Morisca Acts of Resistance and the Subversive Agency of Isabel/Zelima in María de Zayas's *La esclava de su amante*

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> *"Zelima soy, no doña Isabel; esclava soy, que no señora; mora soy, pues tengo dentro de mí misma aposentado un moro renegado como tú, pues quien faltó a Dios la palabra que le dio de ser mío, ni es cristiano ni noble, sino un infame caballero."*
>
> – María de Zayas, *La esclava de su amante.*

With these cathartic words, the protagonist Isabel Fajardo confronts the man who has raped and abandoned her. Her autobiographical account, entitled *La esclava de su amante*, is the opening tale of the *Desengaños amorosos*, María de Zayas's second frame-tale collection of short stories, published in 1647. While Isabel's words express the frustration and suffering she has endured as the object of Manuel's actions, they also display her resistance to the cruelty women faced under the honor code in early modern Spain. From the moment she is raped, Isabel begins to redefine herself and emerges as what Lisa Vollendorf has called "an autonomous subject, an agent of self-invention" (77). Although a Christian aristocrat, Isabel disguises herself as a female Muslim slave named Zelima to secretly pursue Manuel, in the hopes that he will marry her and thereby restore her honor. This disguise as the Muslim Zelima does more than reflect

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Isabel's loss of honor and social status after she is raped. It also empowers her as a subversive presence within the *Desengaños amorosos*. Amy Kaminsky has asserted that Isabel takes on the identity of Zelima "because, as a woman abandoned by a man whom she still loves, she is no longer free" and that her slave identity signals "her degradation" and "psychological enslavement" to Manuel (382). While I agree with these assertions, they are only part of the story. Isabel's disguise as a Muslim slave is also the source of a subversive agency that empowers her to confront her rapist and combat the patriarchal repression of women under the honor code. In addition, her textual presence as Muslim and Christian evokes the subversive ability of Morisco women and slaves to preserve their Muslim identity and resist state efforts to assimilate them into the Christian mainstream after the fall of Granada in 1492 (Figure 1).

Bernard Vincent, for example, notes that "las mujeres fueron las campeonas de lo que se podría llamar resistencia pasiva de los moriscos. Sin su obstinación, sin su acendrada fidelidad, se habrían perdido muchos ritos y costumbres ancestrales" (592). Mary Elizabeth Perry, meanwhile, reminds us that following the Muslim expulsion of 1502, "many Moriscos transformed their homes into a space of resistance. Within this domestic sphere, the women in particular taught their children the prohibited Arabic language as well as Muslim prayers. . . . Even when subjected to arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, and punishment by the Inquisition, these women continued to devise strategies of resistance" (*Handless Maiden* 65).[1]

Figure 1: *La capitulación de Granada* by Francisco Pradilla y Ortiz (1882).

Zayas herself lived in Madrid during the latter sixteenth century, a time when new Morisco populations were establishing themselves throughout central Spain following the Christian defeat of the Morisco uprising in the Alpujarra Mountains of Granada in 1569. When considered in relation to the conditions for Morisco women and slaves during Zayas's time, Isabel's duality as Muslim and Christian may be read as a commentary on the "Morisco problem" confronting Spain at the dawn of the seventeenth century. Isabel uses her disguise as the Muslim Zelima to recover her voice and respond to the rape and patriarchal repression she has endured. Her determination to pursue and confront her rapist reflects tensions between

patriarchal control and female agency in early modern Spain. At the same time, however, her decision to re-create herself as a female Muslim slave embodies Moriscas' resistance to state efforts to erase their Muslim heritage and identity. This study re-examines the enigmatic Isabel/Zelima figure in light of the socio-historical conditions of Moriscas during Zayas's time. By so doing, I reveal Zayas's representation of Morisco women and slaves as a means to expose the destructive influences of the male honor code, while reminding us of the challenges faced not only by women, but also religious minorities in early modern Spain.

The narrative frame of the *Desengaños* is set during the carnival season in Madrid, where five noblemen and eight women have gathered in the home of Laura, whose daughter, Lisis, is recovering from a year-long illness. To pass the time while Lisis recovers, ten women, including Lisis, tell stories to the group. Each woman narrates a tale, or "desengaño" since each story is meant to open women's eyes to the cruelty and deceptive ways of men. Isabel is the first to tell a story, and the only frame-tale character who narrates events of her own life. As the narrative frame begins, however, Isabel's disguise as the Muslim Zelima conceals her Christian identity from those present at the soirée. Here Isabel's own voice is absent from the text, while the primary narrator defines her as an object of material exchange that has been passed from Lisis's aunt to her niece as a gift:

> En esta ocasión le trujeron a Lisis una hermosísima esclava, herrada en el rostro, mas no porque la S y clavo que esmaltaba sus mejillas manchaba su belleza, que antes la descubría más. Era mora, y su nombre Zelima, de gallardo entendimiento y muchas gracias, como eran leer, escribir, cantar, tañer, bordar y, sobre todo, hacer

> excelentísimos versos. Este presente le hizo a Lisis una su tía, hermana de su madre, que vivía en la ciudad de Valencia; y aunque pudiera desdorar algo de la estimación de tal prenda el ser mora, sazonaba este género de desabrimiento con decir quería ser cristiana. (116-17)

As Zelima's Christian identity has yet to be revealed, her status as Muslim slave is presented as a possible detriment to her value, rather than a source of subversive agency.

