terms. Until then, the terms “passion” and “emotion”
were used evenhandedly and interchangeably, and, in a broader sense, indicated mobility, change, agitation, alteration, or movement. Taxonomies and classifications of emotions ranged from ancient to Christian categories, merging together Greek philosophy and Christian ideology. By explaining emotions as paramount features to understanding aspects of human life, early modern philosophers devoted their attention to the notion of the self and identity, as well as to the study of the soul-body composite.

1.4a Thomas Aquinas on Emotion: Anger as Irascible Emotion

Thomistic philosophy is another component that influenced early modern philosophers in their treatment of emotions. ThomasAquinas (1225–1274) is one of the most influential philosophers in the study of the physiological and psychological aspects of emotions. Aquinas’ treatment of emotions is mainly circumscribed to Book II of his *Summa Theologica* entitled “Treatise on the Passions,” and it elaborates on *pathos* and morality after Aristotelian and Stoic philosophy. According to the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, all emotions have a moral dimension, because emotions are subjected to reason and choice. Aristotle argues that emotions can lead an individual to either turn against reason (akrasia), or to experience that emotion and yet still choose to follow reason (enkrateia). Aquinas seems to concur with Aristotle in considering the mind as powerfully affected or moved by emotions. In so doing, Aquinas identifies six emotions and their opposites: love and hatred, desire and aversion, and joy and sadness. A second group of emotions, called irascible passions, are: hope and despair, fear and boldness, and anger, which does not have a direct opposite. In Aquinas’ words:
The passions of the irascible part differ in species from those of the concupiscible faculty. For since different powers have different objects, the passions of different powers must of necessity be referred to different objects. [...] In order, therefore, to discern which passions are the irascible, and which the concupiscible, we must take the object of each of these powers” (Book II, Q21).

In *Summa Theologica*, the philosopher explains the structure of emotions by arguing that an emotion is a movement of the soul-body composite. In other words, Aquinas holds that emotions are object-oriented movements that push us toward or away from our object of interest, perception, or imagination. Taking his cue from Aristotelian thought on emotions, Aquinas also maintains that experiencing emotions involves the action of the mind in a decision making process.

According to Aristotle, the soul is the act of a natural body with the ability to give life. Therefore, the soul is the formal and final cause of its motions. From here it can be derived that a body cannot be the principle that gives life, simply because a body deprived of life is purely lifeless matter. While plants and animals possess, respectively, the vegetative soul and the sensitive soul, human beings also have the rational soul, which enables them to use speech and reason. Consequently, Aristotle differs from Plato, and supports the idea that body and soul are united in one substance. Similarly, Aquinas holds that the sense is united to the body. The body is essential to the sense because it needs to access all the vital physical abilities. According to Aquinas, the sense, or sensitive soul, requires the body in order to perform acts of sensation, such as seeing, hearing, and so on. Also, the intellectual soul needs a body, because without it, it would not be able to act or do anything. In the words of Thomas Aquinas, “[...] it is one and the same man who is conscious both that he understands and he senses. But one cannot sense
without a body: therefore, the body must be some part of man” (Book I, Q.76.1). Reason or intellect by itself cannot operate or access bodily experiences. Therefore, during an individual’s earthly existence, the soul is a vital part of the body, much as the body is indispensable to the soul. Emotions find their place in the interconnected state between soul and body, or, as defined by Aquinas, “the passions of the soul […] The word passion implies that the patient is drawn to that which belongs to the agent” (Book II, Q22).

For Thomas Aquinas, emotions, or passions, understood as movements of the soul, are located in the sensitive-appetitive faculty, which is moved by external causes. With respect to such external causes, there are movements toward what is perceived as a good object or movements away from what is perceived as an evil object. As previously mentioned, Thomas Aquinas divided emotions in two groups, concupiscible (lustful) and irascible emotions. The philosopher defines concupiscible appetite as the passion that the soul utilizes to pursue or reject the objects that are suitable or unpleasant to the senses. The irascible appetite is the passion that the soul uses when experiencing difficulty or arduousness of resistance. Therefore, an irascible emotion is an arduous movement that makes it possible for an individual to overcome obstacles and obtain or reject the desired object. This is how Aquinas explains that each emotion has its opposite. Anger is not a special passion because it does not have a specific opposite, but because it involves the action of other emotions. He states that “there are several passions in this power […] since it accompanies sorrow, pleasure, and hope” (Book II, Q. 46). That is, anger is motivated by opposing passions. Hope is a passion of good, while sorrow is a passion of evil, which means that anger in itself is derived from contrary emotions. It appears, therefore, that Aquinas also agrees with Aristotle in confirming the complexity of anger as an emotion. Furthermore, Aquinas offers a detailed explanation of anger’s duplicity, useful to understanding
anger in relation to other emotions. While both Plato and Aristotle regarded anger as an emotion toward one object or individual, Aquinas argues that:

[..] anger always regards two objects: whereas love and hatred sometimes regard but an object. The object of love is good: since the lover wishes good to someone, as to something agreeable to himself. While both the objects of hatred bear the character of evil: for the man who hates, wishes evil to someone, as to something disagreeable to him. Whereas anger regards one object under the aspect of evil, viz. the noxious person, on whom it seeks revenge. (Book II, Q.47)

Since, according to Aquinas, revenge falls under the umbrella of justice, which he defines as a passion or force for good, revenge in itself cannot be an evil deed. Therefore, anger presents a dual nature, causing tension between what is perceived as good or evil. Specifically, anger contains hatred when the individual wishes evil to his opponents, but it also contains desire for revenge when an individual wishes to right a wrongdoing. The notion of revenge and justice seems to present positive features. First, revenge and justice can be achieved through words rather than violent action. Compared to Aristotle's perception of justice as an attempt to preserve an original social balance, the notion of revenge fulfilled by means of words is better emphasized in Aquinas' treatise, as he observes that “he that holds his tongue when another insults him, provokes him to greater anger […] But by holding his tongue he does the other no harm” (Book II, Q.47). In this passage, Aquinas seems to suggest that for a slight to be avenged, words can be used as weapons to cause injury. This thought received some attention during the early modern period. Specifically, Aquinas’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics* continued to be
influential and was printed in numerous editions. For this reason, Aquinas can be understood as arguing that words were tools that could be used to achieve justice, take revenge, appease anger, or cause injury – or put another way, to “affect” the reader. In the works I analyze in my project, the words of women authors reveal a subtext apt to accuse and insult those who caused offense. If Aquinas’ view that anger regards two objects is accepted, it can be argued that the anger displayed by these women authors, which is often disguised in Petrarchan love poems, could be addressed to their lovers who did them wrong, or to their larger patriarchal society which kept them relegated to their subservient status.

The duality of anger also takes us back to the double standard of justice, which is embedded in the ability to use reason for good endeavors, or good revenge. Like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas believed in women’s physical and mental inferiority because “a woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of a woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition” (Book I, Q.92). Neither philosopher denies that women possess reason, but they concur in asserting that women’s physical inferiority, and the lack of a functional seed during conception, causes them to be less wise or to lack sound judgment. On the basis of this biological explanation, Aquinas justifies women’s natural subservience to men, asserting: “for good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection

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17 On this matter, see Bernard McGinn in Thomas Aquinas’ Summa Theologie: A Biography. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014. McGinn affirms that “the prolific Dutch scholar Denys the Carthusina (d.1471) produced a compedium to the Summa called the Summa of Orthodox Faith, while the Italian Dominica Peter of Bergamo (d.1482) compiled the massive index known as the Tabula Aurea, first printed in 1473. This work, often appended to editions of the Summa even into modern times, was the most complete index until the publication of the forty-nine volume electronically generated Index Thomisticus by Robert Busa (1974-81). […] Aquinas’ thought was also used in the Philosophical Faculty at the University of Padua in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.” (140-41)
woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates” (Book I, Q92). Thomas Aquinas defines a man’s act of thinking as cautious reason, from the Latin discretio rationis. Therefore, in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, women’s inferiority is dictated by a lack of caution or prudence, rather than by the absence of reason per se. A deficiency of discretio rationis would lead to chaos and disorder. For this reason, the presence of a wiser individual would guarantee good order in a family and in a community. Obviously, according to Aquinas’ perspective, men can govern their emotions with reason, while women are not capable of resisting passions, and therefore they are incontinent and lacking in self-control.

Although women had often been accused of having excessive fervor or demonstrating too little control, it seems that excessive heat could manifest in both men and women. Additionally, excessive heat is not caused only by anger. According to Aquinas, “fervor belongs to love. But love is the beginning and cause of all passions. Since then the cause is more powerful than its effect, it seems that anger is not the chief cause of fervor [...] anger increases the fervor of love and makes it to be felt more” (Book II, Q 48). The representation of anger in the texts authored by the women writers I intend to analyze in the following chapters is also a response to different aspects of love. For example, Gaspara Stampa’s sonnets convey the idea of abandoned love, where anger finds its way into verbal attacks against her lover, Count Collaltino di Collalto. Isabella di Morra’s response to a lack of fatherly devotion discloses her anger against the gender norms of her time. This example supports the original Aristotelian idea that anger involves the action of other emotions, and that anger is shaped by coming in contact with other people. In this way, the emotion of anger acquires social significance.

In medieval philosophy and specifically in the work of Thomas Aquinas, a distinctive change in society’s attitude towards and understanding of the concept of emotions became
evident. It was increasingly understood that emotions themselves, no longer relegated purely to the realm of the metaphysical, could manifest as tangible outcomes, with real-world consequences. Thus, the growth of interest in the concept of emotion corresponded to the growing concern of medieval and early modern societies in understanding the relation to knowledge of the self and of the other.

1.4 b Juan Luis Vives on Human Nature: Anger as a Violent Passion of the Soul

Two of the most important philosophical concepts developed on the basis of Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in the early modern period was the growing interest in subjective feelings, and awareness of oneself as a feeling subject. Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540) was among the first to analyze the role of emotions in political, social, and cultural surroundings in terms of how they can create a sense of self-identity for the individual. Indeed, this was his major object of study. Vives elaborates on his theories in his treatise De Anima et Vita (1538), his most important study on human nature.

Carlos Noreña argues that in order to gain a better understanding of Juan Luis Vives’s thought on human nature, an overview of his conflicted life and his own inner turmoil is necessary, as political and personal events are interlaced, and might have influenced his perception of emotions.18 This also supports the Aristotelian idea that emotions do alter and distinguish human thought and individual nature based on one’s judgment and experiences. Born around 1492 in the Spanish city of Valencia to Jewish parents, Vives’ existence was marked by the gruesome realities of the Spanish Inquisition, which persecuted those who had practiced that

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18 Juan Luis Vives’s life has been documented and studied by Carlos G. Noreña. See, Juan Luis Vives. International Archives of the History of Ideas, n.34. The Hague, Netherlands (1970)
religion, even after conversion to Christianity. Thus many of his friends and relatives were executed. As an exiled Jew educated in Paris, and an immigrant in England, Juan Luis Vives always felt the influence of the environment in which he grew up and lived. Vives witnessed Catherine of Aragon’s separation from Henry VIII; the spread of the plague in France; the peasant revolt in Germany; and the sack of Rome (1527) by the troops of Emperor Charles V (1500-1558). These experiences motivated Vives to consider political justice and balance in a larger sense of justice that should exist among individuals. Vives’ philosophical treatises, written during years of political and social upheaval, reflected his belief that war and conflicts in general were always the outcome of emotional excess. Noreña argues that Vives believed that social and political balance could be achieved only if individuals exercised control over their emotions. In 1524, Vives married Margaret Valdaura, who was afflicted by a congenital form of syphilis. While his wife provided enormous consolation during Vives’s most difficult years, the philosopher nevertheless viewed women in general, and their role as wives in stark terms. He wrote two stern discourses on women and marriage, *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* (1524), and *De Officio Mariti* (1528). Despite the fact that education was Vives’ main concern in his treatises, both *De Institutione* and *De Officio* depict an almost sterile vision of sexual pleasure, a harsh verdict on women’s fickleness and excessive emotional character, and a bitter consideration on the remunerations of parenthood. Vives explicitly questions women’s emotional character, and their ability to experience erotic pleasure. The philosopher’s emotions and experiences clearly influenced his writings.

Emotions, finally, become the object of study in his treatise *De Anima et Vita*, which is divided into three books devoted respectively to the soul of the brutes, to the rational soul, and to
emotions. Here, I will focus on the third book. The influence of Aristotelian thinking pervades all of Vives’ works, although Aristotle’s philosophy leans toward a scientific and metaphysical approach, while the Spanish philosopher stresses the importance of pedagogical and moral aspects of emotions. His main intention was to analyze human nature by providing the groundwork for all moral teaching in both private and public life. He held the belief that emotions do not allow a general interpretation of reality, but rather a distinctive and specific view of how each individual interprets reality. In other words, every person participates in a community with his or her own set of emotions, and they are further affected by their surrounding environment, their social position, and their network of acquaintances. In this sense, Vives’s study is incredibly innovative and modern for his time, as it brings forward and anticipates the affective expression of emotions, “the capacity to act and to be acted upon.” (Gregg and Seigworth, 21)

The ability to act on others is a characteristic of emotions described by Vives, and it resembles Aquinas’s perception of emotions as movements of the soul. In Vives’ words, “the acts of those faculties which nature gave to the soul to follow what is good and avoid what is evil are called ‘affects’ or ‘affections’; through them we are led to the good and move away from or against evil. What I here call good or evil is less what is really so than what the individual judges to be so by himself.” (Vives, Passions 2), According to Vives, emotions can precede judgment, but a well-educated mind is capable of exercising control over emotions and changing their direction. Education, therefore, is associated with the activity of a rational mind. For this reason, Vives suggests education as a tool for individual improvement, and as a means to achieve self-knowledge. For example, in De Disciplinis, Juan Luis Vives states that a lack of cultural and

19 Juan Luis Vives, Book I: De Anima Brutorum; Book II: De Rationalis, and Book III: De Affectionis.
pedagogical substance will result in profound emotional disorder. As Foster Watson states in the introduction to his translation of Vives’ *On Education*, “among the causes of the corruption examined by Vives, are arrogance of the scholars, search of glory, jealousy, covetousness, ambition, love of glory rather than the truth” (16).

Among the causes that generate the movements of the soul or emotions there is memory. Vives reiterates Plato’s concept of memory by saying that we are able to identify our desires and appetites because we anticipate future experiences by means of past occurrences. As Plato states, “the soul makes contact with the filling, and it clearly must do so through memory.” (*Philebus*, 36–37) Along these same lines, Vives explains that emotions can stretch into the past because “we hate, love, and feel compassion for those who are already dead. Emotions can also project themselves toward possible objects, and those that are similar to past objects, such as fables which we know not to be real, or into future objects we consider as present” (*Passions* 7–8). According to Vives, we have a recollection of past events and the emotions we felt during those particular events. This recollection allows us to “stretch in the past”, remember how we felt under certain circumstances, and to project those same emotions forward, so that we are capable of actually experiencing those same emotions again, as if they were about to re-occur in the near future. Isabella di Morra displays precisely this kind of projection of past fears toward future hopes. In her poems – for instance, she vividly recalls a time when her father was still living with her in their castle of Favale, and she experiences the fear, sadness, and uncertainty of his eventual abandonment.

Emotions are psychological movements, and, according to Vives, they can thrive in the company of other emotions. For instance, love can cause envy, hatred, or anger. Anger gives rise to the desire for or the joy of a fulfilled revenge. For Vives, anger too involves the action of other
emotions, and requires the desire for a possible vendetta, because “anger is a violent passion of
the soul when we see that somebody despises in us what to us seems good and not all
contemptible” (Passions, 66). Additionally, anger can occur if there is annoyance, which is
similar to Aristotle’s idea about anger and contempt serving as the foundations for revenge.
However, Vives treats anger and annoyance differently by observing that “anger always
proceeds from annoyance, but not all annoyance is anger”, and that “anger without an insult is
not possible, but annoyance is” (Passions, 66). There exists an interesting difference between the
ancient perception of anger and Vives’ idea of anger. For Plato and Aristotle the emotion of
anger always entails either: the restoration of social balance, the restoration of lost honor in the
eyes of society, or the restoration of hierarchy, whether it be military or political. By contrast, for
Vives, anger “is a movement, and irascibility is a habit, a natural disposition” (Passions, 66).
Vives argues that we feel insulted if our qualities or virtues are doubted or derided, because
anger “is caused by a judgment, not the sudden judgment that somebody has insulted us, but the
firmly established conviction that we are good, educated, generous, hardworking, and
distinguished, and that we ought to be honored and revered rather than despised” (Passions, 67).
Vives’ idea of insult takes into account an evaluation of the self, triggered by the opinion of
others. Qualities and virtues of a just individual, Vives suggests, derive from a good education
and hard work, rather than exclusively from high social rank. In fact, social class and political or
military status are taken into account as examples of excessive pride, and because of this, “those
who have a high opinion of themselves think that their good qualities are venerable and
preferable to those of anybody else. To this group belong nobles, soldiers, […]”. Being an
excellent observer of human nature, Vives holds that human pride has amplified the effects of
hatred and derision. That is, in the process of combining self-analysis with an analysis of the
opinions of others, words, gestures, laughter, and emotions in general have aggrandized their expressions in order to affect other people. In Vives’ words, “we become angry not only against individuals who have offended us, but against entire nations because of them” (Passions, 68). In the case of the texts treated in this project, the display of anger by their women authors is first directed to one individual, and then projected onto a group or a community. As Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas did before him, Vives comments on the perceived inconsistent nature of women. While anger can lead men to be strong and fearsome, “weak people such as children and women are ridiculous when angry” (Passions, 69). Additionally, Vives states that if women carry on with big and tragic words, imitating the powerful by threatening horrible things, they appear even more ridiculous.

Juan Luis Vives’ third book of De Anima et Vita became one of the most significant analyses of emotions during the late Renaissance. His studies influenced Francisco Suárez’s theories on morality in his treatise De Bonitate et Malitia Actuum Humanorum (1617), which I will touch only tangentially, and also undoubtedly had an effect upon René Descartes’ Les Passion de l’Âme (1649).

1.4 c René Descartes on Emotions: Anger as species of hatred or aversion.

In his introduction to The Passions of the Soul, Descartes’ translator Steven Voss defines the philosopher’s enterprise as a study on “the technology of emotions” (7–14). Indeed, Descartes’ main concern is how emotions work. In order to understand the mechanism of

20 From this point on, I will refer to Descartes treatise as The Passions of the Soul.
emotions, he suggests considering how reason and experience operate together. By taking into account reason and experience, Descartes is unavoidably committing to the mind-body dualism. According to the philosopher, human mind is pure cognition, while the body is enslaved to pleasure and pain, since it is nothing more than unthinking matter. For instance, when Descartes explains his notion of inner struggle, the body is not involved in it because, “the body alone must be attributed everything to be found in us that is opposed to our reason. Therefore no struggle whatever occurs here, except as follows: as the little gland [the pineal gland] in the middle of the brain is capable of being driven from one side by the soul.” (Descartes, Passions, Article 47) That is, the inner turmoil occurs only between the soul and the brain. Descartes insists on the separation between mind and body and, as Antonio Damasio comments, “this is Descartes’ error: the abyssal separation between body and mind, between the sizeable, dimensioned, mechanically operated, infinitely divisible body stuff, and the unsizeable, undimensioned, no-divisible mind stuff.” (Damasio, 249) Therefore, Descartes’ explanation in the Passion of the Soul orbited around his belief that the soul can be identified with the mind, the non-matter that uses the body matter as its tool. He was certain that human beings could master and control emotions by means of reason. By approaching emotions as a physicist, Descartes was firmly convinced that his method would help people overcome disruptive emotions. Inner struggles, he believed, could be dismembered, anatomized like body parts, and, by dividing a person into material and immaterial sides, Descartes offered new, relevant approaches to medicine and the study of anatomy21.

21 The study of anatomy and its psychological and physical functions came into fashion during the 1500s. Andreas Vesalius was the first physician to systematically study human anatomy and eventually published the results of his studies in his treatise De Humani Corporis Fabrica (On the Fabric of the Human Body) in 1543. After Vesalius, the University of Padua hosted numerous successful anatomists, such as Realdo Columbo (1516–1559), Gabriele Fallopio (1523–1562), and Girolamo Fabrici (1533–1619), among others. The theoretical and physiological knowledge learned during the 1500s remained influential for a good part of the eighteenth century, and it influenced the anatomical thinking of numerous seventeenth century physicians, including René Descartes. On this matter see, Cynthia Klestince, Theaters of Anatomy: Students, Teachers, and Tradition of Dissecting in Renaissance Venice. Baltimore, Maryland. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
When René Descartes elaborated his concept of mind-body dualism, he was responding to the philosophical positions that dominated his time: moral philosophy and how passions could be an obstacle to virtues. Undoubtedly, Descartes borrowed the Stoics’ idea according to which all emotions are condemnable as the causes of disorder and fallacious choices. Even though Descartes approached his analysis as if he had been the first one to study emotions, numerous treatises and philosophical discourses about the function of passions in people’s lives had previously been undertaken. What is beyond doubt however, is that Descartes’ treatise introduced a physiological point of view into the study of emotions. Descartes wrote more like a physician than a moral philosopher. In the first six articles of *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes states that a passion will be always an action in some other respect, but “in order to understand the passions of the soul we need to distinguish its functions from those of the body” (Article 2), and that “because we do not conceive the body to think in any way, we do right to believe that every kind of thought within us belongs to the soul” (Article 4, 20). Since body and soul are perceived as two separate entities, what is the function of emotions according to Descartes? First, Descartes places emotions in the highest cognitive level of the mind, because they are responsible for decision-making and behavior. The distance between mind and body imposed by Descartes emphasizes the physiological nature of his treatise. For instance, after stating that mind and body operate separately, Descartes offers a list of articles on how the heat and movement of the limbs proceed from the body and the thoughts from the soul, how the movement of the heart and of muscles takes place (19–135), and so on. He finally categorizes emotions in the second part of his treatise, asserting: “the number of those [the emotions] which are simple and primitive is not very large. For by carrying out a review of all those I have enumerated, one can discover with ease that only six of them are of this kind- namely Wonder, Love, Hatred, Desire,
Joy, and Sadness- and that all the others are composed of some of these six or are species of them” (Article 69, 55–56). From here it derives that anger is not a primitive or primary passion, but rather the result of a combination of these. For anger to occur, multiple emotions have to participate. Indeed, anger’s multiplicity appears to be a common point of agreement between all philosophers of human nature, from Antiquity to the more recent scholarship on emotions. In light of these views, it would appear that anger cannot exist in a vacuum, but is always accompanied, and acted upon by, other emotions.

Before entering into the details of the mechanism of emotions and anger, Descartes explains the role of perception and imagination. According to the philosopher, the sense of perception resides in the mind because “the first have the soul as cause, the others the body” (Article 19, 29). This means that our mind responds more quickly than our body does, and perception “is neither a seeing, nor a touching, nor imagining [...], it is as inspection on the part of the mind alone” (Meditations, Section 31, 29–30). Perceptions or sensations are therefore part of our thinking process. While Aristotle holds that sensing, imagining, and willing all belong to the sensory world, Descartes maintains that sensing and imagining are part of the mind separated from the physical world. If this is the case, what holds true for emotions? Emotions can start from the mind and then become visible to others by means of our body’s external signs. The external signs of anger, for instance, will be different according to the diverse temperaments of people and to the diverse set of emotions each one of us possesses (Passions, Article 200, 126). According to Descartes, when we see a person getting angry, some might turn pale or tremble, while others might blush red. Additionally, the difference in the physical manifestation of anger derives from an individual’s ability to avenge himself. Someone who feels that they cannot immediately extract vengeance will contain their anger, and will only later explode in a greater
vengeance, causing the individual to heat all the more. From here, it derives that anger has two aspects: anger can be sudden with visible external signs, but with fewer after effects and easily calmed, or it can be a slower process that “gnaws the heart more and has more dangerous effects” (Article 201, 128). For this reason, anger is a complex emotion with multiple causes. It can be caused by indignation, hatred, or aversion. Thus, it appears that the traditional purpose of seeking revenge—restoring a sense original balance—no longer stands for Descartes. Starting with Aquinas, then, and continuing with Descartes, an individual desire for vengeance can be understood as the need to reinstate our self-love. There are therefore, multiple causes of anger; specifically, the individual motivation for self-love, and the understanding of ourselves in relation to others in society. Indeed, by comparing our role in society to that of someone else, we are connecting our self-analysis or self-discovery to the collective.

1.5 Contagious Emotions in Modern Theory of Affect

The interpretation of emotions in literature, as well as in social life, has been studied since Antiquity. Anger, in particular, seems to have been the result of the social and cultural realities surrounding the women writers I will analyze in the following chapters. The approaches to the study of emotions that I have outlined encounter the same interests and concerns found in the most recent theories on affect. The ways in which emotions are formed and shaped, whether through contact with others, or as a responsive effort to contrast ourselves with other people, became a subject of study in affect theory. The understanding of the role of emotions leads to the

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22 According to Descartes, anger derives first from self-love and only later from hatred. In his words, “anger can indeed make a man bold, but it borrows its strength from love of self, which always provides its foundation, and not from the hatred which is merely an accompaniment of it”. In (AT IV, 616: K 217).
possibility of interpreting texts, while allowing the reader to better understand the author’s life, and the social and cultural aspects at work during the early modern era. That is, emotions have their own historical and cultural specificity that shape and inform the cognitive and intellectual framework within which the authors write. As both Peter Stern and Carol Stern suggest in their study “Emotionology” (1985), by studying how emotions affect individuals and their community, affect theory intends to examine the force behind emotions that moves us toward or away from another body. In Peter O’Sullivan’s words, “affects are [...] the stuff that goes on beneath, beyond, parallel to signification” (126). If each emotion has its own historical and cultural specificity, it follows that each one of them offers a different modus operandi to participate in the social world. In fact, as Clare Hemmings states by reworking Silvan Tomkins’ concepts, the manner in which affects work allows “a way of negotiating the social world as unique individuals and [as individuals who are] connect[ed to] one [an]other.” For affect theorists, it is in the moment of interaction with others that affect allows the world we live in to be transformed.

In order to understand how affects operate, transform, and become contagious, it is necessary to understand what affect theorists mean by the term “affect” and how it operates to convey emotions. For Silvan Solomon Tomkins, affects provide the individual with a way of recounting their own inner universe (emotions, desires, and revulsions for instance) to oneself and to others (Affect, Imagery, and Consciousness, Vols. I, II, and III). For John Bruns, affect emphasizes the unexpected that pushes us to act as someone other than who we really are.

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23 Stearns and Stearns defined emotionology as the study of cultural attitudes and thinking about emotions.
24 I start with Silvan Solomon Tomkins because he is the first developer of affect theory and script theory.
(Loopholes). For Federica Giardini, affects are “the qualitative expressions of our drives’ energy and variations” (150). Affects are innate, and they become the states of being, rather than the expression and interpretation of emotions. Affects are what lead us to the fulfillment of satisfaction or revulsion caused by an object. For instance, affect can be the elation that prepares the body for the satisfaction of thirst, a state of pre-emotion. It was Silvan Tomkins who first suggested that affects operate in their own network. That is, affects can have an end or purpose in and of themselves, as if it were a circle. Love might be its own reward, or desire for revenge might be insatiable, never fulfilled. In his work, Tomkins proposes that affects can have a self-referential life that penetrates human existence by means of our relationship with others and with ourselves. Tomkins suggests thinking of “the contagious nature of a yawn, smile or blush. It is transferred to others and doubles back, increasing its original intensity.” (Affect, Vol. II 245) If affects drive their own circuit of emotion and response, they do not operate in opposition to other emotions or other individuals. This is in contrast with the studies of emotions produced during Antiquity that suggested a constant evaluation of social roles and of other individuals. Silvan Tomkins’s idea relies on the individual affective experience, a sort of self-analysis of our own personal experiences. In this sense, Tomkins’s philosophy appears to be closer to Vives’ and Descartes’ conceptions of self-examination or self-love triggered by the judgment of others, even if Tomkins chooses the words “affect”, rather than “emotion”. Regardless, Tomkins argues that even if affects create their own network, they can still connect us to others. How, then, do our affects transfer to others? How do we infect others by means of our affects? An example will prove useful.

25 Bruns argues that the fascination with comedy derives from fear. Fear addresses our anxiety with honesty and this is what scares us the most.
According to Tomkins, when an affect is activated, it depends mainly on what has been learned and what has been experienced. For instance, “if a child is angry and hits the parent, and the parent becomes angry and hits back at the child and frightens the child, anger can eventually be learned to activate fear.” (Affect, Vol. II 325) The body’s exposure to the signs and actions expressed by another body permit others to be affected. For example, the act of hitting generates first anger, and then fear. Therefore, according to Tomkins’ theory, what the body communicates externally can affect others. The body, finally, is no longer a passive Cartesian machine, but is perceived as a thinking machine, able to go its own way and to express what is unpredictable. The mind, on the contrary, remains restricted to social logic and convention. In the case of the texts that I will analyze in the following chapters, the affect of women writers calls for the act of writing. What their bodies cannot communicate externally- because of the social roles and restraints imposed on them by the patriarchal society of their time- is translated into words. Their poems, short stories, and lyrics evoke communicable affects addressed to their readers. The verses and short stories of Gaspara Stampa, Isabella di Morra, María de Zayas y Sotomayor, and Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán elicit joy, provoke laughter, insinuate fear, and ignite anger, by reworking the attributes of male Western literary canon. In doing so, these women inflate the celebrated Petrarchan theme of unrequited love, exaggerate the baroque trope of fiction versus reality, and flesh out physical features in satirical poetry. Although their bodies are not visible to our eyes, their writings work as amplifiers of affect to protest forms of power dynamics, and to act upon their audience in a subtle manner.

Elspeth Probyn explains how affect theory is linked to the act of writing. By taking Stephen King as an example, Probyn states that writing affects our bodies. Although Probyn uses King, a twentieth century male writer, to explain her theory, I believe that her theory is equally
applicable to the aforementioned early modern women writers. Based on Probyn’s theory of the connection between writing and its physical manifestation within the body of the reader, it can be easily inferred that this same connection between author and reader existed for the early modern women writers and their audience. A connection had already been suggested during Denores’ and Guarino’s literary debate, and it has also been explored by scholars such as Victoria Kahn, Gail Kern Pastern, and Timothy Halton.26 This connection provokes a response within the audience. Probyn asserts that an author’s passion for honest writing, that is, the honest transmission of emotion, causes his or her attention to turn towards the reader, as “being honest about writing also means becoming an honest reader” (Gregg and Seigworth, 76) Probyn further states that this imperative for honesty can bring about a state of nervous expectation in an author - the moment when they experience the reader’s response, and can determine whether or not they have been able to capture their audience’s attention in the desired manner. The act of writing, therefore, becomes a “corporeal activity.” (Gregg and Seigworth, 77) As Stephen King explains in Probyn’s example, the act of writing builds expectation, nervousness, excitement, hopefulness, and frustration. It is what the writer is trying to tell his reader, it is the extrasensory connection we desire to establish with our readers, and, significantly, it is the affect that the women writers I analyze transfers to other bodies. In Probyn’s words, “it is about recognizing what you are trying

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26 Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds. Reading Early Modern Passion: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004. In “The Passions and the Interests in Early Modern Europe: The Case of Guarini’s Il Pastor Fido,” the author, Victoria Kahn argues that Guarini directs the reader “not only to the amoral technique of literature, but also to the related scandal of probabilistic reasoning […] it is in the interest of orator to persuade his audience by means of probable arguments and he determines what is probable by accommodating his arguments to the passions and interests of his audience.” (224–225). In “Melancholy Cats, Lugged Bears, and Early Modern Cosmology: reading Shakespeare’s psychological materialism across species barrier,” the author, Gail Kern Pastern, states that “early modern identities contains a cosmological component […] in this model of humoral subjectivity, the early modern subject’s passionate experience of self turns out to be a feelingly intimate transaction with world as well” (129). In “Strange Alteration: Physiology and Psychology form Galen to Rabelais,” the author, Timothy Halton, analyzes how early modern poets “defined a model of transformation in which psychology and physiology were mutually imbricated […] through their attempts to circumscribe and interpret political and moral valences, Renaissance writers produce dramas of psychological mastery over language and body.” (292–293)
to do to the reader and what writing does to the writer. Simply put, writing affects bodies.

Writing takes its toll on the body that writes and the bodies that read or listen.” (Gregg and Seigworth, 77) This is how the representation of anger in the texts of the women writers I will analyze becomes a communicative affect - a contagious affect.

1.5a Anger as a contagious affect.

The perception of anger, from Antiquity to the most recent scholarship of affect theory, has been subject to numerous definitions, and a diverse understanding of its modus operandi has therefore been developed. For Plato, anger is the energy, or force, behind man’s desire for justice, trigged by what is perceived as a slight. For Aristotle as well, anger can be appeased only by the pleasure of a fulfilled revenge. However, while Plato did not believe in the ars oratoria, Aristotle believed that rhetoric, among the other arts, is essential to understanding the nature of things. Orgê (anger), according to Plato, has an ill reputation because anger could result in disgrace and dishonor. In the Phaedrus, Plato offers a harsh view of the practice of oratory, recognized as capable to stir the audience’s anger. For instance, Socrates, in Plato’s dialogues, says that the sophist Thrasymachus “is the winner for the tearful speeches aimed at arousing pity for old age and poverty, and he is also clever, as he said, at arousing the masses to anger, and at soothing them again by his charms when they are angry, and he is first-rate at both devising and eliminating calumnies on any grounds whatsoever” (Phaedrus, 227a). Aristotle maintains that thumos—anger—is not less disgraceful than other unrestrained appetites. To some extent, anger listens to reason. This involves the comparison of anger to other emotions, and most importantly,
the cognitive-evaluative feature of anger. Anger involves judgment and evaluation of others and the social dimensions of which we are part. During Antiquity, the social dimension was rigidly structured within a hierarchical architecture. Still, the dialogue on emotions that started with Plato and Aristotle stretched toward a stronger interest in the physiological manifestations of anger. It is likely that the necessity to demonstrate the extent to which emotions are visible to the human eyes, and the corresponding urge to control such a visibility, became paramount during the Middle Ages and the early modern era.

Increasingly, theories of anger- and emotions in general- have explored the physical expression of emotions. Vives and Descartes are two of the most prominent early modern philosophers who analyzed such aspects. Redness in the face, black bile, sudden paleness, and a racing pulse, are only a few of the manifestations that describe such a complex emotion. Leonard Mullner notes that these observations explain that “emotions are primarily individualized and internal, and their social dimensions are semantically secondary” (133). That is, anger involves a self-analysis first, and then an evaluation of our social and cultural construction.

Finally, in an attempt to explain how “emotions work to shape the surface of individual and collective bodies,” Sara Ahmed argues that emotions are fundamental in showing us why transformations in society are so thorny, but also, how they are possible: by means of affects, and their impact on helping the individual move toward the collective (1–19). For instance, feminism during the 1970s transformed pain and anger into collectivity and resistance through the promotion of feminist organizations. How does anger “stick” to the collective, or move into public domain? Sara Ahmed answers these questions by criticizing how pain becomes a measure of truth in feminism (172–178). In other words, women’s suffering, caused by a male-dominated society, is what provides the foundation for feminism. In order to avoid fetishizing pain, Ahmed
suggests the importance of learning how to read pain in society. According to Ahmed, “responding to pain depends on speaking about pain, and such speech acts are the condition for the formation of a ‘we’ ” (174). Pain, therefore, becomes a communicable affect by means of language. The lyrics and short stories I will analyze in this project tell of anger and pain that cannot be reduced to one person’s story, but rather, allow us to create connections. Stampa’s use of the pronoun “voi” (you plural), di Morra’s emphasis on “tu” (you singular), Zayas’s stress on violence directed towards women, and Guzmán’s weight on exposing physical appearance, lay out the conditions for the formation of “we.” The response to pain, as if it were a call for action, involves anger. The representation of anger in these women’s texts moves outwardly by means of language. The moment anger becomes communicable, it moves outwardly to the public domain, to the reader. On this matter, Shirley Sullivan affirms that the experience of thumos calls for different intellectual activities, such as: thinking, knowing, planning, and perceiving (54–70). Among these intellectual activities, the act of writing also finds its role as a persuasive tool to express women authors’ thumos.

By breaking from the original Aristotelian definition of anger, Sara Ahmed asserts that anger does not necessarily call for revenge (174). However, I believe that the women writers I will discuss in the following chapters contemplate vendetta and achieve it by virtue of their act of writing. Vendetta, understood as pleasure originated by anger, is how these women induce a reaction to the dominant early modern belief in women’s inferiority and inadequateness to education.

Perhaps the clearest contemporary example of scholarship detailing the impact of emotions, and their ability to affect an audience in literary texts is Robert Cockroft’s Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing: Renaissance Passions Reconsidered (2003), whose work asserts
that modern scholarship has tended to distort or overlook the complexity of emotion in works from the early modern period. This concept is expanded upon by Drew Daniel in his *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (2013), who analyzes how early modern English writers used melancholy to produce substantive affects in their audience, leading to the formation of community. By using as an example three of William Shakespeare’s plays, Daniel asserts that, through their work, early modern English writers used melancholy to transmit new concepts of dynamic, interpretive relationships between persons, bodies, texts, spaces, structures, and things.

The notion of using recognizable emotions in literature to convey or transmit new concepts is known as “schema theory”, a theory which, in essence, states that all knowledge is organized into units, or schemata, which can be simply understood as stored information. In a literary context, schema theory asserts that writers use simplistic, relatable concepts in a way that serves to fundamentally change the readers’ understanding of the concept itself – that is, to overlay one schema with a new one. In *Language and World Creation in Poems and other Texts*, the author Elena Semino states that “from a schema-theory perspective, text worlds are cognitive

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27 Cockroft’s conviction is that we cannot exclude emotion, or emotional persuasion, from critical judgment and he explores, “a rage of critical readings showing how critical passion enlivens, directs and motivates the common activity of reading and judging […] In doing so, I [Cockroft] will apply the same principles of analysis to the affectivity of modern critical thinking, its fusions or critical stance and critical feeling […] I will try to achieve a sharper focus on the affectivity of the Renaissance texts themselves. My aim here will be to achieve an exact sense of what was being addressed in the minds of the original audiences, whether by design or in despite of authorial or polemical intention, and of how emotion was moved (whether by conscious rhetorical means or less deliberate linguistic felicity)” (4)

28 Daniel’s analysis of Melancholy in the English Renaissance starts with the fundamental question “what happens when we encounter the emotion of another?” (1) Daniel defines melancholy “as an iconic, instantly legible object for interpretation […] from Armado to Antonio to Hamlet [Shakespearean characters] the melancholy assemblage expands outward from the scene of presentation to include those nearby who spectates. […] A community of witnesses, mourners, spectators, or readers who are constituted through the identificatory legacy generated by a melancholic person or text, share in what I [Daniel] have termed its perceptual community. This community is constituted by the mingling of affective flows and epistemological speculations, producing both investment and skepticism in its percipients. Whether we are mourning Hamlet or simply looking at an emotional body, the burden of our co-participation is the feelings and knowledge of others constitutes a social assemblage that includes us in what we see, read, and experience.” (230)
constructs that arise in the interaction between the readers and the language of texts. More precisely, a text world corresponds to the configuration of schemata that are instantiated by a reader during the processing of a text” (161). Since the text worlds are constructed in the interaction between readers and the language of a text, it is important to consider the role of linguistic choices and pattern in the activation of schemata.

If we consider that early modern audience’s perception of women is deeply embedded in their prior knowledge, which was itself built on their understanding of women’s inferiority, inherited from Aristotle, it is reasonable to infer that early modern audience’s response was determined by such schemata, or unit of knowledge. Furthermore this schema, that is, women’s inferiority, establishes a framework into which new knowledge could be assimilated. Specifically, the early modern audience or reader could make sense of early modern women’s texts by relating that input to existing mental representations of entities and situations that they experienced in the past; for instance love, grief, pain, happiness.

In this sense, women authors’ could activate a schema based on the reader’s experience that was separate and apart from their perception of the author’s as women. In this way, women authors could enter the literary dialogue and help to affect the minds of their readers towards a new understanding of women’s emotions.

For instance: the pain of love is a schema, knowledge acquired by means of experience, both the author’s experience, and that of the audience. The shared sense of experience between author and reader of losing love, enduring pain, or experiencing happiness, helped to define a new schema in which a woman author could transmit her own emotions to the minds of her readers. By combining schema theory with affect theory, it is clear how an early modern reader’s
pre-conceived notions about women and their emotions could be altered by women writers themselves, who harnessed the power of words and poetry to affect the minds of the readers by, in essence, introducing a new schema that overlapped the reader’s original schema.

On the basis of these ideas, my dissertation seeks to establish a similar connection between early modern women writers of Italy and Spain, and their efforts to provoke a response in their audience through anger. Rather than “melancholy,” I assert that these women writers used anger in order to overlay existing schemata, and to transmit their frustrations and affect the minds of their audience, leading to the establishment of similar “communities”, which eventually led to the development of what we call today feminist ideals. This concept is espoused at length by Sarah Gwyneth Ross, in The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England (2009) in which Ross demonstrates that because of their education, and their commitment to the written word, women authors of the early modern period had a renaissance during the Renaissance, and that in so doing, they laid the foundation for the emancipation of womankind – or more simply, to the eventual advent of modern feminism.29

Using, Cockroft’s idea of how language in early modern texts affected the reader, Daniel’s concept of affect leading to the development of community, and Ross’ assertion that in her words, early modern women writers “laid foundations for the intellectual emancipation of womankind”, my thesis asserts that women writers of the early modern period used the written word not only to openly call for equality and to bemoan their station in life, but to transmit their

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29 Ross argues that “the rise of educated woman in the Renaissance era is best understood within a model called, intellectual family. Sponsored and often educated by their learned fathers, women authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries enjoyed and capitalized upon the cultural legitimacy that patriarchal sanction afforded. […] In the process, they laid foundations for the intellectual emancipation of womankind.” (3)
anger to their audience. In so doing, they not only intended to challenge the patriarchal norms of their time, but they aim at affecting their societies in a similar fashion.

CHAPTER 2
Tracing Women’s Anger: from Aristotelian tradition to Early Modern Beliefs

Introduction

Ancient philosophy and literature depicted women as naturally disposed towards anger. While Greek and Roman literary and philosophical texts contain occasional examples of angry men, depictions of angry and overtly emotional women were common place for classical writers and thinkers. The angry women depicted by these writers have been defined as evil and viciously vindictive; monstrous and uncontrollable; excessive and unjustified.30 Women’s anger was perceived as lacking any degree of justice, and being cause for embarrassment and shame for themselves and their families. On the contrary, men’s anger was most often portrayed as involving a process of rational decision-making, whereby they did not give way to rage. On the rare occasions when they did, their actions were often justified by political or military necessity.

This necessity was often linked to keeping order in society. Men’s thirst for revenge was typically used as a tool to restore order within a community, and to earn respect in the eyes of society.

As discussed previously, Aristotle believed that anger is caused by the perception of an unjust slight. The individual’s perception of a slight, and the desire to reinstate justice, leads to the desire to take revenge on their transgressor (Rhetoric, 64). Therefore, anger, if left unrestrained, leads to vendetta. While it was entirely acceptable for men in ancient society to manifest such unrestrained energy, the same behavior was considered unwise, and unbecoming, for women. This attitude reinforced the misogyny of ancient society, which was defined in part by the belief that women were inherently unable to maintain control over their emotions. The widespread belief that women were physically and emotionally inferior to men also explains why they were denied in the ancient world a place in the political and military governance.

