ABSTRACT

THE COMMUNITY OF WOMEN IN MARÍA DE ZAYAS Y SOTOMAYOR’S
LA TRAICIÓN EN LA AMISTAD

by Joshua Ferrer

In the predominantly male world of the Spanish comedia, the seventeenth-century play La traición en la amistad by María de Zayas y Sotomayor is distinct not just for its status as a play written by a woman, but also for its use of predominantly female protagonists. Due to the unique formulaic nature of the comedia, it is quite reasonable to presuppose that Zayas felt a particular need to maintain societal order, which she does through use of traditional theatrical conventions in her work. Nonetheless, through the creation of a local community of women separate from the dominant community of men in the play, Zayas carefully raises the notion of change to like-minded viewers. This thesis will explore the ways in which María de Zayas follows traditional tenets of the Spanish theatrical form; while at the same time also subtly suggests the notion of alternate possibilities for women through representations of a local community.
THE COMMUNITY OF WOMEN IN MARÍA DE ZAYAS Y SOTOMAYOR’S
LA TRAICIÓN EN LA AMISTAD

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Spanish and Portuguese
by
Joshua Ferrer
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio
2004

Advisor: _______________________________
          Darcy Donahue

Reader: _______________________________
        Charles Ganelin

Reader: _______________________________
        Lola Bollo-Panadero
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life and Times of María de Zayas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the <em>comedia</em></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of <em>La traición en la amistad</em></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Criticism of <em>La traición en la amistad</em></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories on Community</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications of Feminist Criticism</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Members of the Community of Women</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Five</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing the Community</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selected Bibliography</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Introduction**

In an early modern era which witnessed a tremendously strong literary output, the Spanish comedia stands out as a decidedly unique form of Spanish literature. As both a performative piece and a literary text, the comedia’s integral role in early modern Spanish society is indisputable. As Spanish power began to steadily decrease, both on the continent and abroad, theatre in Spain played a critical part in not just reinforcing a sense of national pride, but also in strengthening what could be termed a set of normative ideologies, which were essential to the existing social order.

It was within this context that the comedia served a crucial double role. On one hand, as an artistic entity it served to entertain audiences. Authors employed literary conventions to engage the audiences in each of the works. While plots offered some divergence, they initially always concluded on a similar point -- with a conventional order-invoking marriage. The use of a conventional order-invoking marriage as a plot device relates to the second, slightly less transparent function of the comedia. It served not just to entertain the masses, but also to reflect the normative ideologies in place and a sense of social order amongst the Spanish people. In doing so, it directly reflected what has been termed a “philosophy of life” by scholars such as Melveena McKendrick. Thus, while it entertained, it also reinforced a sense of social order that the audience came to know, to expect, and to ultimately accept, through use of literary conventions and plot devices.

In a world of theatre dominated by male writers such as Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina, María de Zayas y Sotomayor stands apart. Best known for her two prose works, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) and *Parte
segunda del Sarao y entretenimiento honesto (1647), she is only credited with writing one play, La traición en la amistad. As a work it is unique not only because it is the sole example of Zayas’s efforts as a dramatist, but also because it employs a cast of predominantly female main characters. On a basic level, it appears similar to other theatrical works of the time, concerning itself with a tale of love lost and ultimately regained, and the ways in which jealousy and betrayal can drive women apart. It ends like so many other works, with a wedding and order restored.

It is not entirely unlikely that Zayas felt a great deal of pressure to conform, not just because she was a woman writing in a male-dominated medium, but also because the comedia as a literary form demanded that convention be followed. Zayas it seems faced a dual challenge: the need to avoid alienating male viewers by appearing too strident or pro-women, and also the need to avoid criticism from viewers familiar with and expectant of certain plot devices in these theatrical works (such as endings in marriage). She appears successful in both respects.

In La traición en la amistad, the author seems to punish the woman (and not the man) that is overly sexual. Zayas also ends her play in the traditional, expected manner with a marriage. Bad characters are punished, good characters are rewarded and social order is restored. Zayas’s reliance on the use of stock characters and literary conventions in this play is even more remarkable when considered against the backdrop of her two later and more well-known prose works which critics note for their strong pro-women views.¹

However, to the discerning viewer or reader, this drama by María de Zayas subtly raises the notion of alternate social possibilities. While simultaneously following

¹ For analyses of Zayas’s novelas from a pro-women point of view, see Brownlee and Williamsen and Whitenack.
conventions dictated by the *comedia* form and audience expectations, Zayas broaches the possibility of change through the creation of an active community of women in her work. Specifically, the group in Zayas’s piece works to aid women who face difficulties associated with living in a society dominated by men. The interior workings of the female community take place simultaneously within the workings of a larger, more male-dominated community in which women exist as well. By working together to create a support system and to move interchangeably between their community of women and the dominant male community, the women in Zayas’s play gain some sense of power and control over their lives. Zayas subtly presents this notion of alternate social possibilities, which allow women to successfully move between two groups and also gain the possibility of a sense of control in their lives. ² She does this in a way that does not disrupt or alarm audiences of the period accustomed to entertainment via social order conventions. In doing so, her work can appeal to both the masses as well as to the disenfranchised viewer or reader.