Isabel's silent confinement within the narrative frame and the narrator's "reading" of her as Muslim slave evokes the displacement and marginalization of Muslims and Moriscos from the Catholic mainstream of early modern Spain. Driven from their communities and forced to conceal any ties to Islam, the Moriscos of Spain were increasingly persecuted and marginalized throughout the sixteenth century until their expulsion in 1609 (Figure 2).

As a population that transgressed religious, cultural and geographical lines that separated Islam and Christianity, the Moriscos were viewed by church and state as a potentially subversive population within the recently re-conquered Iberian peninsula.[3] The 1609 expulsion, however, did not eliminate the entire Morisco population, nor concern over their presence. Perry, for example, estimates that 10,000 to 15,000 Moriscos avoided the expulsion (*Handless Maiden* 166-67).[4] In addition, many Moriscos returned once the expulsion ended, while additional waves of Muslims continued to enter Spain from northern Africa.[5]

Figure 2: *La expulsión de los moriscos* by Vincenzo Carducci (1627). Museo del Prado, Madrid.[2]

Among the areas that attracted Moriscos during Zayas's childhood and adolescence was the court city of Madrid, where Zayas lived during the first half of the seventeenth century.[6] Prior to the 1609 expulsion, the Moriscos of Granada had been relocated throughout southern and central Spain (Figure 3).

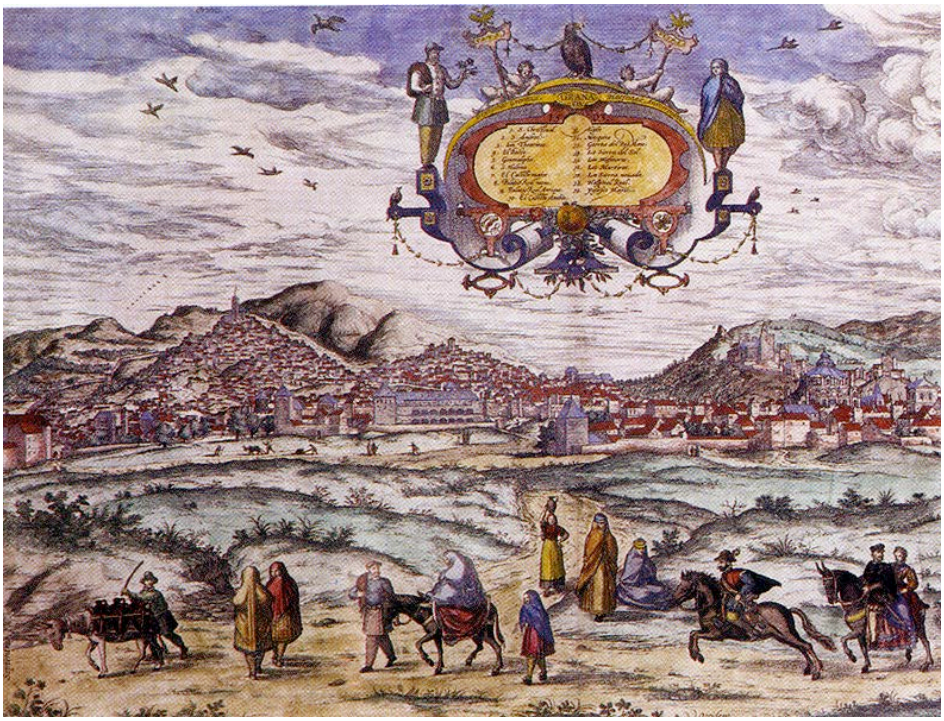

Figure 3: *View of Granada* by Joris Hoefnagel (1564).
Biblioteca Provincial de Granada.

In 1566 Phillip II issued a ban on all Morisco culture throughout his kingdom. This ban sparked the Morisco uprising in the Alpujarra Mountains of Granada, which began in late December 1568 and lasted almost two years (Harvey 217). When Christian forces finally defeated the Morisco uprising in early November 1570, more than 50,000 Granadan Moriscos were rounded up and deported to areas throughout southern and central Spain. The final destination of the Granadan Moriscos included Albacete, Seville, Cordoba, Extremadura, Segovia, Valladolid, Palencia and Salamanca (Domínguez Ortiz and

Vincent 50-52).[7] Inquisitorial, as well as eclesiastical, state, and municipal archives throughout Castile corroborate the region's popularity as a destination for the Granadan Moriscos. This is especially true in those regions throughout the sixteenth century with the highest populations of Moriscos, such as Andalusia, Valencia, Aragon, Extremadura, Old and New Castille, and Catalunya (Epalza 19). Based on these events, it is quite likely that the Castilian presence of Moriscos and their eventual expulsion in 1609 made a lasting impression on Zayas in her youth and formative stages as a writer.