Greek and Roman views on women’s emotional inferiority contributed to the formation of medieval thought on women, and shaped early modern perceptions of femininity. Thus, this chapter will start with a description of Classical philosophical and medical theories regarding women’s bodies and emotions, in order to better comprehend why women’s anger was perceived as uncontrollable and unjustified. I will then proceed to analyze the treatises, by Aristotle and Galen that offer scientific and medical explanations of women’s bodies and behaviors. In order to do so, I will focus first on the scientific observations of Aristotle regarding women. These

31 See chapter 1, pg. 26.
32 Aelius Galenus or Claudius Galenus, (AD 129–c. 216) was a famous Greek physician, surgeon, and philosopher in the Roman Empire. Galen influenced the development of various scientific disciplines, including anatomy, physiology, pathology, and neurology. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus on Galen’s contribution to the study of human temperaments.
observations contributed to the belief that women’s emotional inferiority was a scientific fact, and not an ideologically motivated effort to subdue women and underpin men’s political and military authority.33 Influenced by the theory of humors elaborated by Hippocrates (460–c. 370 BC), Aristotle drew attention to a new element in medical thought, namely, the emotions.34 This new element in medical literature also had a strong impact on the work of Galen (130–200 AD), who lived during the Roman Empire. Galen’s works subsequently became increasingly influential and celebrated during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

After having analyzed the treatises of Aristotle and Galen, I will then proceed to explain how the long misogynistic history of treatises about women is countered by women’s literary and philosophical productions, beginning in the 1400s. Women who advocated for the education of girls and women beyond the domestic sphere wrote dialogues, poems, short stories, and philosophical treatises. In so doing, women began to exercise what the Aristotelian tradition reserved to men only: that is, the *ars oratoria*, or the art of persuasion. Early modern women authors used the strategy of persuasion by expressing their anger and attempting to provoke the anger (*orgē*) of their audience in order to affect their readers’ judgment.

33 In this section I refer to Robert Mayhew’s study, *The Female in Aristotle’s Biology. Reason or Rationalization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Mayhew seeks to clear Aristotle of the accusation that his scientific treatises on women are the result of ideological rationalization aimed to suppress women, rather, Mayhew argues that Aristotle’s biological writings are simply the result of a lack of “modern tools” to observe the vital functions of women.

34 Aristotle was familiar with Hippocrates’ medical theories and the four humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile). The use of medical terms in the passage of *Poetics* (55b15 and 1342a10) for instance, indicates that Aristotle has in mind a medical connection among art, physiology, and emotions. Also Richard Janko agrees on this point, arguing that Aristotle believed that “excessive emotion was associated with an excess of black bile (melancholia).” This is to say that Aristotle believed that seeing a tragedy, for instance, could affect the black bile, since emotions have a physiological component. See Richard Janko, *Aristotle’s Poetics with the Tractatus Coislinianus, reconstruction of Poetics II and the fragments of the On Poet*. Indiana, Hackett Publishing Company, 1978. (184–185)
2.1 Ancient Greek and Roman Traditional Views of Women

Aristotle’s view on the emotional inferiority of women is the source of many standard Western theories on this matter. Aristotle’s treatises on the nature of women’s emotions are *Ethicà Nicomàcheia* [The Ethics], *Perì Tà Zòa Historìa* [History of Animals], *Perì Zòon Morìon* [Parts of Animals], and *Perì Zòon Geneseos* [Generation of Animals].

In *The Ethics*, Aristotle presents the role of women as fundamental for the formation of a family, because, “between Husband and Wife there is thought to be friendship by a law of nature: man being by nature disposed to pair, more than to associate in Communities: in proportion as the family is prior in order of time and more absolutely necessary than the Community” (Book 8.12.7). Here, Aristotle clearly describes the relationship between man and woman as “natural” and central to the creation of a family, and ultimately, of a community. Therefore, the role of women is recognized as necessary and natural to the act of procreation, just as men are naturally “disposed to pair.” Aristotle’s principle of “natural law” reigned undisputed for centuries, leading ancient and early modern society to believe that women’s function in human reproduction was their only natural purpose.

The female body is the object of focused study in two other treatises by Aristotle: *Generation of Animals* and *History of Animals*. In these treatises, a woman is defined as “a mutilated male” (*De Generatione Animalium*, 2.3.737a.26–27), and is described as being “more dispirited and more despondent than the male, more shameless and more lying, readier to deceive and possessing a better memory for grudges” (*Historia Animalium*, 8.9.608b. 11–12). While in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle focused on women’s social roles as wives and mothers, in the *Generation of Animals*, he emphasizes his scientific observations of the female body. The
body of a woman is inferior because it does not fully contribute to the formation of a new life; it only provides the nourishment (matter). It falls to the man, according to Aristotle, to supply the main substance for the creation of a human being, namely the soul (form). (*De Generatione* 2.4.738a.35–38) This belief contributed to the perception of the female body as a container. Caroline Whitbeck compares the Aristotelian view of the female body as a container to a “flower pot,” and states: “Aristotle holds that the woman supplies the container and the earth which nourishes the seed, but the seed is solely the man’s” (Whitbeck 35). Aristotle scientifically justifies the lack of functional “seeds” in the female body by borrowing from Hippocrates’ theory of humors. First, Aristotle identifies menstrual blood as being the female *sperma*. He asserts that the body of a woman is cold by “law of nature”; for this reason, she is unable to heat the menstrual blood to produce a functional seed. The inability to offer a useful and efficient seed leads Aristotle to the conclusion that the female body is simply that of a malformed man.

Why was the female body branded as cold matter? The Greek physician Hippocrates, the first to generate early gynecological theories, elaborated on the concept of the four bodily humors: blood (sanguine), yellow bile (choleric), black bile (melancholic), and phlegm (phlegmatic), which are linked to the elements of air, fire, earth, and water (*De Aere*). According to this theory, women are dominated by water and are therefore phlegmatic. For this reason, the natural condition of women is that of wetness. A woman’s flesh is more sponge-like,

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35 Many other scholars shared Whitbeck’s idea. Page Dubois states that Aristotle’s work: “takes up the metaphorical system [...] that the female body is a container, like an oven, to be filled with the semen” (126). See Page Dubois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Maryanne Cline Horowitz argues that Aristotle’s theory is “an extreme position in the process of the masculinization of procreation.”

36 The theory of fluids derived from the notion that the world consists of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Hippocrates observes that men too are composed of four elements, or fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile. If these humors maintained a proper balance, then individuals would be healthy. Otherwise, human beings would develop diseases.
and softer than a man’s, and, as Hippocrates continues, “since this is so, the woman’s body draws moisture both with more speed and in greater quantity from the belly than does the body of a man” (Disease of Women I 572). If their bodies are not sufficiently moist, the balance of women’s fluids is altered. This imbalance affects women’s minds and bodies, particularly, their uterus. It follows that “when a womb is drier than it should be, it often suffers violent dislocation” (Disease of Women I 567–584). Greeks believed that, the detached, or “wandering” womb could cause numerous pathologies, such as lung disease, drowsiness, headaches, and if left uncontrolled, even death. The womb was perceived as an independent entity, “an animal within an animal” that had to be absolutely restrained (Aretaeus, On the Causes and Symptoms of Acute Diseases, 248). In order to avoid the displacement of the womb, Hippocrates advocated marriage as the only solution. Laurinda Dixon explains that “Hippocratic texts concluded that if women have intercourse, they are more healthy because the womb becomes moist […] marriage was strongly recommended as the most effective cure for all single women while virginity was condemned as unnatural and dangerous” (54). Later, Aristotle uses these ideas to justify the social role of women, as well as the perception of women as inferior human beings, and his belief in their inability to control themselves. Silvia Montiglio further explains that the act of “wandering” presented different and negative connotations if applied to women in ancient Greece. From a social point of view, the act of wandering was perceived as the negative alternative to marriage. Straying women, that is, women who did not have a husband, and young

38 According to Aretaeus, “in the middle of the flanks of women lies the womb, a female viscus, closely resembling an animal; for it is moved of itself hither and thither in the flanks, also upwards in a direct line to below the cartilage of the thorax, and also obliquely to the right or to the left, either to the liver or spleen; and it likewise is subject to prolapses downwards, and, in a word, it is altogether erratic. It delights also, in fragrant smells, and in advances towards them; and it has an aversion to fetid smells, and flees from them; and, on the whole, the womb is like an animal within an animal.” (248)
girls who refused to get married had no social ties to society, because wandering represented a threat to the foundation of society itself, namely the family (Montiglio 16–21). From a biological standpoint, a “wandering womb” was envisioned as a rejection of procreation and motherhood, and it could have lethal consequences. The wandering woman is therefore like the wandering womb. She was displaced in society, leading to societal instability, just as the wondering womb was displaced within the woman’s body, leading to her emotional instability. Jean Davidson observes that the rejection of social and biological stability could eventually result in “wandering in madness,” a concept that can be seen in many instances of classical mythology. The concern of ancient philosophers with maintaining a stable physical and social balance was derived from this fear of wandering in madness. A good equilibrium of fluids, they asserted, was indicative of physical health, and a proper balance of humors indicated mental stability.

Claudius Galen (129–c. 200 AD) expanded on Hippocrates’ theory of fluids by dedicating his studies to the emotional causes of illness. Galen saw a direct connection between the level of fluids in an individual’s body, and his or her emotional behavior. He also explained how different mixtures of fluids corresponded to various physical features. Galen believed that the human body was a map that could be read to interpret temperaments, and therefore, understand various behaviors. Galen believed that these temperaments were visible, that they manifested in the body, and that therefore, they were open to public opinion and judgment. He firmly believed that the excess or lack of bodily fluids could influence the moods, emotions, and behaviors of an individual. In his treatise De Temperamentis [On Temperaments], Galen classified the fluids—blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm—in four elements combined in

two pairs: hot/cold and dry/wet. Mixing the four fluids with the four elements allowed Galen to reveal different possible temperaments, but, he concluded, only one mixture yields a positive outcome. In his treatise *On Temperaments*, Galen presented the optimal temperament in which all four elements achieve *eucrasia*, which in Greek, means the best possible mixture, when he states:

The best temperate man is he who in the body seems to be in the mean of all extremities, that is skinniness and fatness, heat and coldness […] and regarding the body this is the best temperate man. Similarly in his soul he is in the middle of the boldness and timidity, of negligence and impertinence, of compassion and envy. He is cheerful, affectionate, charitable, and prudent (Peri Kraseon 233).

Therefore, a perfect physical and psychological symmetry had to exist in order to possess the ideal temperament. Robert Stelmack and Anastasio Stalikas explain in their study of Galen’s theory of humors that if the two axes—hot/cold, and dry/moist—were not in balance, it was possible to experience either excess or a lack of fluids (255–263). That is, excessive blood would generate a sanguine temperament, and individuals with this temperament would be considered lively, sociable, and pleasure seeking. Excessive yellow bile would generate a choleric temperament, which could make a person impulsive and restless. A melancholic temperament was derived from excessive black bile, and caused a person to appear particularly serious, discontent, and susceptible to moodiness and depression. Finally, too much phlegm was understood to cause a person to be introverted, reserved and hesitant. Galen’s conclusions also comprised an interpretation of bodily features. He believed that the skin was the most reliable detector of a balanced mixture of the four temperaments. Indeed, bones, nails, and cartilage are hard, and, therefore, tend to be dry. Muscles, fat, and blood are softer and more humid than the
The palm of the hand has the right balance of warm, cold, dry and moist, according to Galen, and is therefore the body part that best allows an individual’s temperament to be read. He states: “the skin of the inside of the hand is immune to the extremes suffered by the other parts.” (Selected Works, 565) Physical features, such as skin, eyes, face, and general size of the body, would eventually become a major concern of early modern European thinkers, physiologists, and philosophers, interested in establishing the ideal physical and psychological symmetry, or balance of an individual. By establishing this ideal balance, they believed they could interpret visible emotions and classify the behaviors they elicited in an individual as either moral or immoral.

In Galen’s time, these temperaments were understood as causing illness and playing a key role in determining physical and facial characteristics, and later in the early modern era, they influenced thinkers and writers. Indeed, Galen’s theory of humors exposed a fundamental connection between temperament and gender that would ultimately influence early modern perceptions of male and female bodies and minds. Galen argues that the heat of adult men is more intense and drier than that of boys. Therefore, boys and the elderly are identified as being moister than adult men, but not as moist as women. While men do not experience a long cold stage, women are described as living permanently within that stage. The temperament of men is therefore the exact opposite of that of women. Galen associates hot and dry temperaments with physical characteristics of masculinity, which will become the traditional image of manliness:

the chest is hairy, that the whole of this person is necessarily relatively hot and dry; but the heat is greatest in the heart, and thus is high-spirited […] for these people the whole chest will be very broad, the veins broad, the arteries large, and with a large and very vigorous pulse; and there will be much hair over the whole body, and the hair on the
head will be very fast-growing and black and curly in the first stage of life, but with the passage of time, baldness will follow (Mixture, Book II, 625–627).

In the passage above, it is clear that Galen associates hotness and dryness with masculinity, along with physical strength and hardness of the body structure. Those who did not correspond to this physical description of masculinity were considered “tightly strung,” “narrow and hairless [in the] chest,” with “the whole body bare of hair,” “soft and white skin,” “with small veins”; in other words, they were considered to have an effeminate body. Women, as well as children, adolescents, eunuchs, and old people, were associated with moistness and softness, and therefore, with weakness. Specifically, Galen attributes excessive moisture to the female sex because of regular female menstruation, which he asserts, was meant to expel excessive wetness monthly.

Galen also attributes the emotion of anger to masculinity. In his treatise De Propriorum Animi Cuiuslibet Affectuum Dignotione et Curatione (On Diagnosis and Curing the disorder of the Soul), Galen discusses emotions and analyzes anger (orge) and grief (lupe). Galen, as Aristotle did before him, uses thumos and orge interchangeably, and he distinguishes two outcomes of anger: thumos, which is the spirited and irascible anger associated with youthful masculine temperament, and orge, which lasts longer, and has a profound psychological effect on the individual. Thumos is considered sudden and immediate because, according to Galen, “always there will be some failures, especially when one is young.” Ogre, while longer lasting and potentially more damaging, can be overcome if he or she exercises self-restraint (Selected

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Works 5.22). In the section titled, “The Affections and Errors of the Soul”, Galen describes the effect of the two types of anger in the following way:

[thumos] to become immediately indignant and enraged at apparent wrongs committed against us. This faculty is also responsible for the nurturing of grudges, and affection whose seriousness is greater by virtue of being long-lived. The action of our second irrational faculty [orge] is to be violently attracted to anything, which appears pleasant, without consideration as to whether it is beneficial or harmful, good or bad. The more violent manifestations of this latter faculty should be resisted before it grows to such strength that it is impossible to remove. (Selected Works, 6.29)

Anger and grief are therefore linked together. Indeed, Galen affirms that when an individual is able to restrain anger and grief, they demonstrate intellectual strength, which will lead to success later in life. Individuals who exercise such intellectual strength are described as masculine, possessing a warm and dry temperament, and as intellectually active. Galen suggests that these men experience anger, but that they are also able to use it productively, channeling it into a sense of competitiveness. As a result of the high sense of honor that permeated Greek society, it can be inferred that Galen described the “ideal man” suited to leading a community. Such a man would not give in to violence, or resort to physical force, but would find stability by means of his wits. According to Galen, when violence prevails, it is inevitably the result of an irrational and uncontrollable anger. Galen offers the renowned example of his mother’s physical violence towards her slaves, and by comparing her anger with that of his father. He concludes that his father manifested fine qualities, even when angry, while his mother displayed wretched affections: “this awoke in me the feelings of warmth and love for the former, and hatred and avoidance of the latter […] My father would never grieve at any setback, while my mother
would be plunged into misery by the smallest occurrence” (Selected Works 8.41). Galen’s observations of his mother underlined for him women’s perceived lack of self-control, their inclination towards violent outbursts, (in this case, against slaves), and their despair and frustration afterwards. While the “intellectual” anger of men, based on Galen’s observation, is caused by what is perceived as insult or injustice, anger in the form of physical violence is effeminate and unjustified.

Galen’s notion of womanly anger seems to recall the idea of anger as espoused by Seneca (4 BC–65AD). In De Ira (On Anger), Seneca condemns all emotion as evil, for, as a Stoic, he believed all emotions had to be eradicated. Anger, in particular, had to be weeded out, because of its dreadful effects on human life:

no pestilence has been more costly for the human race. Butchery and poisoning, suits and countersuits, cities destroyed, entire nations wiped out, leading citizens sold on the auction block, dwelling out to torch, then the blaze, unchecked by the city walls, turning vast tracts of land bright with the attacking flame. (2) Consider the cities of vast renown whose foundation stones can now hardly be made out: anger cast these cities down […] anger emptied them (1.2.2).

For the ideal Stoic life, a rational mind was necessary, and required firm control over one’s actions and emotions. Galen asserted in his treatise that he had learned to successfully control his anger and, unlike his mother, never beat any slave ⁴¹(Selected Works 5.22). Seneca,

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⁴¹ Galen states that “I have always followed what I once heard was Plato’s method with regard to the servant who makes a mistake; it is a practice of which I approve, and which I recommend you to impose yourself, too. It is this: never to strike a servant with your hands, or to instruct any other to do so, so long as you are still in a state of anger, but to postpone the punishment.” (5.22)
by contrast, attributes only negative connotations to anger, defining it as the desire to take vengeance for a wrong or to return pain for pain (2.2.3b.3). These definitions are similar to Aristotle’s notion of anger and vengeance, but Seneca takes things further when he adds: “anger sets in motion no substantial and becoming project. Quite the contrary, it seems to me the mark of a lethargic and sterile mind, aware of its own feebleness, given to chronic distress […] in this respect anger is an especially womanish and childish vice. It befalls men” (20.3.4). Seneca, therefore, does not believe any positive intellectual emotion can be generated from anger. Seneca’s view that anger could yield no positive result for men or women did not prevent a continued emphasis on anger as a mindless, womanly vice in classical and medieval literature. This emphasis fed the prevailing view of women’s anger as fundamentally irrational compared to the anger of men. It appears, therefore, that ancient medical and philosophical treatises considered men to be in control of their anger, while they characterized women’s anger as consisting mostly of hysterical outbursts. Women’s anger was perceived as lacking in moderation and reason, bringing instead chaos to the domestic sphere. This, in turn, would be used to justify men’s control of the household, the family, and society in general. Anger, as an “intellectual activity,” could be exercised and possessed only by men. This implies that women were not capable of generating rational and productive anger. Indeed, nearly all displays of emotion by women in the domestic sphere were frowned upon. In his treatise Coniugalia Praecepta [Advice to the Bride and Groom], Plutarch suggests that women should not experience an autonomous anger or display any emotion of their own. Rather, they should share their husbands’ emotions. In Plutarch’s words, “if a wife puts on a glum look when her husband wants to be playful and affectionate, or if she laughs and jokes when he is serious, she is a poor wife […] she proves herself disagreeable, in the second insensitive, […] a wife should not have
feelings of her own, but share her husbands’ seriousness and soberness, his anxiety and his 
laughter” (14.140). The silencing of women’s emotions, along with close male supervision of the 
female mind and body, was reinforced later by the medieval notion that women could not 
conduct public life or feel emotions independently.

2.2 Medieval and Early Modern Perceptions of Women’s Anger.

During the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, misogynistic beliefs, supported by 
centuries of medical and philosophical belief, reinforced the notion of women’s physical and 
emotional inferiority. The widely held view that anger was not a proper emotion for women to 
experience or display because they lacked the intelligence to use it productively (and were 
therefore only capable of negative forms of anger), resulted in women’s inability to openly feel 
and express their anger. Silence, chastity, obedience, and moderation became celebrated 
womanly virtues, which also underpinned the enforced passivity of women’s bodies and minds. 
In addition to the widely held medical and philosophical views of the time, Biblical 
interpretations by Christian theologians served to reinforce medieval concepts of women.42 
Christian views of womanly virtue came to be identified with the conflict between Eve and 
Mary, which can be interpreted as the divergence between a perceived sinful nature versus a 
morally proper nature. Influenced by Greek literature on women’s inferiority, the medieval 
philosophical and religious tradition developed an extensive body of literature attacking women

42 On this matter see Tertullian, “On the Apparel of Women.” In Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim 
Readings on Genesis and Gender. Ed. by Kristen Kvam, Linda Schearing, and Valerie Ziegler. Bloomington, IN: 
as lustful and deceitful. According to the early Christian tradition, moderation and silence were envisioned as the direct opposite of excessive and unnecessary behavior. Therefore, the Christian Church fathers praised obedient and moderate wives, if they followed the examples of the Virgin Mary, or other female saints and martyrs. A similar scission of good versus evil, sin versus virtue, was applied to emotions. Excessive emotional outbursts were categorized under the seven deadly sins: anger, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, and gluttony. Anger, therefore, was associated with evil and sin, reinforcing the already negative perceptions of women’s anger.

Women could not express anger because their anger was considered irrational and uncontrollable, and the source of disorder and insubordination within the matrimonial space, which led to the designation of women’s anger as a condemnable sin. Social restrictions against women’s anger were therefore deeply embedded in society. These restrictions underscored the omnipresent difficulty women faced in openly manifesting their anger.

In the remaining sections of this chapter I intend to answer the following questions stemming from what has been discussed earlier: what caused women to finally break their silent passivity? What provoked women’s anger?

2.3 The Stirring of Early Modern Women’s Awareness

Perhaps the single largest component that served as a catalyst for a general awakening among women during the early modern era was education.43 It is almost certainly no coincidence

that the process of awakening coincided with the bourgeoning of Humanism and the necessity to reexamine many of the academic, scientific, social, and cultural ideas about women’s inferiority inherited from Antiquity. In doing so, interest in the Classics and their translations was revived. Additionally, many grammar schools were founded far from the reach and control of the Church and its doctrine during this period. This allowed a broader spectrum of people to access education. A large number of Italian women of the upper strata of society took advantage of these new educational opportunities, as well as major cultural changes beginning in the late 1400s. In the sixteenth, after Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) proposed in his *Prose della Volgar Lingua* that Petrarca and Boccaccio should serve as models to imitate in poetry and prose, the vernacular triumphed as the dominant literary language in Italy. The printing industry then contributed to a fast and broad diffusion of literary works written in the vernacular, including works by women. Melinda Blade argues that compared to Italy

…women in other European areas, particularly in England and Germany, were feeling the adverse effects that resulted from the suppression of the convents which had been destroyed by the Reformers (1517–1685). Since the convents had been the mainstay of education for centuries, the affected area stagnated educationally while Italy’s education movement progressed (25).

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state that “by the late fourteenth century, it is clear that a group of noble families, who were related by marriage, gave their daughters a through humanist education, so that they could help with the government of their husbands’ lands. […] Wives and daughters of noble class were highly educated. These women wrote occasional orations and letters, usually pleading for some specific cause. Their attitudes were conventional for their time and class. […] Their political discourse was an active exercise in persuasion […] these women were instrumental in encouraging the production of books that combated misogyny and promoted the positive representation of women.” (40)

44 On this matter, see *Women’s Education in Early Modern Europe*. Eds. Barbara J. Whitehead. NY: Garland Press, 1999. In this collection of essays, the definition of education is challenged as for women meant to accomplish a social task, to define their worth, value, and their individual role in early modern society.

45 Between 1536 and 1540, Henry VIII disbanded monasteries, convents, priories, and friaries in England, Wales, and Ireland.
Although women had still not been granted admission to university study, more and more women gained access to the philosophical texts that talked about their supposed weak nature. Only women who belonged to the upper class could immediately benefit from the new cultural norms, societal openness, and emerging intellectual zeitgeist of the times. Nevertheless, as knowledge, literacy, and learning spread among more and more women, they acquired an understanding of how their nature had been perceived and discussed for generations. Armed with this knowledge, women began to take steps towards the development of their own body of intellectual argument against society’s inherent misogyny. The silence of the mind was broken and, though the female body was still circumscribed in the private space, this awareness of the accumulation of misogynistic concepts kindled an angry response in women. Not a violent, physical, irrational and unjustified anger, but rather an “intellectual” anger, expressed through the only weapon available to them: the written word.

One of the earliest examples of such written expression is the work of Christine de Pizan (ca. 1365–1431). In The Book of the City of Ladies (1405), the author describes her reaction at reading the Lamentations by Mathéolus:

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\ldots\text{one day as I was sitting alone in my study surrounded by books on all kinds of subjects, devoting myself to literary studies, my usual habit, my mind dwelt at length on the weighty opinions of various authors whom I had studied for a long time.} \ldots\text{I remember wanting to examine this book by Mathéolus. I}
\]

\[46\] Mathieu of Boulogne, or Mathéolus, was a thirteenth-century French poet about whom there is minimal biographical information. What information is available comes to us through his Liber lamentationum Matheoluli [Lamentation of Matheolus], (circa 1295). Written first in Latin, Mathéolus’ book was translated into French around 1390 by Jean Le Fèvre. In The Concept of Woman: the early humanist reformation 1250-1500. Vol. I. Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002, the author Prudence Allen argues that Le Fèvre’s translation was immediately successful, and it circulated widely both before and after the invention of printing (201).
started to read it and because the subject seemed to me not very pleasant for people who do not enjoy lies, and of no use on developing virtue or manners, given its lack of integrity in diction and theme, and after browsing here and there and reading the end, I put it down in order to turn my attention to more elevated and useful study. But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men-and learned men among them- have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behavior. [...] Thinking deeply about these matters, I began examine my character and conduct as a natural woman [...] (23).

From the passage above it is evident that De Pizan wanted to introduce herself as a learned individual surrounded by knowledge, who occupied a space quite far from the traditional female domestic sphere. Even more evident is the discomfort she experienced from the act of reading, to the extent that she cannot cease to look at the book containing misogynistic statements. Indeed, in the process of learning about the nature of women depicted by male authors, De Pizan started to feel disgusted by her own femininity, as she states: “as I was thinking this, a great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart, for I detested myself and the entire feminine sex, as though we were monstrosities in nature” and finally decided that “God formed a vile creature when He made a woman” (24). In her self-evaluation, the author compares the nature of women and men, and responds to long-standing misogynistic views by offering a catalogue of exemplary women. De Pizan presented a vision of an ideal community of women who could serve as mothers, daughters, queens, saints, warriors, and more. She depicted this community as being made up of women who rejected the label of inferiority. Although she reaffirms that the first responsibility
of women is to serve as wives and bear children, De Pizan is able to re-frame centuries of male-dominant tradition and counter the accusations of men. Moreover, she champions equal education for men and women, which she believed, would allow for a redefinition of the social role and nature of women and would result in a re-evaluation of women’s self-worth.

_The Book of the City of Ladies_ began the debate on “the woman question” (“querelle des femmes”) and generated a plethora of works by both men and women either praising or lambasting De Pizan and women in general. Yet there can be no doubt that De Pizan’s acquisition of information, and the self-evaluation of her nature in comparison with men, prompted and sparked a new way for women to think of themselves, and their roles in society. Through her indignation and disgust, she developed a rational and productive response by means of the written word.

Mathéolus’s work affected Christine de Pizan, and provoked her righteous anger. Mathéolus’s text undoubtedly affected Christine de Pizan as a reader, who responded by composing her own literary and philosophical treatise. De Pizan’s response was provoked by the necessity she felt to right an offense endured for centuries by women. From this example, we can clearly see the germination of the idea that the written word can prompt action, compelling an audience to engage in their own act of self evaluation, and prompting a clear and powerful emotional response. Other women writers, who would eventually seek to take their own kind of revenge through the written word, seized upon this concept. As women could not avenge themselves physically, and no legal system would defend them, women found a tool to regain self-worth in the act of writing. Writing also afforded women an opportunity to be part of literary and philosophical debates originally reserved exclusively for men. Thus, early modern women
writers began laying the groundwork, through their writings, for women to have a say about their own social status.⁴⁷

In Italy, women of the upper social and economic strata received broad education, although it was centered on household arts. Still, many noble women during this time took advantage of the wider educational opportunities afforded to their male siblings. For instance, Moderata Fonte (1555–1592) learned to master Latin through her brother’s education. By the time Moderata Fonte’s most popular work Il Merito delle Donne [The Worth of Women] was published, the author had absorbed all of the male and female literary writers of her day. Furthermore, many of the works by these women writers had been influenced by Christine de Pizan’s proto-feminist work.

In her treatise, Moderata Fonte’s anger is expressed through legal terminology. The daughter and wife of lawyers, Fonte emphasized law, governance, and human justice. Her work focuses on a conversation among seven women, and their vituperation against men and their misogynistic beliefs. The organization that occurs among the seven women resembles a trial. Fonte places herself within the action through the character of Corinna, who offers her audience a debate by putting forward an initial question to ponder, and then remaining largely impartial

⁴⁷ On the absence of an effective legal system in defense of early modern women in Europe, see the following: Barbara Kreps, “The Paradox of Women: the legal position of early modern wives and Thomas Dekker’s The Honest Whore” In ELH, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press. (Vol. 69, N.1) 2002, (83–102). Merry E. Wiesner, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ___, “Frail, weak, and helpless” women’s legal position in theory and in reality,” in Jerome Friedman (ed.), Regnum, Religio et Ratio: Essays Presented to Robert M. Kingdon, Sixteenth Century Journal Publisher, 1987) 161-169. Lucy A. Sponsler, “The status of married women under the legal system of Spain,” Journal of Legal History, 3 (1982), 125-152. The above scholars of women’s history concur with one another and with my thesis, in stating that early modern women’s legal status was deeply rooted in the Roman Law and Greek philosophy. Specifically, the ancient belief that only men could own and inherit property influenced women’s social status as daughters and wives. Laws regarding dowries and inheritance aimed to preserve property under the man’s name. Essentially, the paterfamilias [father of family] possessed the patria potestas [paternal power]. The term “father” would include any male family member, and excluded women (daughters, wives, sisters) who were subordinated to fathers, husbands, or brothers. Women therefore could not transmit any wealth, hold public office, represent anyone in a legal case, or witness a will. Her existence was circumscribed to the privacy of her husband’s household.
during the debate. The women attacking misogynistic beliefs strike first, and the women who want to defend men respond later. Fonte’s audience is provided with the full scope of the argument, and her narration skillfully leads readers to postpone their view on men’s misogyny. In the dialogue, when the characters of Adriana and Elena offer to be silent in the hope that their husbands will stop mistreating them, Leonora replies angrily:

Si è taciuto pur troppo […] e più si tace, essi fanno peggio, anzi per mover il giudice a dar giusta sentenza bisogna dir liberamente la verità - e non tacer alcuna delle sue ragioni; che se per caso uno doverà aver dinari da tale che non si curi pagarlo ed egli si tace, colui che non ha discrezione, non lo satisferà mai, ma se parla, se dimanda, se si querela al giudice, ecco che pur tardi, o per tempo vien satisfatto. (140)

[We have already done too much keeping quite in the past […] and the more we keep quite, the worse they get. On the contrary, in order to move a judge to pass a just sentence, one needs to speak out freely, not suppressing any argument that might support the truth. If a man needs to reclaim some money from a person who has refused to pay him and he keeps quite about it, the unscrupulous debtor will never give him satisfaction, but if he speaks up, if he brings the case, if he complains in front of the judge, then sooner or later he will get back what is his by right].

(Price 199)

In the passage above, Fonte clearly suggests that men have a debt towards women. Fonte’s work goes beyond a simple lament on the social plight of women; it puts forward the idea of a collective justice. By means of words, Fonte urges women to break their silence and persuades ‘the judge’ (patriarchal society) to advocate for social change. Moreover, Fonte
suggests that men’s jealousy, anger, greed, and vice brings into a marriage “servitude and suffering” (93), while women’s virtues balance the relationships in the household. The author subverts the perception of male and female nature, and brings to light the defects and faults of men while heralding women’s virtues. She accuses men of being “cold and ungrateful” and contrasts men’s anger and greed with women’s prudence and temperance. In this sense, according to Fonte, women are more self-restrained than men. As the author demonstrates by virtue of her rhetorical skills, her indignation finds a creative outlet to call for justice and eventually “get back what is hers by right.”

Some early modern women writers express their anger and indignation even more vividly. A century after Fonte, Arcangela Tarabotti (1604–1652) in her *Tirannia Paterna* (*Paternal Tyranny*, 1650) articulated her anger by utilizing bitter and sharp words. Tarabotti informs her readers of the truth about her “imprisonment” by saying:

*ecco La semplicità ingannata*, che finalmente compare alla luce, per scoprire al mondo più fiero inganno, ch’abbia giamai Saputo praticare la più accorta malizia, travestita di bontà. E perché Tu veda che i miei detti sono fondati sopra una candissima verità, ti prononstico ch’udirai mille bugie, invenzioni, mormorazioni e detrazioni verso di me. […] È ben di necessità a chi non vuol conoscere la verità il coprirla con le bugie, e perciò sentirai opinioni diverse, ma tutte dirette a un solo fine di detestar il mio libro, non per altro, se non perché s’oppone immediatamente all’operazione de’ tristi. Fra l’altr’impertinenze ch’udirai profferire due saranno le principali: una ch’io nutrisca in me qualche sdegno particolare contro gli uomini. L’altra ch’abbia in odio lo stato religioso, e che
perciò con fini inconvenient desideri questa prima libertà, praticata nell’età
dell’oro. (173–174)

[here is my Innocence Betrayed, which at last sees the light of the day to reveal to the world the most savage deceit that malicious cunning has known how to perpetrate in the guise of kindness. I would like to persuade you that my words are founded on the unshakeable truth, I imagine you will probably hear a thousand lies, stories, rumors, and calumnies regarding me.[…] anyone who does not wish to know the truth must of necessity conceal it with lies, and so you will hear discordant opinions in the sole aim of arousing hatred for my book just because it is so resolutely opposed to wrongdoing. Two of the main impertinent remarks you will hear expressed are, first, that I nurture within myself a particular contempt for men, and second that I loathe the religious life and consequently seek that original liberty experienced in the Golden Age]. (39–40)

Tarabotti’s anger is evident in her protest against those who conceal the truth; that is, against men. Fierce in her accusations, the author suggests that men “force women to dwell in life-long prisons”; that they are “cruel and inhuman” to women, treating them in a “heinous and pervert[ed]” manner; and that men are “the compendium of all imperfection without woman.” She further asserts that men imprison women in convents so that they can avoid further expenses, including, in the case of a daughter, having to pay a dowry for her marriage. Tarabotti’s work is generated from a strong sense of injustice germinated from her imprisonment in a convent, as well as her awareness of the restrictions imposed on the women of her time. Once again, lacking any form of legal protection from an early modern legal system that only protected men and their property, women had no alternative but to exercise a form of justice through the written word.48

48 See footnote 40 on page 66 for further readings on the early modern legal system for women.
Moreover, Tarabotti explains that by knowing the truth, she will achieve full satisfaction, and take her own revenge, because, “dicendo la verità comporta odio […] la mia sola soddisfazione risiede nella giusta coscienza che penetrando il recondito più profondo del cuore, io possa destare il rimorso nella coscienza dei vili uomini” [speaking the truth incurs hatred […] my one satisfaction lies in an upright conscience, piercing into the heart’s innermost recess, at least may I awaken remorse in the conscience of wicked men.] Affecting her readers, piercing their hearts, and moving them to action, is enough to appease Tarobotti’s loathing of the misogynistic beliefs and practices of her day. It seems therefore that the revenge of women writers was fulfilled in the satisfaction they derived from knowing that their audience had been given the truth; the truth about women’s nature, the truth about men’s nature, and the truth about their intellectual and rhetorical abilities. Although each woman author might have different motivations behind their work, a common desire to be part of literary discourse was shared by most early modern European women writers.

A similar case that of Arcangela Tarabotti, and one that highlights the fact that women throughout history found it necessary to respond to misogyny through writing, was Lucrezia Marinella (1571–1653). Marinella was also compelled to react to the misogynistic literature of her earlier time by writing the longest Renaissance dialogue titled The Nobility and Excellence of women and the defects and vices of men (1600). Marinella’s work was written in response to Giuseppe Passi’s I donneschi difetti (1599); the latter condemns women as beyond any possible salvation and proposes, as an ultimate solution, women’s subordination and segregation from society, like animals, owing to their alleged lack of reason and morality. Passi’s asserted that women’s only purpose should be relegated to the reproduction of the species. Marinella’s indignation took the form of a dialogue, written in praise of women and vituperation of men.
Specifically, she states that women’s bad or sinful behavior is often the outcome of “men’s abuse of persuasion, obstinacy, insolence, insinuation, and promises towards women” (Marinella 128). Furthermore, Marinella rejects Aristotle’s argument that a lower body temperature causes the imperfection of women, and offers examples of men whose high body temperatures lead them to commit terrible actions. In her words, “[…] various reasons drove certain wise and learned men to reprove and vituperate women. They included anger, self-love, envy, and insufficient intelligence. It can be stated therefore that when Aristotle or some other man reproved women, the reason for it was either anger, envy, or too much self-love.” (Marinella 119) Passi seems to confirm Marinella’s assertions, since in his introduction to I Donneschi difetti, he claims that anger against women led him to blame them (126). Additionally, Marinella argues that it is men’s physical strength that enables them to take advantage of women. For this reason, “female sex, which is more delicate than the male one and less strong […] is tyrannized and trampled by insolent and unfair men” (131). In this regard, Marinella’s work is very similar to Fonte’s rhetorical protest in defense of women, and she calls for the attention of her female audience, aiming therefore to provoke her readers by shedding light on Marinella’s sense of injustice.

Like in Italy, women in Spain extensively exercised their rhetorical skills. One of the most renowned examples is Juana Asbaje, later known as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695), who boldly spoke and wrote in defense of women’s right to study, read, write, and criticize society. Taking her cue from De Pizan’s The City of Ladies, and citing biblical and classical sources, Sor Juana describes approximately forty cases of women who were not silent, but rather served as leaders or teachers. She refutes the traditional biblical interpretations of society that asserted that women should keep silent in the church and learn only from their husband, arguing that ignorance in women was not a virtue, but rather a peril that would expose
young women to disastrous outcomes. Additionally, Sor Juana addresses a fundamental problem with regard to the concept of honor in early modern Spain, one that was also addressed by Vives in *De Istitutione Femminae Christianae*, Book II. In his words, “[…] women’s good reputation is a matter of paramount importance. There are some women who, if they are not granted the utmost liberty in everything […] in their incredible impudence and temerity, brand their husbands with an indelible stigma in the talk of the city, from which he will get a bad reputation and become the object of scorn and derision.” (97) Any actions of women are bound to attract negative comment, and therefore jeopardize their honor and, by extension, that of their family. Sor Juana addresses the concept of “indelible stigma” after having been the object of criticism at the hands of her confessor, Antonio Núñez de Miranda and other male clerics. Nuñez openly and relentlessly accused her of vanity because of her contacts outside of the convent, and her literary pursuits. Sor Juana’s letter, titled *Autodefensa Esperitual* (1682) and addressed to those malevolent voices, reveals the author’s angst and concern with having being slandered “publicly before everyone,” rather than “in secret as mandated by fatherly discretion.” To Sor Juana, the presence of an audience strengthened the insult, and gave it heightened validity, robbing her of the chance to contest the allegations against her. Sor Juana is fully aware that for a woman, literary success and applause could come with “stinging thorns of persecution.” In her words:

[… for as all know the facility I have (of writing poetry), if to that were joined the motive of vanity, perhaps it is a motive of mortification, what greater punishment would you wish for me that that resulting from the very applause that confers such pain? Of what envy am I not the target? Of what malice am I not the object? What actions do I take without fear? (Paz 497)
Porqué todos conocen la facilidad que tengo (de escribir poesía), en caso de que se unió el
motivo de la vanidad, tal vez es un motivo de mortificación, ¿qué mayor castigo desearías para
mí que resulta en el aplauso que confiere tales dolor? ¿Por lo que la envidia no soy yo el
objetivo? ¿Por lo que la malicia no soy yo el objeto? ¿Qué acciones debo tomar sin miedo?]49

Frustration and affliction resonate in Sor Juana’s words, but I agree with Stephanie
Merrim, in stating that Sor Juana’s Autodefense also displays “the rarest emotions in early
modern women’s writing, anger” (155). Sor Juana has reached the breaking point, and anger
saturates her letter as she asserts: “but to you [Nuñez] cannot fail to say that by now my breast is
overflowing with the complaints that over the course of the years I could have spoken, and that
as I take up my pen to state them, responding to one I venerate so highly, it is because I can stand
no more” (Paz 498). After dismissing Núñez as her confessor, her letter turns to sarcasm, irony,
caustic accusation, and hatred, vituperation, and horror, directed against Núñez and misogyny in
general. As Arcangela Tarabotti did before her, Sor Juana uses her pen as a weapon, and
channels her anger creatively to tell her own truth. Interestingly, Sor Juana could not publicly
face Núñez and the other male clerics, as Núñez did with her. This supports the idea that, even
enclosed in a convent, a woman could not defend her wounded honor, publicly, in front of her
peers. Writing is the only weapon that could serve that purpose—the only way women could
defend themselves and provoke their readers.

Sor Juana’s self-defense kindled the anger of her letter’s receivers. As Octavio Paz states,
the bishop of Puebla accused Sor Juana of having committed the most perilous sin for all
women: pride, the refusal to be silent, and the presumptuousness that drives women away from

49 The translation is mine unless otherwise indicated.
obedience. Antonio Núñez de Miranda’s reaction was even harsher. After having resigned as Sor Juana’s spiritual guide, Núñez refused to meet her, and shunned her presence. The angry reaction of these men to Sor Juana’s artistic belligerence was condemnation and silence, whereas Sor Juana, who was fully aware that her sex was the primary cause of censure and continuous admonitions, puts her anger down on paper, through words that reverberate outside of the privacy of her quarters.

These are but a few of the examples that demonstrate that women writers used the written word to transmit their anger and affect their audience, by defending themselves against the attacks of men. Clearly then, the desire to speak and be heard, and to discuss their anger and vent their frustrations to society, was a common force that motivated early modern women writers throughout Europe.

In Italy, women’s literary production thrived thanks to the advent of the printing press, while in Spain most women’s writing was produced in convents. The historian Mariló Vigil states that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain conditions were particularly harsh for women because they were subjected to the whims of history. In 1478, the monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel introduced the first tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition in Seville on the advice of the Dominican friar Alonso de Hojeda. Dominican theologians, moralists, and inquisitors produced works highly critical of women’s nature and behavior, which reinforced the idea that women needed constant supervision. The confinement of women to the family and domestic space intensified the image of obedient and silent women. However, even as widows, wives, and nuns,

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51 On women’s lives in Spain and Mexico during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.
women still found that they could channel their discontent and disapproval into the written word through short stories, poems, and plays. Despite the growing number of literary works by Spanish women writers, misogynist beliefs were persistent, and proved difficult to uproot. The belief that women descended from Eve underpinned the notion of female nature as sinful, manipulative, greedy, and weak. Such ideology remained dominant in Spain throughout the 1700s.

Like other European countries, in Spain, the “woman question” generated debates over her place in society. Most of the writings and treatises aimed at challenging the perception of female nature as established by the Bible and the early Church fathers. One fortunate aspect for Spanish women at this time was the increased visibility and influence of Queen Isabel of Aragon in fifteenth-century Spain. Her presence and the respect she commanded helped compel progressive change for women in Spanish society. After the death of her half-brother, Enrique IV, king of Castile, Isabel of Aragon proclaimed herself the rightful heir to the throne of Castile. According to Isabel’s historians, during the ceremony of her proclamation, she paraded in the procession wearing an unsheathed sword. Severely criticized for exploiting a masculine symbol of justice, her choice was dictated by the necessity of communicating her wish to restore order in Spanish society.