Disguised as the slave Zelima, Isabel prepares to tell her story. She exits the central room of the soirée and enters an adjacent changing room. Upon her return, she has carefully constructed her appearance to combine elements of both Christian and Muslim design:

> . . . salió Zelima de la cuadra, en tan diferente traje de lo que entró, que a todos puso en admiración. Traía sobre una camisa de transparente cambray, con grandes puntas y encajes, las mangas muy anchas de la parte de la mano; unas enaguas de lama a flores azul y plata, con tres o cuatro relumbrones que quitaban la vista, tan corta, que apenas llegaba a las gargantas de los pies, y en ellos unas andalias de muchos lazos y listones de seda muy vistosos; sobre esto un vaquerillo o albuja [sic] de otra telilla azul y plata muy vistosa, y asida al hombro una almalafa de la misma tela. Tenía la aljuba o vaquerillo las mangas tan anchas, que igualaban con las de la camisa, mostrando sus blancos y torneados brazos con costosos carcajes o brazeletes; . . . . (123)

Yllera explains that *carcajes* were a type of "Argollas, brazaletes usados por las moras" (123 n.22). Kaminsky, meanwhile, observes that Isabel's cambric linen and lace blouse with its

puntas, or paired cone-shaped decorations hanging from the sleeves, are European, while the *aljuba* and *almalafa*, as well as her sandals and skirt, are of Muslim design (382). Both the *aljuba* and *almalafa* were long cloaks worn by women that covered the entire body from shoulders to feet.[8] Like the Moriscos, Isabel's appearance is neither entirely Christian nor Muslim, but a hybrid construction of both cultures.

The multiple layers of Isabel's clothing take on special significance when viewed in relation to Ronald Surtz's illuminating work with Inquisitorial documents from Valencia. Surtz's work reveals that Moriscas often hid sacred Arabic texts, called *herçes*, within the folds of their clothing during Inquisitorial raids on their homes. The *herçes* were Koranic passages written on a piece of paper. This paper was then folded and sealed in a cloth sack, and covered with a finer cloth. The *herçes* were believed to have magical powers for healing, but had to be carried or worn to be effective. They were therefore often worn around the neck or sewn into women's garments (424-25). Male Moriscos were more socially active outside the home and adopted Christian dress, which had fewer layers and was tighter fitting, making the concealment of such texts difficult. Women's clothing, on the other hand, was looser and multilayered and more suited to concealing the *herçes* (432) (Figure 4).

Surtz notes that by the end of the fifteenth century, one third of the population of Valencia was Muslim, and that from 1566 to 1620, more than a quarter of Moriscos tried by the Valencia Inquisition for the practice of Islam were women (422, 421). During this period, traditional Muslim attire took on new meaning for Moriscas as not only a sign of their Muslim heritage, but a symbol of resistance to Christian authorities. Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that Lisis's aunt lived in Valencia, where she acquired the slave Zelima, not knowing her to be the

aristocratic Isabel. This connection to Valencia evokes the subversion and resistance for which the Valencian Moriscas were known during Zayas's time.

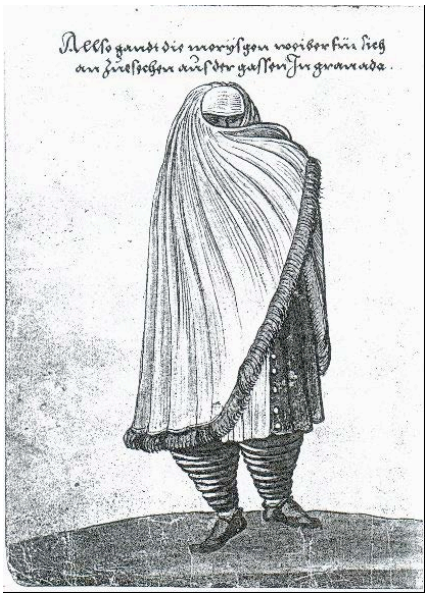

Figure 4: "Morisca in Street Dress."
Authentic Everyday Dress of the Renaissance: All 154 Plates from the "Trachtenbuch" by Christoph Weiditz (1529).

Isabel's spatial move from the adjacent changing room into the center of the main room foreshadows her textual transition from the margins of the frame, where she has remained verbally silent, to a central position of control as narrator and subject of her autobiographical tale. Her ability to re-create herself transforms her status from silent object to

creative agent. As she reemerges, the Moorish attributes of Isabel's clothing deceive even the primary narrator, who defines her solely in terms of her Islamic appearance: "la hermosura, el donaire, la majestad de sus airosos y concertados pasos no mostraba sino una princesa de Argel, una reina de Fez o Marruecos, o una sultana de Constantinopla" (124). When she assumes her central position to begin her tale, Isabel's silent subversion is complete. In her final moments of textual confinement within the narrative frame, Isabel is perceived as a divine being who captivates her audience:

> Admirados quedaron damas y caballeros, y más la hermosa Lisis, de verla, . . . , y no acertaba a dar lugar al disfraz de su esclava, y así, no hizo más de callar y admirarse (como todos) de tal deidad, porque la contemplaba una ninfa o diosa de las antiguas fábulas. Pasó Zelima hasta el estrado, dejando a las damas muy envidiosas de su acabada y linda belleza, y a los galanes rendidos a ella, pues hubo más de dos que, con los clavos del rostro, . . . , la hicieron señora y poseedora de su persona y hacienda, y aun se juzgara indigno de merecerlo. (124)

The subversive agency Isabel displays in the narrative frame parallels her prior actions as Zelima while pursuing Manuel. More than an expression of her "enslavement" to Manuel after being raped, Isabel's Muslim identity may be read as a text of resistance that allows her to cultivate control and authority over others.