Women in early modern Spanish society, like their contemporaries in Italy and much of Europe, had few means of obtaining legal justice, or of seeking vengeance for themselves. Indeed, in his *Jardín de las Nobles Doncellas* (The Garden of Noble Women, 1468) Martín de Córdoba, concerned with women’s weak nature, reminds Isabel that her role should be different from her husband’s role because, “el esposo/ rey era padre, juez, y la espada, mientras que la reina era la madre, partidario, y el escudo” [the husband/king was father, judge, and sword, while
the queen was mother, supporter, and shield.] (Cordoba, no page) In his treatise, de Córdoba describes the responsibilities of a ruler, and advises the new queen, “de usar este trabajo [su tratado] que pueden hablar del linaje, de fondo, y de la preparación de las mujeres nobles, especialmente de aquellos que han de ser la reinas”; [to use this work -his treatise- that may speak of the lineage, background, and preparation of noblewomen, especially of those who are to be queens](no page). De Córdoba offers his work up as a sort of *speculum principis* written to guide the new queen. However, de Córdoba also implies that, although a ruler, Isabella is still a woman with the physical limits of her gender. Thus, his final piece of advice to the new queen is to suggest that she should try to have a masculine spirit, since her physical body and strength would never be that of a man. He asserts “en cuerpo mugeril, deve traer ánimo varonil” [in a female body, should have a masculine spirit]. In defiance of de Córdoba, when Ferdinand, her husband and king, returned winner from the battle in Toro in 1474, Isabel stated “si las mujeres carecen de discreción, y el coraje de atravesar, y la lengua para hablar, he encontrado que tenemos ojos para hablar”; [whether women lack discretion to know, and the courage to dare, and the tongue to speak, I have found that we have eyes to speak] (Stuart 148–149). The use of the pronoun *we* in Isabel’s statement and in her other speeches and writings, is a common element for most early modern European women writers. It seems that for early modern women writers, the consistent use of the pronoun *we* supports the idea of a collective request for justice. The pronoun *we*, indeed, strengthened women writers’ call for equality in education and in the legal system. It subsumed a collective of women who forced their audience to re-evaluate their beliefs regarding the alleged weak and uncontrollable nature of women. By means of the written word, Isabel persuaded her subjects of her ability to exercise firm leadership. She demonstrated a profound knowledge of diverse disciplines and fields of study. Additionally, Isabel’s historians
inform us that in her library there were, in addition to Cristine de Pizan’s *The Book of the City of Ladies*, other books written in the vernacular, including *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli, translations of Sacred Scripture, works of fiction, copies of *Libro de buen amor* (Book of Good Love) of Juan Ruiz and Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.

Early modern Spain exerted tighter control over women’s bodies compared to other European nations of that time. Women’s actions could determine male honor and reputation in the eyes of society. In Spain, the sense of honor and the notion of *limpieza de sangre*\(^\text{52}\) led to incessant scrutiny of women’s behavior, which automatically denied women’s own claim to their bodies and to openly express their anger and indignation.

In order to express their anger and disapproval, many educated noble Spanish women chose to write, even though they could not achieve the same public exposure as Queen Isabel. If, at the beginning of the 1400s, women writers aimed to voice their condemnation of misogynistic beliefs, and to call for equality of education, their anger became more defined as time progressed, and they began addressing their works towards specific readers or subjects. Undeniably, in Italy and in Spain, Petrarca’s *Il Canzoniere* (1354–1360) and Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (1348) influenced the literary production of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century male authors. Women’s literary production was small compared to their male counterparts; still, the desire to be part of literary conversation pushed them not only to use the above-mentioned literary canons, but also to develop their own language and literary canon. Among them were

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\(^{52}\) *Limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) was a statute followed by the sixteenth-century laws of purity of blood. These laws strengthened the anti-Semitic climate against anyone of Jewish ancestry. The statutes of *limpieza* rapidly spread throughout Spain and were intended to exclude individuals of Jewish or Muslim blood from any important position in the government or the church. See Juan Hernández Franco and Jaime Contreras *Cultura y Limpieza de Sangre en la España Moderna: Puritate Sanguinis*. Murcia: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Murcia, 1996. (23–39)
Isabella di Morra’s and Gaspara Stampa’s persistent call for their audience to respond, which proved effective during the stage performances of Stampa’s works. In particular, the anger in Stampa’s collection of poems revealed her intention to affect the emotions of her audience, and sought revenge that would lead to her recognition and acceptance among male authors. Earning the acceptance of male writers was a common goal of many women writers of the age. To achieve this outcome, women took advantage of broader cultural shifts that allowed for the use of the vernacular in literary works, their expanded access to education, and the development of the printing press. Like male writers of earlier generations, women writers of the early modern era understood revenge as a desire to reinstate justice and avenge their anger caused by a perceived slight.

With their expanded access to education, women sonneteers in particular understood how social misogyny had produced long-standing injustice for women. Sonneteers such as Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra used the vernacular to imitate the poetry of the acclaimed poeta laureato Petrarca, and used the printing press as a tool to enter the literary dialogue with their male counterparts. In their works, these women created female poetic subjects, rather than using the female body as an object of desire. The popular theme of unrequited love goes beyond imitating Petrarca’s lament over the loss of his Laura, but rather finds inspiration in the authentic amorous experiences of these female writers. This is an important element in the analysis of the representation of anger in the texts of these women sonneteers, because it brings the audience fully into the psychological space of the author, amplifying its effect on the reader. María de Zayas y Sotomayor had the same intent, and achieved the same ends, in her gruesome collection of stories Novelas Amorosas y Ejemplares (1637) and Desengaños Amorosos (1647). Her collections of short stories was influenced by Boccaccio’s Decameron, and in particular by
Boccaccio’s last story “Patient Griselda”; indeed, Zayas highlights the victimization of women by the hands of men. Zayas laments women’s lack of education, and, through her female characters, criticizes society for blaming women for being the cause of men’s vices, as she states in her prologue to her collection of short stories, titled *Al Que Leyeria*.

My dissertation focuses on Italian and Spanish women writers and their use of different literary genres. Specifically, in the following chapters, I will analyze the Petrarchan sonnets of Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra, María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s *novella corta*, and Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s satirical poems. Although they utilize different literary genres, I argue that they shared tools in the representation of anger, justice, and revenge in their works. The four authors I analyze in the following chapters are driven by a desire to right a wrongdoing; in essence, by a desire for justice. Their anger was provoked by an action perceived as an offence. Their vendetta is achieved by means of words used as weapon to return the offense, and it is fully achieved in their awareness, and ultimately, their acceptance, by an audience comprised of both male and female members of their society.
CHAPTER 3

Anger and Vendetta in the poetic style of Petrarchism: Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s poetic distortion of desire

Introduction

Unrequited love, ideal standards of beauty, and the search for immortality through the beauty of poetry were themes common to authors of lyric poetry throughout the early modern era. Love and desire became the lens through which early modern writers sought to bring meaning and substance to their quest for fame and literary recognition. Unsurprisingly, male authors most commonly represented their symbolic “desire” by objectifying women’s bodies, and idealizing female beauty, a concept that subsequently became widely accepted as the standard representation of desire. De Sanctis observed that the tradition of courtly love poetry portrays women as “la castellana” [“lady of the castle”] and places her on a pedestal in order to admire her beauty and bathe in the light derived from her virtue. However, throughout much of literary history, this veneration of female beauty often served to undermine the authentic presentation of deeply held love on the part of the author, while reducing his feelings to little more than the literary manifestation of physical attraction and desire. The sentiment of the poet of the thirteenth century, for instance, frequently compares the desired woman to a heavenly creature, which reverts to a platonic veneration of the woman as a woman. (65) This medieval

54 In De Sanctis’ words: “La donna come castellana divenne presso di noi un tipo di convenzione, lo stesso in tutti, tanto che e i poeti non si prendono neppure la pena di dargli un nome: le loro donne sono anonime.[…] Quel sentimento è trasformato in una specie di adorazione platonica, nella adorazione della donna come donna. Ma venuto per imitazione, rimane straniero all’anima: non si sente amore, si ragione dell’amore con metafisica sottigliezza.” (65) Ugo Dotti, Petrarca Civile: All’Origine dell’Intellettuale Moderno. Roma: Donzelli Editori, 2001. Similarly to De Sanctis, Dotti explains that such platonic veneration of the woman was necessary because “anche nel suo amore, e nella descrizione di esso, Petrarca non può fare a meno di salire su un piedistallo […]
lyrical tradition was continued in the works of Francesco Petrarca. Early modern women writers were compelled to use a similar structure and conceptual framework in their writing in order to participate in the literary dialogue. However, their definition of desire, their notion of “the ideal,” and their desire for immortal fame, would stray substantially from those of their male counterparts.

Francesco Petrarca earned the crown of poet laureate for *Africa* (1338), his unfinished Latin epic poem on the second Punic war; but he reached the zenith of his popularity with his vernacular work, *Il Canzoniere* (1374), which secured his literary immortality. Indeed, *Il Canzoniere*, and the image of the woman to whom it was dedicated, Laura, would serve as the literary foundation for subsequent poetry inspired by Petrarca’s work in most of Europe, particularly in England and in Spain. It also served as the basis for the notion of unrequited love and desire in Italian epic chivalric works, and for the imitation of Petrarchan language in the Spanish *cancioneros petrarquistas*.

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57 On this matter, Ignacio E. Navarrete states that “Petrarca was repeatedly a source of poetic renewal, as poets continuously reread, reinterpreted, and reappropriated his work. The new horizon led to imitations that at their worst fixated on the decorative aspects of Petrarca’s style, but at their best looked to the organization of the *Rime sparse* as
Petrarca composed *Il Canzoniere*, also known as *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, over the course of forty years. In 1342, the poet started by organizing his lyrics into 317 sonnets, twenty-nine canzoni, nine sestine, four madrigals, and seven ballads, creating a total of 366 poems. He dedicated his entire collection to the life and death of his beloved Laura. Laura is the focus of Petrarca’s passion and the inspiration behind his lyrics and their beauty, but there are many other elements\(^{58}\) that contributed to the immortality of his *sparse rime*. Petrarca’s profound knowledge of the classics allowed him to manipulate the amorous literary tradition, in particular Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* and *Ars Amandi*, the *Roman de la Rose*, and the *Dolce Stil Novo*. Petrarca’s use of the vernacular and the correspondence between image, metaphor, and individual sonnets, form the roadmap with which the reader can navigate the author’s geography of self-reflection.

Giranfranco Contini argues convincingly that the psychological aspect of the *Canzoniere* is expressed in Petrarca’s innovative use of Greek and Roman classics.\(^{59}\)

Petrarca’s self-analysis, his moral crisis, and his inner turmoil are also central topics in two previous works: “De Ascensu Montis Ventosi” [“Ascent of Mount Ventoux”] (IV, 1), a letter from his Latin collection, *Epistulae Familiaris* (1336); and from his *Secretum* (1342). In a macrotext and, in exceptional cases, tackled the profound issues of love, morality, and individuation that troubled Petrarca himself […] Similarly, Spanish poetry shows an eclectic approach to imitation, and while permeated with Petrarcaism as decorative devices, they do not struggle to appropriate Petrarca as a single, privileged model.”

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\(^{58}\) Laura, the amorous object, occupies the central part of the work. Petrarca’s focus does wander however, as he expresses his opinion on the new Crusade, proclaimed by the king of France in 1334, in sonnet 28. Later, in sonnet 53, he provides a warning to the Romans, who have lost sight of Rome’s glory. In sonnet 128, he pleads for peace between the warring factions in Italy. In short, scattered throughout *Il Canzoniere*, are sonnets that expound on themes other than his passion for Laura.

\(^{59}\) Contini argues that Petrarca’s use of the classics is innovative and the cause of the modernity of the *Canzoniere*. In his own words, “in opposizione al teocentrismo necessario a Dante, il suo Dio –di Petrarca- è quell Dio che interviene a sedare il tedio e consolare la stanchezza, s’introduce insomma come tema psicologico, esibita dalle strutture e dai sistemi che descriviamo. Psicologia: è proprio in questi paraggi che si rivela il paradosso di Petrarca. L’innovazione riduttiva per pacata rinuncia agli estremi è cosentita a Petrarca dalla sua introversione. […] il suo romanticismo è condizione del suo classicismo.” (63–64)
*Epistulae Familiares* and *Secretum*, Petrarca examines his faith under the guidance of Saint Augustine. It would seem that the author’s struggle to comprehend the tension between humanity’s attachments to earthly things on the one hand, and mankind’s devotion to the metaphysical on the other, had a clear impact on his literary production. The poet’s effort to understand human nature corresponds to other authors’ general need to satisfy their appetite for eternal fame, and to harmonize this need with the Christian idea of humility. Indeed, Francesco de Sanctis described Petrarca as a frivolous, avid, and resentful individual; a man fond of commendations and honors, but also in a perennial competition with the specter of Dante. If we accept as valid De Sanctis’ evaluation of Petrarca vis-à-vis Dante, it would seem that the constant awareness of such a dominant opponent motivated Petrarca to obsessively search for artistic immortality. Laura, or the crown of laurel, symbolizes the eternal fame that Petrarca seeks. The unfulfilled desire to hold and possess Laura can be understood as his attempt to control and moderate his desire for immortality by giving it human form; thus he devotes his efforts to her. In Gordon Braden’s words, “Petrarca, who hopes for true immortality, must sternly curb the appetite for fame” (12) Given this, to what extent and in what ways did Petrarca motivate future writers? It has been suggested that the desire to obtain Petrarca’s posthumous fame was among the motivating factors of authors after Petrarca, which prompted them to reuse the image of Laura.

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60 Before introducing a detailed analysis of Petrarca’s work, de Sanctis informs us about Petrarca as a man, the author’s ambitions, and personality in the effort to have a wider understanding of Petrarca as author. In de Sanctis’ words, Petrarca was, “vano, si compiaceva delle lodi, e a provocarle era il prima. Faceva la corte a’ principi, e i principi facevano la corte a lui; gli amici lo incensavano, i popoli lo festeggiavano; con un’aria di modestia si lagna spesso di tanti onori che lo perseguono fino nella sua solitudine, compiacendosi però di dirlo e di farlo sapere; l’elogio era la via più diritta al suo cuore […] Ma l’ombra di Dante si drizzava innanzi alla sua immaginazione, come uno spettro nero. Assicura di non averlo mai letto; e protestando di non poter esser tacciato d’invidia verso di un uomo, il quale non trovava ammiratori che presso il volgo.” (59)
Numerous early modern authors composed literary works that aimed to imitate Petrarca’s poetic moral crisis. In striving for immortality, Petrarca used the fragmented description of Laura, his silent muse, to feed the poetic imagery of the female standard of beauty, in addition to using the female body as an object of desire. After Petrarca, other male authors would also celebrate the image of the dismembered woman, and if they followed the aesthetic purpose of Petrarca’s lyrics, they were called *Petrarchisti*. Petrarca’s work also became widely influential in other arts, such as music, painting, and courtly life. The Petrarchan depiction of Laura was adopted as the criterion on which people formed their opinion of what constituted beauty.

Additionally, treatises composed in the sixteenth century to describe womanly beauty provided ideal physical and psychological features taken from Petrarca’s model of female beauty, that is,

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61 On this matter, Naomi Yavneh argues that “golden curls are a standard feature of the traditional Petrarchan donna, adorning not only Petrarca’s Laura, but virtually every literary beauty of the fifteenth and sixteenth century: Ariosto’s Alcina, Angelica, and Isabella, Poliziano’s Simonetta, and the myriad beloveds of the cinquecento sonnet-craze all sport the same flowing blonde locks, just as their bodies all fit the design made classic by Petrarca.” (136)

62 The significance of Laura’s body is constant subject of critical attention. According to Margaret Brose, the body of Laura represents the body of Italy; so Laura and Italy are the female protagonists of the *Canzoniere*. In her own words, “the body of Laura in vita is dismembered -scattered and recollected by the male poet- in a move that mirrors the larger pattern of the composition of the *Canzoniere*. So too, the body of Italy is dismembered in Petrarca’s famous political canzone 128” (8). In “Fetishizing the Veil: Petrarca’s Poetics of Rematerialization”. In *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

of Laura. Blonde hair, fair white skin, red lips, and a silent nature were the most visible traits of
the ideal woman during the early modern era.64

If the ideal of the silent woman was eagerly accepted by early modern male *Petrarcaisti*,
early modern women writers, who sought to participate in the new literary trend of Petrarcahs poetry, appropriates certain traits from Petrarca’s poetry. But, far from being silent, they carved out their
own idea of desire, unrequited love, and ultimately, of eternal fame.

In order to explain Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s use of Petrarchan tropes
and how these two women authors represent the emotion of anger, I will first analyze Petrarca’s
notion of love and desire, and how the poet’s ideas influenced generations of men and women
authors. I will then proceed to provide biographical information about the two women writers,
which will provide a contextual framework through which we can better understand their
concept of emotion, and in particular, of anger. Finally, I will present an analysis of those
sonnets of Stampa and di Morra that contain the idea of anger and the multifarious nature of this
emotion, as I described in chapter 2. As referenced in chapter 1, Cockroft suggests that
“metaphors […] other modes of linguistic innovation, and variation can be used to build the
affective bond between persuader and persuadee […]” (19) Or, put another way, between writer
and reader, author and his or her audience.

64 Also, de Sanctis strongly asserts that Laura’s beauty is not human; it is a form of art that Petrarca utilizes to
express the unattainable. (*Saggio Critico sul Petrarca*, 93-106). For the construction of female beauty and
femininity in the arts, see Philip Sohm, “Gendered Style in Italian Art from Michelangelo to Malvasia.” *Renaissance
Quarterly* 58.4 (1995), 759-760. On the reception of Renaissance treatises on love, womanly beauty and women’s
behavior see, Paolo Lorenzetti, “La Donna presso gli scrittori del Cinquecento.” *Rivista Italiana* VII (1914), and
also Jacqueline Murray “Agnolo Firenzualda on Female Sexuality and Women’s Sexuality.” In *Sixteenth Century

It is well known that Petrarca dedicates his Canzoniere to Laura. Additionally, as Santaga\(^65\) suggests it is unlikely that Laura was a real person, but rather, a metaphorical representation of unobtainable love. For Petrarca, Laura represents many varied emotions, feelings, and personal sentiments. Among the things Laura represents is Petrarca’s own desire to break from his Latin classic tradition, and write instead in the vernacular, a desire which takes form in the scattered image of Laura’s body. In sonnet\(^66\) 90, Petrarca offers a description of his unobtainable muse, Laura. In his own words, “erano i capei d’ora a l’aura sparsi/ che ‘n mille dolci nodi gli avolgea” (Canzoniere) [She’d let her golden hair flow free in the breeze/that in thousand gentle knots was turned] (90, 1–2). The unattainable nature and fragmentation of Laura constitutes the engine that drives Petrarca’s Canzoniere. The image of Laura’s scattered blond hair interlocking with the air suggests Laura’s ethereal perfection, and alludes to the reality that the author will never be able to physically possess her.\(^67\) (Macinante 11–13) The fragmented nature of Laura corresponds to Petrarca’s rupture from Latin. Giuseppe Velli terms Petrarca’s break from Latin a “processo di estraneamento” [process of estrangement or alienation]. Further, according to Velli, by translating the concepts of love and desire from Latin to the vernacular, Petrarca alienated himself from his identity as a Latin scholar and his tenacious attachment to the

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66 The entire version of the sonnets by Petrarca, Stampa, and di Morra that I analyze in my dissertation can be found in the appendix, at the end of this work.
67 On the meaning of the recurrent use of blond hair in literature, I found significant Alessandra Macinante’s study, where she explains that, “la scelta dei figuranti per i cappelli, oro e sole, risponde perfettamente alla motivazione della luce o claritas […] È inoltre interessante ricordare che non solo l’età aurea è tradizionalmente la più felice e prospera, ma d’oro è la testa della statua che si presenta in sogno a Nabucodonosor […] si può affermare che la chioma se bionda, si adatta bene al principio di luminosità e perciò più vicino a Dio” (11-13).
classics (30). This explains Petrarca’s tormented peregrination from possession to dispossession, from classic tradition, to tensions that led to the flourishing of modern consciousness. It follows that the “scattered” image of Laura can be understood as an example of the author’s experiment with lyrics, reflecting the fragmented nature of his collection of poems, which are held together by abstract notions of love and hope. Nancy Vickers interprets Petrarca’s obsessive dismembering of Laura’s body in two ways. Petrarca did have the desire to represent the female body, but the act of dismembering and scattering that body is also a strategy that allows his voice to emerge while Laura’s voice remains silent. William Kennedy argues that Petrarca’s use of Laura’s dismembered body is the rhetorical grid that brought a radical shift in the European literary landscape of the fifteenth century. (52) Therefore, in his *fragmenta*, Petrarca conveys his poetic universe: Laura is the *lauro* (laurel), but also the *l’aura* (the halo, or the air). Additionally, like Giuseppe Velli, Giuseppe Mazzotta focuses on Petrarca’s sense of the self. According to Mazzotta, the author’s self is fragmented, and each fragment is derived from the poet’s scattered, fragmented knowledge of philosophy, faith, antiquity, politics, art, and religion, in Italy, France, and Greece (*Worlds*, 65).

Sonnet 5 is an example of the multiple allusions contained in the name “Laura,” where the author plays with the French version of the name, Laurette (Petrarca sonnet 5, 6–7). The poem recites:

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Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi
E ‘l nome che nel cor mi scrisse Amore,
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68 Giuseppe Velli explains that Petrarca, “nell’affrontare in volgare certi temi che avevano trovato la loro formulazione in latino volesse di tale veste originaria, per conquista personale, catturare la dimensione di perentoria fermezza connaturata al veicolo linguistico e, insieme, attraverso il processo di *estraneamento* provocato dalla traduzione, reinventare in proprio quei contenuti; che fosse cioè affascinato, sul terreno della forma, dal medesimo cerchio presenza-assenza, possesso-privazione che ha la sua perfetta espressione nel mito essenziale di Laura” (30).
LAU-dando s’incomincia udir di fore
il suon de’ primi dolci accenti suoi;

vostro stato RE-al che ‘ncontro poi
raddoppia a l’alta impresa il mio valore;
ma “TA-ci,” grida il fin, “ché farle onore
è d’altri omeri soma che da’ tuoi.”

Così LAU-dare et RE-venire insegna
la voce stessa, pur ch’altri vi chiami,
o d’ogni reverenza et d’onor degna;

se non che forse Apollo si disdegnà
ch’a parlare de’ suoi sempre verdi rami
lingua mor-TA-l presuntuosa vegna. (Il Canzoniere, Sonnet 5)

[When I summon my sighs to call for you,/ with that name Love inscribed upon my heart, in
LAUdable the sound at the beginning/ of the sweet accents of that word comes forth./Your Regal
state which I encounter next/ doubles my strength for the high enterprise, / but “Tacitly” the end
cries, “for her honor/ needs better shoulders for support than yours.”/ And so, to LAUd and to
Revere the word/ itself instructs whenever someone calls you, /O lady worthy of all praise and
honor, / unless, perhaps, Apollo be offended/ that mortal tongue be so presumptuous/ to speak of
his eternally green boughs.]

In this sonnet, Petrarca suggests that the name Laura contains the verb laudare (to laud),
and the adjectives regale and reale, which refer to Laura’s glorious height and also suggest the
existence of a real, flesh-and-blood woman. The command of tacere (to be silent), used in sonnet
181, underpins the image of a voiceless muse, hard and insensitive, like a statue of white marble. As the author says, “e’ l fune avolto/era a la mano ch’avorio et neve avanza.” [the rope was wrapped/ around the hand the outdoes snow and ivory]. (10–11). Though the poet later asserts that Laura’s “atti vaghi and angeliche parole” [charming gesture, angelic words] captured him, her voice is disembodied. Laura’s voice comes from above and not from her mortal body, as the author confirms in sonnet 193 when he hears “quella voce infin al ciel gradita” [that voice which pleases even high as Heaven] (9). Laura’s voice is not the voice of a flesh and blood woman, but rather, something derived directly from an ethereal realm – angelic, mysterious, and metaphysical.

The image of fair white skin is found in more than one sonnet. In sonnet 157, the author describes “la testa or fino, et calda neve il volto” [her head fine gold, her face was like warm snow] 99–100), and in sonnet 160 with the description of her “candido seno” [her white breast] (11). The whiteness of Laura’s fragmented body recalls Greek and Roman statues, suggesting that Petrarca wishes his words to gain permanence for the reader, as statues stand permanently as works of art for the viewer.

Petrarca’s Canzoniere contains numerous references to the classics, and they express the author’s desire to imitate Greek art and the classic authors of the Greek and Roman literary tradition he studied all his life. In his commentary on sonnet 186, Mark Musa states: “Petrarca celebrates Laura, immortal beauty of Christian era, as a subject worthy of the genius of Homer and Virgil. (Petrarca 630–631) The last stanza of sonnet 5 plays with the name of laureta-laureata, which reinstates the author’s desire to become poet laureate. Although Petrarca’s desire to be crowned with the laurel is eventually fulfilled, his drive for artistic perfection never reaches the apex of satisfaction.
Laura frustrates Petrarca with the shadow of her presence, (which is evident when the author writes, ‘beato in soggno, e di languire contento, / d’abbracciar e seguir l’aura estiva,”) (212, 1–2) [blest in my dreams and satisfied to languish,/ embrace shadows and chase a summer breeze]. However, the fact that Laura is physical unobtainable also serves to continuously strengthen the poet’s desire to reach or touch her. A further distance between the author and his muse is represented by Laura’s contempt toward Petrarca. Laura’s disdain can be lethal to him, as the poet accuses Laura of paralyzing or killing him, “e veggio ben quant’elli a schivo m’anno/e so ch’I’ ne morrò veracemente,/ché mia vertú non po contra l’affanno” [and I can see how her eyes disdain me,/ and I am certain I will die from it-/my strength cannot hold out against such pain] (10–11). This struggle, and the perpetually unfulfilled desire that derives from it, characterizes Petrarca’s inner turmoil, or dissidio. He has, in a literal sense, fallen in love with the concept of love; a transgression that he gradually comes to realize may lead to his undoing.

Petrarca’s error becomes the engine of his entire Canzonerie. Starting with the first sonnet, Petrarca oscillates from moments of grief to moments of reason: “piango et ragiono”. This reflection leads the poet to feel ashamed of himself, as he asserts: “di me medesmo meco mi vergogno.” Petrarca is liberated from his error (or sin) when he recognizes and acknowledges that his only hope for salvation and redemption is the King of Heaven. Sonnet 365 recites: “a quel poco di viver che m’avanza/ et al morir degni esser tua man presta:/ Tu sai ben che ’n altrui non o speranza” (12–14) [over the little life that still remains to me, / and at my death, deign that your hand be present/you know You are the only hope I have.] After the recognition of his vergogna, Petrarca’s appeal for salvation and redemption turns to his audience, perhaps in the hope “there might be among his readership some who may have experienced love at some
Petrarca’s self-reflection is initiated with a call for his audience, “voi ch’ascoltate” whereby his reader is invited into his inner universe by means of the poet’s narration of his past errors. His willingness to make his private thoughts public in this manner strengthens the relationship between the author and his audience, as Petrarca narrates his own dissidio against love and desire. Petrarca’s struggle may not have been against a tangible object, but it was certainly an internal struggle driven by his own personal psychology, as Santagata observes:

con Petrarca la psicologia fa il suo ingresso nel discorso amoroso. Ma è una psicologia che può esprimersi solo come esame di coscienza, come un prodotto di un dissidio ideologico. Petrarca è, prima di tutto, un poeta cristiano. Potrà anche apparire paradossale, ma la scoperta petrarchesca della soggettività comporta, in poesia, la fine del laicismo cortese.70

[Through Petrarca’s poetry, psychology enters in conversation with the discourse about love. Such a psychology could be expressed only by means of a self analysis, as a result of a inner ideological conflict. Petrarca, is first of all a Christian poet. It might sound paradoxical, but Petrarca’s discovery of subjectivity results, in poetry, with the end of laicismo cortese.71]

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69 William T. Rossiter, Chaucer and Petrarch. Rochester: NY, Boydelle & Brewer LTD, 2010. In his comparatist study on Chaucer, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, Rossiter argue that “Boccaccio and Chaucer’s appeal seems to have no doubt that their audiences are composed of ‘amanti’ and ‘lovers,’ where as Petrarch hopes that there might be among his readership some who may have experienced love at some point. A further difference lies in the final object of pathos: Boccaccio’s speaker prays that his audience will pray to Amor on his behalf; Chaucer’s speaker asks his audience to ‘preieth for hem that ben in the cas’; rather than for himself; whilst Petrarch’s poet-lover simply feels ashamed for having been so in thrall to love in the first instance. Nevertheless, the overall thrust in all three cases remains nostalgia, in its literal sense of shared pain; as the speaker recalls so must the audience.”(105)

70 Marco Santaga, Amate e Amanti: Figure della Lirica Amorosa fra Dante e Petrarca. Bologna: il Mulino, 2000.

71 All the translation of Marco Santagata’s works are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
The psychological grief and fear experienced by the author, and transmitted to his readers through his poetry, enter into dialogue in their minds, compelling them to compare Petrarca’s experience of love and desire to their own. In line with Cockcroft’s theory, Petrarca sets out to overlay his own schema onto the existing schema of his readers with regard to unfulfilled love and desire. In so doing, he seeks to affect their understanding of his emotions, and their own views on unrequited love. The personal becomes first public, as the author’s emotions move outwardly, and then personal again, when his audience absorbs them inwardly. Thus, he succeeds in affecting the minds of his readers.

This rhetorical and psychological route from the author to his readers finds its expression in Petrarca’s use of the *Lamentationes Ieremiae*. According to Ronald Martinez, the opening sonnet in Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*, which recites “voi ch’ascolate...” is modeled after Jeremiah’s Biblical lament: “O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, adtendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.” (1.12) [Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow]. This was a common way to begin a poem in Italian vernacular poetry; both Guido Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri utilized the same opening in their works. In a clear example of the written word being used to “affect” an audience, Martinez states that from the twelfth century onward, the topics of *conquestio* and *indignatio*, the Roman oratory tradition of pitiful complaint, were applied to the Sacred Scriptures, the Bible, in order to excite the sympathy, pity, or righteous indignation of the listener, reader, or spectator. (1–45) Petrarca utilizes the citations from *Lamentations*, with the aim of arousing his reader’s attention. As a result, his sonnet emerges as even more suggestive. Additionally, “with the emphasis on the reading public in the

73 Dante, for instance, starts *Vita Nuova* as follows: “O voi che per la via d’amor passate.”
first line, Petrarca as the speaker appropriates the emotional intensity of the spectacle of the Passion.” (Martinez 2)

Marco Santagata argues that the relationship between Petrarca and his audience is one of the most significant innovations in his Canzoniere (100). Santagata’s argument is similar to what Cockroft and Daniel emphasize in their respective works: there is a two-way transmission between the author and the reader. Cockroft, specifically, suggests we should understand a text “as open to immediate response from the audience, which may affect its overall expression or direction […]” (21). Petrarca’s audience is universal, where the moral salvation of a man cannot be circumscribed to social or political hierarchy. However, Santagata warns us against an interpretation of Petrarca’s poetry as “intimista,” or romantic. Still, Petrarca’s poetry serves as an open window to the inner universe of the poet. It summarizes the main features of the poetry from the Duecento and the use of prose to express ideological messages. According to Santagata, the relationship between poetry and prose was turned upside down: prose was used to express ideological and cultural themes, while poetry appeared more functional in describing personal and individual sentiment (104). For this reason, on the surface, Petrarca’s poetry presents itself as an autobiographical work and a narration of his dolci sospiri. A deeper analysis of his Canzoniere, however, reveals Petrarca’s anxiety to put forward a new poetry. The author’s “I” is not an inner I, or a psychological I; rather, it casts Petrarca himself as the main character of the Canzoniere. Petrarca employs this rhetorical device in order to help his audience empathize with the deep emotions he experiences, and to connect with the characters’ (his) grief and hope. Petrarca urges his audience to feel compassion and sympathy for him; to identify with the “I” character of the Canzoniere. It can be inferred that Petrarca sought to impress in his audience’s mind an abstract and philosophical idea of love, and to disguise his ambitions in the act of
writing by placing himself within the action of the story, casting himself as a “character” in his poems, as Santagata confirms (103).\footnote{Ibidem, On the meaning of \textit{Il Canzoniere}, see Marco Santagata, \textit{I frammenti dell’anima}. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992. In his words, “Il poeta e il proprio testo, fra loro indissolubilmente legati, si offrono alla fruizione del pubblico. […] Al dire d’Amore, Petrarca sostituisce il confessare l’amore, sollecitando la simpatia, la comprensione, oggi diremo l’indetificazione da parte dei suoi lettori.” (103)} Petrarca’s opening sonnet, which he addresses to an audience, highlights the significance of a readership in his \textit{Canzoniere}. The importance of the audience is further underlined in generations of authors after Petrarca, who wished to emulate his poetic style. As Mary Moore states, “Petrarch’s rhetorical and dramatic positioning through the topic of audience is supplemented by a complex speaker whose fictionality and fragmentation, women sonneteers –like their male counterpart- will imitate.”\footnote{Moore, Mary B. \textit{Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism}. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000. (35)} It is now to the Petrarchan women sonneteers Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra that my analysis will now turn.

3.2. Gaspara Stampa: Historical and Cultural Surroundings.

The widespread acceptance of Petrarca as a model for poetry, and of the image of “Laura” as a standard of beauty and behavior, crystallized the role available to women, and shaped their view of society during the early modern era. Indeed, Petrarca’s \textit{Canzoniere} portrays Laura as an object to view and admire; therefore, she could hardly serve as a promising muse for women who aimed to pursue a career as writers themselves. Women writers instead participated in the Petrarchan literary conversation by appropriating Petrarca’s poetic style, re-framing it, and adapting it to fit their own authentic amorous experiences. Gaspara Stampa (1525–1554) is a successful example of such appropriation.
Gaspara Stampa was born in Padua in 1525, although she lived most of her life in Venice, which, thanks to the printing industry, had begun to serve as a pivotal center for the transmission of the Petrarchan model beginning in the 1400s. Her father, Bartolomeo Stampa, was a wealthy jeweler and merchant who provided a classical education and musical training for Gaspara and her siblings, Cassandra and Baldassarre. Following the death of Gaspara’s father, her mother, Cecilia, moved the entire family to Venice, where the writer and her siblings continued their education with the help of private tutors. Although the dates are not certain, the Stampa home became a *ridotto*, or salon, open to artists, scholars, musicians, and other noble patrons of the arts in Venice during the second half of the sixteenth century. According to the detailed account presented by the historian Marina Zancan, all three Stampa siblings participated in Venice’s cultural and cosmopolitan scene, and were lauded in epistles and accounts of the time by Benedetto Varchi, who named her “la bella Saffo de’ nostri giorni” and Giulio Stufa who calls her “Saffo novella, pari a la greca nel tosco idioma.”

Even though none of the siblings chose to get married (“Gaspara Stampa,” 263–273) Gaspara Stampa’s poetry clearly suggests her passionate and tumultuous affair with Collatino di Collalto (1523–?), whom she encountered in 1548 during one of her theatrical performances. Collatino, a handsome feudal landowner from the Friuli region, was also a patron of the arts and artists, in addition to being a skillful military man. According to historical records, Gaspara Stampa sent a collection of her sonnets to Collatino while he was campaigning in Parma, in 1549. It was during the war in Parma that Gaspara’s and Collatino’s relationship came to an end.

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77 Ibidem, 2.
The author dedicated most of her 311 rime to Collatino, and her readers can follow the amorous and dolorous vicissitudes she experienced. Stampa found consolation in a new love, Bartolomeo Zen, a member of a patrician family and a wealthy Milanese jeweler. According to Zancan’s account, Stampa died on April 23, 1554, and several months later, her sister Cassandra published her collections of poems. Only four of Stampa’s sonnets (51, 70, 75, 290) were published while she was alive. Three sonnets appeared in a 1553 collection of the most well-known authors of the day, entitled Sesto Libro delle Rime di Diversi Eccellenti Autori Nuovamente Raccolte et Mandate in Luce con un discorso di Girolamo Ruscelli, edited by Girolamo Ruscelli. In 1559, they were reprinted, along with sonnet 290, in an edition edited by Lodovico Domenichini entitled Rime Diverse di Alcune Nobilissime e Virtuosissime Donne. It is odd that only four of her sonnets were published in her lifetime, as Gaspara Stampa was a public figure who lived a very public life as a theatrical performer and promoter of the arts in different cultural salotti. Indeed, her network of associates included the most notable and influential intellectual figures in Venetian society, such as Sperone Speroni, Luigi Alemanni, Domenico Venier, Trifone Gabriele, and Giovanni della Casa. It seems likely that many of her works would have been circulated in manuscript form, but perhaps Stampa prioritized the “oral” dimension of her work over the printed versions; or, perhaps Stampa was concerned with the potential social ramifications of printing her poems as a woman, and the impact those ramifications could have on her reputation. However, in her poems, Stampa expresses her wish to be crowned with the laurel’s leaves, symbolizing her desire for her art to become immortal and remembered by posterity. It can be

79 Sperone Speroni (1500-1588), Italian Renaissance humanist, members of Padua’s literary academy Accademia degli Iffiammati. Luigi Alemanni (1495-1556), Italian poet and stateman. Domenic Venier (1517-?) poet and founder of the Accademia di Venier. Trifone Gabriele (1470-1549), Italian humanist and poet. Giovanni della Casa (1503-1556) poet, writer on etiquette and society, diplomat, and inquisitor. He is celebrated for his treatise on polite behavior, Il Galateo overo de’ costumi (1558).
inferred that, she and most other female authors of her era yearned to see her poems circulating in print. The fact remains, however, that it was incredibly difficult for women writers to publish their works, owing to deeply entrenched misogyny and the pervasive belief that to publish was the exclusive right of men. Thus, very few female authors were able to be heard through their printed works. Indeed the number of women authors who succeeded in having their works printed during this era did not approach that of male authors. Fortunately for Stampa, her native Venice could provide that opportunity, even if only posthumously.

Sixteenth-century Venice was one of the most active printing centers in early modern Europe. Aldo Manuzio (1449–1515) founded the Aldine press in Venice following his collaboration with Pietro Bembo, which resulted in the first published edition of Petrarca’s Canzoniere (1504). As a result, Venice became the capital of publishing, as well as a distribution center for Petrarchan works. The Aldine press published the complete works of Aristotle, Plato, Pindar, Herodotus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Xenophon, and Demosthenes. Manuzio reissued the Latin classics in print, and published vernacular writers such as Dante and Petrarca. By the beginning of the 1500s, Manuzio was able to produce a thousand copies at a time, making these works accessible to those without knowledge of Latin or Greek. Among Manuzio’s publications were included books written by women. For instance, in 1500, the Aldine press published Caterina of Siena’s epistles, titled Epistole Devotissime. Such a thriving city was the ideal place for a woman to write, publish, and disseminate her works.

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80 Caterina of Siena’s Epistole Devotissime were certainly a profoundly different work, from those of other male and female authors of her time. Canonized less than a century after her death in 1380, Caterina’s letters became famous for the description of her visions and revelations.
It was with Gabriele Giolitto de’ Ferrari, (1508–1578) and his interest in publishing the works of new authors, that more and more women writers entered into Venice’s literary world. For instance, the book of *Rime* by Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547) was published first in Parma in 1538,81 then in 1552, and republished by Giolitto in an edition edited by Lodovico Dolce. Isotta Nogorola’s philosophical treatise, *Dialogo sulla responsabilità di Adamo ed Eva nella Caduta del genere umano* [*Dialogue on the Equal or Unequal Sin of Adam and Eve*] was published in 1563, and Veronica Franco’s *Terze Rime* and *Lettere Familiari a Diversi* [*Familiar Letters to Various People*] between 1575 and 1580. As Virgina Cox states, many women writers took advantage of the use of the vernacular as the dominant literary language, in addition to utilizing the printing technology available to them in Venice. Nevertheless, the fact remains that many of their works were not published in their lifetimes, with only a few notable exceptions; among them is the literary production of Veronica Franco. Still, the innovative and experimental nature of their work undeniably paved the way for later generations of women authors.82

The city of Venice was also at the center of intersecting beliefs that pulled the city in two opposite directions regarding the sacred and the profane. Venice was believed by many to be the Christian successor to ancient Rome; but the city was also associated with the mythological image of Venus, goddess of love, lust and desire. As Venus was born from water, so too was Venice. According to Margaret Rosenthal, Venice was perceived as being “the city of women,” linked to the widely held view of the physiological status of women’s nature: cold and moist. (42–45) Therefore, Venice was perceived as a place of sensuality and deception. Celebrated for

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81 Editor has not been indicated.
its beauty and mystery, the lagoon city was also a favorite setting for carnivals and masquerades. Furthermore, the seductive nature of Venice was nourished by the figure of the courtesan and her role as entertainer. However, while Venice applauded the idea of women’s freedom, there was a clear line of demarcation between the public and private spheres for Venetian women. The Catholic Reformation contributed to this partition. Women were still held responsible for upholding Christian morality and family ideals. For this reason, their place was circumscribed to Church and household. Although cultural and social changes opened up educational opportunities for women, the literature produced by the Catholic Reformation emphasized Christian training in obedient wifehood and dutiful motherhood. The very Petrarchan tropes of silence, obedience, modesty, and chastity were the traits expected of any woman. These virtuous qualities contrasted with the unique and creative vitality of Venice’s women artists.

Gaspara Stampa’s collection of poems was printed in Venice. Edited posthumously by her sister and Plinio Petrasanta, the author’s lyrics were roundly ignored, according to Zancan. Only after almost two hundred years of silence was Stampa’s voice resurrected thanks to an edition edited by Luisa Bergalli and Apostolo Zeno, entitled Componimenti Poetici delle più illustri rimatrici d’ogni secolo (1726). The circumstances surrounding the rediscovery of Gaspara Stampa’s collection of poems are themselves intriguing. Antonio Rambaldo di Collalto, a descendent of Stampa’s lover Collatino di Collalto, commissioned the edition, and in his account of Stampa’s life, he portrays the Venetian woman author as a noble, talented artist, consumed by her passion for his ancestor, Count Collatino.

Perceived as an unconventional figure because she was unmarried, financially independent, and actively sought the company and approval of the Venetian high social class, Gaspara Stampa’s poetic style is often coupled with that of Veronica Franco and of Vittoria
Colonna. All three women composed poems dedicated to their lovers and loved ones by imitating the Petrarchan model. However, this fact predisposed Petrarchan sonnets written by women to a biased reading and interpretation. As I explained in the previous chapters, male writers appropriated the emotions of women, and the manner in which those emotions were presented. Consequently, writing and composing works about love and emotion, even those of women, was considered a privileged form of art reserved exclusively for men. Women’s acceptance in literary discourse remained marginal, as Cox states in her work, and only a small number of women writers was recognized and accepted as a consequence of changing cultural and societal norms. Stampa’s poems are often read as a woman’s journey through the struggle of love, lust, and melancholy. Gaspara Stampa, eventually, fulfilled her desire to be recognized as an accomplished Petrarchan sonneteer, even if only posthumously.

While the topics of unrequited love, loss, and desire are emblematic of the Petrarchan model, I argue that other emotions exist in Stampa’s collection of poems; particularly, the emotion of anger, which permeates her lyrics. This anger was provoked by Collatino’s abandonment, as well as her eagerness to be accepted and recognized as a writer by a society in which it was still unacceptable for a woman to embark on such a career path. While love and desire served as pillars that supported the underlying subtext of her work, anger, a stronger, more explicit emotion, was the bedrock on which those pillars stood.