Only when she assumes narrative control does Isabel relinquish the identity that has been a source of subversion for her. As she breaks her silence, Isabel speaks from a position of textual and social authority as autobiographical narrator and Christian aristocrat:

> Muchos desengaños pudiera traer en apoyo de esto de las antiguas y modernas desdichas sucedidas a mujeres por los hombres. Quiero pasarlas en silencio, y contaros mis desdichados sucesos, para que escarmentando en mí, no haya tantas perdidas y tan pocas escarmentadas. Y porque lo mismo que contaré es la misma represión, digo así. – Mi nombre es doña Isabel Fajardo, no Zelima, ni mora, como pensáis, sino cristiana, y hija de padres católicos, y de los más principales de la ciudad de Murcia; que estos hierros que veis en mi rostro no son sino sombras de los que ha puesto en mi calidad y fama la ingratitud de un hombre; y para que deis más crédito, veislos aquí quitados; así pudiera quitar los que han puesto en mi alma mis desventuras y poca cordura. Y diciendo esto, se los quitó y arrojó lejos de sí, quedando el claro cristal de su divino rostro sin mancha, sombra ni oscuridad, descubriendo aquel sol los esplendores de su hermosura sin nube. (125-27)

In this self-defining moment, Isabel strips away the facial markings that label her as slave. In early modern Spain, slaves were frequently branded on a cheek or the forehead with the letter S (*ese*) and a vertical line (*clavo*) through it, proclaiming their status as slave (*esclavo*).[9] Such permanent, physical markings were used to identify slave subjects and prevent their escape. Muslims captured during the fall of Granada, for example, were turned over to their new owners, who "tenían derecho, no solamente a servirse de ellos, sino a herrarlos en la cara o brazos para reconocerlos e impedir su fuga" (Domínguez Ortiz 5). When Isabel later describes the creation of her disguise, she explains that "fingiendo clavo y S para el rostro, me puse en hábito conveniente para fingirme esclava" (153). Because Isabel is able to remove and toss aside these markings ("se los quitó y arrojó

lejos de sí"), they function on a temporary or symbolic level, rather than a permanent, literal one. Isabel herself suggests this as she declares "estos hierros" to be no more than "sombras de los que ha puesto en mi calidad y fama la ingratitud de un hombre." As she removes her slave markings, Isabel also declares her Christian identity. Her words and actions dismiss the views and opinions of the frame narrator that have thus far defined her for the reader. This ability to create, destroy, and reconstruct herself recalls Joanne Frye's notion of the female autobiographical narrator: "A woman who speaks in her own voice of her own experience is a subject rather than an object, and as such, she is capable of self-definition and autonomous action" (143). As both subject and narrator of her autobiographical tale, Isabel is able to combat cultural definition and objectification. She is a subjective presence that reminds us of its ability to create and define itself in/on its own terms.

As creative agent, Isabel first constructs herself visually through her elaborate attire, and then verbally as autobiographical narrator. Her resistance to external labels at the moment of her textual transformation from Muslim (Zelima) to Christian (Isabel) also alludes to the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity of the Moriscos, as well as resistance to the dominant Christian mainstream for which Morisco women were known. As discussed above, the Valencia Inquisition tried many Morisco women for preserving and hiding sacred Arabic texts within the folds of their Muslim attire during Inquisitorial raids on their homes. In accordance with such acts of resistance, Perry explains that Morisco women were viewed as a source of subversion for the role they played in preserving Islamic culture within the household ("Behind the Veil" 48). Unlike their husbands and brothers, who were socially and professionally

active outside the home and more assimilated to Christian culture, Moriscas had less contact with Old Christians and raised their children in the religion and culture they knew, that of their Muslim ancestry. This phenomenon persisted in areas most heavily populated by Moriscos, such as Valencia and Granada.[10] As the persecution of Moriscos intensified, the struggle to make them more like Christians shifted from the male-dominated public sphere of battleground, court, and church to the private woman-centered household, where Moriscas were in charge of cultural practices such as child-rearing, cleanliness, and food preparation that Inquisitors regarded as evidence of apostasy (Perry, "Moriscas" 275-76). For Vincent these practices constitute a form of passive resistance, which Moriscas used to preserve their Islamic identity:

> . . . las mujeres fueron las campeonas de lo que se podría llamar resistencia pasiva de los moriscos. Sin su obstinación, sin su acendrada fidelidad, se habrían perdido muchos ritos y costumbres ancestrales. . . . Puesto que no se puede realizar en público manifestaciones de fidelidad al Islam, el hogar se convierte en sitio privilegiado para tales manifestaciones. (592-93)

Just as traditional Muslim attire allowed Morisco women to preserve their heritage and resist the efforts of Christian authorities, Isabel's own Muslim attire becomes a source of subversive power that she uses to challenge and respond to the patriarchal authority of the Spanish honor code.

The theme of honor is integral to Isabel's evolution since her primary objective is to restore her family's honor through marriage to Manuel. From the outset, Zayas establishes the psychological and emotional impact the honor code has had on her narrator, who tells us she is the only child of "padres católicos, y de los más principales de la ciudad de Murcia" (127).

As an only child, Isabel is responsible for her family's honor and Manuel's actions have left her with insufferable guilt: "—Nací en la casa de mis padres sola para que fuese sola la perdición de ella" (128). Isabel's feelings reflect the oppressive nature of the code, which made women the repository of man's honor. As Williamsen explains, "Fathers, brothers, and husbands guarded the purity of the women in the family; any stain or reputed stain on female virtue consituted an offense against male honor" (138). Much like the Inquisition's attempts to rid Spain of the subversive threat of the Moriscas, the honor code demanded male authority and control and sought to eliminate the threat of female agency through a culture of fear and suspicion. Williamsen, for example, has observed the influence of the honor code as a social structure "designed to perpetuate unchallenged male dominance and to ensure women's compliance with the cultural expectations regarding morality" (139).[11]

Isabel's relationship with her father reflects the gendered power differential on which the code depended. He belongs to one of the preeminent families of Murcia and honor is central to his identity. Isabel explains that her family moved to Zaragoza so that her father could assist the Crown against the uprising in Catalonia. As she recalls their move, Isabel notes her father's obsession with honor: "Previnose la partida, y aderezado lo que se había de llevar, que fuese lo más importante, para, aunque a la ligera, mostrar mi padre quién era, y que era descendiente de los antiguos Fajardos de aquel reino" (129-30). It is in Zaragoza that Isabel first meets Manuel, the son of a widow with whom her family temporarily resides. Isabel's beauty catches Manuel's eye, although she initially rejects his advances to protect her honor. After all, it is her father who will decide her marriage, in keeping with the honor code. When her friend and servant, Claudia,

suggests that Isabel accept Manuel's advances and marry him, she replies matter of factly "El gusto de mi padre se hará el mío" (135).

Although Manuel eventually wins Isabel's love and trust, he soon reveals his true colors. One afternoon as Isabel passes by his bedroom, Manuel pulls her into his room and locks the door. Isabel is immediately overcome with fear and looses consciousness: "Yo no sé lo que me sucedió, porque del susto me privó el sentido un mortal desmayo" (137). When she awakens, Isabel experiences a loss of identity and self: "Pues pasada poco más de media hora, volví en mí, y me hallé, mal digo, no me hallé pues me hallé perdida, y tan perdida, que no me supe ni pude volver ni podré ganarme jamás" (137). Ironically, this declaration that she will never recover herself after being raped is itself a piece of the narrative fabric Isabel creates to tell her side of the story and redefine herself. Although she repeats herself and stumbles as she searches for the words to recount the trauma of her rape, Isabel quickly recovers her narrative thread and explains that her feelings of loss soon turned to anger and a determination to take matters into her own hands. As a victim of rape, Isabel's only options are death or marriage. Amy Kaminsky reminds us that "According to the traditional Spanish honor code, in the case of fornication (as opposed to adultery) only the death or marriage of the transgressing couple could restore honor to the family of the woman involved" (391, n.16). Isabel's first inclination is to restore her honor by killing Manuel herself. Her words are reminiscent of the violent sexual act that Manuel has just committed, although now the tables have turned: "arremetí la espada que [Manuel] tenía a la cabecera de la cama, y sacándola de la vaina, se la fui a envainar en el cuerpo" (137). This attempt fails, however, and she turns Manuel's sword upon herself,

declaring "Traidor, me vengo en mí, pues no he podido en ti, que las mujeres como yo así vengan sus agravios" (137). Isabel's efforts are once again interrupted by Manuel, who "abrazándose conmigo, me quitó la espada, que me la iba a entrar por el cuerpo por haber errado el del infame" (137). That evening she leaves home secretly, taking with her "mis joyas y las de mi madre, y muchos dineros en plata y en oro" (151). As she slips free of her home and her father's control, Isabel's declaration conveys an underlying confidence in her abilities: "todo estaba en mi poder" (151). She enlists the help of Octavio, a former family servant, and the two travel to Alicante, where Manuel is to depart for Sicily in service to the Spanish viceroy. When Isabel learns that Manuel wishes to purchase a slave for his journey, she seizes the moment and alters her appearance:

> . . . fingiendo clavo y S para el rostro, me puse en hábito conveniente para fingirme esclava y mora, poniéndome por nombre Zelima, diciendo a Octavio [que] me llevase y dijera era suya, y que si agradaba, no reparase en el precio. Mucho sintió Octavio mi determinación, vertiendo lágrimas en abundancia por mí; mas yo le consolé con advertirle este disfraz no era más de para proseguir mi intento y traer a don Manuel a mi voluntad . . . . (153)

Isabel's plan is successful and Manuel's family purchases her as their slave. With a sense of pride Isabel notes the convincing appearance of her slave markings, "tan perfectamente imitado el natural, que a nadie diera sospecha de ser fingidos" (154). Her disguise quickly becomes a source of agency that she uses to manipulate her new owners: "yo les supe agradar y granjear, de modo que antes de muchos días me hice dueño de su voluntad y casa" (153-54). These words recall Isabel's presence in the narrative frame, echoing what the primary narrator has already observed regarding her agency: "sabía muy bien Zelima granjear

y atraer a sí la voluntad de Lisis" (117). Having grown up under her father's wishes, Isabel is now able to influence others for her own benefit. Her disguise as slave ironically acts as a catalyst of agency and control. As Zelima, Isabel is able to reinvent herself and confront Manuel as a symbolic response to the cruelties women endured under the honor code.

When Manuel realizes the true identity of his slave, he demands that Isabel explain her presence before him. Although Isabel admits the suffering she has endured as Manuel's victim, her words display an unwavering determination to restore her honor. In addition, Isabel appears inspired by the identity that has become a source of agency during her journey:

> Zelima soy, no doña Isabel; esclava soy, que no señora; mora soy, pues tengo dentro de mí misma aposentado un moro renegado como tú, pues quien faltó a Dios la palabra que le dio de ser mío, ni es cristiano ni noble, sino un infame caballero. Estos hierros y los de mi afrenta tú me los has puesto, no sólo en el rostro, sino en la fama. Haz lo que te diere gusto, que si se te ha quitado la voluntad de hacerme tuya, Dios hay en el cielo y rey en la tierra, y si éstos no lo hicieren hay puñales, y tengo manos y valor para quitarte esa infame vida, para que deprendan en mí las mujeres nobles a castigar hombres falsos y desagradecidos. Y quítate de delante, si no quieres que haga lo que digo. (157)

Not only is Isabel willing and able to avenge her loss of honor by herself, her actions will serve as inspiration to future generations of women. In an attempt to calm Isabel, Manuel promises to rectify her situation. Although she no longer trusts him, the need to restore her honor compels Isabel to accept his promise: "más llevaba el pensamiento de restaurar mi honor que no el achaque de la liviandad" (157). Nonetheless, Isabel savors a

moment of success, noting that "para la primera vez [yo] no había negociado muy mal" (158).