3.3 Isabella di Morra: Historical and Cultural Surroundings

While Gaspara Stampa had the privilege of being able to disseminate her art through her theatrical performances, Isabella di Morra’s social surroundings were a determining factor in the
production of her poetry, and in the creation of her ideal audience. While Gaspara Stampa and Maria de Zayas, as I will explain later, addressed their work to men in the real world, and more indirectly, to a broader real female audience, Isabella di Morra seeks an “ideal” audience consisting of men and women in the French court of King Francis I (1494-1547), where her father fled in 1524, to whom she directly addresses several of her poems.

According to Ann Rosalind Jones, an understanding of a situational context, or pre-text, is necessary when interpreting early modern women’s writings. (“Surprising Fame,” 80–81). Isabella di Morra represents a unique type of Petrarchan sonneteer, as she opts to express the emotion of isolation, rather than the celebrated trope of unrequited love. In his critical edition of Isabella di Morra’s work, entitled *Vite di Avventure, di Fede, e di Passione: Isabella di Morra e Diego Sandoval de Castro* (1929), Benedetto Croce informs the reader that the little information gathered about Isabella di Morra was published in 1629 in Naples, thanks to Marcantonio di Morra. The latter was the son of Isabella’s youngest brother, Camillo di Morra, who served as Isabella’s posthumous oral biographer, narrating the events of her life, including her ultimate infelicitous fate, to his offspring and relatives.

The widely accepted account of Isabella di Morra’s life suggests that Giovan Michele di Morra, Isabella’s father and baron of Favale in southern Naples, fled to France in 1528 because he was accused of conspiracy and treason against the Spanish monarchy. According to Croce, the Baron could easily defend himself, but he feared the revenge of the Prince of Salerno, who, for personal reasons, aimed to seize the lands of Favale. The baron’s second born, Scipione, followed Giovan Michele di Morra to France, where they both took up service in the court of the French King Francis I (1494–1547). Only Isabella, her mother, Luisa Brancaccio, and her siblings remained at the castle of Favale.
A short distance from the di Morra’s residence was the Castle of Bollita, where the Spanish Don Diego de Castro (1505–1546) lived and served as assistant to the vice roy of Naples, Pedro Álvarez de Toledo. Don Diego, who often visited the Castle of Favale, happened to read some of Isabella’s Petrarchan verses, and, inspired by the young baroness’ sonnets, entered into an artistic conversation with her by composing and exchanging Petrarchan lyrics. With the help of her brother’s tutor, Isabella would secretly slip out her sonnets to Don Diego. Her demise at the hands of three of her brothers, Cesare, Fabio, and Decio, came when they found her with one of Diego’s opened letters in her hands. Although she explained that Antonia Caracciolo, Diego de Castro’s wife, sent the letter to her, her brothers were deaf to reason. They stabbed their tutor to death for helping Isabella, and then turned their knife on their sister. Don Diego de Castro, having learned about the senseless and violent murder of Isabella at the hands of her brothers, took extra precautions by traveling with a military escort at all times. Eventually however, the di Morra brothers, assisted by two of their uncles, succeeded in ambushing and murdering the man whom they believed to be Isabella’s lover.83

The viceroy of Toledo closely followed the investigation and the search for Isabella’s brothers, who had fled to France, aided by their brother Scipione. According to Croce’s account of this event, Isabella’s father died prior to the horrible fate that befell his daughter, having originally intended to return to Favale after a royal edict decreed that his lands were to be restored to the di Morra family. Isabella’s brothers stayed in France: Fabio offered his military services to the French court; Decio took the vows and became the abbot of the Augustinian order of the Limousin province; and Cesare married a French noble woman, Gabriella Falcori, from

whom he inherited the land of Ciamora. The triple-homicide of Isabella, her tutor, and Don Diego remained unpunished.

It was only during the process of investigating her murder that Isabella di Morra’s lyrics were brought to light and used as evidence to support the author’s innocence. During the investigation, copies of Isabella di Morra’s sonnets found their way to Venice. Ludovico Dolce was the first to edit and collect all the lyrics by Isabella, in a 1556 book entitled *Rime*. Several years later, Isabella di Morra’s verses arrived in Lucca, where Lodovico Domenichini published all thirteen sonnets composed by Isabella in a collection of poems by female authors, entitled *Rime Diverse di Alcune Nobilissime e Virtuosissime Donne* (1559). The tragic murder of Isabella di Morra undoubtedly contributed to her posthumous popularity, as did the fact that her work was re-published in two different editions over the span of only three years. But there can be little doubt that the literary terrain the author covered, taking her reader on a journey of her own troubled relationship with the geography of her native place, also contributed to the widespread dissemination of her work. While the forest and the fields were the ideal nests to nurse Petrarca’s need for solitude, and Gaspara Stampa’s Venice was the ideal theater for her affani d’amore, Isabella di Morra passionately despised the deserted land around the castle of Favale. According to Agapita Sibilia, Isabella di Morra’s description of Favale echoes Dante’s image of infernal valley[^84]. In the *Purgatorio*, Dante the pilgrim sees Cato, who asks, “chi v’ha guidato, o che vi fu lucerna,/ uscendo fuor de la profonda note/ che sempre nera fa la valle inferna?” (*Purg.*, i. 43-45) [Who has guided you, or what has been your lantern, coming forth from the deep night that makes the valley of Hell forever black?]. In her verses, Isabella di Morra describes her surrounding geography as “vile et orride” [“vile and horrid region”] (1, 3), “valle inferna”

[^84]: Agapita Sibilia, *Isabella di Morra: la Vita, la Poetessa*. Internet Source. (19)
Sibilia argues that although di Morra’s poems have been studied as Petrachan sonnets, the presence of Dante is undeniable. Indeed di Morra’s recurrent use of the topics of martyrdom, the sublimation of human love to divine love, the invocation to the Virgin Mary, and the use of grief on earth in exchange of a spiritual redemption suggest a profound knowledge of Dante’s work.

The reference to Dante’s Purgatory becomes Isabella di Morra’s obscure and desolated Favale, which during the author’s time was one of the poorest and most isolated areas in the Italian southern region, as Giovanni Caserta states in his study:

È pressoché incomprensibile come abbia potuto, nel selvaggio e desolato sito di Favale, nascere la poesia di Isabella di Morra; d’altra parte, è anche vero che il carattere tutto personale e soggettivo di tale poesia non è comprensibile fuori dalla solitudine remota di quell’angolo della Basilicata.

[…] it is incomprehensible how Isabella di Morra’s poetry was born in such a raw and isolated place as Favale; after all, the private nature of her poetry cannot be comprehended if we exclude the secluded solitude of that corner of Basilicata.

Isabella di Morra describes Favale as a land populated by unsophisticated and irrational individuals, where ignorance and insensitivity reigned undisturbed. Hope, fear, frustration, and anxiety are present in all thirteen of Isabella di Morra’s sonnets. In them, she frequently alternates between attacking the politics of her country, which kept her father away from her, and

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85 Ibidem, (19)
86 Translations from Caserta’s book are mine.
lashing out against the same man, who, in her view, abandoned her in the hands of her brothers.
Finally, she also speaks out against her perceived misfortune at having been born a woman, whose only hope was to marry well and thus break free from the prisons of Favale.

3.4. Gaspara Stampa’s Petrarchist Sources in Her Sonnets

In order to follow the popular motif of using poetry to describe a journey, Gaspara Stampa writes in sonnet 72:

La mia vita è un mar, l’acqua è il mio pianto,
I venti sono l’aure de’ sospiri,
La speranza è la nave, i miei desideri
La vela, e i remi, che la caccian tanto. (72, 1–4)

[My life’s a sea and the waves are my tears, and the winds are the breath of sighs, hope is the ship, and my desires the sail and oars that it forwards bears.]

The metaphor of the journey of life as a ship navigating through the sea was common among Stampa’s contemporaries. Starting with Petrarca and continuing with poets like Gabriele Giraldi Cintio, Ludovico Ariosto, and Vittoria Colonna, the image of a sea journey was used not only as a metaphor to describe life and love, but also to describe the creative process that is involved in producing literary masterpieces, or other works of art. The imagery related to the sea is particularly strong in Gaspara Stampa’s poems, as the author offers specific references to the Venetian and Adriatic seas. For instance, in sonnet 244, Stampa praises Venice for the beauty of its waters, as well as for being the location of her encounter with Cupid:

87 Trans. Janes Tylus
De le ricche, beate, e chiare rive
D’Adria, di cortesia nido, e d’Amore,
Ove si dolce si aggiorna, e vive,
Donna, havendo lontano il suo signore,
Quando il Sol si diparte, e quando poi
A noi rimena il matutino albore
Per isfogar gli ardenti disir suoi,
Con queste voci lo sospira, e chiama,
Voi rive, che l’udite ditel voi. (289, 1–9)

[From the blessed, rich, and famous shores/of Venice, love’s nest and courtesies,/ where we so sweetly live and dwell,/a woman whose lord is far away/when the sun departs and when it returns/to us, restoring the colors of the day,/unleashes the desire that so burns her,/as with these words she sighs and calls;/you shores, who heard her, tell it all.]

While Petrarca, as a “cittadino dei boschi” [“dweller of the forest”] found an audience for his laments over Laura in birds, the moon, and the stars, Venice becomes the place that bears witness to Stampa’s love affair with Collatino, and the sea and its waters are the carriers of her joy and grief. The choice of a place like Venice as the setting for her work strengthens the realistic dimension of Stampa’s experiences with love, allowing the depiction of love to be neither metaphysical nor purely abstract, but instead, definitive and grounded in a tangible, relatable reality for the reader. Unlike Petrarca’s Laura—who, again, most historians and literary scholars agree, was not a real woman88—Gaspara Stampa and Count Collatino of Collalto met in

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88 On this matter, also de Sanctis doubted on the existence of Laura as a woman in flesh and bone, arguing that Petrarca conceived Laura as the idea of beauty. Laura is the idea of perfection, in De Sanctis words, “Laura è un
real life. In sonnet 2, Stampa tells us of their first encounter by echoing Petrarca’s description of the first time he saw Laura:

Era vicino il di, che ‘l Creatore,
Che ne l’altezza sua potea restarsi,
In forma humana venne à dimostrarsi,
Dal ventre Virginal uscendo fore. (2, 1–4)

[It was near the day that the Creator/ came in human form to reveal himself/ when he could have stayed in his lofty domain,/issuing forth from the virginal womb89].

Stampa’s allusion to Christmas is parallel to Petrarca’s encounter with Laura on Good Friday. Both authors choose a Christian liturgical event as the location of their first encounter with their beloved. Stampa also recalls Christmas day in sonnet 211, lines 1–2, “io non veggio giamai giunger quel giorno,/ ove nacque colui, che carne prese” [“I no longer see that day arrive/when he was born who took on our flesh”]. The use of the liturgical calendar in Stampa’s poem is a clear attempt to imitate Petrarca’s use of religious themes, but it also merges together the recurrence of Christ’s birth with the birth of her passion. Petrarca’s Good Friday commemorates the death by crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, suggests that he anticipated a cessation of his earthly passion for Laura. By contrast, Stampa’s earthly love for Collatino calls to mind the

89 Translation Jane Tylus (p.61)
body of Christ made flesh. Collatino, object of her desire, is real, and only grows more real, as she admits in sonnet 211: “vince il senso” (line 13) [“passion conquers”]. Stampa unflinchingly admits the physical nature of her relationship with Collatino; she does not express any repentance, nor does she plea for moral forgiveness. On the contrary, she celebrates their nights together in sonnet 104:

O’notte, à me più chiara, e più beata,
   Che i più beati giorni, e i più chiari,
Notte degna da’ primi, e da’ più rari
   Ingegni, esser non pur da me lodata.
Tu de le gioie mie solo sei stata
   Fida ministra, tu tutti gli amari
De la mia vita hai fatto dolci e cari,
   Resomi in braccio lui, che m’ha legata. (104. 1–8)

[O night, to me more luminous and blessed/ than the most blessed and luminous of days,/night, worthy of being praised/by the rarest geniuses, not just by me,/you alone have been the faithful minister/of all my joys; all that was bitter/in my life you’ve rendered sweet and dear/and placed me in the arms of the man who bound me.]

Petrarca’s embrace of Laura becomes a prison, as he laments in sonnet 76 that, “Amor con sue promesse lusigando/ mi ricondusse a la prigione antica” (1–2) [alluring me with his promises,/Love led me back to my former prison]. Similarly, for Gaspara Stampa, Collatino’s arms represent the incarceration of the flesh and of her physical passion. Did such unrestrained and bold sensuality provoke her audience’s judgment? Or did they instead help the author to capture her audience’s compassion, and affect their understanding of her work?
Gaspara Stampa was fully aware of her social status as an oddity as an unmarried and financially independent woman, and of the reality that despite her wealth, she was a member of a subordinate class as a woman. In the dedication that opens her collection of poems and multiple sonnets, Stampa invokes the attention of her audience. The author places emphasis in the pronoun voi as a collective call, which echoes Petrarca’s opening sonnet of the *Canzoniere*. “Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono/di quei sospiri ond’io nudriva ‘l core” [“You who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart”]. Stampa’s use of Voi assumes multiple meanings. The author’s use of Voi as a plural pronoun meaning “you all” is addressed to both male and female audiences, and she strengthens the idea of female readership in the following line, when she writes, “e sper ancor, che debba dir qualc’una,/felicissima lei, da che sostenne” (9–10) [“and I hope some woman will be moved to say:/ most happy she, who suffered famously”]. In his introductory sonnet, Petrarca speaks to his audience about a time that has been concluded; his use of Voi is addressed to the person who understands love as a painful experience. Stampa, instead, calls for our collective attention, and for a written response from Collaltino. Indeed, Stampa’s use of Voi, meaning you formal, was addressed to Count Collaltino, as Tylus and Bassanese state.90 In sonnet 66, the author calls for Collaltino’s consideration, because the count persisted in remaining deaf to her laments, and he never wrote Stampa back:

Ricevete cortesi i miei lamenti,
E portateli fide al mio Signore
O’ di Francia beate e felici ore,

90 Gaspara Stampa sent numerous letters and poems addressed to the Count Collaltino. Jane Tylus suggests that Gaspara Stampa was bound to a single locale, unable to reach those she loved most and that the intensity of separation and distance became particularly salient aspects of her poems. Stampa’s preoccupation with sending forth so many poems to absent friends and lovers parallels her eagerness with which she awaits their responses (20); Bassanese, Fiora A. *Gaspara Stampa*. Boston: Twayne, 1982. Also according to Fiora Bassanese, Gaspara Stampa sent up to one hundred poems to Collaltino in the summer of 1549, presumably during Collaltino’s military campaign in Bologna (17).
Che godete hor de’ begli occhi lucenti.
E ditegli con tristi e mesti accenti,
Che, s’ei non move à dar soccorso al core,
O’ tornando, ò scirvendo, fra poche hore
Resteran gli occhi miei di luce spenti. (1–8)

[Accept my courteous laments/ and bear them faithfully to my lord,/O blessed winds of France!
Happy you/who can delight in those bright and shining eyes./And tell him in sad, melancholy
accents/that if he’s not moved to rescue this heart/by writing or returning within hours./of their
light my very eyes will be spent].

The importance of the audience’s attention is evident as Stampa calls for approval and
 glory from the prominent members of society, who might be willing to listen and possibly even
to reply back. Although the author pleads for forgiveness, Stampa clearly rejects the notion of a
divine judgment, in contrast to Petrarca’s moral view on this matter. Additionally, while Stampa
does not stray from her desire for eternal fame, her desire is neither a spiritual transgression nor
indicative of a lack of humility.

As previously mentioned, among her readers and listeners, Stampa often addresses her
voi to women. While she does not receive a response from Collaltino, in the last verses of sonnet
1, Stampa speaks to “some woman”: “e spero anch, che debba dir qualc’una” [“and I hope some
woman will be moved to say”] (1, 9), with whom to share her experience of anguished love, a
female compatriot who will mourn her death and keep her memory alive. In sonnet 86, Stampa
writes, “piangete Donne, e poi che la mia morte/ non move il Signor mio crudo e lontano/ Voi,
che sete di cor dolce e humano,/ aprire le pietade alemen le porte. /Piangete meco la mia acerba
sorte” [“Ladies, weep, and since my death moves not/my lord who’s cruel and far away, then
you, /who possess hearts that are sweet and humane,/at least out of pity open your gates./Weep with me my bitter fate”] (86, 1–5).

It seems clear that Gaspara Stampa’s agenda is to affect her audience by means of words. The fact that her words are grounded in the reality of her experiences renders her verses even more suggestive, and effective. In so doing, her anger and other emotions become communicable affects, aimed at entering into conversation with her audience’s emotions, attracting the attention of noble patrons, and working to overlay new schemata onto existing ones. In this way, Stampa carves a position for herself outside the established male-female social boundaries. A closer analysis of Stampa’s sonnet I will prove useful in order to gain a deeper understanding the manner in which the author affects her audience. In sonnet I Stampa activates a schema, triggered by the repeated reference to the following elements:

Meste (line 1); Mesti/ oscuri accenti (line 2); Amorosi Lamenti (line 3); Pene (line 4).

The activation of the above schema, found in the first stanza, enables the reader to make sense of the author’s experience of love described in the text. This concept will be shared by other readers who are familiar with the grief that love can cause. Therefore, the first stanza triggers a schema, which can be understood as the author’s knowledge of her experience of love and pain, and presents the theme or author’s idea. The activation of the schema includes the participation of the readers in the following stanza, which activates a second schema: the author’s goal. Why does the author want her readers to know about her “amorosi lamenti”? This second schema enables readers to infer details, such as the reasons for the author’s grief, her intentions, and her hopes. Indeed, the reader is informed of Stampa’s hopes of finding glory. Schema two is triggered by the repeated reference to her hopes for “glory”: valor/ stime/ gloria/ sublime/ felicissima/ chiara cagion/ tanta Fortuna.
These two schemata, that of love pain, and that focused on her desire to share her hope with her readers, work in tandem to allow the reader to deduce certain details, such as the intensity of the author’s grief, and her purpose behind her call for the audience’s attention. Through these two schemas, readers easily establish logical connections between the actions, people, and objects presented, thereby constructing a coherent interpretation of an early modern text and of an author’s effort to give emotive language a graphic quality. Indeed, Stampa’s awareness of using deictic language as means to persuade her readers, (a language derived from her knowledge of using a language dependent for its meaning on the frame of time, space and social awareness common to persuader and persuadee, namely the language of the Petrarchism), is applied to her real life experience as lover, as woman writer, and as a member of a minority. By replacing one schema with another, Stampa sought to have an affect on the emotions, thoughts, and experiences of her readers.

3.5 Isabella di Morra’s Petrarchist Sources in Her Sonnets

Similar to Gaspara Stampa, Isabella di Morra expresses personal and private aspects of her life in her poems. In her sonnets however, Isabella di Morra also demonstrates her humanistic education, received from her brother’s tutor. Croce confirms that Isabella di Morra read and studied the classics, and that she took advantage of her father’s library, where she found published versions of Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*. Her references to mythological figures, although sparse, are evident in sonnet 2, with the author’s prayers to Juno, queen of the deities and goddess of marriage and childbirth, and to Hymen, the Roman god of marriage. Isabella di Morra uses the above examples when she expresses her desire to marry not for love, but rather as a
possible way to escape the tyranny of her brothers. In sonnet 13, the author calls upon Apollo to cast his sun light on the shadowy valley surrounding her castle. Only then does she return to the figures of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

Sonnet 12 is entirely dedicated to Jesus Christ and to the description of his body. In it, di Morra proclaims her rejection of mortal beauty and other earthly objects of desire. The author prays to be recognized as Christ’s true, pure lover, and to be graced with the talent to portray such eternal beauty in her verses. The portrayal of her loved one, in this case, Jesus Christ himself, echoes Petrarca’s fragmented depiction of Laura, as well as Gaspara Stampa’s portrayal of the handsome Collaltino. However, while Petrarca could freely create the scattered beauty of Laura in his mind and in his verses without any judgment, and while Gaspara Stampa depicted Collaltino’s beauty regardless of the fact that the majority of her audience was likely to be male, and thus, less likely to be receptive to this depiction, Isabella di Morra could not portray a man in flesh and blood, not even an abstract male muse, nor could she create the image of a beloved woman without raising concerns or suspicions over her own sexuality. Therefore, the author strategically relied on the safest male figure in her life, Jesus Christ, in order to experiment with Petrarchan tropes, and to express her desire to reach artistic immortality. Isabella di Morra traces the portrayal of her beloved one by first asking that “ognun m’additi per tua fida amante/ in questo mondo errante” [“that everyone points me out as your faithful lover/ in this erring world”] (12, 1, 8–9). She then continues by describing his physical features: “occhi tuoi pien di salute” [“your eyes full of salvation”], “I suoi capelli,/ tanto del Sol piu belli” [his hair/more beautiful than the sun], “tua divina bocca/ di perle e di rubini” [“your divine mouth/of pearls and rubies”], “guancie di fiori celesti adorne e piane” [“cheeks adorned with heavenly flowers and open”], “le mani tue non dirò belle/ che molto innanzi ad ogni etade” [“hands I would not say are
beautiful/hands that long before every age”], “la vaghezza del tuo biano piede” [“the
gracefulness of your white foot”], and so forth. In Isabella di Morra’s description of Jesus Christ,
one gets the clear allusion to Laura’s fragmented body in Petrarca’s Canzoniere. As Stampa
before her, di Morra experiments by imitating the same Petrarchan trope of the dismembered
body. However, if Petrarca’s use of Laura’s fragmented body allowed for varied interpretations,
from the metaphor of Italian political disunity to Petrarca’s innovative use of classics, Isabella di
Morra’s dismemberment seems to stem from her own personal disconnect from her physical
surroundings. In sonnet 2, dedicated to Juno, goddess of marriage, di Morra expresses her hopes
of escaping from Favale by means of a marital contract. In sonnet 12, she proclaims herself to be
Christ’s bride only, and therefore, to have eloped in a spiritual form, since her flesh and bones
are prisoners at the castle of Favale. Thus, di Morra’s escapism takes on a metaphysical
dimension.

3.6. Toward the Appropriation of Women’s Emotions: Desire and Anger in Stampa and di
Morra’s Sonnets

The Petrarchan rhetorical technique influenced early modern women sonneteers and their
desire to affect their audience. Both Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra wish “to touch
inside” their audience; that is, to “affect” them. However, when a woman wrote in the Petrarchan
tradition, several factors contributed to the appropriation of women’s emotions. Juliana Schiesari
states that women sonneteers experienced a tremendous internal and social tension (160–182).
As writers in the Petrarchan tradition, their love sonnets focused on their own objects of desire,
genearly male. This challenged the conventional role of women in literature and in society.
Whereas previously women had served solely as objects of desire in male works, female sonneteers who devoted their works to male objects of desire, were not often taken seriously by society. Virginia Cox states that the fascination of men with women writers during the early modern era was the result of the relative novelty of the existence of the woman writer. There was not any particular interest in encouraging women’s creativity, and often, male authors praised the works of women writers with hyperbolic compliments (11–28). While women writers were widely read, many male authors and critics overly flattered them, resulting in the devaluation of their work, and ultimately, in the re-appropriation of women’s emotions by men; indeed the emotions represented in women’s poems, letters, and short stories were not considered exceptionally profound or meaningful, and were often judged as being hyperbolic, or excessively emotional. For instance, Antonio Rambaldo (1647–1719) in his account of Gaspara Stampa’s life, portrays her as a noble and honest woman “fortemente accesa” [strongly consumed by love], betrayed, and “sopra ogni maggiore espressione addolorata” [“pained beyond what words can express”]. Rambaldo offers a biased interpretation of Stampa’s life, as he elevates her talent, suggesting that it is considerable, “for being a woman.” This critique renders Stampa’s poems merely the result of her overly dolorous experience.

The hyperbole with which women sonneteers like Stampa and Isabella di Morra were praised served to undermine their credibility and their substance as writers. Critics like Rambaldo fed into the commonly held and widely accepted narrative of the overly emotional female, and reinforced existing schemas in the minds of Stampa’s and di Morra’s readers about women authors. It was in an effort to overcome this devaluation of their emotions that these women poets sought to affect the minds of their readers by overlaying new schemata onto those that pre-existed. Specifically, anger, fear, and vendetta are presented by Stampa and di Morra as
tangible, lived experiences—experiences which their readers could imminently understand and relate to. The transmission of anger, experienced as a rational response to their circumstances, and relayed to the reader by overlapping one schema upon another, was the method employed by these female poets to break through the cacophony of critical and public voices that sought to undermine their legitimacy.

The emotions presented in women’s writing during the early modern era did not acquire the same public value as emotions presented by male writers. Such asymmetry caused women’s writing not only to be excluded from the literary exchange of the time, but also contributed to the idea that emotions are by nature gendered. Did early modern women writers represent emotions in their works differently from their male counterparts? One can reach a provisional conclusion by comparing some examples from Petrarca’s poems, and those taken from Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s works.

In the analysis of Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*, Mario Rapisardi suggests that other emotions exist beyond the author’s love for Laura. Furthermore, Rapisardi claims that Petrarca is almost carried away by the platonic, scholastic, and chivalric concept of love, to the extent that his sentiment succeeds in being overly sentimental. On the contrary, when Petrarca writes of his hatred for the corruption of the papal and monarchical courts, the author is “più intenso, più virile; le parole gli sgorgano dall’animo concitato, con un impeto spontaneo.” (Rapisardi 41–42)91 This is because when Petrarca writes about Laura, he turns to the aid of imagination, and

91 On the hatred expressed in Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*, Rapisardi states that Petrarca, “scrivendo d’amore, si lascia talvolta prendere prendere la mano da preconcetti platonici, scolastici, cavallereschi: il sentimento degenera in sentimentalità, l’arte piega all’artifizio, è ricercato, raffinato, pretenzioso, muliebre. Il concetto, l’antitesi, l’arguzia, l’arzigogolo si sostituiscono all’affetto vero. Nell’odio invece egli è più riconcentrato, più intenso, più virile; le parole gli sgorgano dall’animo concitato, con un impeto spontaneo, con una schiettezza efficace che vi trascina. […] perché egli non deve staccarsi tanto dal reale; la corte papale è sotto gli occhi suoi e tutto il suo sdegno religioso, di credente, di poeta e d’uomo si risveglia e prorompe come un flagello […]” (41–42)
reminisces on women’s beauty, a trope inherited from the previous literary tradition on courtly love. By contrast, Petrarca closely and personally experienced the political and moral fractures of Italy. Petrarca’s vehement criticism of Avignon’s papal court is also featured in his Epistola XI. This contrast between the intangible and the tangible, that is, the abstract nature of Laura versus Petrarca’s real and profound moral and political discontent, are evident in the nature of his poetry. Most scholars agree that Petrarca’s description of love and grief, as provoked by Laura, reaches the apex of poetic aesthetic, but that it lacks of any “emotional” authenticity or experience, because Laura herself is intangible. Petrarca is free to portray her in any way he pleases, but that very freedom undermines his legitimacy. By contrast, it is very clear that when he speaks of his hatred for the political realities of his day, his work becomes more substantive, as it is clear that it is grounded in lived experience.

In sonnet 205, Petrarca is grateful for all the pain and suffering that he experienced because of Laura, and describes these moments as being of “sweet pleasure”. Echoing Ovid and Chatullus’ amorous works, Petrarca’s anger is sweet. In his own words, “dolce ire, dolci sdegni et dolci paci/ dolce mal, dolce affanno et dolce peso/” [“sweet anger, sweet disdain, sweet times of peace/ sweet harm, sweet torment, and sweet weight”] (205, 1–2). Petrarca’s anger, caused by his muse’s contempt, is a welcome emotion that does not offend or dishonor. On the contrary, the author scolds his soul by saying “non ti lagnar ma soffra et taci,/ et tempra il dolce amaro che n’a offesi/col dolce onor che d’amar quella ai preso” [“do not complain, suffer in silence/and temper the sweet bitterness that hurt us/with the sweet honor you gain loving her”] (205, 5–7).

The emotion of anger in Petrarca’s Canzoniere communicates the author’s restlessness, as he oscillates between the feeling of losing his soul and being blessed by eternal life; his sweet anger provoked by his muse’s sweet disdain could only lead to his experiencing sweet bitter pain. I
argue that Petrarca alternates his moods between anger, calm, pain, and peace simply to emphasize his status as *peregrinus* [pilgrim]. By alternating between peace and torment, the author offers to the reader the idea of an inner journey, of constant movement. Therefore, Petrarca’s anger is a strategy designed to set a pace in the first four lines of sonnet 205, providing a rhythm; the author then ends with the words “sweet weight” [“dolce peso”], hinting at the idea of slowing and gradually stopping the hectic pace of his initial line.

Although Petrarca’s expression of sweet and creative anger assumes positive connotations, it is not as evident as the representation of many of his other emotions. Petrarca describes his idea of wrath or uncontrolled anger in sonnet 232. Here, the author presents the emotion of wrath as an uncontrollable force that vanquished Alexander the Great,92 carried off Taydeus,93 and punished Silla94 and Valentinianus.95 Wrath is a blind rage that kills or leads to madness. In Petrarca’s words, “ira è breve furore; et chi nol frena,/ è furor lungo che’l suo possessor/spesso vergogna et talo mena a morte” [“Wrath’s a short madness; but for one who can’t/ control it, it is long, and to its possessor/ it often brings to shame and sometimes death”] (232, 12–14). Echoing Seneca’s *De Ira* [On Anger] and Cicero’s notion of anger in *Tusculanas*

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92 Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) was the king of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedon. According to Plutarch’s account in *The Age of Alexander*, Alexander was overcome by rage also outside of the battle field and in one of this occasion he murdered a friend.
93 Tydeus, in Greek mythology was one the leader of the army named the Seven against Thebe. Tydeus challenged all the Theban leaders in single combats. Only one of the defender, Melanippus, was able to mortalily wound Tydeus, right before dying. According to the myth, the goddess Athena had planned to make Tydeus immortal, but she refused after Tydeus in a rage devoured Melanippus’ brain.
94 According to scholars of Roman history, Silla was a Roman general and statesman, described as a man of violent temper, entered Rome and massacred the most of leading senators and knights that had voted his banishment. In his vindictive rage, Silla slaughtered without mercy all whom he suspected of disaffection toward him. He died shortly after, it has been said, in a fit of rage.
95 According to the account of Priscus and John of Antioch, Valentinianus, Roman emperor, in a fit of rage killed Aetius, a general of the Roman army.
Disputationes [Tusculan Disputations] 96, Petrarca highlights the darkening of the sight and mind due to the overwhelming power of wrath. In grief and uncontrollable anger, the famous men mentioned in Petrarca’s sonnet perished in a fit of rage. Therefore, while “sweet anger” propels the cadence or the pulse of the affanni d’amore, wrath can only bring death and oblivion.

The representation of anger and wrath in Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s poetry differs from Petrarca’s portrayal of those emotions. Although both authors attempt to imitate Petrarchan lyrics utilizing the tropes of love and desire, they distance themselves from the notions of solitude and peregrination, which are extolled by Petrarca. While Petrarca’s work was inspired by a vision of an idealized woman (his beloved Laura), Stampa and di Morra are motivated by real events and personal experiences. As a result, they shun the solitude of Petrarca, seeking instead widespread acceptance of their objects of desire; their audience and their male contemporaries. Indeed, both women authors addressed their poems to concrete and corporeal object of desire. Gaspara Stampa dedicated all her sonnets to her beloved Count Collatino di Collalto, while Isabella di Morra pleads for help by addressing her poems to her father. Both women authors use the Petrarchan tropes of unfulfilled desire and inaccessibility, but these tropes find expression by means of their concrete experiences with abandonment.

Anger, grief, fear, and vendetta are indeed represented in a unique way because of the authors’ tangible experiences, far from Petrarca’s abstract amorous devotion to the fictional and idealized Laura. For instance, in sonnet 25, Gaspara Stampa sings of “ire e sdegni” provoked by amorous sufferings, but the author also reminds her audience that varied styles in prose and

96 Cicero highly suggests putting anger aside because loss of control is the enemy of reason; “it lays flame to every state of mind, throwing it into disturbance and riot.” In Cicero on the Emotions: Tusculan Disputations, Book IV, 22. Trans. Margaret Graver. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002. (46-47)
verses, from every epoch and country, sang about grief and love: “non fia anche alcun, che possa
dire/ anzi adombrar la schiera de’ diletti,/ ch’amor, la sua mercè, mi fà sentire” [“none could ever
describe,/let alone hint at the wealth of delights/that Love in his mercy has made me feel”] (25, 9–11). The author puts forward a self-reflection, as Petrarca did in his sonnets. However, Stampa
strategically draws attention to her own personal experiences in an effort to overlay a new
schema to her reader and affect the mind of her audience. This allows her experience to be
shared and understood by her reader, even though only she can truly know the experiences
themselves. Stampa is therefore able to describe and sing about her affanni d’amore and to
transmit those feelings to her audience. Isabella di Morra’s poems do not speak of love, but of
the desire to be released from the walls of her castle. She recites in sonnet 9: “qui non provo io di
donna il proprio stato/per te, che posta m’hai in si ria sorte/ che dolce vita mi saria la morte”
[“here, I cannot prove my own womanhood /for you, who placed me in so evil a lot/that form me
a sweet life would be death”] (9, 4–7). The author’s sense of abandonment often invokes death,
but it also expresses her anger towards her father and the practice of disownment.

The anger expressed in both Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s lyrics is bitter
rather than sweet, and brings to light their respective awareness of their surroundings. As
previously discussed, Aristotle defined anger as an impulse provoked by an offense. Anger leads
to self-evaluation, and an evaluation of other individuals, particularly of those perceived as
superior, of an upper social stratum, or of a stronger physical or intellectual prowess. Anger
therefore involves an evaluation of social roles, which occurs in Stampa’s and di Morra’s poems.
In undergoing this self-analysis and transmitting their self-discoveries to their readers, each
author overlays a fundamentally new schema upon their audience, and works to affect their
readers by relating experiences of love, loss, and anger with which they will surely be familiar; though each writer has a different goal in mind.

Stampa’s goal, in the opening sonnet, is to positively impress her well-born audience. Stampa writes: “Gloria, non che perdon, d’ miei lamenti/ spero trovar fra le ben genti” [“I hope to find glory among the well-born:/ glory and not only pardon”] (1, 6–7). Retracing Petrarca’s steps, Stampa asks her readers for forgiveness, but she also expresses her desire to be heard. It can be inferred that this is a clear attempt by the author to attract the attention of noble patrons, perhaps to advertise her work beyond the borders of her social status as the daughter of a merchant, and to seek approval from the male authors of her time. Stampa’s constant concern for her social position, and her writing skills, are also expressed in sonnet 3, when she writes: “che meraviglia fia s’alza, e estolle/me bassa e vile a scriver, tanta pieta” [“what marvel it is if that high and verdant hill/ lifted up someone like me, base and lowly,/raised me up to write piteous verse”] (3, 5–7). Only the author’s beloved Count Collaltino di Collalto is able to raise Stampa from her low status, as she recites “Collaltino] ogni ignoranza e bassezza sgombra” [“he clears out all that’s ignorant and base”] (3, 11). Stampa’s self-evaluation continues in the description of herself as “abietta e vile” [“a lowly, abject woman”] (8, 1) and her accusation of Collaltino’s cruelty, “empio in amore.” Furthermore, it is in her anger that Stampa remembers him the most; while the author laments her loss and her abandonment in anger, “ [si l’ira, il rimembrar pur lui, mi smorza”] [“in wrath, there is remembrance of him, and I’m calmed”] (25, 10). Therefore, anger, caused by her lover’s rejection, is not irrational, but rather a “nova forza” channeled to write “nova arte.” Stampa’s new strength is projected toward the possibility of a future revenge, when she predicts in sonnet 9 that the disloyal Count will repent his cruelty, though, she asserts, that her vengeance may come too late, because the author may have moved on, or perhaps, the
Count will simply be dead. In her presage, she writes that “vedrò forse anco in man di crudeltate/la vita vostra a mia vendetta involta” [perhaps I’ll see you yet in cruelty’s/grip, your life bound up with my vendetta] (9, 13–14). Stampa envisions her vendetta as a future where Collaltino experiences suffering and a desire for atonement. This echoes the Aristotelian idea of vendetta as a desire to inflict the same suffering and pain on an adversary or enemy that they inflicted upon you. Aristotle’s concept of vendetta grew from his belief that the emotion of anger and the desire for vengeance are derived from an evaluation of oneself in relation to others. The act of writing affords Stampa an opportunity to undergo this self-evaluation, and to evaluate Collaltino.
Writing becomes a reflection of her soul. She seeks her vengeance against Collaltino by informing her audience of his “empio amore.” Through her writing, she seeks to create a new schemata—one that compels the reader to focus on her anger toward Collaltino rather than her own position as a female poet. In doing so, she invites her readers to relate to and understand her anger towards a lover who has scorned her, to understand and internalize her notion of lost love. She seeks to affect their perceptions of her work, gaining their acceptance.

By communicating Collaltino’s cruelty to her audience and informing them of his true nature, she seeks to expose his faults. Her words affect her audience, and move them to sympathize with her through their own personal experiences with pain and love, overlaying new schemas onto existing ones. Stampa’s pain becomes their pain, transmitted to them through the written word. In so doing, Stampa’s sonnets achieve multiple purposes: to experiment and imitate Petrarchan sonnets; to openly cite her lover’s wrongdoings; to affect the mind of her audience; and, finally, to achieve immortality by means of her poetry. It can be inferred that both Stampa and Petrarca aimed at aesthetic perfection in their poetry; however, Petrarca’s obsession with the unobtainable emphasizes the abstract nature of the idea of love, thus making it
intangible and distant. Stampa’s real-life affair with Collaltino, on the contrary, makes it possible for her audience to fully comprehend, relate to, and sympathize with her experiences with love.

Similarly, Isabella di Morra experiments with Petrarchan lyrics, and expresses her awareness of her style “rozzo” [“unrefined”], “ruvido” [“rough”], and “frale” [“frail, weak”], and also of her social status as woman, perceived as inferior and powerless. Indeed, she writes: “E donna son, contra le donne dico:/ che tu Fortuna, avendo il nostro nome,/ogni ben nato core hai nemico” [“I am a woman, and against women I decry:/ that you Fortuna, bearing our gender,/have as an enemy every well-bred heart”]. She is angry over her misfortune at having been born a woman in a patriarchal society, as she confirms in sonnet 9: “fra questi aspri costumi/ di genti irrazional, priva d’ingegno,/ ove senza sostegno/ son costretta a menare il viver mio,/ qui posta da ciascuno in cieco oblio” [“amid these rough customs/ of an irrational people, devoid of intellect,/where without support/ I am constrained to lead my life,/placed here by everyone in blind oblivion”] (9, 7–11). Like Gaspara Stampa, Isabella di Morra’s anger has been provoked by a self-evaluation and an appraisal of her social status. This instills in di Morra a desire for revenge that, similar to Stampa, is expressed in her wish for her father to know about her death, as di Morra conveys in her sonnet 8.

Stampa and di Morra demonstrate an eagerness to enter into conversation with the Petrarchan lyrical tradition, but their writing suggests that they resisted the ready-made grid of Petrarchism. Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s representation of anger and vendetta appear to be configured to narrate their own stories and experiences, rather than being aimed at an idealize representation of love, as Petrarca did with Laura. This makes their attempt to affect their audience in a more tangible way than Petrarca’s sonnets.
3.7 Beyond the Physical Death: Anger, Fear, Hope, and Desire for Immortality

According to Aristotle, anger does not operate by itself. In order to exist, anger involves the interactions of other emotions, such as fear and hope. The poetic treatment of fear in the works of Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra is interlocked with the representation of death, or, more precisely, the fear of artistic death. In Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*, death and fear interplay with the poet’s moral crisis, and the errant poet finds in Laura the vehicle of his damnation and redemption. In Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra’s poems, the fear of death rests on the notion of being forgotten by their audience. In his *Canzoniere*, Laura pervades Petrarca’s poetic universe by becoming lauro, l’aura, l’auro, and tormenting the poet with her absence, her physical unavailability, crucial in the mechanism of the entire collection of lyrics which earned Petrarca the laurel, popularity, and his reputation among generations of readers. Diverging from the moralizing Petrarchan undertones, the female poets’ lyrical torment recalls the Petrarchan tropes of grief, pain, and imminent death. However, rather than a physical or even metaphysical death, these women used fear of death to express their fear of being unable to write or to be inspired. Gaspara Stampa dreads death because her source of inspiration, her “bitter joy and sweet torment” [“gioia amara and dolce tormento”] will depart from her. She implores God to preserve her as she is “now wretched, now content” [“hor misera, hor contenta”] (1,1–4) so that she can continue creating and performing her lyrics. Similarly, Isabella di Morra claims to be “worthy of the sepulcher” [“degna del sepolcro”] already in sonnet 1, thus recalling the poetic trope of artistic immortality, for she is already condemned on this earth to live in solitude. She expresses her fear of death, and relates how the thought of physical death immobilizes her only because her guidance will be missed: “fear and desire are her escorts” [“timore e ‘l desio son le mie scorte”]. Simply put, fear and desire serve as vital catalysts for her act of writing. Although
the two women poets come from a different lineage and upbringing, they share a common
treatment of death as the loss of poetic inspiration. This angst was explained by Harold Bloom
more than forty years ago, when he defined it as “anxiety of influence97”.

In light of new literary theories oriented toward a better understanding of emotions and
affect theory in literature, I analyze not what, but how the fear of death operates in the poems of
these two female writers, and how that fear helps define their anger. How does fear affect
Stampa’s and di Morra’s poetry and their act of writing? For an interpretation of fear in poetry, I
consider affect theory as it is intended in cultural studies, or in Sarah Amhed’s words, “affect
interwoven to history of emotions unfolds regimes of expressivity tied to atmosphere of sociality
nurtured into the lived practices of the everyday.” Simply put, the interpretation of emotions in a
text is adjoined to the social context of the author, and to how their social circumstances affect
his or her poetry.

Starting with Aristotle, fear is to be perceived as a “kind of pain and disturbance deriving
from an impression [phantasia] of a future evil that is destructive or painful” (Rhetoric, 2.5). For
Aristotle, to be fearful of something involves the desire to keep a physical and temporal distance
between an individual and the object causing fear. The object that causes fear is the one that
possesses the power to destroy or to inflict harm. Fear, as an emotion, is caused by the reality
that we do not fully understand what will happen if the thing we fear should come to fruition.

97 This angst was explained by Harold Bloom more than forty years ago, when he defined it as “anxiety of
influence.” On this matter see, Harold Bloom, The anatomy of influence: literature as a way of life. New Haven:
Yale University Press, 2011; Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, the Madwoman in the Attic After Thirty Years. Columbia:
University of Missouri Press, 2009. Drawing from Bloom’s theory on the anxiety of influence, Gilbert and Gubar
explains that women authors experience a different type of anxiety, which they named “anxiety of authorship”: an
anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist
to be by definition inappropriate to her sex. (no pag, electronic source).
What we fear, in essence, is the pain associated with the object of our fear. So long as we live in fear, we still haven’t acquired the knowledge of that pain. What form will the pain take? How intense will it be? In short, we cannot recognize pain if we haven’t experienced it before. What is dreadful and frightening is not the physical pain itself, but rather, the knowledge that it is approaching. Fear, as an emotion, is powerful because we live waiting for it to turn into physical or psychological pain. Fear, therefore, activates knowledge and memory, a “deduction of fear,” which presumes imminent harm. Taking their cue from Aristotelian thought on “presaging fear,” affect theory scholars focus on the physical and psychological response to such a “deduction of fear.” Conforming to the idea that affect is the capacity to act and to be acted upon, Silvan Tomkins explains that affects deriving from emotions are powerful sources of motivation. In consideration of these thoughts and ideas, my questions are the followings: from what do Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra want to keep their distance? What is the object causing the fear represented in their sonnets? How does fear influence their act of writing?