During an excursion to an island off the Sicilian coast, Isabel, Manuel, and Felipe are kidnapped by Moorish pirates and taken to Algeria. This twist in her journey tests Isabel's ability to pass as Muslim and preserve her agency while in captivity. Once again she is successful, and her disguise as Zelima now provides her an inside advantage as a perceived member of the dominant culture. Isabel recalls her ability to deceive first the ship's Moorish captain, and then his daughter upon their arrival to Algeria:

> Contento quedó el arráez, tanto con la presa por su interés, como por parecerle había hecho un gran servicio a su Mahoma en sacarme, siendo mora, de entre cristianos, y así lo dio a entender, haciéndome muchas caricias, y a los demás buen tratamiento, y así, fuimos a Argel y nos entregó a una hija suya hermosa y niña, llamada Zaida, que se holgó tanto conmigo, porque era mora, como don Manuel, porque se enamoró de él. (159)

It is from Zaida that Isabel receives the elaborate attire she later dons to tell her story at the soirée for Lisis. When Zaida attempts to erase Isabel's slave status, however, Isabel refuses to give up the self-imposed facial markings that have allowed her to deceive her Moorish captors:

> Vistióme [Zaida] luego de estos vestidos que véis, y trató de que hombres diestros en quitar estos hierros me los quitasen; no porque ellas no usan tales señales, que antes lo tienen por gala, sino porque era S y clavo, que daba señal de lo que yo era; a lo que respondí que *yo misma me los había puesto por mi gusto* y que *no los quería quitar*. (159, my emphasis)

Reminiscent of her relationship with Manuel's family and later

with Lisis, Isabel's slave disguise provides a measure of influence and control during her captivity. Isabel recalls that Zaida was so taken with her that "yo hacía y deshacía en su casa como propia mía" (159). Even in captivity, Isabel preserves her influence and power. She uses the jewels and money from her home in Zaragoza to pay her fellow captives' ransom and negotiates their safe return to Spain.

Isabel's ability to influence others and preserve her autonomy amidst conditions of confinement suggests the unique challenges that Muslim and Morisco slaves posed to Christian authorities. Although by definition the Moriscos had converted to Christianity, their religious practices were elastic and difficult to control. Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent, for example, note that various post-expulsion *autos de fe* included cases of Moriscos who "a veces eran esclavos bautizados que habían recaído en la práctica de su antigua fe" (258). This continued practice of Islam was all the more troubling to authorities since slaves were exempt from state control and expulsion as the legal property of their Old Christian masters. While authorities prohibited Islamic practices in public, they had no control over the practices of slaves within a particular owners' home:

> . . . los esclavos mahometanos que en gran número había en España . . . nunca fueron incluidos en los decretos de expulsión, porque hubiera supuesto una lesión del derecho de propiedad de sus dueños; y tampoco estaban sometidos a la autoridad de la Inquisición, puesto que legalmente no eran cristianos; se sabía que profesaban su culto, aunque se les prohibiera toda práctica externa del mismo. (Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent 257)

This loophole, which allowed slaves to practice their Islamic faith, created an intriguing dynamic between confinement and freedom. This dynamic is reminiscent of Isabel's agency during

her captivity in Algeria, where her status as Muslim slave is a catalyst for control and allows her to negotiate her freedom. Perry also explains that many Morisco slaves were able to create an independent life free of control by Christian masters or officials:

> Although most Morisco slaves remained in Iberia under the control of Christian owners, many lived independently. Some became free through manumission or by saving wages to purchase freedom. Others simply fled and made their way to mountains and remote areas where they joined other Moriscos who had settled there, beyond the view of officials intent on expelling them. (*Handless Maiden* 158)

Female slaves, in particular, were valued for their longer life expectancy compared to their male counterparts. They also could reproduce more slaves and provide domestic service (Perry, *Handless Maiden* 167). At the same time, however, authorities feared these women since they could raise their children in the Islamic faith, producing future generations of infidels or false Christians. Such formation was possible because children born to slave mothers also assumed slave status and remained with their mothers throughout infancy (Perry, *Handless Maiden* 171-72).[12] Although slavery was not common in all of Spain, Zayas's home city of Madrid was one area where it proliferated.[13] The conditions of confinement and freedom experienced by slaves, and their reputation as a source of subversion, recall Isabel's contained yet subversive presence within the narrative frame and the agency she develops as the Muslim Zelima in pursuit of Manuel.

Back in Zaragoza, Isabel confronts Manuel for the final time. In a public declaration before Zaida, Leonisa, Felipe, and Manuel's family, she demands to know once and for all if he will

restore her honor through marriage:

> Cesen ya engaños y cautelas y sepa Zaida y el mundo entero que lo que me debéis no se paga con menos cantidad que vuestra persona, y que de estos hierros que están en mi rostro, cómo por vos sólo se los podéis quitar, y que llegue el día en que las desdichas y afrentas que he padecido tengan premio; . . . . . si hasta aquí con hierros fingidos he sido vuestra esclava, desde hoy sin ellos seré verdadera. Decid, os suplico, lo que queréis que se disponga, para que lo que os pido tenga el dichoso lauro que deseo. (162)

When Manuel tells Isabel he never loved her and reveals his intention to marry Zaida, Felipe draws his sword and kills him, declaring "Ya hermosa doña Isabel, te vengó don Felipe de los agravios que te hizo don Manuel. Quédate con Dios, que si escapo de este riesgo con la vida, te buscaré" (164). With marriage to Manuel no longer an option, Isabel is now obligated to marry Felipe, since he has avenged her honor: "a quien [don Felipe] tan obligada estaba por haber hecho lo que a mí me era fuerza hacer para volver por mi opinión perdida" (164-65). In the closing moments of her tale, however, Isabel rejects marriage to any man, noting the indelible mark Manuel has left upon her: "pues ya no ha de resucitar don Manuel, ni cuando esto fuera posible, me fiara de él, ni de ningún hombre, pues a todos los contemplo en éste engañosos y taimados para con las mujeres" (166). Instead, she chooses to enter the convent and take religious vows. As she kneels before Lisis, Isabel explains her decision: ". . . tengo elegido Amante que no me olvidará, y Esposo que no me despreciará, . . . pues por un ingrato y desconocido amante he pasado tantas desdichas, y siempre con los hierros y nombre de su esclava, ¿cuánto mejor es serlo de Dios, y a Él ofrecerme con el mismo nombre de la Esclava de su

Amante?" (167). As Kaminski observes, conventual life allows Isabel to restore her family honor: "Since Doña Isabel's lover is dead she cannot marry him, nor would she. She *can* choose to become the bride of Jesus, which marriage may also be taken as a valid solution to the problem of familial honor" (391, n.16). Within the convent, Isabel is also able to preserve the agency and self expression she has developed in pursuit of Manuel. Electa Arenal reminds us that although the convent was a patriarchal space that contained women, it also granted them autonomy and the opportunity to develop their creative voice:

> The cloister, which common opinion often represents as a refuge (or a prison), was equally a place in which women could support each other and even cultivate a certain amount of independence. It provided women of greatly divergent personalities with a semiautonomous culture in which they could find sustenance, exert influence, and develop talents they never could have expressed as fully in the outside world. In that sense, the convent was a catalyst for autonomy. (149)

Conventual life, therefore, allows Isabel to influence other women and develop the talents and sense of autonomy she has experienced in her journey disguised as a Muslim slave.

The power of Isabel's story is not lost on Lisis, who, in the closing moments of the narrative frame, proclaims "no me siento más firme que la hermosa doña Isabel, a quien no le aprovecharon tantos trabajos como en el discurso de su desengaño nos refirió, de que mis temores han tenido principio" (508). Here Isabel's influence as an example for future generations of women is embodied by Lisis, who also chooses conventual life as a means of protection from men: "me acojo a sagrado y tomo por amparo el retiro de un convento, desde donde pienso (como en talanquera) ver lo que sucede a los

demás. Y así, con mi querida doña Isabel, a quien pienso acompañar mientras viviere, me voy a salvar de los engaños de los hombres" (509). This communal influence from one woman to another contributes to what Vollendorf sees as the "gynocentric exemplarity" of the *Desengaños*. By allowing her female characters to speak for themselves, Zayas infuses a female perspective into a literary tradition dominated by men.[14] Once a silent object defined by the frame narrator and her father's wishes, Isabel has emerged as a powerful and influential voice that refuses to accept the injustices women often faced under the patriarchal authority of the male honor code.

Isabel's ability to control how others see and read her grants her autonomy and frees her creative spirit from the oppressive forces of the male honor code. Although she is unable to restore her honor through marriage to Manuel, her decision to do so by entering the convent speaks volumes about the woman she has become. While she can never escape the patriarchal authority of early modern Spain, Isabel chooses the option that grants her physical safety, spiritual and emotional healing, and continued creative autonomy. As a Christian aristocrat who seeks to restore her honor through marriage, it is ironically her disguise as a Muslim slave that frees her inner voice and provides her such autonomy. Just as so many Moriscas eluded and resisted Christian authorities in order to preserve their Muslim identity, Isabel's decision to embrace conventual life is both a means to preserve her regained sense of self and a refusal to tolerate further abuses at the hands of any man. Her journey as Christian aristocrat disguised as a Muslim slave is also an enduring reminder of the ability of women and religious minorities to challenge and resist authority in early modern Spain. By creating a character who transgresses ethno-religious and geographical boundaries, Zayas reminds us of the mutability

of religious identity. In spite of state efforts to categorize and separate Muslims and Christians in early modern Spain based on appearance and evidence of cultural or religious practices, Zayas demonstrates the inherent shortcomings of such an approach. The dual identity of Isabel Fajardo/Zelima within the *Desenganos amorosos* reminds us that looks can be deceiving and that religious identity could be altered or manipulated to suit one's needs and surroundings during a period of continued tension between Moriscos and Christian authority.

Notes

[1] For discussion of the increasing tensions between Moriscos and Christian authorities throughout the sixteenth century and of the failed attempts to assimilate the Moriscos into the Christian mainstream see Domínguez Ortiz and Bernard Vincent 17-72. For further detail on how Morisco women utilized the domestic sphere as a space of resistance to Christian authority, see Perry's chapter on "Dangerous Domesticity" in *The Handless Maiden*, p. 65-87.