In the very first line of Stampa’s sonnet 76, she indicates the existence of temporal distance between her and the object causing her fear – namely, being physically unable to write as a result of her death, which would lead to the absence of her poetry. Where love itself was the focus of Petrarca’s grief, for Stampa, loss, or absence of love, was the cause of only occasional pain. She asserts: “Quando t’alhor Amor m’assal più forte” [“When sometimes Love assaults me especially hard”]. The initial melancholic tone introduces the reader to the traditional Petrarchan motif of the assaults of Love/Cupid. But by choosing to utilize the word “t’alhor” [“sometimes”], Stampa is explicitly asserting that she does not suffer permanently from the absence of love. She rescues her poem from Petrarca’s poetic prison, the “carcer di Amor,” taking it away from Cupid and refocusing the reader’s attention onto a setting that is secular, contemporary, and definitely
more realistic: her belief in the immortal value of poetry, and her fear of being separated from poetic inspiration by death.

Her inner conflict does not regard Collatino/Laura, but rather the fear of not attaining literary fame and approval from her audience. Therefore, by using the word “sometimes,” she is retreating, if only for a moment, from the Petrarchan trope of Cupid as an enemy in her lyrics. Stampa’s line about absence and desire as perpetrators/agents of a pitiless and dark death [“E’l desir e l’assentia…vorria pormi sotterra, preda d’oscura e dispietata Morte”], is eased by the presence of Stampa’s “fide scorte” [“faithful escorts”]. According to Alessandro Vellutello’s interpretation in his Biblioteca Petrarcaesca\(^{98}\) (1525), “le fide scorte” in Petrarca’s sonnet 170, are to be understood as the “lacrime e sospiro” [“tears and sighs”].

On the surface, Stampa’s sonnet uses Petrarchan themes, but upon closer scrutiny, her text presents a sophisticated case of concealed meaning. Her verse, “io mi rivolgo à le mie fide scorte” [“I turn back to my faithful escorts”] doesn’t refer to her tears and sighs, but rather to Collatino’s [her lover] absence, and to her desire for him. Petrarca’s escorts and those of Stampa are thus very different. As Aristotle puts it, “fear makes people deliberative” (Rhetoric, 2.5, 1382a5) rather than irrational. Her trusted mind (good sense) will lead her ship, (a metaphor for her artistic endeavor), safely to the shore, as she indicates in the following line “tal che la nave mia, che dubbiosa erra / subito par, ch’s lido si riporte” [“so that my ship, wandering in doubt /can suddenly be returned to shore”]. Her guidance will not trouble her as the fide scorte did with Petrarca; on the contrary, it will free Stampa from doubts and errors. How does Stampa utilize her moment of cognition? She recognizes first the conniving, double nature of Love, which

https://Petrarca.uoregon.edu/apparatus/commentary/14670
causes pain, but frees her creativity, since, “Si che quanto ho d’Amor’ onde mi doglia/ tanto ho onde mi loda” [while much of what I have from Love brings grief/ there’s also much to praise]. She finally reveals that her prize consists of her act of writing because she feels that “ch’una sol man mi leghi una mi scioglia” [“one hand binds me and another sets me free”]. While one hand seems to suggest she is still tied to the Petrarchan poetic trope of the love knots, her other hand is free to write and to create, motivated (affected) by the fear of losing joy, and tormented and motivated by the fear of being unable to write her poetry. Stampa states, “io prego il ciel, che mai non mi vi toglia / e sia’l mio stato hor misero, hor content” [“may God never take you (joy and torment) from me-please / preserve me as I am, now wretched, now content”]. Stampa foreshadows a pitiless and obscure death, which recalls the Aristotelian concept of a future evil. If we recognize the reality that Stampa is concerned with Love’s attacks only briefly, we can infer the following question: what does the female poet dread? More precisely, what does she fear more, Collaltino’s absence, or the absence of joy and torment? It appears that Stampa is more preoccupied with always living in torment, so that she can continue to write, and create her poetry with her free hand, an act motivated by this torment. The tension between the desire to achieve artistic immortality and the wish to keep a distance from the Petrarchan model is evident in sonnet 39, when Stampa writes,

Se con tutto il mio studio, e tutta l’arte
   Io non posso accennar pur quanto, e quale
E’ ‘l foco mio dal di, che’l primo strale
   M’aventò Amor ne la sinistra parte.

Come volete voi Signor, che ex parte
   L’altrui voglie amorose e l’altrui male
Con questa forza stanca, e così frale

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I dica in vive voci, ò scriva in carte?

_Datemi ò ’ciel più stile, ò voi men pena_

Ond’habbia ò più vigor’, ò men martire

Si che la vostra voglia resti piena. (Sonnet, 39)

[If with all my study and all my art/I can’t even hint at the force of the flame/that’s been mine from the day the Love/an arrow in to wound my heart,/how then, lord, can you expect another part/of me to tell in lively words, or write on the page/ the amorous desires and grief of others/When my force is so tired and so frail?/Oh God, grant me more skill/ or you less heartache, so I may find/ or know less sorrow—then your wish can be fulfilled].

As in the previous example, Stampa introduces her audience to the Petrarchan trope of painful love, but then invokes God to advocate for her cause: “datemi ò ’ciel più stile” [“Oh God, grant me more skill”]. Less painful love, and more talent to write; less of Petrarca’s presence, and more skill to create original works of art and survive into posterity. In this sense, Gaspara Stampa’s sonnets demonstrate a profound awareness of her immediate circumstances, both as female poet, and as member of a lesser class than that to which many prominent members of her audience belonged. Always aiming for public recognition and eternal poetic glory, Stampa strives to ensure she will never live with the absence of her poetry - the frightening and cumbersome poetic presence of her precursor—and, “with one hand,” the female poet redirects her angst to satisfy her desire to write. In so doing, Stampa relegates the silent muse, Collaltino, to a mere tool of inspiration, an initial cause of her anger and fear, who is then forgotten so that she can strive towards a higher purpose: artistic immortality.
In likewise manner, Isabella di Morra’s lyrics also present a complex and rich text of concealed meaning. Like Gaspara Stampa before her, di Morra absorbed and demonstrated a mastery of Petrarchism, and of Petrarchan tropes. However, her personal and social circumstances have a huge impact on the representation of anger, and fear of imminent death in her lyrics; interestingly, this makes the representation and description of fear more evident in di Morra’s sonnets than in Stampa’s lyrics. First, the motif of painful love is absent. In sonnet 2, di Morra mentions “i volgari amori” [“vulgar loves”] but as something she renounces, for she would rather get married:

Sacra Giunone, se i volgari amori
Son de l’alto tuo cor tanto nemici
I giorni e gli anni miei chiari e felici
Fa’ con tuoi santi e ben concessi ardori
A voi consacro i miei verginei fiori
A te, o Dea, e a’ tuoi pensieri amici
O de le cose sola alme, beatrici,
Che colmi il ciel de’ tuoi soave odori.

Cingimi al collo un bello aurato laccio
De’ tuoi più cari ed umili soggetti,
Che di servire a te sola procaccio 99

[If vulgar loves are so inimical/before your lofty heart, sacred Juno/with your holy ardors graciously bestowed/Make my days and years bright and joyful/to you I consecrate my virginal flowers/to you and your friendly thoughts, O Goddess;/o only you among things benign and

99 Translated by Irene Musillo Mitchell.
blessed/ Fill heaven with your sweet aromas. /Around my neck a beautiful golden knot encircle /
of your subjects most humble and dear,/for only to serve you I intend].

The sonnet above demonstrates di Morra’s desire to consecrate herself to Juno, Goddess of Love, but only for the purpose of getting married. In spite of her isolation, the self-educated Isabella di Morra makes large use of classical references, not only to imitate the Petrarchan style, but also to highlight her desire to reach immortality by means of her poetry. As her verses recite in sonnet 2, “degno il sepolcro, se fu vil la cuna/ vo procacciando con le Muse amate” [“If vile the cradle, I am worthy of the sepulcher/I keep procuring with the beloved Muses”]. She continues by expressing her desire to be buried in a marble tomb, “nei saldi marmi.” The desire for immortality also appears in sonnet 4, when she spurs the river Siri to be as proud as its lands, in order to bury her glorious name, and her life will be finally joyous because “my body will depose of grave troubles/and laurel will crown these tresses” [“de’ gravi affanni deporro’ la salma/ e queste chiome cingerò d’alloro”]. As Gaspara Stampa is preoccupied with the immortality of her art, di Morra writes about her desire to keep a temporal and physical distance from the object of her fear, that is, the death of her poetry. As previously stated, di Morra does not lament the pain of unrequited love, or being abandoned by her lovers, but rather, addresses her fear to “crudele Fortuna.” Sonnet 10 states:

Se a la propinqua speme nuovo impaccio

O Fortuna crudele o l’empia Morte

Com’han solute, ahi lassa, non m’apporte,
rotta avrò la prigione e sciolto il laccio. (10, 1–4)
[If to the imminent hope, a new obstruction,/O impious Death, O cruel Fortuna, /You do not bring me, alas, solution ./I will have loosened the lash and broken the prison]. In the passage above, imminent hope overlaps with the constant presence of impious death and cruel Fortuna. The approach of hope leads the reader to believe that a possible change in di Morra’s life is imminent; perhaps the marriage she hoped for, or her father’s return from France. Either way, her release from the prison of her castle at Favale seems near. Later, Isabella di Morra departs from her previous thought and confesses that “pensando a quel di, ardo e agghiaccio/ chè ‘l timor e ‘l desio son le mie scorte” [“but thinking of that day, I freeze and burn, because fear and desire are my escorts”]. Thinking of a possible future of freedom also meant departing from “fear and desire,” crucial in di Morra’s collection of poems. While Gaspara Stampa could not depart from gioia amara e dolce tormento in order to write, Isabella di Morra finds in fear and desire the engine that powers her act of writing: the fear of ending her days in complete isolation and therefore not being able “to crown her tresses with laurel”, and the desire (hope) to join her father in France. Fear and desire are di Morra’s source of motivation for her writing, as she confirms in the following verses, “a questo or chiudo, or apro a quel le porte” [“now to one, now the other, I shut and open the doors”] to write and rewrite her pages. Di Morra’s “presage of a future evil,” understood as imminent death, is sadly fulfilled when she and Don Diego Sandoval are murdered by her brothers. Only after the publication of a selection of her works by Ludovico Dolce in Rime di diversi illustri signori napoletani did di Morra receive recognition and the poet’s crown.

Hoping to open a line of analysis and critique in the study of emotions—passions—in early modern texts, this chapter aimed to provide an interpretation of fear as “an impression of a future evil,” and to highlight how the desire to be recognized as poets affected Gaspara Stampa’s
and Isabella di Morra’s poems. This chapter sought to explain how the two women authors aimed to “touch inside” their audience, laying new a schematic understanding onto existing schemas in order to help bring their anger, frustrations, and passions to light in a way that their readers could understand and relate to; and thus, to affect their minds. The analysis of fear of artistic death in the two female poets is only one example of how an understanding of the emotion of anger allows us to interpret the modus operandi of the early modern social cultural texture. As women writers of the early modern era, Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra lacked the freedom to openly express their anger towards a concrete subject. Instead, they channeled their anger into the written word, and the emotion of anger manifested itself in a constant call for the attention of their audience, and in their desire to gain eternal fame by affecting the minds of their readers—provoking in their readers and listeners the desire to remember, heed, and preserve their words for posterity. As Silvan Tomkins asserts, “emotions are the code to life and with enough attention to details and particulars, the code could be cracked.”
CHAPTER 4

Practicing Murder: María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s Propaganda of Revenge

Introduction

Anger is the overriding motive that links together early modern women writers. However, the extent and degree to which anger could manifest was heavily dependent upon the particular cultural norms of the nation and society in which they lived. Anger, hope, fear, hate, and all other emotions play an important role in the social process of self-evaluation and the evaluation of other individuals. As María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s work demonstrates, this is as true in the genre of the short story as it is in poetry. Zayas’ short stories weaved together a portrayal of the social tapestry of early modern Spain, allowing her readers to internalize and comprehend her emotions, and conditioning them to accept the new schemata she sought to overlay.

Emotion, therefore, can be understood as a form of knowledge derived from experience of the outside world; that is, from the cultural and historical surroundings of an individual. For this reason, in order to analyze the representation of anger, and how it involves the participation of other emotions, it is necessary to understand how anger is formed, modified, and shaped by the history and culture of a particular nation. Only after a comprehensive evaluation and understanding of the historical and cultural context in which an individual lives, can an analysis of that individual’s anger be undertaken. Furthermore, from a literary point of view, the representation of anger might be different depending on the literary genre.100 For instance, the

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100 On this matter see, Patrick Colm Hogan, *What Literature Teaches Us About Emotions*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Hogan asserts that “there is a vast body of literature. It arises in all cultures at all time periods. It repeatedly produces emotions in readers. Some works have been particularly remarkable in their effects, provoking mirth or sorrow in readers or listeners from many times and places” (2); Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than*
representation of anger in Petrarchan sonnets might differ from its depiction in narrative writing or short stories. Specifically, Pietro Bembo’s explanation of the Canzoniere’s characteristics led to the development of “a new way of reading poetry.” (Mace, 135). Bembo’s study of Petrarca’s Canzoniere emphasized the relationship between words and sounds, and the fact that these can be combined to serve as vehicles for meaning and affect. An innumerable combination of words and their individual sounds, such as “dense, fluent, rough, tender,” can transfer visual and audio cues to the reader (McKinney 110). Bembo groups these words under the categories of gravità and piacevolezza. (102–103) Words achieve gravità and piacevolezza by virtue of the length of the vowel and the placement of accents. Long vowel and accents falling on the last syllables are called gravità, whereas short vowel and accented penultimate or antepenultimate syllables are piacevoli. Thus, verses that achieve piacevolezza possess a dense, packed rhyme, while those achieving gravità contain a more open rhyme. Furthermore, the reader should pay attention to the variazioni—of the words’ shifting sounds, because their combination can create

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McKinney states that from Bembo’s study on Petrarca’s sonnet, “Bembo elaborated the notion that words could convey meaning through their sound, rhythm, and context as well as their literal meaning […] Bembo’s theory suggests two basic categories of affective word-sound, which he called gravità (gravity) and piacevolezza (pleasigness)” (110)

Pietro Bembo, Le Prose di Messer Pietro Bembo Cardinale nelle quali si ragiona della Volgar Lingua, Scritte al Cardinal De’ Medici, che poi fu creato a Sommo Pontefice, e detto Papa Clemente VII. Verona: Presso Antonio Berno, Librario e Stampatore nella via de’ Leoni (1743). In his work Bembo explains that in poetry words assume a specific signification because, “alle variazioni generanti, gravità e piacevolezza, che empiono il bene scrivere, aggiungersene ancora delle altre ancora a questo medesimo fine, si come sono il decoro e la persuasione. Conciossiacosache da servare è il decoro degli stili, o convenevolezza, che più ci piaccia di nomare questa virtù, mentre di essere o gravi, o piavevoli cerchiamo nelle scritture, o per avventura l’uno, e l’altro; quando si vede, che agevolmente proscioglien fiu la gravità, passare si può, più oltra entrando nell’austerità dello stile: il che nasce, ingannandoci la vicinità, e la somigliano, che aver sogliono i principi del vizio con gli stremi della virtù, pigliando quelle voci per oneste, che son roze, e per grandi le ignave, e per piene di dignità le severe, e per magnifiche le pompose.” (102–103)
new meanings and affects. Petrarca’s language, which Bembo considered the most elegant and the most musical, was also elected as the national language to adopt in Italy. Petrarchan phraseology and poetic expression were imitated by all aspiring authors of that time. A Petrarchan poet, according to Bembo, will choose words where their phonetic sounds corresponds to a sense, such as “rozzo,” “aspro,” “duro,” which recall the sense of hearing. The sounds of poetry, therefore, became a medium for senses and emotions, able to affect the reader or audience. It is most certainly for this reason that poetry is generally considered one of the more suitable genres to express an author’s emotions, as Gur Zak observed in commenting on the place Petrarca’s *Canzoniere* occupies in Italian literature.\(^\text{104}\) (22) In such manner, the Petrarchan sonneteers Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra were able to impress and affect their audience.

In light of Bembo’s consideration on poetry, it can be inferred that the essential difference between poetry and prose is the degree of “passion” involved in poetry, conveyed through the strategic combination of words and sounds. Could the genre of the novel express the same degree of emotion? As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Santagata states that the relationship between poetry and prose, during the 1300s, was turned upside down because of historical changes, but also because of the literary trends of the time.\(^\text{105}\) The genre of lyric poetry appeared more functional in describing personal and individual sentiment, while the prose in novels or short stories was used to express ideological and cultural themes (Fowler and Greene 3; Liebler

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\(^\text{104}\) Gur Zak analyzes Petrarch’s cultivation of self and how the poet’s means of writing is the best means available to cope with Petrarch’s experience of exile and fragmentation; furthermore, Zak states that “although Petrarch attempts to establish his use of writing in his works in direct opposition to the feminine, weak, Ovidian uses in the vernacular poetry, the Latin texts themselves are plagued by the tension between “Stoic” and “Ovidian” uses of writing, particularly because writing as the letters show, is always dominated for Petrarch by desire and emotions.” (22)

\(^\text{105}\) See chapter 3, page 115.
1–17). Pietro Bembo compares the use of language in Petrarca’s poetry with Boccaccio’s short stories, and he concludes:

> se il Petrarca avesse le sue Canzoni con la favella composta de’suoi popolani, ch’elle così vaghe, così belle fossero, come sono così care, così gentili? Male credete se ciò credete. […] il Boccaccio, massimamente nelle sue Novelle, secondo le proposte materie, persone di volgo a ragionare trasponendo, s’ingegnasse di farle parlare con le voci, con le quali il volgo parlava. (Bembo 58).

[if Petrarca had written his Canzoni with the vulgar language of his common people, do you think that the Canzoni could be that beautiful, that nice, that gentle? If you believe so, you are mistaking. […] Boccaccio uses the vulgar language in his novella, according to the proposed subjects, by describing common people’s reasoning, he uses his intellect to have his characters speak with their own voices, with the language of common people]¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁶ Fowler and Greene assert that “the difference between poetry and prose can be shown to be substantially restructured between Middle Ages and the eighteenth century. Unlike poetry, which is often said to be always itself, autonomous and visible, and therefore always contemporaneous with us even as it delivers antique events or obsolete ideas, prose is often seen as invisible, as coterminous with its contents.” (3); Naomi Conn Liebler, Early Modern Prose Fiction: The Cultural Politics of Reading, eds, Naomi Conn Lieber, New York: Routledge, 2007. In her collection of essay, Liebler addresses early modern prose fiction in terms of its reciprocal relation, 1) to class distinction among readers and authors and their attendant complications for critics of these materials, 2) the development of the genre of romance fiction in particular (narratological, structural, and thematic), 3) to the ways in which these growing shelf-lists of popular reading material permanently altered the social map of English readership as well as the book trade. Liebler also states that, “taking in consideration the high number of printings and re-printings of prose fiction text in the Renaissance suggest not only the popularity of the genre but also the relative speed with which such literary texts were produced […] Reading became the means by which people in a range of classes and communities discovered, fashioned, knew, and imagined not only themselves but also the relation of those selves nearly to a nearly infinite world of other selves both real and invented.” (1-17)

¹⁰⁷ The translation from Italian to English for Pietro Bembo’s Prose della Volgar Lingua is mine, unless otherwise indicated.
Several questions arise from this conclusion: is it only for aesthetic reasons that poetry is the more appropriate genre to express the author’s inner feelings? Does the difference between poetry and narrative lie in the different use of language? Certainly, the narrative genre grew from the roots of poetry, which was itself derived from passing down stories in the oral tradition, and which was meant to record history. Both poetry and prose tell stories, but they differ in the ways they convey plot, characterization, setting, and even meaning. According to Geoffrey Roberts, poetry is characterized by what Roman Jakobson defined as a “combinatory axis” of language (32). This theory envisions poetry and narrative as exact opposites, because poetry uses metaphor, whereas narrative favors the use of metonymy. I do not necessarily agree with such a dualistic opposition, because, I assert, both genres can utilize both figures of speech. Metaphor is by nature interpretive, and different readers will interpret metaphor in different ways, while metonymy indicates a specific domain. For instance, in sonnet 272, Petrarca compares life to a restless run, whereas a martial army that chases after life inexorably, using as weapons his past, present, and future, personifies death. In Petrarca’s verses: “la vita fugge, et non s’arresta hora/et la morte vien dietro a gran giornate, et le cose presenti et le passate/ mi dànnò guerra, et le future anchora.” [life flies and never stays an hour/and death comes on behind with its dark days/ and

108 Jakobson answers the questions, what makes a verbal message poetic? What is the poetic function of language? According to Jakobson, any verbal communication is composed of six factors: narrator, reader, code system, message, context, and contact, which is the psychological or physical connection. Corresponding to those six factors there are six functions. Depending on the factor emphasized in the verbal communication, one of the six functions will be dominant. The six functions are: emotive, conative, metalingual poetic, referential, and phatic. The message construction then is based on two operations. Metonymy, which is a horizontal construction and implies time, cause and effect, a chain of successive events. Metaphor, which is a vertical construction and implies relation on basis of similarity, substitution, equivalence or contrast, synonym and antonym. Based on this diagramma, Jakobson concludes that in poetry the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection (metaphor) is used as the major means of constructing a sequence (combination; metonym). This projection defines the characteristic of poetry and it expresses itself in rhyme, meter, symmetries, repetitions, and motifs. Therefore, the dominant mode in poetry is metaphor, whereas in prose the metonym prevails, the chain of events, the plot, successive actions, and sequence of occurrences. (86–95)

109 The entire sonnet IV can be read in the appendix at the end of the dissertation.
present things and past things/embattle me, and future things as well]. The use of the metaphor of war in this sonnet conveys the image of Petrarca’s inner conflict: the author’s meditation on the instability and frailty of human nature, when past and future melt together with present. But the metaphor of war also recalls Petrarca’s reference to the social and political conflicts that existed in Italy around 1344.110 In this example, the metaphor of war suggests two images: the author’s inner conflict, and the political and social upheavals in Italy. In the same sonnet, Petrarca compares human existence to a sea journey, stating “veggio al mio navigar turbati i vénti” [I see the storm-winds rattling my sails]. The author’s life is like a ship at the mercy of storms and winds. He can envision safety only when the ship reaches port, which may suggest the end of his life. However, the metaphor of life as a sea journey also seems to equate the process of creative writing with the image of navigation. The metaphor of navigation as symbolic of writing a masterpiece was utilized throughout antiquity as well as the early modern era by authors such as Ludovico Ariosto and Torquato Tasso (Finucci 24; Ariosto; R. Wilson 17–30).111 The use of the metaphor, therefore, allows for multiple meanings and possible interpretations when compared to the use of metonymy in the genre of the novel.

110 On this matter, Petrarca’s poem “O Italia Mia” calls for Italians’ unity against mercenaries and civil wars.
111 In her study, Finucci states that Ariosto’s carte, a word that merges a navigator’s charts with the pages of the poets, finds its origin in the prophecy of Tiresia about Odysseus’ last journey. “This is the origin of the famous trope used in Virgil, Ovid, and the Medieval Latin rhetorical tradition to describe the oars of the ship as wings (remigium alarum). This metaphor becomes the emblem of the last journey of Odysseus in Dante’s poem, and may be taken as the emblem of the continuity between the voyage of Odysseus and those of several Rinaldos and their narrators.” (24); Ludovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso, trans. John Hoole, London: George Nicol Strand, 1785. In the fifth volume of this English edition, Hoole observes that the opening of the last canto – canto 46- the metaphor drawn from a ship, appears to be imitated by Spencer in the first book of his Fairy Queen, Canto 12.; Richard Wilson, “Ship of Fools: Foucault and the Shakespeareans” in, Sophie Chiari, The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature, Farnham Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2015. Wilson observes that the metaphor of the ship can corresponds to “the ship of writing adrift in a sea of words spoke of paradox of thinking”, and by quoting Deleuze in regards to the act of writing, Wilson adds that the metaphor of ship corresponds to “the inside as an operation of the outside” (17-30)
The metaphors in Gaspara Stampa’s poetry also carry multiple meanings, some of which can occasionally compel her readers to interpret mythological references. For instance, in sonnet 188, Stampa compares her adoration for Collatino to the flower of hyacinth brightened by the sun. In her verses, “quasi vago e purporeo giacinto […] crescendo ai raggi del piú bel pianeta” (188, 1–3). Collaltino is the sun, and his absence, for the author, has the same effect as the lack of sun on hyacinth; it grows weak and feeble. However in Greek mythology, Hyacinth is a young prince of Sparta whose beauty captures Apollo’s heart. Apollo, the god of the sun and poetry, never leaves the side of his young lover, Hyacinth. One day, while throwing a discus, Apollo hits his beloved Hyacinth, who dies in his arms. In order to preserve his lover’s beauty, Apollo transforms Hyacinth into a flower, and his tears stain its petals, leaving permanent signs of the god’s grief. In Stampa’s sonnet, the image of the flower seems to suggest the trope of female beauty. Indeed, the “giacinto” suggests, at a first reading, the personification of the author herself, who suffers if her “sun” is absent and does not shower his light upon her, tapping therefore the Petrarchan motif of unrequited love. On a closer reading however, the mythological reference to Hyacinth echoes the author’s desire for immortality, as suggested in many of her other sonnets. Stampa ultimately aspires to become Hyacinth, rendered immortal by the god of poetry by means of his grief, forever impressed upon the petals, as the author inscribed her grief on the paper of her collection of sonnets. Ultimately the question emerges: does Stampa simply imitate the Petrarchan motif of unrequited love? Or does she perhaps use it as a disguise for her higher aspiration for artistic immortality? Either way, this demonstrates clearly how the use of

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112 Sonnet 188 can be found in the appendix at the end of the dissertation.
metaphors in poetry allows for different levels of interpretation, and for this reason, the genre of poetry presents a vertical construction, as Jakobson observed.113

According to Roberts, the genre of the novel is constructed around a form of discourse that “tries to show the reader the true form of things existing behind a merely apparent formlessness […] the narrative style in the novel would then be constructed as the modality of the movement from a representation of some original state of affairs to subsequent state.” (232–233) Thus, the narration of a story moves from a beginning point, or initial state, continues through the description and depiction of events that are driven by the actions of the characters, which causes a different state, and ends with the consequences and effects of those actions. Giovanni Boccaccio’s collection of novelle presents such characteristics. In his suggestive portrayal of human nature, the author sheds light on the consequences of the choices made by both his female and male characters. Their adventures and misadventures are structured around depictions of behavior which could be either highly praised or harshly criticized, according to the tradition of the Christian exemplum, and which are certainly entertaining by means of the variazioni, as Bembo commented in his Prose della Volgar Lingua. In his words:

[…] la variazione delle quali nelle prose può capere, gran maestro fu, a fuggirne la sazietà, il Boccaccio nelle sue novelle, il quale, avendo a far loro cento proemi, in modo tutti gli variò, che grazioso diletto danno a chi gli ascolta; senza che in tanti finimenti e rientramenti di ragionari, tra dieci persone fatti, schifare il fastidio non fu poco. (Prosa, XVIII, 127)

113 I explained Jakobson’s diagramma in footnote 9.
Boccaccio is an exemplary model of the use of the variazione which characterizes the narrative prose. He avoids saziété in his novelle and presents one hundred poems for each short story in order to please and entertain whoever listens to the stories; it was not simple to leave out adornments and inwards reasoning among ten persons and elude annoyance.\footnote{The translation is mine.}

The multiple narrative voices and the extensive use of allegory render Boccaccio’s Decameron a masterpiece of double meaning and hidden messages that provoke, fascinate, and stimulate the impulses of the readers.\footnote{Attardo states that “Boccaccio transforms both style and content [of courtly literary genre] frequently with recourse to parody and word-play[…] the double entendre is always source of humor in the Decameron, which is not an end in itself, but rather a means of creating the new genre of novella, a genre that through the double coding inherent in parody, is both concerned with the events narrated and the act of narrating them.” (87-88); Richard Kuhns, Decameron and the Philosophy of Storytelling: Author as Midwife and Pimp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Kuhn observes that “the storyteller can entertain us by creating stories with sexual subjects, comments, jokes, double meaning, flights of imaginative eroticism that surely delight as they may offend.” (22)} Boccaccio’s readers are pushed to interpret and reveal the truth behind the novella, according to their experience and the historical and religious settings of the fourteenth century. As George Lakoff confirms, linguistic structure both reflects and results from a specific concept of reality; meaning that language, in the written word, provides us with the tools to comprehend principles of reality the author wishes to convey, and that these principles “are often metaphoric in nature and involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience.” (Lakoff and Turner 117)

Emotions, in poetry, are often expressed by means of metaphors, which are open to multiple interpretations, and can therefore cloud the message that the author seeks to convey. Thus, while the use of metaphor to convey meaning in poetry can be challenging, the representation of emotions in narration is, by contrast, quite straightforward, as the word itself, “prose” (from Old
Latin *provorsus*, moving straight ahead) suggests. For instance, in the analysis of Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Filocolo*, Elissa Weaver observes that

Boccaccio dwells at great length and with striking *psychological realism* on the lovers’ emotions: their infatuation with one another, their grief at parting and longing to be reunited, recollection of happy moments spent together and their fear of losing their beloved to another or to death.[…] both Florio and Biancifiore have dreams and visions of beasts and heavenly messengers, portents of what is to come, which seem highly contrived alongside the moving portrayal of their emotions. (82)

In the *Decameron*, such *psychological realism* is evident, and Boccaccio elaborates one hundred short stories that portray nearly all of the possible emotions (anger, fear, hate, love, and so on) alongside the depiction of all social classes in Tuscany during the fourteenth century. Similarly, María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s collection of stories *Novelas Amorosas y Ejemplares* (c. 1634) and *Desengaños Amorosos* (1647) are deeply steeped in the historical and cultural surroundings of her time and place. As Boccaccio did in his *Decameron*, Zayas concerned herself with expressing the vast gamut of human emotions in order to affect her audience. Indeed, Zaya’s work suggests that the cause and consequences of women’s anger are woven in the social tapestry of early modern Spain. In order to understand the representation of anger in María de Zayas’ work, this chapter will first explain the historical and social realities in Spain between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and flesh out women’s social roles in Spanish society. I will continue with a biographical account of Zayas’ life, and, in order to understand the structure of María de Zayas’s works, I will present an analysis of the tradition of the *novela corta* and how this tradition was influenced by Giovanni Boccaccio and his *Decameron*. Zayas’s collection of short stories is indeed modeled on the Boccaccean narrative frame. I will then
conclude with an analysis of Zayas’ most representative short stories depicting anger, aiming to highlight how emotions cannot be understood in abstraction from its linguistic context.

Borrowing from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s (1953) “language-game” concept, Emma Engdahl explains that in the language of emotions, an emotion is a specific form of social action, the thought of an individual that reflects the thoughts of individuals. (79–96) In the same manner, María de Zayas, by means of her short stories, invites her readers to understand the social reality surrounding women; anger and revenge are dialectically connected to each other within the history and culture of her time.

4.1 Women’s Space in Early Modern Spain.

In chapter 2, I referenced Queen Isabel of Spain (1474), as an example of a powerful and visible woman who questioned the normative gender roles of her time in her patriarchal society. Perhaps Isabel of Castile’s role as queen, her young age, her fierceness, and her strong will in stating her opinions, were the catalyst for others works that questioned the nature of women and their role in society. Or, as Virginia Cox argues, perhaps the sudden interest in explaining and understanding women’s nature was simply the result of changing times, as the voices of women

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116 According to Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word or phrases or proposition is nothing other than the set of rules governing the use of the expression in actual life. Like the rules of a game, Wittgenstein argues that, the rules of the language-game are neither right nor wrong, but they are useful for the applications in which we apply them. This is to say that members of any community, or group, develop ways of speaking and writing that serve their needs as a group (87-90). Similarly, early modern women writers elaborated their own “language game” apt to serve their needs of having the attention of their audience and provoking a response.

were becoming more and more assertive. It is difficult to narrow down a specific moment in history that might have caused the beginning of this discussion on gender roles. It is undeniable that during this era the writing of both women and several men regarding the roles of women sparked an intense dialogue that lifted the concept of gender norms off the page, out of the poems, dialogues, short stories, and treatises, and into real life, allowing the seeds of social change to germinate. 118 The written word can affect a society—indeed, it can serve as the conduit through which the beliefs, feelings, ideals, and emotions of an author is transmitted to a readership, and beyond, into a culture.

Toward the end of the fourteenth century, Giovanni Boccaccio’s De Mulieribus Claris (1380), a long list of famous and praiseworthy women, served as the model which inspired other similar treatises on exemplary and virtuous women in Europe and Spain. It is worth noting however, that in 1355, Boccaccio wrote Il Corbaccio, a misogynistic work of invective tradition. Boccaccio’s misogynistic work might have inspired works like El Corbacho (1438), also known as El Arcipreste de Talavera, written by Alfonso Martínez de Toledo (1398?–1482?). This work attempted to dissuade men from trusting women. 119 Indeed, in the first part of his book, the author argues against earthly, physical love, and the negative consequences that a man suffers if he yields to love and his desire for a woman. Moreover, Toledo insists on claiming that loving a woman could offend God, leading to insanity, the loss of virtue, and even to murder and death.

118 This concept is explained also in Sara Gwyneth Ross, The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2009. Ross argues that early modern women’s commitment to learn and write reveal “a renaissance within the Renaissance” and in so doing laid the foundation for the emancipation of woman kind, or simply to the advent of modern feminism.

119 On this matter see, Joan Cammarata, Women in the Discourse of Early Modern Spain. Gainsville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 2003. Cammarata argues that following the ascendance of Queen Isabella to the throne of Castile in 1474, literary texts increasingly confronted and questioned the medieval tradition of misogyny by exploring and testing the limit of female conduct. Misogynistic texts such as El Corbacho contributed substantially to the literature of misogyny and as well to the construction of feminine identity tied to sex, money, and ingenuity. (36)
In the second part of his book, the author focuses on women’s faults, and their destructive traits. Tapping into traditional misogynistic views, the author underpins the conviction that women are hypocritical, deceitful, lustful, insatiable, greedy, and so on.

Obviously, Toledo is basing his negative portrayal of women on the works of misogynist writers and theologians from antiquity to the Middle Ages. Some of these works include Tertullian (160–220 AD), Cyprian (?–258 AD), Ambrose (337–397 AD), Augustine (354–430 AD), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), among others. Many of them were particularly concerned with women’s vanity and its consequences. Indeed, the alleged feminine practice of embellishment was perceived as a dangerous tool of seduction and a leading cause of men’s sin.120 (Martin 75)

The early Christian author, Tertullian, is particularly critical of women. In *De Cultu Feminarum* (*On Female Fashion*), the author describes women as a public menace that men should fear, giving endless examples of their vanity, sinful sensuality, frivolous nature, avidity, and what he terms their stupidity. In *De Virginibus Velandis* (*On Head-Covering for unmarried girls*), Tertullian thoroughly explains what he perceives as women’s sly and deceitful manner of wearing veils, asserting that women would often attend mass while “perching a small handkerchief on the top of the bun so that everyone can judge the beauty of their hair.” (22) Vanity and greediness seem to be women’s major faults, as Tertullian considers them the primary reasons women push to be married. In his words, women are only interested in seeking “to dominate over others, to appropriate the wealth of others, to extort from others that which she

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120 Martin states that “by the end of seventeenth century, most criticisms against finery and artifice were made in name of God.[…] make up was a tool for deception, invented by the devil, which was especially tempting to women, though no less dangerous for men.[…] early modern criticisms against cosmetics stressed feminine frailty and the need for male control” (75)
lacks herself, to spend without counting money which one does not feel the loss.” (139)

Furthermore, a woman’s stupidity leads her to chase after futile and shiny things, such as money, gold, and jewelry, rather than useful tools made of iron and bronze. Nevertheless, a woman uses her cunningness if she wants to ruin another individual, men in particular. Tertullian’s vituperation against women concludes with the suggestion that in order to deal with such a dangerous and futile creature, society should keep women in subordinate roles as much as possible: at home she should submit to her father, or her husband; at church, veiled and silent, she should submit to the mercy of God.

Similarly, Cyprian, who was the first Christian bishop to suffer martyrdom, wrote *De Habitu Virginum (The Dress of the Virgins)*, probably inspired by Tertullian’s works. In his treatise Cyprian considers a secular problem of Christian ethics; namely, the behavior of women who chose a life dedicated to virginity. Cyprian also condemns the use of jewelry, make-up and hair accessories, or any other adornments. The author considers a woman’s virginity to be “the flower of the ecclesiastic seed, the grace and ornament of spiritual endowment, a joyous disposition, the wholesome and uncorrupted work of praise and honor.” (130) If unmarried and virginal women corrupt themselves with frivolous adornments, they “ought not to be counted among virgins, but, like infected sheep and diseased cattle, to be driven from the holy and pure flock of virginity, lest by living together they should pollute the rest with their contagion; lest they ruin others even as they have perished themselves.” (134) Stemming from the biblical example of Eve, perceived as mother of vice and cause of Adam’s downfall, the idea of corruption versus the promotion of chastity became major topics in early modern Spanish philosophical and medical treatises, and in literary works on the nature of women. Women’s supposed ardent sexuality, in particular, is approached as a problem and a cause for men’s plight.
The author of *El Corbacho*, for instance, seems certain that a man should stay away from a woman and learn, by means of his knowledge in medicine, to cure the illness of desire. The rejection of the female body, along with the individual’s physical desire, are further extolled in *El Corbacho* by Toledo’s dialectic technique. His use of language is rich in popular and colloquial speech, and his use of hyperbolic, bombastic Latinized language strikes the interest of his readers, underlining women’s defects and faults. In particular, when women are speaking, the author draws speeches that amplify their defects. He elongates women’s monologues in order to feed the perception of women as endlessly verbose. Toledo’s work is full of high and low speeches, popular tales, moral fables, and linguistic registers useful to comprehend fifteenth-century Spanish cultural attitudes towards women. Furthermore, *El Corbacho* paved the way for subsequent works on the defects of women, including Fernando de Rojas’ *Celestina* (1499), which marks the end of medieval literature and the beginning of early modern literature in Spain. In Rojas’ work, Celestina is the procuress who helps the rich young man Callisto pursue Melibea, secluded in her house by her parents in order to guard her beauty and honor. Celestina’s greediness and Melibea’s ingenuity and weakness will lead to a tragic end for all the characters.

As in Italy, the dominant view of women in early modern Spain was derived from antiquity, the Bible, and the writings of early modern authors. Nevertheless, all the texts

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promoting women’s enclosure and extolling male’s supervision provoked reactions among men and women of early modern Spain. Already in 1417, Enrique de Villena wrote *Doce Trabajos de Hércules* in which he praises women and proclaims feminine virtues as the engine behind men’s righteous actions. Juan Rodríguez del Padrón, in his *Triunfo de las Donas* (1443) applauds women’s strengths and their superiority. In *Libros de Las Virtuosas y Claras Mujeres* (1446) Álvaro de Luna argues that women’s virtuosity should be recognized rather than punished for the wicked behavior of other women. In his *Jardín de Las Nobles Donzellas* (1468) Martín de Córdoba calls for both a male and female audience, and praisés and blames men and women in equal measures for their vices and virtues. It seems, however, that most of the works by Spanish authors in defense of women, while extolling their virtues and merits, did little to actively change judgment on women’s social roles and space, or their access to academias or universities. The authors above, their work and views on women were standard in Spanish society for two centuries. Having grown up within Spanish society, Zayas, almost two hundred years later, seeks to change those perceptions of women. In her work, she invites her readers to alter their perceptions and change their judgments about women, starting with her idea on equality. Zayas encourages her readers to consider the similarities, rather than the differences, between men and women asserting:

[…] porque si esta materia de que nos componemos los hombres y las mujeres, ya sea una trabazón de fuego y barro, o ya una masa de espíritus […] si es una misma la sangre, los sentidos, las potencias, y los órganos por donde se obran sus efectos son unos mismos […] ¿qué razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y presunan que nosotras no podamos serlo? (de Zayas y Sotomayor and Ruiz-Galvez, 17–19)
[because if this matter of which we are made, men and women, whether it be a union of fire and clay or an amalgamation of spirits […] if it is the same blood, the same senses, powers and organs through which men work their effects, […] what reason is there that they should be wise and presume that we [women] cannot be so?] (Exemplary Tales, 48)

The above passage is particularly strong as Zayas is openly arguing against the Aristotelian belief that women’s physiology was inferior to that of men. In this passage Zayas lays the cognitive groundwork for her ultimate advocacy of equality in education. For this reason, Zayas accuses men of unreasonable cruelty because, “there is no other explanation for this than their [men’s] cruelty and tyranny in enclosing us [women] and in not giving us teachers.” (Exemplary Tales, 49)

While in Italy the Council of Trent (1545) drew its ideological underpinnings from the ideal Christian feminine model as exemplified by the Virgin Mary and other female martyrs, in Spain, the Inquisition dictated the qualities that the ideal female should possess. Although the main purpose of the Holy Office was to reach religious unity and attain political stability, scrutiny of women was particularly tight. According to Mary Giles, women in Spain were much less daring than men in expressing heretical or blasphemous views in public. (1–15) The Spanish Inquisition severely persecuted women who the inquisitors believed could undermine the Holy Office’s authority by means of visions or hallucinations. The term used to describe women who were said to experience mystical visions was La alumbrada [the enlightened], and the term represented a menace to the religious restrictions imposed on women by the Inquisition. Perhaps, aiming to further provoke the religious authority of her time, Zayas personified the theme of

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123 Women’s seclusion within domestic walls and convents was reinforced subsequent to the establishing of the Spanish Inquisition in 1478.
Alumbrada (or beata) through her female character of Beatriz, in the ninth story of Desengaños Amorosos, titled “La Perseguida Triunfante” [“Triumph Over Persecution”]. In it, Zayas suggests that women can effectively guard themselves from men’s wickedness through divine intercession, which is more powerful than the Holy Inquisition’s decrees and practices.

Responding to the religious norms of the time, sixteenth-century Spanish women fell under one of two categories in the public eye: that of saint or sinner (or beata or lascivious). Unquestionably, such separation was one of the many effects of the promulgation of the Inquisition’s office. At the end of 1480, after establishing the first tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ordered the expulsion of Jews. The effects of such politics were predictable and the contrast between old Christians and the conversos, that is, Jews converted to Christianity in order not to leave Spain, generated more and more suspicions in Spanish society. Any action was a reason to suspect and accuse men, and more frequently, women, of being heretical, engaging in witchcraft, or generally being sinners. Zayas’ short stories presented numerous examples of black magic, poisons, love potions, and mysterious death. These elements served to enhance the presence of the supernatural in her stories, and to stoke the fears prevalent in Spanish society during an epoch in which Spain was exposed to the foreign cultures and customs of the New World. These fears were only exacerbated by the addition of immigrants from East and Central Europe who converged on the Spanish cities on the West coast. By the end of the sixteenth century, Seville and other cities in Spain reached a population close to 100,000 people (Perry, 13), including, of course, women who were representative of these new and foreign cultures. Prostitutes, procuresses, potion makers, and fortune tellers, crowded a city where men tried to impose religious decor and moral behavior. Giles states that what aroused the deepest concerns for the Church at this time was the presence
of women who claimed to have divine visions and who believed that they possessed healing powers (12). Most of these women were accused of being heretical, and were condemned and later assassinated by the Holy Office. Although María de Zayas never directly alluded to the Inquisition, it is highly probable that its politics of terror, often specifically against women might have inspired some of her stories. In her novelas, Zayas narrates the horrendous treatment of women by men of all social classes and professions, leaving to her readers the space to interpret and identify the hand that committed the crime.

In her study, Perry observes that, whether perceived as saints or sinners, women became vital during the 1500s in Spain because fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons left for the New World. Women acquired the power to make decisions: in raising their children, in selling or buying property, and in arranging marriages for their daughters. They even pursued commercial activities, which required the learning of business jargon in order to negotiate the best deal. The Venetian ambassador Andrea Navagero visited Spain towards the end of the 1500s and was surprised to discover that Seville had become a city “en poder de las mujeres” [“in the hands of women”] (273). The growing power, prestige and visibility of women certainly would have created anxiety and preoccupation among the clergy. As Mary Elizabeth Perry explains, the beliefs on gender restriction, and the notion that women required a protected and supervised enclosure, grew dramatically stronger, sharing a direct relationship with the number of men who left Spain for the New World. The active participation of women in the life of the city became necessary, and this increased women’s visibility and offered the opportunity to engage in social roles beyond the traditional feminine confines of mothers, wives, and daughters. Additionally, the traditional feminine domestic activities acquired the economic dimension of profit. For instance, Juan Luis Vives, in De Institutione Feminae Christianae [The Education of Christian
Women] (1526), stated that feminine domestic activities, such as sewing, cooking, embroidering, and managing the house, should be learned by women to help their families financially. (Education, 262) María de Zayas appears to agree with Vives. In the first story of Desengaños Amorosos, Zayas’ heroine, Zelima, excels in reading, writing, embroidering, playing musical instruments, and singing. These multiple talents provide Zelima with the tools to survive and to achieve a satisfying outcome at the end of her adventures.

Although in many ways Spanish women might at first have appeared to be slowly gaining the ability and freedom to act independently of strict male control, the doctrines of the Spanish Inquisition still exerted tremendous power over the gender beliefs of that time. Enclosure and chastity were still the virtues that shaped the ideal model of female perfection. The importance of female chastity took on a political dimension. In accordance with the statute of purity of blood, which appeared in Toledo’s work as early as 1449, genetic purity could be guaranteed only by virtue of women’s virginity. Genetic purity, which usually took the form of strictly ensuring that no intermarriage between religious groups took place, determined who could hold office and enjoy privileges, such as inheritance, owning a business, and marriage dowry. The purity of blood was a delicate theme in Spain because the country was center of a mixed population of Jews and Muslims. Probably in response to this social attitude, Zayas, in her seventh short novel, titled “Mal Presagio, Casar Lejos” [“Marriage Abroad: Portent of Doom”] promoted a new idea of chastity for a woman, depicting the notion of purity of heart.

In this short story, the protagonist, Blanca, who died as a Christian martyr because of the cruelty of her husband from Flanders, symbolized the innocence and purity of women. Her blood, like with any sacrificial lamb, did not diminish her unearthly and innocent beauty (Disenchantments 269). Interestingly, the same novela appears to also emphasize the idea of
limpieza de sangre, cautioning Spanish noble women against marriage with foreign men, as Blanca asserts to one of her servants: “[…] y dichosa tú, que tendrás marido de tu natural, y no como yo, que me entregué a un enemigo.” (Desengaños 359); [“May you be happy because you’ll have a husband from your own country as I did not, having surrendered myself to the enemy”] (Disenchantments, 264). In fact, Blanca and her sisters were killed by their Portuguese, Italian, and Flemish husbands, and their sacrifices were compared to the martyr’s victimization: “doña Mayor gozaba en el cielo la corona de mártir” (Desengaños 349); [“…doña Mayor was wearing a martyr’s crown in heaven”] (254); “doña Blanca estaba tan linda que como si entonces acabara de morir (señal de la Gloria que goza al alma)” (Desengaños 365); [“She was as lovely at the moment of her death, a sign that her soul enjoyed heavenly bliss”] (269). The image of the martyr appeared more and more often in Spanish history and literature, as the Inquisition and religion itself embraced a central political role that imposed misogynistic beliefs in order to maintain social order. The Church supported and promulgated saint icons of female martyrs and reinforced the idea of the self-sacrificing woman. As in Italy after the advent of the Council of Trent (1545), so too in Spain did the Virgin Mary come to represent the perfect chaste woman, while Mary Magdalene was the sinful creature of the devil, unrepentant, and guilty of inducing men into temptation. To enforce this gender ideology, treatises that professed the Aristotelian idea of natural order, and consequently women’s seclusion, found their place among the common reading of the time.

Fray Luis de León, in La Perfecta Casada [The Perfect Wife] (1583) asserted that women were particularly sensitive to the devil’s temptations; for this reason, they had to be protected by being enclosed and kept under control. The only book thought to be safe for women to read was
In opposition to León’s ideology, Zayas asserted her purpose in a frame story, in which one of her primary narrators, Lisis, describes her intention to “volver por la fama de las mujeres tan prostrada y abatida por su mal juicio, que apenas hay quien hable bien de ellas” (Desengaños 118); [“defend women’s good name so denigrated and defamed by men’s bad opinion that there is scarcely anyone who speaks well of them”] (Disenchantments 37).

Supporting the traditional misogynistic viewpoint, Juan Espinosa, in Diálogo en laude de las mujeres (1580), offered a method to distinguish a good woman from a bad one. A man had to suspect and stay away from masked women, wandering women, good-looking older women, and any other woman that could charm them and deceive them. Instead, a modest, humble, and silent woman would be highly appreciated.125 In defiance of misogynistic literature, Zayas inverts the natural order, and in doing so, the role of gender. The author firmly asserts that “que lo cierto es que no hubiera malas mujeres si no hubiera malos hombres[…]y como son los hombre los que presiden en todo, jamás cuentan los malos pagos que dan, sino los que les dan” [“there would be no bad women if there were no bad men…because men preside over everything, they never tell about the evil deed they do, they tell only about the ones done to them”] (Desengaños 118).

Fray Martín de Córdoba, asserts in Jardín de Nobles Donzellas (1589) that nature itself created man for the purpose of speaking out in public, and created woman for the purpose of being silent and remaining inside the house (Córdoba 206). Zayas’s answer to this misogynistic belief was to reverse, the “natural order” and suggest in her stories that only women could speak

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124 Fray Luís de León states that women should avoid the dangerous temptation of reading because “leer en los libros de cavallería, y del traer el soneto y la canción en el seno, y del villete, y del donayre de los recaudos, y del terrero y del serao y de otras cien cosas deste jaez, nunca las hagan” (38).

and narrate the disenchantments caused by love, while Don Juan and Don Diego, the only two male characters, had to silently listen to the female narrators. In order to strengthen women’s domain, Zayas depicted Lisis and her soirees enclosed in a house, which also emphasizes the female character’s control over men in the house, since just women traditionally managed the household, while spaces beyond the house were under the control of men, such as legal courts and the Church.

The Church assumed a dominant role in early modern Spanish patriarchal society, which relied on the Catholic religion to provide images of feminine perfection, specifically, the Virgin Mary and women martyrs (Perry 145). These women became the symbols of religious faith, as they sacrificed their own life for their love of God. The image of the Virgin Mary, however, changed its symbolic meaning during the age of the Counter-Reformation in Spain. Mary Beth Rose stated that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the image of Mary encompassed a passive, asexual model of compassion. Following the misogyny of the time, the Virgin Mary was no longer Jesus Christ’s mother. Rather, she became the representation of chastity, piety, and obedience (Rose 267). The significance of Mary’s motherhood was erased, even in pictorial representation. Bartolomé Murillo, Francesco Pacheco, and many others, depicted Saint Mary without Child in her arms, or even without the motherly shapes of maternity. It appears that Mary’s sexuality as a woman was somehow erased, thereby promoting the idealization of female purity. Artists and painters portrayed Mary as an innocent girl, a woman in sorrow, or a martyr. Perry believes that “the great emphasis on Mary as an innocent maiden or protective mother seems to reflect a need for social control, a concern for order that rested squarely on gender prescription” (Perry 43). According to Perry, the intense scrutiny of women’s body simply reflected the growing anxiety of a society that was rapidly moving towards cultural and political
changes. These asexual depictions of Mary can thus be interpreted as a means of surveillance and a type of propaganda, designed to maintain social order by controlling depictions of women’s bodies. One can say that in early modern Spain the body of a woman belonged to society.

David Castillo and William Egginton compare early modern woman’s social position in Spain to a man’s concept of honor. According to Castillo and Egginton, an early modern Spanish man, was not a “persona,” rather he was perceived as a public subject, while a woman was envisioned as a public object. A woman was always in the spotlight because of the idea that “honor” resided in her body (Subjects, 54). Obviously, speaking of a woman’s honor during Zayas’ time meant to speak of her virginity. If a woman was publicly dishonored due to the loss of her virginity, or if her body was otherwise considered violated without an appropriate marriage, her family also bore the burden of this dishonor; her father, brother, or husband had the right to wash away his dishonor by killing her.126 A woman’s honor belonged to the public sphere. The notion of a woman’s honor being a public matter recalls Aristotle’s idea of emotions as a public event for other individuals to see and to judge. Like Greek men and women in antiquity, early modern Spanish men and women experienced a constant acute awareness of themselves and other individuals, because an ill judgment or action could irredeemably belittle or damage their honor.

The public display of reclaiming social honor at the expense of women belonged to State and Church, which were ruled by the King and by God, respectively. A man became a king so as

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126 On this matter, see Renato Barahona, Sex Crimes, Honour, and the Law in Early Modern Spain: Vizcaya, 1528–1735. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. In his research in the Archivio de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid, Spain, Barahona put together an extensive documentation consisting of numerous lawsuits. These lawsuits carry elements of paten threats and intimidation, while other involve physical violence and aggression in the commission of sex acts and, “despite a wealth of evidence of coerced sex and aggression, the record is silent on the injuries done to women during the commission of forcible sexual accesses. In some cases, too, female victims were abducted or enticed from their homes and places of work for sexual purposes. When these extractions happened, they were often facilitated and assisted by friends and associates, who functioned as intermediaries between victimizers and victims.” (122)
to fulfill God’s will. Consequently, to be dishonored meant to involve the King and God in the
man’s shame. Therefore, a woman’s body had to be constantly controlled to preserve society and
order (Castillo and Egginton 423). Once again, Zayas inverted the order of gender and
disentangled the theme of honor from the woman’s actions, suggesting that it was the action of
men that caused women to lose their honor. In fact, most of her protagonists lost their “honors”
because of men’s whimsies. Although she did not accuse men directly of being the cause of
social disorder, Zayas accuses them through the narration of her heroines’ misadventures, where
men are the source of disarray, shame, death, sorrow, and disorder. For example, in “A Slave of
Her Own Lover”, Zelima- doña Isabella had lost her honor, her family, and nearly her life, after a
man violates her; Octavia, for love, was deceived and dishonored by a treacherous and married
man in Zayas’ second disenchantment, titled “La Más Infame Venganza” [“The Most Infamous
Revenge”]; Inés had lost her honor, her freedom, and her family’s respect because of a man’s
insatiable desire in “La Inocencia Castigada” [“Innocence Punished”]. The reader has a full
understanding of the magnitude of honor’s role, and by reflection of what a woman’s body
represented in early modern Spanish society, when Don Juan in, “La Más Infame Venganza”,
proclaimed that:

Carlos, vuestro dueño que comó, habiendo burlado a Octavia y deshonrándome a
mí, no vivía con más cuidado; que ya yo me he vengado quitándole el honor con
su mujer, como él me le quitó a mí con mi hermana…que ahora, que se guarde de
mí, porque aún me falta tomar venganza en su vida, ya que la tengo en su honor.

(Desengaños 193)
[Don Carlos should have been more careful, having deceived Octavia and dishonored me. I have now avenged my honor by destroying his honor through his wife just as he did to me through my sister… I still must take away his life as I have his honor] (Disenchantments, 106).

This appalling way to repair a loss of “honor” reflects the obsessive scrutiny over a woman’s body. A woman’s body presents a twofold purpose: it can be an instrument to restore honor, or a weapon to fulfill an individual’s need for revenge. This also recalls Aristotle’s notion of honor and revenge as necessary tools to reinstate the original balance. In Zayas’ stories, male characters act out of rage and murder their wives, sisters, and mothers to regain honor in the eyes of society and therefore reinstate their original balance. Zayas’ female characters can rarely reinstate their original balance, and most of the time, their “honor” is restored in the eyes of society only by marrying the man who raped them and therefore initially robbed them of their honor.

María de Zayas lived during the Counter-Reformation and witnessed its attempts to safeguard the patriarchal order first hand. During this time, women were grouped as either saints or sinners, evil or good. The distinction of good women from evil ones led to the division of women’s space in what was considered their natural confinement: convent, home, or brothel. The misogynistic belief was that such enclosures would protect women physically, while, at least in the space of convents and private homes, also preserve their dignity and honor.

As the boundaries of appropriate behavior for Italian women was re-defined by the Council of Trent, Spanish women survived the Counter-Reformation in different ways. Some of them bent the rules of gender prescriptions; others found freedom within the enclosure of the convents (Mujica). For example, Catalina de Erauso (1592-1650) challenged gender by running
away from the convent, cutting her hair, and sewing her skirt into pants to board a ship to the
New World (Mujica 156). Teresa de Jesús (1515–1582) and María de San José (1548–1603)
defied the ecclesiastic authorities in their campaign for convent’s reformation and in their
defense of women’s intellectual ability (Mujica 37). Luisa Roldán (1652–1706) took advantage
of her father’s sculpting workshop and created statues of saints, angels, and Mother and Child
with her own name (Perry 178). María de Zayas wrote short novels challenging the assumptions
of male ideology.

The Aristotelian “natural order” pursued during the early modern era seemed to create
“disorder” in the female sub-culture, as Zayas pointed at men as the only cause of women’s
disgrace. Indeed, Zayas’ aim is to suggest the existence of a “new social order” by depicting
talented women willing to narrate their own story and misfortunes at the hands of men. The
author’s vituperation against men contributed to the formation of a female subculture, or female
community, as women writers of the early modern used their anger as a lens through which to
criticize society and affect the mind of their readers. This led to the establishment of other
affected communities, or as Barbara Rosenwein names “emotional communities” those groups of
individuals who share a common discourse, vocabulary, and ways of thinking emotions (25).
Rosenwein uses the term “communities” in order to stress the social and relational nature of
emotions, the collectivity of emotions.

Similarly, Elaine Showalter defines gynocriticism as “a female subculture, including not
only the ascribed status and the internalized constructs of femininity, but also the occupations,
interactions, and consciousness of women”¹²⁷ (256). It can be inferred that Zayas wrote her

¹²⁷ Showalter explains that women should write their own experiences; from their own literature; otherwise what
feminist critics are trying to do would be useless. Experience is directly available in texts written by women, and
gynocriticism should be used by feminist critics to study women’s writing, because gynocriticism frees itself from
following or imitating male values, and seeks to focus on newly visible worlds of female culture. (250-256)
collection of short stories influenced by her social and cultural surroundings, affected by the literary trends of her time, as well as the tiresome misogynistic accusations, as she laments in her prologue, “Al Que Leyere”. In her words: “no doubt [...] many will attribute to madness this virtuous audacity of printing my scribbles, being a woman which, in the opinion of some idiots, is the same as being incompetent.” (de Zayas y Sotomayor and Ruiz-Gálvez 17–19)

4.2 María de Zayas y Sotomayor: Historical and Cultural Background

The biographical information on María de Zayas y Sotomayor is sparse, and often details about her life are not that reliable. The little reliable information about her life derives from the *Apuntes para una Biblioteca de escritoras españolas desde el año de 1401 al de 1853* by Manuel Serrano y Sanz, who utilized notes and observations from Álvarez Baena. María de Zayas y Sotomayor was born in Madrid, daughter of Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor, infantry captain in Flanders, and of María de Barasa, noblewoman of Madrid. Based on a certificate of baptism found during his research, Serrano y Sanz states that Zayas’ date of birth is September 12, 1590. María de Zayas lived in Spain most of her life. According to Serrano y Sanz, on the day of St. Lucas 1617, Zayas signed the register of the *Confederados pertenecientes a la Harmandad de Defensores de la Immaculada Concepción de la Virgen María*, in order to help the foundation of the Concepción Jerónima of Madrid. Zayas’ signature on different documents between 1617 and 1637 confirm that the author was an active member of *academias literarias* and that she

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128 Joseph Antonio Álvarez Baena was one of the first historians to study María de Zayas’s life. He wrote *Hijos de Madrid, Illustres en Santidad,Dignidades, Armas, Ciencias y Artes*. Madrid, 1789. 4 vols. In vol.3, Baena asserts that in view of the date at which the author flourished in her literary work, she was the daughter of Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor. His supposition has been later confirmed by Serrano y Sanz, who discovered María de Zayas’ baptismal record. (48)
participated in poetry contests. Among her friends and admirers were Pérez de Montalbán, Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, and Lope de Vega, who all composed sonnets dedicated to Zayas. Montalbán calls her “dulce siren,” “diosa verdadera,” and praises her eloquence while wishing her glory and fame, because, he asserts, Zayas’s writing does not have any equals. Castillo Solórzano lauds the fame attained by Zayas and points to her as Sibila and daughter of Apollo. Lope de Vega applauds “su ingenio vivamente claro/es tan único y raro.” Zayas’ works reached the apex of popularity when her novelas cortas were translated into French; it is still surprising how her stories escaped the censorship of the Inquisition, as Patsy Boyer states:

following up the Council of Trent and the Catholic Reformation, Spanish Catholicism permitted moral freedoms unthinkable to the Victorians at the same time that there was dogmatic control and harsh repression of heresy under the Inquisition. Zayas’s novellas are in no way unorthodox and were lauded as exemplary by the censors, yet they treat moral issues and present material (e.g., rape, battering, murder) with a frankness that seems shocking to us. (Boyer in Zayas, Enchantments, 25)

Zayas and her collection were lauded and translated in French, in English, and in other languages. The collection circulated broadly in English very early in the eighteenth century, having been published in London in 1709, and was translated into French and published in 1680, and again in 1711. By the end of the eighteenth century, more than eleven editions of the twenty tales circulated in Spanish, English, and French, which suggests Zayas’ enormous popularity and the increasing number of readers whose minds she could shape and influence.

129 The complete laudatory poems to Zayas can be found in the appendix, at the end of the dissertation.
The practice of lauding an author through poems led to the exchange of works between the author of elegiac poems, and the subject lauded in these poems. According to Zayas’ biographer, she participated in this literary tradition in Madrid. Unfortunately, not all of her works have been found. For instance, the only existing tragedy written by Zayas was found and published by Serrano y Sanz is *La traición en la Amistad* [*The Friendship Betrayed*] 1632. The editor of her *Novelas* and *Desengaños*, Agustín González de Amezúa, and subsequent editors, all affirm that Zayas spent some time in Valladolid, North West of Spain, where the king Philip III (1578–1621) relocated his court, as well in Naples, in southern Italy. Naples appears frequently in both collections of her short stories, where Zayas offers detailed and exact descriptions of the southern Italian city, which suggests a close knowledge of Naples. Isabel Barbeito Carneiro also confirms, in her anthological work, *Las Escritoras Madrileñas del Siglo XVII*, that María de Zayas lived in Naples with her father and enjoyed a close friendship with the count of Lemos, who was a patron of the arts and letters in Naples between 1610 and 1614. Lemos’ time in Spain led to an important chapter in the period of Spanish rule in the south of Italy, especially from a cultural point of view. The foundation of the Accademia degli Oziosi,130 which Lemos visited for the first time on May 13, 1611, was particularly significant. According to the historian Fernando Rodriguez Mediano, “this academy sought to integrate Hispano-Neapolitan literary society into the court, as part of a general project of Spanish hegemony in both culture and politics.” (237) Amy Williamsen and Judith Whitenack speculate that María de Zayas might have participated in the reunion of the *ociosos* organized by the founder Giambattista Manso (1561–1645) (40).

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Using dated documents signed by the author as a reference, and combining this with knowledge of her geographical movements, Zayas’ biographers inform us that she was in Zaragoza when she published the *Novelas* in 1637 and the *Desengaños* in 1647. However, after the publication of her second collection of *novelas cortas*, biographers and historians cannot suggest or estimate a date of her death. Serrano y Sanz proposes two certificates of death of a certain widow named María de Zayas: one was widow of Juan de Valdés (1661) and the other was the widow of Pedro de Balcázar (1669). In either case, both Amezúa and Serrano y Sanz confirm that Zayas appeared to drop off the literary map after 1647. She neither published any works after this date, nor did anyone else appear to write a public eulogy or laudatory work dedicated to her from this date forward. Based on the baptism date, María de Zayas was 57 when she retired from the literary world of early modern Spain. Nevertheless, by analyzing her works, it is possible to understand what sort of education Zayas had been able to receive.

Estrella Ruiz- Gálvez Priego\(^{131}\) suggests that education was extremely important in the upbringing of a young aristocratic woman. Isabel Fajardo, the protagonist in *La esclava de su amante* [*Slave to her own lover*], talks about herself and informs the readers about her education being: “las cosas más importante a mi calidad. Ya se entenderá, tras las virtudes que forman una persona virtuosamente Cristiana, los ejercicios honestos de leer, escribir, tañer y danzar, con todo los demás competente a una persona de mis prendas.”(*Desengaños* 402) [“The things most important to my station. You understand, in addition to the virtues that form a virtuous Christian, the honest exercises of reading, writing, playing a musical instrument, and dancing, and all other matters appropriate to a person of all my natural gifts”] (*Disenchantement* 44)

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formation, reading, writing, music, and dancing, were the most common disciplines taught to upper class and noble young women in early modern Spain. Most of the female characters in Zayas’ works have been taught these subjects, in addition to sewing, embroidery, and the basics of arithmetic.

Both men and women practiced the art of composing verse as a form of entertainment, but poetry and rhetoric were not formally taught to women as official disciplines. María de Zayas, was one of those few women who, because of the status of her family, was able to gain access to books and libraries, advancing her own education. Throughout her life, she advocated for women’s education across social levels. At this time, most women who acquired knowledge were self-taught, reading books as entertainment but also to satisfy their desire to know more about the literary and philosophical panorama of early modern Europe. According to Zayas’ biographers and historiographers, the author extensively read both Spanish and Italian literature, as well as works in Latin and vernacular Tuscan. In one of her letters to the poet Montalbán, Zayas claims to have read “en la lengua latina y Toscana la Fábula de Orfeo en la cuarta Geórgica de Virgilio y en el décimo de Ovidio y en los Idilios de la Zampoña del caballero Marino.” (de Zayas y Sotomayor and Priego 12) Still, María de Zayas was lacking a formal academic foundation, which she advocated for throughout her works. For instance in her prologue to her collection of short stories, *The Desenchantedments of Love*, Zayas asks her reader, “¿qué razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y presuman que nosotras no podamos serlo? […] si no dieran los libros y preceptos fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y par alas cátedras como los hombres…” (de Zayas y Sotomayor and Ruiz-Gálvez 17) [“what reason is there that they should be wise and presume we cannot be so?…if in our upbringing they gave us books and preceptors
as they supply us with chambray for sewing cushions and designs for embroidery frames, we would be as well suited for posts and professorship as men”). (Greer, Baroque 62)

Zayas, like other women writers of early modern in Spain and Italy, is eager to be a part of the literary discourse of her time, and to demonstrate her writing skills to her male contemporaries. The author calls attention to the lack of schools and tutors that jeopardize women’s ability to learn literary canons. As previously mentioned, women in early modern Europe had limited or no access to higher education. Women were disadvantaged in both education and law, as there were no laws that would protect their interests and safety. Furthermore, women could not utilize weapons such as swords to defend themselves, as Zayas observes, because women have been given a needle as a tool since their birth, despite, or perhaps because of the reality that a sword would be more useful to protect themselves from men.

Specifically, María de Zayas laments women’s weakness in the short story, *La Esclava de Su Amante* [Slave to Her Own Lover] saying: “Ah flaqueza femenil de las mujeres acobardadas desde la infancia y aviltadas las fuerzas con enseñarles primero a hacer vainicas que a jugar las armas…” [alas for the feminine weakness of all women, made cowards from infancy with all their natural strength dissipated from the start by teaching them how to do hemstitching rather than how to use weapons!] (Boyer, 52) and in the short story, *Tarde llega el desengaño* [Too Late Undecived] suggesting: “…bueno fuera que si una mujer ciñera espada sufriera que la

132 As I explained in chapter 2, Roman law determined women’s lack of rights and possession of properties. On this matter, see Renato Barahona, *Sex Crimes, Honor, and the Law in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Barahona argues that in Spain, the concept of honor would determine the identity and role of a woman in society, for instance, “women deflowered and wronged by their seducers profoundly believed that they had possessed honor, a claim they universally and loudly made. […] such women felt they had experience loss of honor, not only because they had lost their virginity, but also because, and perhaps more significant, they now found their marriage prospect impaired and their social standing diminished.”(121) It is worth noting that in Italy some aristocratic women, especially when they become widows, could manage large amount of money. This might suggest the presence of more freedom for early modern Italian women, compared to Spanish women of the same era. See Anne Jacobson Shute et al., *Time, Space, and Wome’s Lives in Early Modern Europe*. Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2001.
agravia un hombre en ninguna occasion…” [It would be a good thing for women to use swords, then they would never suffer affront from any man] (Boyer, 140).

Eventually, Zayas used her pen as a weapon, which allowed her to be part of the literary discourse of her time, and to attack misogynistic beliefs and advocate for equality in education.

Zayas’ novelas cortas also reveal the influence of Miguel de Cervantes. The genre of the short novels in Spain, like the novela, was unknown before him. On this matter, Emiliano Echarri and José Franquesa state that:

la novela corta, tal como nos la da Cervantes y se ha venido luego cultivando, era desconocida en España antes de él. Existía desde El Conde de Lucanor, de don Juan Manuel (siglo XIV), el cuento o relato breve; y abundaba la narración o historia extensa, en libros de caballería, de picaresca, bizantinos, pastoriles o de ambiente cortesano. La forma intermedia se debe a Cervantes. (357–358)

Although Cervantes is considered to be the first to introduce the genre of the novela corta in Spain, his collection of Novelas Ejemplares indicates a strong influence derived from the Italian novellieri. Echarri and Franquesa hypothesize a sort of hybridization of the genre. The spreading of foreign models of short story, and the absorption, and subsequent assimilation of the model in Spain, contributed to the germination of the novela corta.133 (264) Among the foreign models, the Italian novella was one of the major influences in Zayas’ work. Indeed, the narrative

133 Echarri and Franquesa state that “el Renacimiento, con su complejidad cultural, abre nuevos horizontes a la novela, en la que se opera un doble proceso: ampliación de los modelos extranjeros y españolización de los temas. A la modalidad franco-bretona sucede la enmarañada selva de los libros de caballería indígenas; la temática oriental encuentra digno sustituto en la novela bizantina y en la morisca; y el campo que puede perder el novelista de Certaldo en Il Corbaccio y la Fiammetta, arquetipos informadores de nuestra novella del XV, queda sobradamente compensado con Il Decameron, que entra de lleno en nuestras corrientes literarias, juntamente con otros novelistas italianos: Straparola, Bandello, Sacchetti, Firenzuola, Cintio, ect. (264)
frame constructed around Zayas’ ten narrators recalls the narrative setting described in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*.

4.3 *Il Decameron* in Spain: The Influence of Boccaccio and Cervantes in Zayas’ *novelas*

Zayas’ collection of short stories has attracted the interest of scholars of early modern studies and led to dissect and discover the possible literary influences that led to the creation of such a stunning collection of *novelas* in Spain during the 1600s. According to Priego, Zayas’ second collection of short stories, *Desengaños*, reveals not only a profound knowledge of Spanish literature, but also of Greek and Roman mythology, and of the Neo-Platonic dimension of the Petrarchist movement (13). This draws attention to her first collection of *novelas*, *The Enchantment of Love*, while she was still a novice. It seems that Juan Pérez de Montalbán134 (1602–1638) might have intervened and helped edit and enhance Zayas’ first collection of stories. Nevertheless, Zayas specifies in the last *desengaños*, titled “Estragos que Causa el Vicio” [“the ravages of vice”] that the way she writes is the way she speaks, because she learned to “hablar en el idioma que es mi natural.” Zayas’ narrative language is natural, the result of a fluid discourse, and speaking style. She extols the oral tradition of storytelling, which prompts her to attempt to establish a direct discourse between her female narrators and her audience in the narrative structure of her work. In the introduction to the *novelas*, Zayas informs her audience of the dual purpose of her work: first, to entertain; but every bit as important, Zayas seeks to teach women, to show the social position of women, to depict the realities of the society in which

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134 Juan Pérez de Montalbán was a Spanish Catholic priest, dramatist, poet, and novelist. Montalbán wrote theatrical plays under the guidance of Lope de Vega and it seems that he might have assisted de Vega in composing *El Orfeo en Lengua Castellana* (1624).
women lived, and suggest ways for women to play the cards they have been dealt by life. She seeks to advise, warn, to “harcérselas jueces de su propia causa” (Novelas Amorosas, 12) [“to be judge of your own cause”] and therefore, to teach women how to defend themselves and push them to claim a better place in society. Zayas’ expression “to be judge of your own cause” is a call for justice, which invites women to become the subject of their own cause, to fulfill justice according to their own terms and with their own weapons. In her words, “[…] dejemos las galas y rosas, y volvamos por nosotras mismas, unas con el entendimiento y otras con las armas.” (Tarde Llega el Desengaño); [let’s abandon elegance and roses, and turn to ourselves, some with reasoning, others with weapons] (Too Late Undeceived, 139). Zayas’ use of the concepts of both reasoning and militarism suggests she seeks to “arm” women with the power of words – that is, with the ability to use words persuasively to argue against entrenched misogyny. In a society in which knowledge led men to seek to constrain their bodies and their minds, Zayas is clearly seeking to affect the minds of her readers and to prompt them to take action, if only in their own lives, to make their situations better.

The purpose of teaching a lesson to the audience certainly derived from the tradition of the medieval exemplum that Boccaccio mastered with the Decameron and that Cervantes emulated with the Novelas Ejemplares. Giovanni Boccaccio’s one hundred stories was first translated into Spanish in 1496, with the title of Las Cien Novelas.\textsuperscript{135} The work was read throughout the sixteenth century in Spain, and it seems that a copy of the Decameron was found in many personal libraries even after the book was listed in the Index librorum prohibitorum in 1559, after four of his editions had already been widely circulating. Nevertheless, the Decameron was the most imitated model of short stories in early modern Europe. Howard Mancing suggests

\textsuperscript{135} The first translation in Spanish of Boccaccio’s Decamerone (?)
that Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptameron* (1558) was an equal literary accomplishment to
Boccaccio’s work, and that neither the *Decameron* nor *Heptameron* have the social implications
(79–80) that characterize Cervantes’ *novelas*. Robert Alistair disagrees with Mancing’s
observation, arguing that Boccaccio adopted a clear moral standard in his *Decameron*, and that it
emanates a sense of moral value. (5) Still, Boccaccio’s goal was not to “give a moral lesson to
his reader”; the author aimed to simply outline his reflections on human nature, and he never
imposes his moral judgment or his ten narrator-characters’ moral verdict. Boccaccio, therefore,
lets the facts speaking for themselves. The choices and the consequences of those choices
become the real protagonists of the *Decameron*.

Informed by the previous literary tradition, Zayas chooses to place the actions of her
characters, rather than the characters themselves, at the center of her stories. Their decisions and
actions will have a strong effect that flows throughout the narrative, with varying consequences
both good and bad, for those involved, in particular for the female characters. Both Boccaccio
and Zayas address their work to a predominantly female audience. However, Boccaccio’s
primary purpose is to entertain, thus overcoming possible moral considerations. Zayas aims both
to entertain and to shake women’s awareness of their position in early modern society. For this
reason, as I explained previously, Zayas has her female narrators engage in a game of
storytelling. The narrative frame of her *novelas* and *desengaños* echoes Boccaccio’s *allegra
brigada* who had escaped not only the horrors of the plague in Florence, but also the degradation
and viciousness of its citizens. In order to serve the didactic and polemic purpose of her work,
Zayas alters Boccaccio’s narrative frame. Specifically, the group of narrators composed of four
women and five men gathers to entertain Lisis, who suffers from unrequited love for Don Juan,
who favors her cousin Lisarda. The first group of stories, also called *maravillas*, concludes with
Lisis’ betrothal to don Diego, since Juan still preferred Lisarda. Lisis will term the second group of stories desengaños, aiming to narrate the disenchantments, disillusions, and deceptions of men. Furthermore, Lisis requires that only women recount the novelas, in order to reinstate women’s reputation in the eyes of the listeners, and therefore, in the mind of Zayas’ readers. Certainly, Zayas wished to tap into the literary tradition of the short story, but I argue that she had a double purpose in her work. Besides desiring to enter into the literary discourse on the genre of the novelas, Zayas meant to affect her audience’s judgment and to suggest social changes in favor of women. Indeed, at the end of the second collection of stories, Lisis, the main protagonist who learns both maravillas and disengaños of human nature, decides to withdraw from the world of men in favor of a life in convent, which contrasts Boccaccio’s last novella of the X day, “Patient Griselda,” where the protagonist stays married to a man who submits her to the most absurd and cruelest tests and humiliations.

Boccaccio’s work also influenced Cervantes’ literary production. According to Cervantine scholars, Miguel Cervantes read the Decameron in both languages, Spanish and Italian- probably during his residence in Italy, in 1569.\(^\text{136}\) According to J.A. Garrido Ardila, the development of the Spanish novella can be envisioned as a two-stage process: the first is represented by Cervantes’ Don Quijote (1605, 1615), and the Novelas Ejemplares (1613); the second can be found when Cervantes borrows from other novelists. (1–55) Cervantes certainly strengthens the structure of the picaresque novel established in Spain with Lazarillo de Tormes (1554?). Edward Friedman states that the anonymous Lazarillo does on a small scale what

Cervantes did with his *Don Quixote*, which is “to demonstrate a consciousness of the literary heritage as it breaks away from the past.” (Ardila 97) The character, who is both narrator and protagonist, captures all aspects of the modern novel character, namely, self-reference and self-consciousness. When the characters in *Lazarillo*, *Don Quixote*, and the other picaresque novels narrate their adventures and misadventures, they often address the difficulties entailed in their low social status, and in the struggle for the pursuit of a better position in society. This implies a constant self-evaluation and appraisal of other individuals, and a continuous comparison with those who occupy a better social position. It is a characteristic that the characters of María de Zayas also demonstrate in her collection of short stories. Certainly, this is in part because Zayas is experimenting with her narrative skills and tapping the road of “modern” *novelas*, but it also demonstrates the author’s awareness of her audience. The self-evaluation of her female characters addresses the social pressures and constraints imposed on women during the early modern era in Spain.

Cervantes boasts in the prologue to his *Novelas* that “[…] I am the first who has written novels in the Spanish language, though many have hitherto appeared among us, all of them translated from foreign authors. But these are my own, neither imitated nor stolen from anyone; my genius has engendered them, my pen has brought them forth, and they are growing up in the arms of the press.” (5) Cervantes assigns to each of his characters a sort of linguistic identity and behavior. Each character, as Mary Gaylord states, is conscious of his linguistic complexities (72). It can be inferred that Cervantes wanted to familiarize his readers with a vast gamut of men and women from different social classes, and to immerse those characters in the literary environments of different genres. In so doing, Cervantes’ *novelas* acquires the realist nature that characterizes the picaresque novel.
The picaresque novel goes against the unrealities of the pastoral and chivalric work; indeed, for many scholars, it represents the beginning of modern Realism. According to Richard Chandler and Kessel Schwartz, early picaresque novels were idealistic and realistic, tragic and comic. Furthermore, the author of picaresque novels attacked political, religious, and military matters, aiming to draw attention to uneven social and economic conditions of sixteenth century Spain. Cervantes’ *Novelas Ejemplares*, printed in 1613 in Madrid by Juan de la Cuesta, presents similar characteristics. The *Novelas* are divided into two groups. The first emphasizes the idealized aspects of the stories that the second will realistically portray. The short stories of the first group deal with the theme of love and its consequences, and they are titled: *El Amante Liberal* [The Liberal Lover], *Las Dos Doncellas* [The Two Young Women], *La Española Inglesa* [The Spanish English Lady], *La Señora Cornelia* [Miss Cornelia], *La Fuerza de la Sangre* [The Strength of Blood]. The characters in this first group demonstrate a psychological development, but the plot is distant from the footprint of reality. The second group of short stories, which are more renowned than the first group, offers more realistic descriptions of characters and their surroundings. Furthermore, criticism of certain aspects of society is embedded in the plots. The stories in this group are titled: *Rinconete y Cortadillo* [Rinconete and Cortadillo], *El Licenciado Vidriera* [The Lawyer of Glass], *La gitanilla* [The Little Gypsy], *El Casamiento Engañoso* [The Deceitful Marriage] (which concludes with novella built in dialogue with satiric discourses *El Colloquio de los perros*). As I previously mentioned, Cervantes is certainly Zayas’ main inspiration in the first collection of tales, *Novelas Ejemplares*; however, Margaret Greer asks us a fundamental question:

why did Cervantes, in his *Novelas Ejemplares*, (1613) dispense with the frame, and why did Lope personalize it in the *Novelas a Marcia Leonarda*
Stories for Marcia Leonarda (1621)? Why did the many Spanish novella writers of the 1620s and 1630s follow the example of Cervantes rather than Boccaccio […] why did María de Zayas y Sotomayor opt to use a frame tale again?¹³⁷

(“Who’s Telling,” 35)

Greer argues that the act of narrating stories, in Zayas’ work, is parallel to the illness of one or several characters. Indeed, the pretext that brings together the small community of narrators is Lisis’ illness, namely love sickness. This also suggests that the act of narration can serve as a cure to heal the main characters; not only Lisis, but also the audience in the frame tale, and the audience off page, the reader. As Boccaccio’s prologue to The Decameron opened with a gloomy, realistic description of the plague in Florence, and works to re-build it by means of the depiction of an idealized version of Florence and its habitants, Zayas’s introduction to the Desengaños informs the reader of Lisis’ illness, and her group of female characters carry the cure for that illness; namely, narrating the truth of men’s deception. In her words, “¡Ay, engañoso amante, ay, falso caballero, ay, verdugo de mi inocencia! ¡Y, ay, mujeres fáciles y mal aconsejadas, y cómo os dejáis vencer de mentiras bien afeítadas, y que no les dura el oro que van cubiertas más de mientras dura el apetito! […] Abran las demás los ojos del entendimiento.”

[oh false gentlemen, deceptive lovers, executioner of my innocence! Woe be to all ill-advised and credulous women who let themselves be overcome by lies so well adorned that their glitter lasts only as long as does the appetite! […] Let all women open up the eyes of their minds!]

(Baroque, 51)

¹³⁷ Greer states that Zayas had already written eight of the stories of the first volume and to have prepared them for publication around 1625, when the preferred style was Cervantes’ frame-less model. Yet Zayas encloses her collection within a single frame that unites the two volumes, despite the ten year separation in their publication and the much darker tone of the second volume. (35)
Zayas seems to suggest that only the truth can heal the illness of Lisis and by reflection, that of society. As Amy Williamsen explains, a dialogue with an imagined audience is one of the primary functions of the frame tale. The dialogue with the reader becomes a communicative act, whereby the author reaches out to the readers. The numerous printed editions of Zayas’s works made them available to an even larger audience of readers. By using Anne Cayuela’s theory of “liminary apparatus” of the seventeenth-century Spanish fiction, Greer explains, that the prologue is meant to seduce the readers, and to create an image of both the author and the ideal reader. The prologue is therefore designed to suggest that the reader engage in a very particular kind of reading. (Baroque, 326) This concept echoes Cockroft’s idea of rhetorical affect in early modern writing, which suggests the existence of a connection between reading and what the reader senses behind the words in early modern texts.

In line with Greer, Cayuela, and Cockroft, I argue that the author’s words have the power to persuade the reader by prompting an emotional response based on the reader’s understanding of their surroundings. María de Zayas, by means of her fictional female narrators, triggers a constant exchange between herself and her readers, which mirrors the exchange taking place in her work; that is, between her fictional characters and their audience of listeners. For instance, Anne J. Cruz offers the example of María de Zayas and Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz as women writers aware of—and angrily writing about—the discrimination that existed against women’s education. Indeed, in their writings, both authors asserted that women’s intelligence was not different from men’s, and complained bitterly of lack of educational opportunity for women. Did their angry words provoke a change? Although not immediate, early modern women writers’

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request for equal education stirred questions and doubts among readers. For instance, Jane Stevenson observes in his treatise *Diatribe de Gradibus Academicis*, on the academic profession (1679) that Johann Christian Itter posed the question, “are women capable of holding academic status?” and his answer was “why not?” (413) In France, the Cartesian Poullain de la Barre argues that women should be allowed to hold any public office (1673). It is legitimate to hypothesize that women authors’ anger, channeled in their writings and spread by means of their readers, paved the way for possible changes in society.

How did Zayas convey anger in her collection of tales, *Desengaños Amorosos*? The representation of anger in Zayas’ second collection of short stories emerges from a sense of injustice, a slight to women’s bodies and reputation. Zayas’ female characters constantly analyze themselves and their social position, and engage in continuous comparison with other individuals, men and women. Revenge is often fulfilled by the hands of women themselves in order to regain a respected position in the eyes of society, and, therefore in the attempt to re-establish order in a community.

4.4 Of Angry Lovers and Revenge: The Representation of Anger in Zayas’ Tales

As mentioned in previous sections, María de Zayas introduces her *desengaños* with a prologue to her readers. In it, the author calls for her audience’s attention, but also anticipates what her readers’ expectations might be. In her words, “quién duda lector mío, que te causará admiración que una mujer tenga despejo no sólo para escribir un libro, sino para darle a la estampa” [“doubt, my reader, you will be amazed that a woman should have the nerve, not only to write a book but to have it published”] (Obra Narrativa Completa 17) The author’s statement
activates two schemata. One is the early modern reader’s pre-conceived misogynistic notions about women. Zayas seeks to overlay onto this schema a new schema, or new knowledge for the reader: the author’s intention. In her words, “que es el crisol donde se averigua la pureza de los ingenios; porque hasta que los escritos se rozan en last letras de plomo no tiene valor cierto” [“for publication is the crucible in which the purity of genius is tested; until writing is set in letters of lead, it has no real value”] (Obra Narrativa Completa, 17). Such a strong statement demonstrates Zayas’ full awareness of the persuasive power of published written words, and of the fundamental role of her readers, who would be crucial in spreading those words. Marina Brownlee states something similar on the magnetism of Zayas’ words. Using Zayas’ collection of novelas as examples, Brownlee argues that the act of reading activates the reader’s surveillance of fictional characters, which provides the reader with a greater understanding of his or her own real-life difficulties. Furthermore, the reader experiences a range of pleasures from the act of reading the accounts, adventures, and misadventures of other individuals—even if they are fictional—arousing the reader’s interest in constructive self-analysis. (Brownlee 4) Indeed, Zayas’ characters engage in self-evaluation and evaluation of other individuals when anger is triggered. Self-analysis and the desire for vengeance are linked, for it is only after a character undergoes a journey of self awakening that they become aware of their need to exact revenge. Zayas exploits the opportunity to affect her readers, and guides them through the intricacies of her cultural surroundings, charming her readers and as well evoking a vast gamut of emotions, including anger, fear, envy and more.