[2] The most notable and influential of the dispersions of Moriscos occurred in 1570 as a response to the Morisco uprising in the Alpujarra Mountains of Granada in 1568-70. Previously, under Charles I, prohibitions on Morisco culture had intensified and in 1566 Philip II issued by royal decree a ban on all Morisco culture throughout his kingdom. This sparked the Alpujarra uprising, which was defeated and led to the dispertion of the Granadan Moriscos throughout southern and central Spain. For further discussion of where the Granadan Moriscos relocated, see Harvey 234-37 and Epalza 68-75.

[3] Elliot observes that this view was intensified by the Moriscos' Muslim ties with the Turks, whose encroaching Ottoman empire was a serious threat to Spain's territories in southern Italy and the western Mediterranean under Charles I and, later, Phillip II (168). For further discussion of this topic, see Elliot 235-41 and 305-08.

[4] Philip III exempted Morisco vassals from the expulsion since noble Christian landowners depended upon them for the cultivation of their lands. These vassals accounted for approximately 6 percent of the total Morisco population at the time (Perry, *Handless Maiden* 158). Also exempt were irreplaceable artisans; clerics and nuns; children under the age of seven; and wives, servants, and slaves of Old Christians (Perry, *Handless Maiden* 166-67).

[5] "Había, pues, en la España del XVII una mescolanza de moriscos que consiguieron quedarse, ya con títulos legales, ya disimulados; de moriscos que volvieron, cuya suerte fue variada; de esclavos moriscos y mahometanos; e incluso hubo berberiscos que atravesaron espontáneamente el Estrecho para quedarse en España, pidiendo el bautismo como requisito previo ineludible" (Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent 257).

[6] While debate exists as to the exact year of Zayas's death (both 1661 and 1669 have been suggested), baptismal records indicate she was born in September 1590. She therefore would have been 19 years old when the decree for expulsion was made public on September 22, 1609 in Valencia (Epalza 11, n.1). Greer, meanwhile, cites the appearance of Zayas's signature in the court city of Madrid in 1617 (20). For discussion of the years of Zayas's death and birth, see Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas desde el año 1401 al 1833*, p. 583-84. For additional information on Zayas's life see Yllera 11-21 and Greer 17-35.

[7] For a detailed analysis of the Alpujarra uprising, including its causes and the subsequent relocation of the Granadan Moriscos, see Harvey 204-37 and Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent 35-56.

[8] The Spanish Royal Academy defines the term *aljuba* as "Vestidura morisca, usada también por los cristianos, consistente en un cuerpo ceñido en la cintura, abotonado, con mangas y falda que solía llegar hasta las rodillas" ("Aljuba"). An *almalafa*, meanwhile, was "Vestidura moruna que cubría el cuerpo desde los hombros hasta los pies" ("Almalafa").

[9] Yllera observes that "Era costumbre de la época marcar con un hierro candente a los esclavos en el rostro. La marca más frecuente era la S y clavo, aunque no era la única" (117, n. 2).

[10] Vincent explains that Inquisitorial documents from Valencia in the late sixteenth century reveal that only nine out of 259 male Moriscos questioned did not know Castilian, while 184 of 310 female Moriscos did not, a difference of 3.5% of men to 59% of women. Vincent concludes that, "Las mujeres moriscas valencianas o granadinas, totalmente analfabetas, con escaso contacto con el mundo de cristianos viejos, conservan el lenguaje ancestral mejor que sus maridos o que sus hermanos" (589).

[11] Allyson Poska's recent work on the peasants of Galicia reveals that honor affected all levels of society in early modern Spain, not just aristocrats. Poska also notes that literary representations of the code were often exagerrated, most likely for dramatic effect, since in reality "the Castilian legal system provided women and their families with a variety of mechanisms to restore their impugned reputations, none of which involved murder" (7). In addition, a variety of factors affected male-female relations in early modern Spain, not just honor: "for the most part, historians have remained narrowly focused on honour based on female chastity, ignoring

the other possible social and cultural norms that might have structured gender relations. Early modern Spain was not a unified society, but instead a patchwork of many social classes and regional cultures. Honour may have been only one of many factors that defined the actions and interactions of Spanish men and women" (Poska 9).

[12] Boronat y Barrachina (585) observe that in 1610, the bishop of Orihuela addressed this potential threat in a letter to Phillip III, noting that women are of particular concern "because they are used to being more effective in persuading the children to follow the said sect" (qtd. in Perry, *Handless Maiden* 172).

[13] "La esclavitud era fenómeno frecuente en la España Moderna, si bien limitado en su extensión geográfica, puso [sic] sólo en el sur, *en la Corte* y en algún otro punto aislado como Valencia llegó a tener gran densidad" (Domínguez Ortiz and Vicent 265; emphasis mine). In addition, Serrano y Sanz observes the appearance in 1624 of the name María de Zayas as the owner of a Muslim slave. While he cautions that Zayas's name was not uncommon in Madrid in the seventeenth century, he explains that "A fines del año 1624, D. Francisco Ordóñez de Lara fué procesado por haber dado muerte en Málaga á D. José de Aguirre, y entre los testigos que declararon figura una esclava llamada Fátima cuya dueña era *doña María de Zayas*" (584).

[14] Vollendorf explains that by "Responding to the masculine literary tradition that portrays women negatively, these texts are meant to free women's voices and to tell their side of the story" (69).

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