In the first tale of Zayas’ Desengaños, Slave to Her Own Lover, one of the main characters, Zaida, kills herself after Don Manuel, her suitor, tells the truth about his future intentions to Zelima; that is, his rape and abandonment of Isabel. Despite Isabel’s resistance and
attempt to elude Don Manuel’s bold courtship, she is caught off guard and pushed into a room, where he forces himself upon her. Her reaction to her assault was to realize not only the loss of her “honor,” but also of her identity, as she states, “[…] volví en mí, y me hallé, mal digo, hallé, pues me hallé perdida, y tan perdida, que no me supe ni puede volver ni podré ganarme jamás […]”; […] I did come to my senses and I found myself—no, I am wrong, I did not find myself—I saw that I was ruined. So ruined that I did not know myself then nor would I ever again […]” (Disenchantments, 53). Isabel’s self-evaluation is immediate and Don Manuel’s act is recognized as a grave offense, which in the Aristotelian definition of anger will result in desire of revenge. The loss of her virginity reflects the loss of her identity as daughter of a noble family, because, in the cultural paradigms of the day, Isabel is now considered damaged goods, and no longer desirable for a marriage by her family’s aristocratic class. Isabel continues describing her reaction to her listeners—and by extension, to Zayas’ readers—using words that charge the imagination of the reader: “infundiendo en mí mi agravio una mortífera rabia, lo que en otra mujer pudiera causar lágrimas y desesperaciones, en mí fue un furor diabólico” [“that affront filled me with mortal rage; what might have caused tears and despair in another woman, filled me with a demonic fury”] (53).

Isabel evaluates herself as different from any other woman; her anger is mortífera which recalls Medea’s and Clytemnestra’s ancient anger and anticipate a deadly outcome of the story. As if Isabel’s anger was a super natural manifestation of evil, an unnatural physical strength possessed her, allowing her to disentangle from her aggressor’s embrace and grab his sword. But since Isabel fails to wound him, she threatens: “Traidor, me vengo en mí, pues no he podido en ti, que las mujeres como yo así vengan sus agravios” [Traitor, if I cannot take vengeance on you, then I shall upon myself: that is how a woman like me avenges her affronts.] (53) Perhaps
intending to recall the ancient rape of Lucretia\textsuperscript{139} and her subsequent suicide, Zayas informs her readers that suicide should no longer be seen as an acceptable manner in which to redeem lost honor. Indeed, Isabel does not yield to desperation and death, rather, she fights back to secure her revenge and reinstate her honor in the eyes of her family and community. Don Manuel tries to assuage Isabel’s anger with the promise to marry her, which, as Barahona confirms in his research on sex crimes and honor in early modern Spain, demonstrates how a marriage or dowry could restore a woman’s lost reputation in the eyes of her community (128). Additionally, Isabel’s maid, Claudia, recognizes her anger and comments:

“No me espanto, señora mía, que tu sentimiento sea de la calidad que ha mostrado y muestras. Confieso que el atrevimiento del señor don Manuel fue el mayor que se puede imaginar; mas tu temeridad es más terrible, y supuesto que en este suceso, aunque has aventurado mucho, no has perdido nada, pues en siendo tu esposo queda puesto el reparo.” (412-13)

[I am not surprised, my lady, that you are as angry as you have been and still are. […] don Manuel’s temerity was the worst imaginable, but your temerity is more terrible because, while you have a lot at risk in all of this, you haven’t really lost anything. The minute he becomes your husband, the slip is mended.] (Disenchantments, 54)

\textsuperscript{139} Livy, The Early History of Rome, Book I. Edinburgh, 1812. According to Livy’s account, Lucretia was the virtuous and dutiful wife of Lucius Tarquinus Collatinius. Sextus Tarquinius, prince and son of the Emperor, surprises Lucretia while asleep and rape her under the threat of his sword. Lucretia, having lost her honor, informs her father and her husband, and kills herself as “punishment” for losing her honor. The rape of Lucretia though becomes the trigger for the Roman revolution, as Lucretia’s uncle and her husband decide to avenge the offense going into battle against the king in Rome. Lucretia’s body is publicly displayed as a reminder of the numerous acts of violence by the hand of the king and his family.
Clearly, Claudia’s words of solace to Isabel describe the customary practice to amend a woman’s reputation during Zayas’ time. Claudia, however, reminds the reader about the negative effects of a woman’s anger, as they are believed to be more terrible than her assault at the hands of Don Manuel. According to classical and early modern misogynistic literary tradition, women’s anger was considered irrational, infantile, without just cause, and dangerous, because it could lead to a deadly outcome. On the contrary, Zayas narrates how from Isabel’s anger a reasoned plan emerges. Rather than giving into rage and suicide, Isabel, disguised as a Moorish slave, plans to follow don Manuel in order to remind him of the promise of marriage. Even after numerous misadventures, and after Isabel calls for justice by saying “ya de justicia merezco el premio que de tantas desdichas como he pasado os estoy pidiendo” [“in all justice I [Isabel] well deserve this reward I am requesting for all the misfortunes I have endured”], (Novelas, 77) don Manuel plans to marry another woman because, “es imposible que yo me fiase de mujer que sabe hacer y buscar tantos disfraces.” [“it would be impossible for me [don Manuel] to trust a woman who knows so many subterfuges.”] (Novelas, 79) Since Isabel’s revenge could not be fulfilled by means of a rehabilitating marriage, Zayas plans another way to satisfy Isabel’s thirst for justice. Don Felipe, a servant devoted to Isabel’s well being, “delivered his [don Manuel’s] well-earned punishment and my [Isabel’s] long desired vengeance.” (Novelas, 78) Interestingly, Zayas does not let Isabel avenge herself by her own hand, perhaps in fearing that her readers might accuse her fictional character of being a murderer, and because it was more normal to have another man reinstate her honor by killing her rapist. Nevertheless, Isabel’s reputation is restored, and she will no longer be ashamed to appear in the presence of her family. Indeed, Zayas’ portrayal of her protagonist marks the writer herself as somehow a radical in the annals of literary history. By conveying to her audience what she believes they need to hear, rather than what they may desire
to hear, Zayas seeks to affect the mind of her reader through what might be termed pure “shock value.” Zayas is more concerned with portraying the world as she feels it ought to be, rather than as it is; and in doing so, provides an example to be followed. As Rhodes asserts, by wading into the somewhat dangerous waters of the literary portrayals of women, Zayas walks “straight into the horrible and dangerous consequences… [and shows her audience] the way out.” The author presents Isabel’s revenge as the just outcome of Don Manuel’s cruel words to his victim:

como ésas damos los hombres para alcanzar lo que deseamos, y pudiera
ya las mujeres tener conocida esta treta y no dejarse engañar, pues las
avisan tantas escarmientadas (Desengaños 163)

[we men do this to get what we want and you women should have learned this game by now and not let yourself be deceived…; the many women who have learned this lesson should give ample warning. I gave you my word only to assuage your wrath and never intended to keep it…]

(Disenchantments 77)

Medea and Clytemnestra’s anger had been taken as examples of irrational, unjustified anger in ancient Greek literature and philosophy, and their revenge was seen as being cruel and gory. By contrast, Zayas’ depiction of anger is far more complex and well planned. Indeed, in her collection of short stories, anger is often caused when women and men are shown to have suffered a loss of honor, which, as previously explained, is a matter of public interest for women. The loss of a woman’s honor, at this time, was treated as a loss of a valuable property, making the offense punishable by law. Therefore, Zayas’ stories can be viewed as presenting a trial – one in which the reader serves as the judge, and the voice of the female character serves as the voice of the prosecutor, building a case against the crimes of the male characters depicted in the story. The act of reading, and serving as a silent judge, is, yet another way in which the reader is
affected. Zayas asks her reader not to be a passive viewer, but an active participant, forming their own conclusions about the actions of the male characters, and drawing parallels to the real state of the world at that time; a world in which women were routinely victimized by men and could only regain their honor through marriage to their attacker, or by escaping to a convent.

Zayas wanted to reveal the reality or truth that it is men who possess a deceptive nature. Ironically, in the second disenchantment titled “Most Infamous Revenge,” the innocent Camila lost her life because she hid the truth. Once the truth was revealed, Camila’s husband killed her because “he blamed her for failing to tell him the truth just to avoid unpleasantness” (Disenchantments 107) in the attempt to preserve both her own honor and that of her husband. As Camila died because she hid the truth, Roseleta in the third short novel, titled His Wife’s Executioner, is killed because she tells the truth. Roseleta threatens Don Juan that she will tell the truth to her husband: “I know that if I ever thought any man had ideas about me that might damage my honor I would tell my husband” (Disenchantments, 125). Unfortunately, Roseleta does not escape death, and as the author commented:

“[…] si Camila perdió con su esposo por callar las pretensiones de don Juan, en el engaño que ahora diré no le servió a otra dama [Roseleta] para asegurar su crédito con marido avisarle de la pretendencia de otro don Juan” (El Verdugo de su Esposa, 479)

[If Camila died because she failed to tell her husband about Don Juan’s courtship, Roseleta will suffer the same fate because she did tell her husband about her suitor’s bold and excessive behavior.] (Disenchantments, 125)
Here, Zayas seems to suggest that, whether women decide to be truthful or not, they will always be men’s scapegoats because “as far as men are concerned, it’s all the same whether a woman speaks or remains silent” (*Disenchantments*, 125).

In the fourth disenchantment, titled *Too Late Undeceived*, Elena is condemned to beg for food from her husband’s table because an ill-intentioned servant claimed to have seen Elena deceiving her husband. The ill-fated woman is close to death when the servant decides to tell the truth to Elena’s husband:

Señor mio: en este paso en que estoy no han de valer mentiras ni engaños. Yo me muerro, porque a mucha priesa siento que se me acaba la vida…Soy cristiana, aunque mala, y conozco, aunque negra, con el discurso que tengo, que ya estoy en tiempo de decir verdaderas, porque siento que me está amenazando el juicio de Dios. (*Desengaños*, 261)

[My lord, I find myself in straits where lies and deceit are of no avail I am a Christian, even though I am black, I know the time has come for me to tell the truth, for I feel God’s final judgment hanging over me] (*Disenchantments*, 160).

The truth sets Elena free, but it’s too late, as she is already dead. Another example of how Zayas uses the truth to emphasize the authenticity of her work is in the fifth disenchantment, *Innocence punished*. At the end of the story of doña Inés, who became blind because of her husband, the narrator Laura confirms the veracity of the story by saying “todo este caso es tan verdadero como la misma verdad, que ya digo le contó quien se halló presente” (*Desengaños*); [“this story is as true as truth itself. I’ve told you that the person who recounted it to me was an eyewitness”] (*Disenchantments*, 197). Zayas gives proof of the validity of doña Inés’s story by asserting that the storyteller was an eyewitness, someone who actually saw the horrendous events. Another
dreadful example of how the truth condemned an innocent woman to death is the seventh disenchantment “Mal Presagio Casar Lejos” [“Marriage Abroad: Portent of Doom”]. It’s the story of Blanca, who married a Flemish prince, but unfortunately discovered the sad truth about her marriage when, “vio acostados en la cama a su esposo y a Arnesto, en deleites tan torpes y abominables, que es bajeza, no sólo decirlo, mas pensarlo” (Desengaños 360); [“in the bed she saw her husband and Arnesto engaged in such gross and abominable pleasures that it’s obscene to think it, let alone say it”] (Disenchantments 265). Once Blanca learned the truth about her husband, she knew the detestable lover would attempt to silence her forever. Once again Zayas validates the authenticity of her macabre short novel by saying “…un historia tan verdadera, que aún hoy hay quien no tiene, acordándose de ella, enjuntas las lágrimas” (Desengaños, 337); [“My story is so true that even today there are people whose eyes have not dried from remembering what happened”] (Disenchantments, 243).

The disillusions of love bluntly depict horrible crimes and diabolical acts against women in order to warn all women against deceiving men, but they also revolve around Zayas’s theory about the truth, as Alcalde stresses by quoting Nise, one of Zayas’ female characters:

Advirtiendo que, supuesto que la Hermosa Lisis manda que sean casos verdaderos los que se digan, si acaso pareciere que los desengaños aqui referidos, y los que faltan, los habéis oído en otras partes, será haberle contando quien, como yo y las demás desengañadora, lo supo por mayor, más no con las circunstancias que aquí van hermoseadas, y no sacadas de una parte a otra, como algún lego o envidioso que lo dijo de la primera (Desengaños, 199)
In the above passage, Zayas suggests to her readers that her desengaños are authentic because there is a possibility that her audience has already heard of them, or that we may have ourselves been eyewitness to similar stories. Zayas is attempting to overlay one schema on another, and to affect the minds of her readers by drawing on experiences with which they are familiar in order to articulate her point.

Alcalde states that what made Zayas’s storytelling unique is her originality in claiming to profess a truth which is different from the one claimed by her patriarchal society (Alcalde 49). With this stratagem, Zayas has her readers believing the authenticity of her stories. Indeed, she states that men “que dicendo verdades, no hay que temer, pues pueden poner falta en lo hablando, tanto en verso como en prosa; mas en la misma verdad no puede haber falta, como lo dijo Cristo nuestro Señor, cuando dijo: Si verdad os digo” (Desengaños 258); “[“can criticize whatever people say in poetry or in prose, but there can be no error in the truth, as Christ Our Lord said: When I tell you the truth”] (Disenchantments 168). Since men and women have to know the truth that surrounds them, Zayas concludes her novelas by asserting that men “que se den por desafiados porque no cumplen con la ley de caballería en no defender a las mujeres” (Desengaños 510); “[“should consider themselves under challenge because they fail to keep the laws of chivalry when they fail to defend women”] (Disenchantments 405). Zayas also agrees with men when they say that “en alguna parte tienen razón, que hay hoy mujeres viciosas y
perdidas que ha habido jamás; mas no que falten tan buenas que no excedan el número de las malas” (Desengaños, 504); [“there are in these days and age more loose and vicious women than there have ever before been”] (Disenchantments, 399); however she argues that society does not have to categorize all women as bad, and emphasizes her thought by saying that:

Y tomando de más atrás el apoyar esta verdad, no me podrán negar los hombres que en las antigüedades no ha habido mujeres muy celebradas,

que eso fuera negar las innumerables santas de quien la Iglesia canta: tantas mártires, tantas virgenes, tantas viudas y continentes, tantas que han muerto y padecido en la crueldad de los hombre; que si esto no fuera así, poco paño hubieran tenido estas damas desengañadoras en qué cortar sus desengaños, todos tan verdaderos como la misma verdad; tanto, que les debe muy poca la fábula, pues hasta para hermosear, no han tenido necesidades de ella. (Desengaños, 504)

[to support the truth of this more strongly, men can’t deny…that in antiquity there were many famous women. That would be to deny the innumerable saints celebrated by the church, all the martyrs, all the virgins, all the widows and all the chaste that have suffered and died at the cruel hands of men. If this were not so, then these disenchanters wouldn’t have had material for their disenchantments, and all have been as true as truth itself, so true that they owe little to invention. As for embellishment, they have needed it] (Disenchantments, 399)

In the above passage, Zayas justifies the purpose of her second collection of stories by questioning the existence of many famous women that inspired her opus magnum. Moreover, she argues that men can’t disagree with the existence of distinguished women who have inspired poems, novels, sculptures, and paintings. In fact, Zayas mentioned illustrious women who lived
during the seventeenth century by starting with the princess Isabel Clara Eugenia of Austria, whose father, king Felipe II, did not take any action without consulting her, or Eugenia de Contreras, a nun in the convent of Saint Juana in Salamanca, who studied Latin, theology, and grammar. Eugenia was so knowledgeable that she amazed the most erudite men. Zayas also nominated other women who excelled in prose and poetry like Maria Barahona and Ana Caro (Disenchantments, 141).

Zayas is thus a clear example of a female poet who not only sought to affect the mind of her readers, but actively informed the readers of her intentions. Her somewhat audacious and certainly straightforward pronouncement to the introduction of her desengaños makes clear that she not only recognizes the relative novelty of her position as a female poet, but that she has every intention of exploiting it, serving as an example for women and a foil to a patriarchal society intent on silencing them. Additionally, her straightforward declarations that the veracity of her characters’ stories can be confirmed by eyewitness account can be understood as a clear effort to replace existing schemata with new ones in an effort to both call attention to the misogyny inherent in her society, and challenge her audience to think about its implications and consequences for both men and women. By having her storytellers assert that their accounts have witnesses, Zayas calls on her readers to serve as those witnesses themselves, and to understand, relate to, and empathize with the scenes she unfolds. Zayas is perhaps the boldest and most ostentatious of the female authors I examine in this dissertation, as her assertive prose and direct invocation for the sympathy and understanding of her audience is clear in her work. In this manner, she contrasts sharply with the Llerena poet Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán, who favored satire and an acerbic wit, which differs from the direct and literal writing style Zayas preferred. It is to de Guzmán that my analysis will now turn.
CHAPTER 5

Provoking Laughter, Concealing Anger: Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s Satirical Portraits

Introduction

The previous chapters explored how the representation of emotions may change in different literary genres, and questioned the characteristics (tone, content, rhetoric) that writers employed to better convey emotions in poetry or prose. Consequently, I sought to explain how, by manipulating the mechanisms of tone, content and rhetoric through different literary genres, the author’s written words could affect their reader or audience. In the case of Petrarchan women sonneteers, the emotion of anger, grief, and fear conveyed in Gaspara Stampa’s and Isabella di Morra’s poetry are linked to the strategic combination of words, repetition, and sounds. This made their poetry more functional in describing personal and individual sentiments, and therefore, more effective in affecting their reader’s mind. Nevertheless, the use of metaphors to express emotions can be challenging for the reader, as metaphors are almost always open to multiple interpretations. The prose in the narration of a story is, instead, built around a form of discourse that pushes the reader straightforward to the causes and subsequent consequence of the events narrated in the plot. The emotions described in prose acquire a sort of “frank realism,” more accessible to the reader’s interpretation because of how the story is narrated, and because it is easier for the reader to relate with fictional characters. This is what María de Zayas successfully achieved with her collection of tales. Nevertheless, both the literary genres of love poetry and novelas utilized by the early modern women writers I analyzed in the previous chapters aim to express and arouse emotions in their audience, and channel their anger by means of the written word. In this chapter, I will analyze the genre of satire, utilized by Spanish writer
Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán (1611–?) who used levity and humor in order to express social tensions and her personal view and emotions regarding the misogynistic literature of her time. In order to better comprehend the author’s satirical work and set her writing within its proper historical context, I will first provide biographical information about the author. I will then proceed to explain the development of the genre of satire in early modern Spain, and, finally, conclude with an analysis of Guzmán’s satirical poems most representative of anger.

5.1. Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán: Historical and Cultural background

Much of what is known of the life of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán has been subsequently pieced together over the centuries from depictions present in her own poems, and from the work of her critics, friends, and contemporaries. While scholarly opinion varies as to the precise circumstances surrounding her birth, most reliable sources place the date sometime in the year 1618, in the Spanish city of Llerena. Born to Francisco Ramírez Guerrero, a career soldier and later an officer in the Inquisition, and Isabel de Guzmán, Catalina was the sixth of eleven children, only six of whom were destined to live to adulthood. Her name, Catalina, was bestowed upon her at her baptism in remembrance of an older sister, who had died in infancy. Catalina was also the name of her maternal grandmother, Catalina de Terrazas y Vera y Aragón.

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s life coincided with the development of Llerena as a growing cultural, economic, military, and political center of Spain during the seventeenth century. Since the late 1400s, the city had served as the third largest Inquisition tribunal in Castile, and the city was also home to a large number of learned clergymen. Its strategic location near the border with Seville, its large market, and its abundant natural resources was, by the time
of Guzmán’s birth, turning the city into one of Spain’s major economic centers. Perhaps most significantly, by the early 1600s, Llerena had become a major artistic center as well, attracting poets, artists, painters and sculptors, including Francisco Pacheco and Francisco de Zurbaran. The city was also the birthplace of author Luis Zapata de Chaves, and historian Pedro Cieza de León. This up and coming city of political, economic, and artistic prestige served as the backdrop for Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s formative years, and informed her education and her later works.

A member of a prominent family in an increasingly affluent community, de Guzmán and her siblings would have received a formidable education, with formal training in classical languages, mythology, and religion; tropes that were common in her later poetic works. Indeed, it is from her poems that, “references to, among others, Nestor, Venus, Atlas, Juno, Pallas and Narcissus” can be found, along with allusions to the Latin language, and to the heavy influence of religion, instilled in her by her grandmother and her four aunts who were nuns. Love of religion and family are the major themes that run throughout Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s poems. A poet of the baroque period, Guzmán lavished attention on the details that defined her family and circle of associates – both in terms of their physical attributes, as well as the nature of her relationship with them. Her works often unveiled surprising elements and different sides of the people in her life, and these portrayals sometimes ran counter to public perceptions, and this helps to define her familial setting and upbringing. For instance, her

father Francisco Ramírez, remembered in history as a fierce administrator, pious Inquisitor, and polarizing public figure, is depicted in her poems as a loving and doting father who both encouraged and appreciated his daughter’s poetic aspirations. Additionally, her relationship with her three sisters and two brothers, documented in her poetic portraits dedicated to each, was also believed to be an extremely close relationship.

Her proclivity for creating poetic “portraits” of family, friends, and herself, is among the most interesting and distinctive aspects of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán’s poetic style, along with an acerbic wit and humorous vein that would serve as an underpinning for much of her work. Her self-depictions tended to focus on her physical attributes, eschewing the burlesque preferences of her male contemporary counterparts, which tended towards effusive dissection of their personal lives. According to McLaughlin, “the absence of references of this type is unsurprising given the decorum demands imposed on women by a patriarchal society. Indeed, Ramírez de Guzmán herself suggests that the mere act of composing and sending a portrait may well be a transgression of female modesty.” (226)

De Guzmán’s body of work demonstrates a clear desire to participate in the literary dialogue of her day, and to affect the minds of her readers. The male dominated cultural norms of her era, however, obliged de Guzmán to operate “within the boundaries of a consolidated masculine tradition” (227) in which “women’s participation in culture […] was discouraged by the establishment.” (227) For this reason, de Guzmán turned to poetic portraiture as a means of critiquing the dominant norms of her society and calling for her own attention and recognition as an artist.

I argue that de Guzmán cloaked her criticisms and critiques of patriarchy and of the dominant poetic and literary tropes of female beauty in satirical and humorous shades, allowing
her the freedom to comment on her society and seek to affect the minds of her readers into a realization of the absurdity of the systematic marginalization and subjugation of women. As evidence of my argument, I point to the reality that Guzmán was known to use both humor and double meaning in her verses to deliberately obscure their meaning. This was particularly true in the case of her poetic portraits of herself and female associates, in which Guzmán would seek to use humor to deflect from the dominant themes of female beauty and unrequited love handed down from Petrarchan tradition. Humor and wit, then, become the driving mechanisms through which Guzmán sought to critique her society, overlaying onto existing schemata of female beauty a new schema of absurdity that called attention to the incongruity of male and female representations in poetry, and in society. Affect theory can thus be aptly applied to Guzmán, as her life and upbringing encouraged her to express in humorous satirical poetry what she sought to impress upon the minds of her audience.

5.2. Satire in Early Modern Spain

According to George Ticknor, satirical poetry did not enjoy widespread success in sixteenth century Spain. (6–7) As Antonio Pérez Lasheras explains, the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been studied from many different perspectives and via several analytical methods. Yet, a deeper and wider knowledge of Spanish writers during this time period is still missing, and we cannot, therefore, circumscribe the mode of satire in Spain to those few known authors such as Quevedo and Góngora (7). Lia Schwartz Lerner observes

\[141\] In his words: “la poesía de los siglos XVI y XVII se ha estudiado desde muy diversos puntos de vista y con métodos de análisis muy variados. Sin embargo, falta todavía por completar el panorama poético de estos años con un conocimiento amplio de un gran número de escritores llamados menores. Es necesario conocer qué es lo que se
that the definition of satire, as a literary mode, tended to group dissimilar works under the same umbrella, which consequently blurs our perception of the aesthetic practice utilized by the Golden Age writers (262).

The mode of satire in Spain can be traced back to the appearance of *El Libro de Buen Amor*\(^{142}\) (1343) by the Archpriest of Hita, known also as Juan Ruiz (c. 1283–c. 1350); the works of Rodrigo Cota de Maguaque (?–1498); and the plays of Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (c. 1485–c. 1530). The definition of satire in sixteenth century Spain is connected to the definition of the picaresque. Indeed, the author’s use of the picaresque and satire in a literary genre corresponds to the author’s critical perspective about social types and stereotypes. The *pícaro*’s viewpoint of the world is the point of view of the outsider, of a low social class individual who has the ability to expose and ridicule individuals of all social classes. In a similar fashion, the mode of satire involves criticism and mockery, and connects the reader to the author’s moral vision and to the playful, humoristic aspect of the text. The difference between satirists and moralists is the importance the satirist places on the use of ridicule (of an individual or aspect of society), and their use of irony. For instance, during the seventeenth century, Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645), who represented the epitome of satirical production in early modern Spain, reveals in his *Discurso del Alguacil Endemoniado* [*Discourse of the Demoniacal Constable*] (1627) the scorn with which intellectual writers of his time viewed as unorthodox superstitions about demonic possessions. Francisco de Quevedo, who started his literary career with a theological treatise

\(^{142}\) *El Libro de Buen Amor* [*The Book of Good Love*] is a semi-biographical work that narrates the fictive adventure of the author. Juan Ruiz begins his book with prayers and a guide suggesting the reader how to read his book, which is a collection of *exemplum*, love stories, lyrical compositions, traditional bucolic poems, and so on. Essentially, the author warns men to be careful about Love because it can be *buen amor* [good love] or *loco amor* [fool love]. Good love derives from God, whereas Fool love emerges from men’s carnal sins.
against atheism, titled *Providencia de Dios* [*God’s Providence*], and a picaresque novel titled *Vida del Buscón*, was mainly known for his mordent satirical works. According to Jules Whicker, Francisco de Quevedo was particularly cruel in deriding his enemy Juan Ruíz Alarcón. Alarcón was the target of Quevedo’s satires, which exaggerated his physical deformity and presented him as mendacious because of his red hair and his hunchback. Quevedo also derides him as slanderous, and as a *burlador of mujeres*. (104) Quevedo also satirizes the Spanish Baroque poet, Luis de Góngora (1561–1627), criticizing his prominent nose, “una nariz superlativa/ un peje espada muy barbado”143 [“a marvelous nose/ a swordfish with an ugly beard”]. Luis de Góngora’s response was likewise vitriolic, which demonstrates the trickling effect of offensive accusations, in particular if those offenses become matter of public opinion.

Despite his own physical handicap, a clubfoot and a strong myopia, Quevedo’s satirical work offers strong criticisms of various topics, including: certain physical defects; as well as certain trades and professions, including tailors, pharmacists, doctors, lawyers, and merchants. He also prolifically attacks different types of women, as well as individuals he derides as foreigners and heretics, which demonstrate Quevedo’s commitment as a defender of Counter-Reformation in Spain. Quevedo’s satire overflows with puns, turns of phrases, comic allusions, and paradoxes which describe the author’s parade of standard social types. For instance, one of Quevedo’s most extensive works, titled *La Hora de Todos y la Fortuna con Seso* [*The Hour of all Men and the Fortune in Her Wits*], written in 1635 and published in 1650, is a work that opens with a group of Greco-Roman deities who reunited to decide if Fortune should give to each human being what he or she deserves. In the development of the plot, where everyone’s ill deeds are eventually exposed and punished, Quevedo also takes care of his usual target, such as:

doctors, lawyers, poets, prostitutes, women who use cosmetics, and many political, social, and religious allusions. It is also worth mentioning that Quevedo’s shorter satirical works are in prose because they are emblematic of his writing style, known as conceptismo. Quevedo’s use of conceptismo, which is characterized by a rapid rhythm, simple vocabulary, and witty metaphors, conveyed in a concise and rapid manner the double meaning of words or phrases; in so doing, he brings to light multiple meanings. Indeed, Quevedo’s use of conceptismo, combined with the grotesque, allows the author to exploit images and visions, and to portray human absurdity in his satires. Quevedo’s satire becomes a criticism of everybody and everything: women of all social classes, old women in particular; tavern keepers, accused of adding water to their customer’s wine; pastry sellers, accused of filling their pastries with cats’ or dogs’ meat. All are accused of being sinners, or ugly, or old. His other satirical prose works include La Vida de la Corte y Oficios Entretenidos en Ella (1599) [Life at the Court and Entertaining Occupations There], which displays Quevedo’s inclinations towards satirizing figures in the city and in the court; El Caballero de la Tenaza (1606) [The Knight of the Pincers], which portrays one of his most used archetypes, money-grubbing greedy women and men intent on enriching themselves; Obras Festivas [Festive Works]; and his satirical masterpiece Sueños [Dreams or Visions], which is composed of five parts: El Sueño del Juicio Final [The Dream of the last Judgment] (1607), El Aguacil Endemoniado [The Bedeviled Constable] (1607), El Sueño del Infierno [The Vision of Hell] (1608), El Mundo Por de Dentro [The World Inside Out] (1612), and El Sueño de la Muerte [The Dream of Death] (1621–1622). Undoubtedly, Francisco de Quevedo was indebted and influenced by the satire of the Latin and Greek authors, whom he studied assiduously during his younger years. Schwartz observes that, although unknown during the Middle Ages, the diffusion of Lucian’s dialogues during the Renaissance paved the way to the rediscovery, and re-
translation, of other Latin and Greek satirical authors. Among them are Menippus’s works
(Lerner 265).\footnote{According to Schwartz, the rediscovery of Menippean satires is connected to the rediscovery of Lucian’s work in Western Europe in the early fifteenth century. It is during that time that Italian humanists searched for Greek manuscripts and added their discoveries to the works already discovered by the Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras. The humanist Aurispa brought Lucian’s works in Italy in 1422–1423.} Indeed, Quevedo’s Sueños, Discurso de todos los diablos, and Hora de todos echo the influence of Lucian and Seneca, and also Erasmus and Lipsius.

The author Lope de Vega, in his poem, titled Laurel y Apolo, calls Quevedo, “Juvenal en verso”. Indeed, the parallel between Quevedo and Juvenal\footnote{Decimus Iunus Juvenal was a Roman poet active in the late first century and second century. There is no source that provides detailed information of the life of Juvenal. He is the author of the Satires, whose style has been known for its wrathful scorn towards all representative of social deviance and corruption.} is evident in Quevedo’s harsh and skillful use of language designed to attack. In his introduction to The Sixteen Satires, Peter Green argues that Juvenal’s callous conservatism, his proclivity to oversimplify things in moral terms, his attachment to the austere moral behavior of the past, and his strategy of belittling situations and individuals, derives from the author’s terror of social change. Juvenal saw his world in peril and lashed out at upper-class shortcomings the hardest because he believed it was responsible for the corruption of the Roman government.\footnote{Peter Green, “Introduction” in The Sixteen Satires of Juvenal, New York: Penguin Group, 1998. (no. pag.)} Perhaps Francisco de Quevedo saw in Juvenal’s satires the same spirit he wanted to convey in his satirical poetry, where he attacks the vanities and vices of society in general. After all, the genre of satire involves an “attack” of some sort; one that is accepted and explained away by the author’s purpose of attacking in order to “correct, expose or defect”, with humor. The ability of satire to attack and expose a defect corresponds to a possible response from the object of derision. Satire can provoke enjoyment, but also other emotions, such as shame and anger. Indeed, reactions to Quevedo’s satires, for instance, have not always been very positive. According to Willis Barnstone, a poet of invective such as Quevedo,
knew and translated the Latin satirists, and carried on the tradition of comedy and anger in his works:

The language itself is a web of ingenious puns, and what can we do but gasp when he connects a fart with a nightingale [...] as he does in a socio-comic poem in which he also “shits on the royal emblems of the kings”? [...] Unfortunately, Spanish letters in the past have been so puritanical that critics and anthologies have excluded this vital, fantastic side of Quevedo, usually with a few words of apologetic commentary. (26)

The ability of satire to provoke uncomfortable emotions such as embarrassment and anger finds its roots in the rhetorical training and approach to satire in antiquity. Catherine Keane holds that Juvenal’s tendency toward emotions that were deeply held, and universal to all people, became the keystone of his satire. Juvenal succeeds at convincing his readers that satire is emotional expression and engagement. In Keane’s words, “Juvenal’s emotional debut reorients the convention of satiric self-presentation, creating an interpretive context for later gesture to laughter and freedom from passions [...] Juvenal prods his audience to type satire according to its emotional flavor on a scale that runs from detached to engaged.” (10) It can be inferred that Juvenal’s awareness of using deictic language as a means to involve his reader draws from the author’s knowledge of using a language dependent for its meaning on the frame of time, space and social awareness, common to the author and his audience; that is, the language of satire. Indeed, the representation of emotions in the genre of satire implies an interdependent relationship between the satirist and the world that surrounds him, and which he describes. Furthermore, the author’s personal emotions on any matter become public the moment they reach the reader by means of the act of reading. The emotion of anger, as I mentioned earlier,
assumed an important place in the assessment of an individual’s social status. The emotion of anger, especially when “performed,” was valued as a weapon in Greek and Roman society during antiquity. Men from the upper class, in particular, needed to assert their status when affronted or offended. Emotions, therefore, were deeply entangled in social rituals; satirists such as Juvenal were fully aware of this. For this reason, the satirists wrote their works not about anger, but rather used the emotion of anger as fuel to attract their audience’s attention. This demonstrates how satirists, and authors in general, were cognizant of behaviors and responses prescribed to their community. The emotion of anger could not take the form of a physical, primitive attack on an individual; rather, the written word could serve the purpose of informing and involving a larger number of individuals, such as the readers. Barbara H. Rosenwein holds that “emotional communities” were formed based on particular norms of emotional valuation and expression, dictated by religious beliefs, social and cultural rituals of a certain community (Communities, 56). I argue that the emotion of anger finds its way in another sort of emotional community, that of the reader. Rosenwein argues that in the so-called progress of western civilization corresponds to the increasing restrain of emotions (Worrying, 827). I agree with Rosenwein, but I would also add that emotions, although restrained in the public social sphere, are represented more in literary works, via the written word. The literary genre of satire, in particular, offered authors such as Juvenal and Quevedo, the opportunity to present emotions as a principal theme. Humor is undoubtedly entwined in satire’s emotional dynamics. The laughter of a reader or spectator can be connected to multiple emotions: derision, disdain, or an effort to conceal anger. What does a satirist want? To notice defects and provoke responses; to be heard.

According to Kenneth Scholberg, satire is one of the literary forms that reflect the issues, preoccupations, and the moral concepts of an era (9–13). However, he asserts, satire cannot be
classified as ONE literary genre, as it utilizes all literary genre. Satire can be found in poetry as well in short stories; it can be found in a speech or discourse or a theatrical play. Satire can utilize the form as well the language of lyric and of epic poetry. Satire can be present in verses and in prose. But at its core, satire is fundamentally about an attack. It can be smooth or ferocious, subtle or direct; but whatever form it takes, it nevertheless can always be classified as an attack.

Although there is general agreement among scholars of literature regarding the definition of satire as a form of verbal attack against something or someone, ideas vary considerably with regard to satire’s invectiveness. According to Richard Garnett, satire “in its literary aspect may be defined as the expression in adequate terms of the sense of amusement or disgust excited by the ridiculous or unseemly, provided that humor is a distinctively recognizable element and that the utterance is invested with literary form.” (5) Northrop Frye states that “two things are essential to satire; one is wit or humor, the other an object of attack.” (76) Others support the idea that satire “does not have to harm or disguise itself with comedy […] even laughing satire is laughing-at, not merely irresponsible laughing.” (Johnson 6–7) Either way, it appears that the mode of satire leans towards two poetic traditions: the Horatian, which supports the idea of ridentem dicere verum, quid vetat? [what prevents me from telling the truth with a laugh?] and the Juvenalian facit indignatio versum [indignation makes verse], which is characterized by the author’s sentiment of moral indignation and contempt against men’s vices and corruption. According to Scholberg, the purpose of Juvenalian satire is to hurt and damage, while the Horatian satire tends to evoke laughter at human weaknesses and vices.

The purpose of satire is very difficult to frame or classify. Ruth Cave Flowers, in her study of Voltaire and Rabelais’ satirical devices, argues that the simplest, yet sharpest weapon of
satire is the use of invectiveness, which is the direct verbal attack on a person, place or thing through the use of vituperative language or ridicule (38). David Worcester, however, divides invectiveness in two categories: gross invective, or abuse, which is characterized by “direct, intense sincerity of expression”, and satiric invective, which shows “detachment, indirection, and complexity in the author’s attitude.” (16–19) John Middleton Murry makes a further distinction between satire and invectiveness. In his own words:

Satire is not a matter of personal resentment, but of impersonal condemnation. Partly reason of the classical tradition, invective and true satire are often indiscriminately lumped together under the single name; but they ought to be distinguished. True satire implies the condemnation of a society by reference to an ideal; it differs from invective in that it is not an attack aimed by a particular at a particular. (64–65)

Despite Murry’s distinction, and the different nuances and tones utilized in a literary work, I think that satire is still a form of verbal attack addressed toward an individual or a community. In the case of Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán, her poems reflect the social and cultural habit of her time, furthermore the observant author comments caustically on particular physical aspects and customs, of her community that involve a vast gamut of men and women of different social strata. Guzmán’s satirical poems reveal, as Amy Kaminsky states, a complicated author; a direct and opinionated woman, who serves as an acute and careful observer of society, both contemplative and critical (384).
To understand Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s work and her place in the literary hierarchy of her day requires a deep understanding of the unique period in both the literary and political history of Spain during which she lived. Born near the Baroque period, which is thought to begin around 1600 and to extend roughly to the mid 1700s, her work was undoubtedly influenced by elements typical of this era: escapism, satire, stoicism, and moralizing, which were used by poets in order to expand on themes of life’s futility, the relentless passage of time, societal disappointment, and death, common in Spanish society during the 1600s. These themes served as the lynchpins underlying most artistic pursuits during an era in which societal turmoil and unrest led artists to air their grievances against the ideals of earlier generations. Painting and sculpture during the Baroque period was characterized by ornate detail and exaggeration in order to evoke an emotional response. In Spanish literature however, the Baroque was predominantly characterized by feelings of overt pessimism over the direction of the Spanish empire, the frailty of human life, and the feeble and temporal nature of all human endeavors. The disappointment with the realities of the world served as the catalyst for much of Baroque poetry, and Spanish Baroque literature can therefore be understood as a kind of reaction against the perceived failures of both empire, and the humanistic endeavors of the Renaissance (Green 21–22).

Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s Spain was markedly different from the expansionist, imperial, and enterprising nation that characterized the “Golden Age” of Spanish exploration in

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147 In his work, Green analyses different aspects of Medieval and Renaissance literature in Spain. In particular, he observes how Spain’s sudden emergence from inferiority to a position of great world power, during the 1400s, resulted in a productive affluence of great Spanish thinkers, such as Luis de León, Juan de Mena, Nebrija, and others. Otis also treats the changing tastes of poets, “as the Spanish erudite mind turned toward the baroque” later in the 1500s, and how the post-Renaissance Spanish mind experienced a sort of desengaño, which shattered the poets’ faith in Spain, yet purified the Spanish mind leading to a reaction away from Renaissance literary tradition. (21-22)
the 15th century, during which the rapid expansion of Spain’s political, military, and economic power throughout Europe had coincided with the idealism and cultural developments that had characterized the Renaissance. With its vast holdings in the New World, Spain was at the apex of its geopolitical power in the late fifteenth century. But with the ascension to the throne in 1598 of Phillip III (1578–1621), Spain began a long and painful decline, resulting in inevitable feelings of disillusionment, disappointment, and pessimism in the following century. Most scholars agree that these elements were especially emblematic of the Baroque literary period. Phillip III’s reign was marked by international political conflict between Spain and France, and internal societal unrest across Spain. Don Francisco Gómez de Sandov, the Duke of Lerma and Phillip’s chief minister, was the subject of scorn and derision for the manner in which he carried out Phillip’s expulsion of the Moors, and near constant war with both the British and the Dutch had brought Spain to the brink of bankruptcy. The economic situation was made only more difficult by Phillip’s entry into the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648), during which the economy continued to suffer, leading to unrest and political revolt in Spanish area of Portugal and within Spain itself. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) ended the Thirty Years’ War with Spain seeding more territories to the Dutch Republic. De Guzmán’s home of Llerena was likewise not immune to the debilitating social, economic and political pressures of the era. Llerena suffered severe economic and social unrest resulting from the expulsion of the Spanish Moors in 1609, and the devastation wrought on the city’s population by the Portuguese war of Independence in 1640. Natural disasters, plagues, and a series of inept administrative leaders contributed to the decline of Llerena during the latter part of de Guzmán’s life. Having grown up in the early Baroque period, in a Llerena that was both vibrant and growing, de Guzmán’s poetic output closely mirrors the life cycle of her home city, which fell prey to many of the same forces that caused the end of
Spain’s “Golden Age.” It was in this turbulent society that Spanish Baroque literature, and the poetry of Catalina de Guzmán evolved. Set against this cultural and societal backdrop, de Guzmán’s work came to embody the genre of _poemas de circunstancias_—a poetry of circumstance, seeking to describe, react to, and in the case of de Guzmán and others, satirize the realities of the world.

Spanish Baroque literature owes much to the influence of Stoicism and skepticism. These two classical philosophies are both cause and consequence of humanism’s hold on Spain throughout the seventeenth century. The extended duration of the Thirty Years’ war (1618–1648) resulted in the rapid diffusion of Neostoicic philosophy in Europe. In Spain in particular, Neostoic philosophy was adopted as integral component of political thought. As one of the most important intellectual movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Neostoicism sought to separate and abandon things out of human control, like bodily passions, and to yield them to the will of God. In Spain, this led to a moralizing campaign that urged individuals to draw a line between appearance and reality, and desert the false material values of the world, epistemologically referred to as _desengaño_. The notion of deceit imbued all Baroque literature, and for individuals to recognize _desengaños_ meant to recognize that they were living in a state of _engaño_. From here, the disjunction of _parecer_ (appearance) from _ser_ (reality) was inevitable. The Spanish Baroque’s view of the world became somewhat antithetical, where body and soul, reason and passion, heaven and hell, are conspicuously opposed. The antonymic aspect of the Baroque’s view of the world differentiates Spanish literature of this time from the Renaissance literary works that sought a more unified vision of the world.148

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Where the artistic and literary endeavors of the Renaissance had extolled life’s virtues and the thrilling possibilities that exploration, discovery, and scientific inquiry held forth, Baroque poetry is characterized by themes dealing with disillusionment with the grandiose hopes and ideals of the Renaissance, and societal frustrations with the gradual degradation and fracturing of the empire Spain had forged in the previous century (Veliz 69). Pessimism and disappointment gave way to a preoccupation with the concept of the passage of time, and a profound distrust of earthly and human endeavors. Melancholy and a sense of bemusement were characteristics shared by many Spanish Baroque literary authors. The Baroque symbolism was very rich. Stylistically, the Spanish Baroque literary period was an era that eschews precise definition, with a wide variety of nuances, subtleties, and societal realities serving to determine the broader contextual framework within which Baroque poetry was written and, perhaps more importantly, read and understood by the audience of the day (Beverley, 12). According to McLaughlin, “although there is general agreement that the term Baroque does carry some notion of period…and indeed of internationalism, it does not imply that all the periods literature, including lyric poetry, represented a clean break from what went before and what comes after.” (106) The clearest line of demarcation between Renaissance and Baroque poetry rests, according to McLaughlin, not in the thematic elements of pessimism, melancholy, and disappointment in and of themselves, but rather, in the “frequency, intensity, and immediacy of the manifestations” (107) of these themes. Poets, novelists, playwrights and other writers channeled the frustrations, fears, and preoccupation with loss and the frailty of the human experience prevalent in Spain during this period into their works. It was, therefore, an era of Spanish literary history during which artists of all stripes, and writers in particular, found themselves at a cultural crossroads that characterized a shift in social, political, religious, and geographic norms that separates the
Renaissance from the later stages of early modern era. There was a resurgence of themes that had characterized the poetry of earlier eras, including a renewed focus on classical and metaphysical elements. Escapism, with its emphasis on avoiding reality, often was expressed through mythology, as in the case of Luis de Góngora. But where earlier artists had extolled the virtues of the gods of classical mythology and believed in the power and wonder of the natural world, Baroque poets, responding to the cultural realities of their day, turned these themes on their head, choosing instead to create artistic landscapes that were “multi-dimensional, asymmetrical, imbalanced, and relatively obscure, reflecting a shift from a harmonious universe […] for a fundamentally different outlook […]” (McLaughlin 104). Baroque poetry sought to challenge the certainty of earlier periods that human will and ingenuity could reign supreme over nature and bend the world to its whims. It sought to establish a new reality in which all human endeavors were transient, human life was frail, and time lorded over all things and marched relentlessly towards death. Spanish Baroque society was characterized by feelings of frustration, detachment and failure, in which the lofty ambitions and fanciful ideals of previous generations were perceived to have failed and led to the decline of the once-mighty Spanish Empire. The *poemas de circustancias* are expression of Baroque poetry, for the genre itself could reasonable be said to be the resulting criticism of an artistic society trapped in a world not of their own making, as they paid the costs of the overzealous reach of the Spanish empire and the unrealized dreams of the Renaissance. Baroque poetry was a response to the realities of a world in which dreams, hopes, and an earlier world had fallen away.

Yet, in spite of the frustrations which in part drove the era forward, Baroque literature, including the poetry of de Guzmán, was markedly more “liberated and imaginative” (McLaughlin 104) than that of its predecessors. It was freer to engage in the kind of pointed and
acerbic prodding of which de Guzmán was fond. There are innumerable ways to express themes of anger, disillusionment, and pessimism, and while some artists felt victims to the general malaise and sense of overwhelming melancholy that characterized the Jacobean era in England, de Guzmán, and many of her Spanish contemporaries chose the format of satire to comment on the realities of their day. Through satire, poets like de Guzmán could use humor and wit to comment on the prevailing sense that change and fluctuation are the only constants in life. Rather than channeling their disillusionment with Spanish society into portrayals and commentaries on the relentless ravages of time or the pointlessness of human endeavors, de Guzmán and others used their poetry as an outlet to deride the illusory nature of things. Their works sought to break free of the rules and artistic bonds that had restrained art in general and poetry in particular to the learned classes in order to make them accessible to a wider audience. Defeatism, so often the death knell of opportunity, was channeled by some artists during the Baroque period, including de Guzmán, in order to create works that were satirical and witty. These artists choose to use humor in order to poke fun of the stark reality in which they found themselves, and expand the size and scope of their audience. Satire, and a penchant for parody and the burlesque, were therefore vital components of Baroque poets, who, according to Lisa Vollendorf, “invented new words and wrote tangled syntax, popular plays produced bleeding bodies or pale cadavers to audiences, and fiction relied on unlikely coincidences to move the plots forward. All in the service of wonder. (“Wonder” 229)

De Guzmán’s poetry rarely focused on death as one of its major tropes, and she seemed little concerned with the frailty of the human body or the inevitable march of time towards death and the decay of humanity and its endeavors. Only two of her poems deal explicitly with the topic of death, and the symbolic representation of time, a major theme in the poetry of her
contemporaries, is lacking in de Guzmán’s work. Nevertheless, the societal and cultural realities in which she lived and which drove the artistic and poetic community of her day undoubtedly influenced her poetic outlook and production. Her works do reflect on the reality that death is ultimately inescapable, and her sense of disenchantment, or desengaño, with life is prevalent throughout her works.

5.4 Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s Portrayals of Society

Rafael Sender, in his Spanish translation of Paul Eluard’s work titled Le Poete et Son Ombre, states that in order to understand the poetry of circumstance:

> debemos persuadirnos también de que para que un poema de circunstancia se traslade de lo particular al general y tome por ello un sentido válido, duradero, eterno, es necesarion que la circunstancia concuerde con lose deseo más simple del poeta , con su corazón y su espíritu, con su razón […] La circunstancia exterior debe coincidir con la circunstancia interior, como si el mismo poeta la hubiera producido.

[we must also persuade us that for a poem of circumstances to move from the particular to the general and take for it a valid, lasting, eternal sense, it is necessary for the circumstances to coincide with the simplest desire of the poet, with his heart and spirit, with his reason […] the outer circumstances should match the inner circumstance, as if the poet had created it].

Was Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s wish to convey her circunstancia interior in lyrics?

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If this is the case, what is the function of portrayal in her satires? Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s refined anger, as for the other women authors I analyzed in the previous chapter, finds expression in the use of irony among the pungent lines of her satire. Her intellectual anger appears concerned with the absence of women’s individual identity, and in her hilarious paintings of men and women of Llerena, de Guzmán articulates her reaction to the misogynistic beliefs of her time.

Aránzazu Borrachero Mendíbil suggests that de Guzmán’s accounts portray a solid link with a real, daily world. The author’s texts, part of them self-referential, tell us a great deal about the relationship of de Guzmán in her immediate domestic life, and as well the broader history of her surroundings. (Mendíbil, and Laughlin 92) Furthermore, Mendíbil continues, de Guzmán’s poems clarify that her descriptions do not focus on public elegies of aristocratic men and women, but on the private depiction of facts and people addressed to friends who were not able to attend public ceremonies and see those aristocratic men and women (98). An instance of a poetry of circumstance about a public ceremony is poem CIII. Religious processions, birth and baptism of aristocratic members of Llerena, bullfights, and other public traditional ceremonies represented fertile ground for de Guzmán’s observant eye. Additionally, the author could enjoy the best view of these entertaining public rituals, as members of the upper class could take advantage of the higher-level seats in arenas, churches, and theaters. In her poem, de Guzmán describes the celebrations organized in occasion of Prince Phillip Próspero’s birth (November 28, 1657), son of King Phillip IV and Queen Mary of Austria. The author states immediately the reason for writing the sonnet. In her words, “Ya que no viste las fiestas,/ en rasgos he de copiarlas,/si no es
De Guzmán clearly addresses her poem to a friend who did not attend the historical event, but she does not set a celebrative tone in her poem. From the beginning of the poem, de Guzmán artfully establishes the mood of her romance, by defining the event to be a masquerade. The author demands her readers’ attention and starts by saying “con todo, atención me presta/si no te hace mucha falta,/que quiero hacer un romance de mojiganga” [that being said, pay attention to me/ if it is not too much trouble for you,/ because I want to write a romance about this masquerade.] Both Mendibíl and Maclaughlin commented that Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s critical eye towards the celebration for the prince’s birth coincides with the author’s father’s opposition to las fiestas de toros, a festivity that caused many financial troubles to Llerena. De Guzmán continues her romance aiming to ridicule every aspect of the celebration and its guests. For instance, the author makes fun of the participants by calling them “alvestruces” [“ostriches”], in her words: “De parte del lucimiento/ se puso en todos la gala/ y fue fiesta de alvestruces,/ por lo que gasta” (Ramírez de Guzman, Mendibíl, and Laughlin v. 14–17, 325) [“From showcasing/ everyone dressed up for the gala/ and it became a feast of ostriches/ for waste”]. De Guzmán’s analogy of ostriches helps to create the image she wants to depict the participants at the celebration for the prince’s birth. The depiction is of a uniform mass of people all dressed alike, who think in the same manner and therefore not particularly alert and aware of the financial waste derived from the celebration. Also, according to Mendibíl and McLaughlin, during de Guzmán’s time the ostriches were known to be “aves tontas y simples […] sin tener diferencia ni gusto en uno más que un otro” (. Mendibil, and Laughlin 325). Colorfully, De Guzmán derides

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150 Full text in the appendix.
151 All translations should be attributed to me, unless otherwise indicated.
the poor skillfulness of the knights who played at the medieval games and at the end “las cañas se vuelven lanzas” (v. 79–80) [“the canes become lances”], she disdains the merchants who earn a great deal of money during these celebratory occasions, but also “orejas de mercader/ hacen cuando se repara/ que su traidor disimulo/ tienes dos caras.” (v. 173–176) [“merchants turn a deaf ear when his treacherous camouflage reveals his double face”]. De Guzmán, ridicules all the members of society, starting with the upper class and working her way down to the ladder of social class. Furthermore she laughs at the possible reaction of her readers, in her words: “Ya dirán los escribanos/ que mi pluma es mal cortada,/ y una causa le harán/sin otra causa” (185–188). [“The writers will say already/ that my pen is badly cut,/ and they will make a case/ out of no case”]. The author expresses her awareness of being object of criticism among other writers; nevertheless, she plays with irony scorning the possible judges of her poetry, judges of a court that does not have a case. The idea of being judged as an author, as a woman writer, and as an individual by the members of the Lleran’s society, is a current motif in de Guzmán’s satire. It certainly expresses the author’s wish to be part of the literary tradition of satire, but also de Guzmán’s eagerness to ridicule misogynistic beliefs and representation of female body in literary traditions. This is particularly evident in the author’s treatment of female portraits and how those portraits represent a verbal attack against the overwhelmingly repetitive portrait of women’s beauty by male authors, but disguised as laughter.

In numerous sonnets, Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán echoes the motifs of Petrarchan amorous lyric tradition and adapts them to the baroque conventions. The self-portrait and the portrayal of the beloved in poems, as I mentioned in chapter 3, was indeed a popular theme during the 1600s, when the creation of a portrait coincided with the urge to define and understand the notion of identity of early modern men and women. Mendibil states that “el
sentido de la identidad es un periodo decisivo de avance, siendo Descartes expression señera de ello. Con él, dicen los filósofos, -la identidad se convierte en un asunto derivado del intelecto."\(^{152}\) (Olivares, ed. 81) This might explain De Guzmán’s strong interest in portraying by means of words the members of her family, friends, and people of the community of Llerena. The notion of identity is derived from the author’s intellect. Specifically, de Guzmán’s urge to affirm her identity as a woman author results in the multiple portrayals she presents to her reader. Furthermore, her portrayals present a double intellectual objective. The first is to be part of the literary discourse dominated by men, which repeats a common wish among the women authors analyzed in this dissertation. The second aim is to redirect Petrarchan conventions, “in order to critique gender inequities and to discard the mute, passive role assigned to women on and off the page.”\(^{153}\) (Powell, 44)This trait in de Guzmán’s portraits makes her poetry unique as she addresses many of them to women. While the object in Stampa’s poetry is the Count Collaltino di Collalto, and in di Morra’s poetry is her father, de Guzmán’s poems focus on women’s beauty. Although, the author seems to comply with the Petrarchan imagery, she uses humor to further complicate her relation to traditional poetic conventions and also to mock traditional female occupations such as sewing, cooking, and the care of men and children.

In sonnet I, de Guzmán focuses on a renowned Petrarchan trait of female beauty, Laura’s golden locks. De Guzmán though transforms them into black hair. The author starts:

> Que le retrate, Celia me ha mandado,


\(^{153}\) Amanda Powell, “¡Oh qué diversas estamos,/dulce prenda, vos y yo!: Multiple Voicing in Love Poems to Women by Marcia Belisarda, Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán, and Sor Violante del Cielo” in *Studies on Women’s Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras el Espejo la Musa Escribe.*
y solo obedecerla es mi cuidado;

y aunque es vana osadía

querer copier la luz que alumbra el día,

vaya a Dios y a ventura,

en señas, lo menor de su hermosura.154 (Mendibil, and Laughlin v. 1–5, 47)

[To portray her, Celia ordered me,/ and to obey her is my only care;/ and although it is futile audacity/ to wish to copy the light that enlightens the day,/may it go to God and fortune,/in signs, the least of her beauty.]

As if a noble woman commissioned her a portrait, Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán humbly obeys and prays God and fortune to help her in her enterprise to start because it will be an endeavor to portray such a beauty, compared to the pure light of the day. The trope of the “unskilled” author is recurrent in the poetry of both men and women authors; however, I believe that for de Guzmán it was particularly important to state it as she is not planning to conform to Petrarchism, as she writes “vaya, pues, su cabello de otro modo” [“Let’s do, then, your hair in a different way”] and continues, “es un mar de Guinea su cabello/ que en negras ondas se dilate bello.../ mas ¡qué bozal apodo![...] madeja de azabaches es su pelo” (v. 13–17) [“her hair resembles the Guinea sea,/that expands in beautiful black waves.../But, what a stifled nickname! /a skein of her hair is jet black”] As Adrienne Martín observes, de Guzmán is comparing Celia’s hair to the hair of a black slave arrived from Guinea, which certainly did not to reflect the idea of female beauty, “when Petrarchism and fashion demanded fair untanned skin of ladies of privileged classes.”

154 Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán, “Sonnet I:Retrato de una dama, en chanza Silva” in Obra Poética. (47)
Therefore, de Guzmán built, on the prior-knowledge of beauty, a new schema of “beauty” by aiming to ridicule the previous idea of female beauty. Indeed, the image of black slaves was often used as a comic element because, during the Spanish Golden Age, a black individual was an anomaly, not akin to the social convention of what was perceived as acceptable. Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán was aware of this and in describing the features of a black woman as beautiful meant also to push the image of the black woman as object of desire, or object of love; an idea at the time impossible to accept or conceive. As Kate Lowe and Baltasar Fra-Molinero argued, the early modern attitude towards black people was affected by Renaissance ideas, including firmly held classic and medieval preconception related to Africa and its inhabitants. 

Although de Guzmán’s portrayals of black slaves give us a clear idea of the attitude and jokes about African slave, the author was not interested in engaging with racial issues and stereotypes. Rather, de Guzmán wanted to provoke her reader by targeting men and women’s pretentiousness in her community. She continues tapping on the motif of Petrarchan fragmented description of female body. De Guzmán describes Celia’s beautiful eyes, “sus ojos, ¡qué hermosura!, están roncando;/ dormidos saben más que otros velando.” (35–36) [“Her eyes, what a beauty!, are sleepy;/ asleep they know more than others watching.”] According to Francisco Rodríguez Marín, Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán might have been inspired by Luis Vélez de Guevara’s play El Diablo Cojuelo (1641), where the main character, the devil, ironically describes the people of a town walking slowly and roncar hermosura (Rodríguez 55) [snoring beauty]. The image of semi-closed eyes echoes the image of Beatrice’s and Laura’s eyes from Dante and Petrarca respectively. Indeed, de Guzmán is playing with the previous literary traditions that depicted women’s eyes. For Dante, Beatrice’s eyes represent the mediate vision of Christ, as he follows her gaze toward the “eternal light” (Paradiso, 33, 40–45).
Petrarca, Laura’s eyes are the reflection of the poet’s own eyes, “who was sole light and mirror to my eyes” (*Canzoniere* 312, 11). For Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán, Clelia’s eyes are beautiful, asleep, but alert. Those eyes tell to every gracious young girl, in Latin “nigra sum, sed formosa” (v. 36) [“I am black, but beautiful”]. Clelia’s eyes do not emanate any eternal light or reflection, but they serve as double meaning to de Guzmán’s poem. Indeed, Clelia’s *pupilas* indicates both her eyes and as well the meaning of “female students”. De Guzmán writes that the black slave advocates in Latin for her race and beauty to channel a far more discussed topic; namely, women and education. The author continues talking to her reader, “del latín, no se espante el que lo viere,/ sino que son pupilas considere,/ y no es de niñas el seguir a Marte./¡Estudien, pues, que tienen tan buen arte!” (v. 37–39) [“of Latin, do not be afraid you who reads it,/since I am considering girl students,/ and it is not girl like to follow Mars./Study girls, because, you have such a good art!”]. Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán lays a new schema on the prior knowledge and belief that women do not need education as for them only beauty is necessary. By having the black slave proclaiming her beauty in Latin, de Guzmán overlaps the idea of a subaltern society (black slaves = women) on the necessity of education (knowledge of Latin). Furthermore, the author informs her readers that young girls cannot follow the art of war (Mars), they on the contrary should study because it is a more appropriate art (good art). De Guzmán reinforces this idea in the following lines, deriding again the unnecessary idea of beauty as, “no es cosa forzosa/ tener nariz cañuto toda hermosa.” (v. 47–48) [“it is not mandatory to have a small nose to be all beautiful”]. De Guzmán’s goal is clearly to provoke laughter by deriding the traditional idea of female beauty, but the author’s agenda is also calling for her reader’s attention and response as in numerous satire poems she clearly invites her readers of not being surprised of such daring words. De Guzmán’s irony, I believe, is an innovative tool of “emotional language,” as she
clearly wished to achieve, in general, recognition as a capable author, but she also uses it as a tool to first shock her readers, and then to instruct them on the ideas of gender of that time. De Guzmán was indeed pushing her readers toward new gender ideas about women. According to Mary Douglas, laughter cracks the meaning hidden under the appearance of a first meaning (158). De Guzmán is exactly doing that by bringing into relation elements of previous literary tradition and new element in her poetry. The accepted traditional pattern is challenged by the appearance of a new pattern (black hair, black slaves, and so on), which reveals the hidden one: the image of women that look for a subjectivity rather than comply with uniformity.

An example of Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán’s perception of her subjectivity, of her personal and social meaning of being a woman, it is her self-portrayal in sonnet XLIX. The author starts with saying that it will be costly for her modesty to portray herself; however, since it has been said that she is beautiful and in order to please who asks for her portrait, she will abide to it. In her words: “un retrato me has pedido/ y aunque es alhaja costosa/ a mi recato,/ por lograrte agredecido/ si he dicho que soy hermosa,/ me retrato” (v. 1–6) [“A portrait you have asked of me/ and, although it is an expensive piece of jewelry/ to my modesty, /for giving you the pleasure of it, /if I said I’m beautiful, /I portray myself”]. According to Entrambasaguas and other scholars who studies de Guzmán’s works, there is not an existing painted portray of the author, but we can have an idea of her look described by anonymous authors contemporaries of de Guzmán. She has been described as beautiful, “dotada de extraordinaria blancura, sus cabellos rubios tenían aquel meravilloso tono rojizo obscure que tanto se estimó entre las bellas de la época de splendor de Venecia.” (Entrambasaguas and Ramírez de Guzmán 23) It appears, though, that Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán was not of the same opinion. Certainly, the author was complying to her modesty, as knowing that her poem would have been read by many, de
Guzmán wouldn’t wish to be accused of boasting her beauty, since modesty and humbleness was a more appreciated virtue in a woman of her time. Indeed, she plays with the word *retrato/retracto* [*portray/retract*] in order to express her sincere reluctance in painting her image in words. Additionally, de Guzmán warns her reader that since she is not particularly beautiful, her portrait will also not be charming. In her words, “y por que sea parecido,/ha de ser cosa perdida/ la pintura” (v.16–18) [“and in order to be liked it, the painting/ should be lost”] She continues mocking, as usual, the Petrarchan poetic convention. Her hair does not interlock “nodi d’amore” like Laura did for Petrarca; on the contrary, it is “cabello rebello” [“rebel hair”]. As Borracchero observes, de Guzmán plays with the word double meaning. The adjective *rebelde* means “rebel” or “wild,” which could refer to the author’s unmanageable hair, but as well de Guzmán could refer to her unwillingness to portray herself, and in general to her hostility and anger towards the traditional perception of women’s beauty. If Laura for Petrarca is “the new flower of beauty” (sonnet 186), de Guzmán justifies the lack of metaphors and analogy of flowers to describe her facial features with her lack of knowledge about flowers; she simply informs her reader that “será dificultosa de imitar,/ pues no le entiendo/ yo la flor” (v. 29–30) [“it will be difficult/ to imitate,/ because I do not understand/flowers”]. In the same manner, the author derides the celebrated whiteness of a female body, as her cheeks and hands unfortunately are not that white and “nunca hallo quien sobre ellas/ dé dos blancas” [“never find who would give *dos blancas* (two coins) for them”]. Her mouth, though, is well refined, although who sees it can exclaim: “¡cosa es grande!” [“what a big thing”]; jokily, the author refers to her inability to stay quiet. Therefore by means of puns and irony, de Guzmán addresses her virtues and defects, offering to her reader a humanized portrait of a woman, her uniqueness and individuality.
De Guzmán was a satirist. In fighting back against entrenched misogyny of her day, her weapon of choice was humor, wit, and a keen eye for the absurd. Yet her choice of satire can be understood as little more than a preference for a particular genre. Anger, that is, frustration with Petrarchan depictions of women; bemusement at the customs and traditions of the class structure of her time; and disappointment that her contemporaries seem unable to recognize the absurdity of it all, are the themes that dominate her poetry, and serve to help her construct her “portraits” of her world, and the individuals within it, as she truly saw them: silly, inept, and at least in part, fundamentally corrupt. Satire was the road de Guzmán chose, but the engine that drove her forward was anger, and a fair degree of resentment at her lot in life for having been born female. Through her work, she demands respect and attention. Through her portraits, she engages in dialogue with her male contemporaries. And through her keen and cutting humor, she excoriates a society too foolish to recognize and celebrate her talents. The author’s portraits use humor to affect the minds of her readers; and offer a clear and definitive new schema that overlays a layer of the absurd onto the seriousness and restrictions of her culture.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to critically analyze the manner in which early modern women writers sought to use anger to create works of literature that attempted to communicate their feelings of resentment to their readers. Specifically, I have analyzed the works of Gaspara Stampa, Isabella di Morra, Maria de Zayas, and Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán, in order to demonstrate how each of these women used the written word for a dual purpose: to enter into the literary dialogue of their day regarding the nature of women, and secondly, to attempt to affect the judgments of their readers (and by extension, their societies) regarding women – women’s bodies, their emotions, and their place in the community.

My study has applied the concept of affect theory to literature, suggesting that complex emotional states can be transmitted to a reader through writing. Language acts as a catalyst capable of triggering an emotional response in a reader by activating pre-existing emotional states, or schemata, that are inherent in all people. Writers, in this theoretical framework, attempt to influence the manner in which a reader applies those emotions to a subject. By influencing the manner in which readers emotionally relate to a subject, and working to transmit their own experiences onto their readers, these women writers sought to overlay new schemata onto the existing schemata of their readers, and how they viewed the emotions of women.

In the case of the women writers I have analyzed in my study, the overriding emotion they sought to convey was a sense of anger; anger at perceptions of their nature and their bodies, handed down from antiquity; anger over their literary portrayal in works throughout the medieval and Renaissance periods; and anger over their treatment in society and culture. Using different genres and writing styles, each woman sought to use language to prompt an emotional reaction in their readers, one that would lead their readers to understand their frustrations and animosities,
and garner a sense of sympathy that could change the way the reader perceived women. Affect theory suggests a method (namely, the act of writing), while the concept of schema theory suggests a mechanism, (the transmission of new emotional understanding onto existing emotional states) through which these women sought to convey their anger, and affect the minds of readers.

It is worth noting that the women writers I analyze in this dissertation sought to affect the judgement of readers in their own time and place. The intent of my dissertation is to establish a connection between the written word and its ability to affect the judgement of a reader – not to establish a direct link between early modern, and post-modern feminist tracts. It is my contention that the early modern women writers I analyze were among the first to break the traditional mold and to write openly about their anger and frustrations, and to seek to affect the judgments of their readers. In so doing, I believe it is not an unreasonable suggestion to hypothesize that their efforts laid the conceptual groundwork that allowed for the gradual expansion of women’s efforts to write about their emotions and their place in society. The immediate impact of their efforts was undoubtedly small, resulting only minor changes in cultural attitudes and beliefs.

I believe it is a reasonable inference to suggest that slow, gradual, incremental changes did occur in society over the course of many years, even centuries, occurring long after they had each lived. Nevertheless, it is my belief that through their efforts, the door had been opened for women of later generations to pursue their own efforts to speak of their anger openly, and to attempt to transmit their own perceptions and schemata, affecting the judgment of their readers. I believe it would be a worthy pursuit for future scholarship on women’s studies and the application of affect theory to evaluate the gradual, case-by-case evolution in women’s writing from the early modern period onward. However, this is not the intent of this dissertation. Instead,
my aim is to establish a method and mechanism through which early modern women writers sought to affect their audience, and transmit their sense of anger over their literary portrayals throughout history.

The emotion of anger is characterized by a multifaceted nature: it requires the participation of other emotions in order to exist, and it leads the individual to an act of self-evaluation that inspires the individual to seek to take action in order to attempt to right a perceived wrong or injustice; by reinstating the desired balance, individuals would achieve vendetta. Anger was the catalyst that prompted these women to write about their myriad other emotions, including love, loss, fear of death, grief. I argue that the early modern women writers that I analyze in my dissertation experienced a kind of awakening. They had access to books and knowledge, and educated themselves in the misogynistic tradition regarding women’s bodies and emotions, from antiquity through the early modern era, which expounded on women’s perceived faults and their presupposed weak nature. Shocked by what they read, an initial sense of shame soon translated into feelings of anger and resentment. Gaspara Stampa, Isabella di Morra, Maria de Zayas, and Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán strived to disprove the misogynistic beliefs of their time, by re-appropriating the literary depiction of women in their time and place. They utilized the literary canons (genres) in fashion during their era, such as Petrarchn poetry, short stories, and satire. In my dissertation, I demonstrate that Stampa, Di Morra, Zayas and de Guzmán, used anger as a tool of persuasion aimed at expressing their ideas and transmitting their anger onto their readers, and to experiment with the literary discourse of their time.

The manifestation of anger in a written text first involves a rigorous self-analysis, followed by an analysis of the opponent who caused the perceived offense or injustice. In my dissertation, I have worked to demonstrate that these women authors first analyzed their own
standing in society when they became aware of how they had been portrayed in literature. These portrayals of women’s bodies and alleged emotional shortcomings become subjects in their poems and short stories – topics to deride, refute, and to exaggerate in order to reveal the absurdity of those concepts and to counter patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs. Obviously, it is the intention of any author – male or female – to capture the attention of their reader. However, as stated, I argue that early modern women authors’ intention is twofold. First, like all writers, they hope to be widely recognized as accomplished authors. Second, they hope to change their reader’s judgments regarding women by affect their audience through words. To demonstrate this point, I combine the conceptual precepts of schema theory and affect theory. Schema theory suggests that human experiences are functionally similar to units of knowledge. According to Robert Cockroft, it is a fact that speakers and writers deliberately play on the emotions of their audience in order to persuade their audience. Early modern women authors, I suggest, had exactly the same aim. By overlaying one schema of knowledge over another, they sought to transmit their emotions to their readers, and in so doing, to affect their readers’ judgments about women. Both Gaspara Stampa and Isabella di Morra have been grouped under the heading of Petrachan sonneteers because of the use of Petrarca’s poetic style in their collections of sonnets. The first schema can then be understood as the Petrarchan language of love, and by his poetic style, represented by his *Canzoniere*, which would have been familiar to most readers of poetry during the early modern era. The motifs of unrequited love, desire, grief, the image of Laura, and the desire for eternal fame, are indeed themes presented in the poems of both Stampa and di Morra. Petrarca, as a man, was able to use these motifs to call for the approval of his audience without consequence. Women of the early modern era asserted that right for themselves. On top of the schema of the Petrarchan love sonnet, Stampa and Di Morra sought to overlay a new
schema, with the purpose compelling their readers to understand and comprehend the anger these women harbored over their literary portrayals, and their circumstances in life.

What occurs, I suggest, between the authors and their audience is an actualization of the emotion in the mind of the reader. Stampa and Di Morrra, for instance, invoke the reader’s own sense of frustration and experiences with anger by writing of their personal experiences as women. Stampa transmits the schema of unrequited love by relaying her passionate, real-life love affair with the Count Collaltino di Collalto, which activates her reader’s knowledge of Petrarca’s passionate, though fictional, love for Laura. Instead of an overly emotional woman, she hopes to come across as a justified and rational individual, whose anger is perfectly logical and controlled in light of her experiences. Isabella di Morra overlays the schema of grief and abandonment caused by the absence of her own version of “Laura”, represented by her sense of abandonment by her father. In both cases, the women’s experiences are funneled through the emotion of anger, as the fact that they were women meant they had no means available to them to right these perceived wrongs other than the written word. The overlapping of new emotional experiences onto a prior knowledge causes the audience to engage effectively with the text as well as with the author’s emotions. What triggers the audience’s emotions is essentially a new unit of knowledge, or a new understanding of an emotional state, that seeks to compel the audience to sympathize, (or sometimes reject) the author’s attempt at persuasion.

In similar fashion, Zayas’ attempts to affect her readers. Clearly stated in her prologue dedicated to the reader, Zayas asserts her awareness of the fact that a woman writer will not be warmly welcomed among the male authors or audience members. Still, onto the misogynistic schema of her time, Zayas attempts to overlay new schema. Her most persuasive works utilize female characters, who possess many of the weaknesses and faults that have described as being
inherent to women for centuries. However, Zayas instills in them a sense of anger, allowing them to obtain their revenge and instill a sense of justice, either by murdering the man who caused an offense to them, or by forcing them to accept more pleasant outcomes in convents or in the afterlife. The satirical portraits of Catalina Ramírez de Guzmán go even further in their attempts to affect the minds of her readers away from the entrenched misogyny of her day. In her collection of satires, de Guzmán derides the Petrarchan motif of Laura’s blonde and fair skin, choosing instead to extol the beauty of a black slave. This defies not only the standard of female beauty, but also the notion of desire, as it was unthinkable in that time to desire a black woman.

Whether these women are able to produce a literal shift in the thinking of their audience or not, what emerges from their efforts are clear depictions of women’s authors who have acquired for themselves a sense of justice. Their anger is not of the type described in Cicero’s Tusculanae Disputationes, as an aegritudo and perturbation, (which entails disorder and distress of the mind), nor is it the uncontrolled and destructive anger described by Seneca in De Ira. Rather, they effectively demonstrate that women are capable of experiencing and, moreover, of using, a rational, justified anger. As Aristotle argues, anger is an emotion that can be tempered by reason and strength of will within the individual’s social context. These women of the early modern era demonstrate that this is entirely possible for women. In doing so, they left a literary legacy that, I believe, affected the minds of their readers, and helped women to enter into the literary dialogue of their era, and re-appropriate the bodies and emotions of women from male authors.

For scholars of women's literature of the early modern period, my dissertation seeks to open a new line of interpretation and understanding of emotions as represented in text, as well to analyze the connective tissue between an author and their audience. After all affect theory
explores the gap between author and reader, and attempts to fill the breach by suggesting the manner in which the author can relate to their reader, and attempt to persuade and affect their judgments.
I. Portrait of a Lady, in jest Silva

Que la retrate, Celia me ha mandado,  
y solo obedecerla es mui cuidado;  
y aunque es vana osadía  
querer copier la luz que alumbra el día,  
vaya a Dios y a ventura,  
en señas, los menor de su hermosura  
Póngame en cobro, que este basilisco  
es de las libertades abarrisco,  
y su rostro hermoso  
de cuanta almas ve, roso y velloso.

Mas el retrato empieza  
y es fuerza el empazar por la cabeza.  
Es un mar de Guinea su cabello,  
que en negras ondas se dilate bello

Mas ¡qué bozal apodo!  

To portray her, Celia ordered me,  
and to obey her is my only care;  
and although it is futile audacity  
to wish to copy the light that  
enlightens the day,  
may it go to God and fortune,  
it indicates, the lesser of its beauty.  
Put me in charge, that this basilisk  
is without distinctions of freedom,  
and her beautiful face,  
of how many souls go, red and  
velvet.  

But the portrait begins  
and forces to start from the head.  
It is a sea of Guinea her hair,  
that expands in beautiful black  
waves...  

But, what a stifled nickname!
Vaya, pues, su cabello de otro modo:

Lets do, then, your hair in a different

madeja de azabaches es su pelo,

a skein of her hair is jet black,

que Venus con desvelo

that Venus sleeplessness,

hiló, según colijo,

spinned, gathered in order to

para cuerdas al arco de su hijo.

string the bow of his son. 20

Mas pelillos dejando,

More hairs leaving

por la frente se va musa entrando

on your forehead if my muse is
going

como por casa propia.

back to her own home.

Es de la aurora tan divina copia,

It belongs to dawn such a divine

tan clara, cristalina y transparente

so clear, transparent and crystal 25

que es hija de algún clérigo su frente

that her forehead can be of a cleric’s
daughter,

y si suda mi dama,

and if you sweat my lady,

presume que la frente se derrama.

I presume that your forehead spills.

Cada ceja es un rasgo soberano

Each eyebrow is a sovereign trait

con que escribió Cupido de su mano.

that Cupido described of his hand. 30

Sepan cuantos miraren atrevidos

Be aware of how many bold gazes

esta deidad que han de quedar rendidos.

upon this deity that must be

rendered.

Sus ojos, ¡qué hermosura!, están roncando;

Her eyes, what a beauty!, are sleepy;

dormidos saben más que otros velando. watch.

They know more than others asleep
Y dice en ellos cada niña, airosa:

"Nigra sum, sed formosa."

Del latín, no se espante el que lo viere,

sino que son pupilas considere,

y no es de niñas el seguir a Marte

¡Estudien, pues, que tienen tan buen arte!

Dejando niñerías, que ya enfada,

me voy como por viña vendimiada

y, a pintar su nariz, mi musa toma

el camino de Roma

Y para esta, jurada

que ha de holgar esta vez lo perfilada,

que no es cosa forzosa

tener nariz cañuto toda hermosa.

En jazmín, es su boca breve herida

y si otras muerte dan, ella da vida.

Y sus mejillas bellas

cielos de rosa son, campos de estrellas.

And they says to every girl, graceful

“I am black, but beautiful”

From Latin, do not be afraid you

who reads it,

Since I am considering girl students,

and it is not girls like to follow

Mars.

Study, because, you have such a

good art!

Leaving childishness behind, this is

annoying,

I'm like vineyard harvested,

and, to paint her nose, my muse took

the road to Rome.

And for this reason, I sworn

the sketch has to be idle this time,

it is not mandatory

to have a small nose to be all

beautiful.

In the jasmine, its short mouth is a

short cut,

and if others give death, she gives

life.

And her beautiful cheeks

Are pink skies, fields of stars.
Órgano de cristal es su garganta:
con tal dulzura suena cuando canta
que al que diestro se escapa de su vista,
en oyendo, la muerte a letra avista.

Con sus manos, la nieve
a tener competencias no se atreve
porque, con su blancura,
egra es el alba y es la luz oscura,

que la naturaleza
la repartió a dos manos la belleza,
con perfección tan rara
que a retratarlas ella no acertara.

Y a sus pies, de intentarlo, perdón pido:

a la mano los pies se me han venido.
Digo que son tan breves sus matices
que vinieron sus pies de sus narices;

que si a su pequeña no hallo apodo
(ya que fue Roma a su nariz por todo),

A crystal instrument is her throat:
so sweetly sounds when it sings
that to the skillful one it escapes
from his view,
in hearing, the letter catches sight of
death.

With her hands, the snow
does not dare to compete
because, with its white,
black is the dawn and dark is the
light,

that nature
gave beauty to her with two hands
with perfection so rare
that it is not certain how to portray
them.

And at her feet, trying, I ask
forgiveness:

To my hand my feet have come.
I say that its nuances are so brief
that they came his feet under his
nose;
that if I do not find a nickname for
their smallness
(as was Rome to his nose for
su talle, garbo y brio,
quererlo dibujar es desvarío;
y, aunque hipérboles halle,
¿quién me mete en dibujos con su talle?

Con tanta gracia rinde y enamora
que he sospechado que es saludadora,
y no es presunción vana,
que hay quien rabia por ver su luz tirana.

Mas si a alguno el mirarla le permite,
su discreción con su beldad compite
y, en competencias tales
tienen votos iguales.
Miren en su retrato ya acabado
lo que va de lo vivo a lo pintado,
y si no es parecido,
poca culpa el pincel habrá tenido,
pues aunque fuese Apeles,
ignorara el acierto sus pinceles,
que siendo su hermosura soberana,

Gracefully, she surrenders and loves
that I suspected she is a healer,
and it is not an idle boast,
That some people see the light of
their tyrannical rage.
but if anyone allows to look at her,
her discretion competes with her
beauty
and, such competition
has equal votes.
Look at her portrait now finished
that goes from the live to a painted one,
and if you don’t like it,
little blame the brush will have had,
because even if it was Apeles,
he ignored his skilled brushes,
because of her sovereign beauty,
XLIV. A lady that tried many times to be religious and, in trying, moved from that purpose and left the convent, and moved around so many times.

Ya no me atrevo, Marica,
a disculpar tus mudanzas,
que eres un arpón con tocas

y una luna con enaguas.

Para reñir tus pendencias,
siempre de tu parte estaba,
mas ya no hallo salida,
al haber tú hecho tantas.

Viéndote mudar convento
con tal presteza, pensaban
que andabas las estaciones
o delincuentes buscabas.

No intents más el ser monja,
pues que tienes, se repara,
más salida que un lugar
y que un calvo más entradas

Tantos hábitos te has puesto
que ya bien puede tu hermana,
por los actos positives,

no es possible imitarla ciencia humana.

human science cannot imitate her. 90
ponerse el de Calatrava wear the cross of Calatrava.  
Para augment de tu dote, To augmentation of your dowry, 
no ha sido mala la traza, the general appearance has not been 
bad, 
pues uno solo tenías as you had only one 
y ahora con tres te hallas. and now you found three. 
A puro mudar conventos, By constantly changing convents, 
temo que has de quedar calva, I am afraid you will stay bald, 
y esto de andar de mal pelo and this habit of having “bad hair” 
es desaire de tu gala. it’s a disgrace for your regalia. 
El año del noviciado The novitiate year 
para ti nunca se acaba, never ends for you, 
pues antes que religiosa, since before declaring to be religious, 
has profesado ser varia. you have professed to be inconstant. 
También quisiste tenerlo You wanted to keep it 
hasta para ser casada, anyway to be married, 
dando ocasión que te viese giving occasion to who saw you 
quien dude que te alcanzara. to doubt in wanting to reach you. 
Y aunque tus desatenciones And although your inattention 
quieran deslucir tu fama, can tarnish your reputation, 
no te estorba al ser bien vista don’t bother to be well seen 
haber sido mal mirada. since you are not well reputed (seen). 
Sólo en mudarte eres firme Only about changing you are constant 
o, si fortuna mudaras O, if fortune could change 
y gozaras la belleza and enjoy the beauty
sin pension de la desgracia, without money(pension) of misfortune,
nunca tan bizarra fueras never so bizarre were,  
pues con desdichas lo pagas, because with misfortunes you pay for it,
ni aquésa cara tuvieras neither you would have that face,
que te ha costado tan cara, which costed you very much
pues siendo menos hermosa, because if you were less beautiful
fueras menos celebrada you would have been less celebrated,
y a que por ser muy querida since you are desired very much
llegas a ser desgraciada you ended up being disgraced.

XLIX. Portrait of the author, having been asked from her brother.

Un retrado me has pedido A portrait you have asked of me
y, aunque es alhaja costosa and, although it is an expensive piece of jewelry
a mi recato, to my modesty,
por lograrte agradecido, for giving you the pleasure of it,
si he dicho que soy hermosa, if I said I'm beautiful,
me retrato. I portrait myself,
El carecer de belleza The lack of beauty
con paciencia lo he llevado I have patiently carried;
mas repara I realized more and more
en que ya a cansarme empieza, That I begun to get tired
y aunque lo niegue mi agrado, and even denying my liking
me da en cara. it gets to my face.
Pero, pues precepto ha sido, But, since tradition requires it,
va a un retrato reducida my figure will be reduced to a small
portrait; y por que sea parecido, and in order to be liked it, the painting
ha de ser cosa perdida has to be lost.
No siendo largo ni rizo, Not being long or curl,
a todos parece bien everyone seems to like
mi cabello, my hair,
porque tiene tal hechizo because it has such charm
que dicen cuantos lo ven that when people see it
que es rebello. say it that it is rebel.
Si es de azucena o de rosa If a rose or a lily
mi frente, no comprende is my forehead, I don’t understand
ni el color, the color,
y sera dificultosa and it will be difficult
de imitar, pues no le entiendo to imitate (paint), because I do not understand
yo la flor. flowers.
Y aunque las cejas en frente And although the eyebrows in the forehead
viven de quien las mormura live of those who speak of them
sin recelo, without suspicion,
andan en traje indecent, walk in indecent dress,
pues siempre está su hermosura still her beauty is always
de mal pelo. messy hair (bad mood)
Los ojos se me han hundido, My eyes were sunken,
y callar sus maravillas and don’t say anything about their wondrous
me da enojo, makes me angry,
pero tengo dos negrillas but I have two negrillas
cuyo agrado me ha servido which have served me pleasantly
muy de ojos
Mis mejillas, desmayadas,
nunca se ve su candor,
y esto ha sido
porque están tan espantadas
las tales que hasta el color
han perdido.
De mi nariz he pensado
que algún azar ha tenido
o son antojos,
p ero a ello me persuade
porque siempre le he traído
entre los ojos.
Viéndola siempre a caballo,
mi malicia me previene
que lo doma,
y en buena razón lo hallo,
pues aunque lengua no tiene,
se va a Roma.
No hallaré falta a mi boca,
aunque modesto el desdén
me lo mande,
porque el creerlo me toca,
y dicen cuantos lo ven:
“ ¡cosa es grande!”

as eyes.
My cheeks, unconsciousness,
never you see their candor,
and this happened
because they are so frightened
that their color
they have lost
My nose I thought
had some bad luck,
or has cravings,
but it persuaded me
because I have always carried it
between the eyes.
Always watching her riding a horse,
my malice prevents me
from taming it,
and I find a good reason,
for although it doesn’t have a tongue,
it goes to Rome.
I wouldn’t miss to describe my mouth,
Though my modest disdain
commands me,
because I have to believe it,
and when they see it, they say:
“what a big thing is!”
Pero aunque es tan acabada, confieso que le hace agravio un azar, pues al que mayor le agrada dice que tiene en el labio un lunar. Mi garganta es pasadera y, aunque no es larga, no estoy disgustada, pues en viéndome cualquiera ha de confesar que soy descollada. Tiene el que llega a mi mano, aunque ella misma lo niega, gran ventura, pues llegue tarde o temprano a sus dedos, simepre llega a coyuntura. Con todo, tan poco valen (aunque alegan con querellas no ser mancas) que cuando mejores salen, nunca hallo quien sobre ellas dé dos blancas. Porque nada desperdicida,
dicen que es corto mi talle,  
y he observado  
que no es talle de codicia,  
pues nadie puede negarle  
que es delgado  
Que el mundo le viene estrecho  
su vanidad ha llegado  
a presumir  
y, viendo su mal derecho,  
más de cuatro le han cortado de vestir.  
Pues no merece mi brio quedarse para después,  
ni el donaire:  
o no encarezco por ser mío,  
solo digo que no es cosa de aire.  
A ser célebres sospecho que caminan mis pinceles  
cuando copio,  
pues el retrato que he hecho sé que no le hiciera Apelles tan al propio.  
Sin haberte obedecido,  
el trabajo, a mi despecho,
ha sido vano, was vain,
pues tú cabal lo has pedido, although your asked for a full order,
y todoel retrado he hecho I made it all
de mi mano. by my hand.
Y que tiene, es infallible, And it has, it is infallible,
algún misterio escondido, some hidden mystery,
y yo meno and I suffer
por saber cómo es posible to know as it is possible
que estando tan parecido that being that likeable
no esté bueno. it is not good.
Tal cual, allá va esa copia As such, there this portrayal goes
y, si me desees ver, and, if you want to see me,
yo bien creo, so I believe you do,
según ha salido propria, as soon as to it is out,
que te ha de hacer perder it will make you lose
el deseo. the desire.
Y si aqueste efecto hace, And if this is the effect that has on you,
temo que pareceré I fear I'll look
confiada confident,
que aunque no me satisface that although it doesn't satisfy me,
mi trabajo, quedará my work,
muy pagada. I will be highly paid.


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