This thesis will use theories on women’s culture, as explained by Elaine Showalter to illustrate the ways in which women in the play create coping strategies while living in a patriarchal society where the need for social order is maintained. The idea of community as an imagined space, as espoused by Benedict Anderson, will also be discussed in order to illustrate the possibilities for a new understanding of community opened up by Zayas’s play. Additionally, the thesis will explore Nina Auerbach’s ideas on specific characterizations of communities of women and their manifestations in literature.

² For the purposes of this study I define alternate social possibilities as the multiple and varied ways in which women find new and original mechanisms to cope with their general state in society, where others view them as subservient and secondary to men.
The ways in which Zayas suggests alternate social possibilities for women in her work through the creation of active community development, while still carefully following the time honored comedia formula will also be explored. Specifically, a focus will be placed on the inter-workings of the community of women in La traición en la amistad. The women in the play face a variety of conditions imposed upon them by society, which require them to find appropriate coping and survival mechanisms. Such conditions include chastity and the preservation of one’s honor, infidelity from one’s partner, and a societal double standard which allowed men to have multiple sexual partners but which shunned women who dared to act in a similar manner. Through her suggestion of a series of alternate social possibilities, Zayas indirectly criticizes the society at large and the way in which it deems gendered behavior acceptable and appropriate.

Each woman in the work will be analyzed to reveal the specific role she plays within her group. The ways in which these characters interact with their male counterparts will also be examined. As a result, the thesis will demonstrate that María de Zayas y Sotomayor successfully imparts a vision of alternate social possibilities for women, manifested in the creation of a distinct community.
Chapter One -
The Life and Times of María de Zayas y Sotomayor

Although María de Zayas y Sotomayor has achieved great fame amongst literary scholars and readers alike, scholars know very little about her life itself. This has led to considerable speculation about Zayas’s life and what influences might have motivated her writings. She was born sometime in 1590 in Madrid, the child of Don Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor (a knight in the Order of Santiago) and Doña María de Barasa. She benefited from being born into the upper echelons of Spanish society, probably enjoying access to literature and resources unavailable to women of lesser classes during this period. The wide range of places described in her works suggests that she traveled extensively as a child, likely due to the position of her father. She first became known as part of the literary circle in Madrid sometime during the 1620’s. Evidence suggests that she was on friendly terms with Ana Caro, author of two plays, Valor, agravio y mujer and El conde Partinuplé. According to Valerie Hegstrom, in the introduction to her edition of La traición en la amistad, Zayas was also an acquaintance of Lope de Vega as well (15).

Zayas is most well-known for her two prose works, which have enjoyed considerable fame and extensive favor among researchers and scholars in the past fifteen years. She published her first collection of novelas, entitled Novelas amorosas y ejemplares, in 1637. Interestingly, after the publication of her first book, Zayas appears to disappear completely from the literary scene. Her name is not mentioned in accounts of the Spanish literary world of the time, and does not reappear again until the publication of her second collection of stories entitled Parte segunda del Sarao y entretenimiento honesto (more commonly known by the title Desengaños amorosos), which was published in 1647.
Sometime after the publication of this second book, Zayas died. Although two death certificates dated 1661 and 1669 do exist, the reliability of both is questionable considering the common nature of her name during this period. Also unknown is the marital status of Zayas which has led to multiple opportunities for readers and scholars to make conjectures on the details of her personal life.

Amidst the uncertainties of her life, what is never in question after reading her two prose works are María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s feelings about the status of women in early modern Spanish society. At the start of her second collection of stories, one female character states, “pues ni comedia se representa, ni libro se imprime que no sea todo en ofensa de las mujeres, sin que se reserve ninguna” (Parte segunda 124). As Amy Katz Kaminsky points out in her introduction to Zayas in the book Water Lilies, the short tales are decidedly pro-women in so far as the characters are aware of and are working to remedy their state of subjugation at the hands of men (144). In the introduction to her translation of Zayas’s second prose work, The Disenchantments of Love, H. Patsy Boyer notes that Zayas’s stories use vivid colors to describe what it feels like to live in a patriarchal society, noting, “Striking is the stated purpose of the Disenchantments to ‘change the world’ by changing the ways women and men think, talk about, and treat women” (1).

As noted earlier, considerable attention has been lavished on the prose works by María de Zayas in recent years, while her one play, La traición en la amistad, remains relatively unexamined. In many biographies on Zayas, the existence of this theatrical work is glossed over, if not omitted entirely, most often in older analysis such as Katharina Wilson and Frank Warnke’s Women Writers of the Seventeenth Century from 1989.
While the prose works contain fodder for obvious analysis from a pro-women point of view (indeed the aim of the 2nd collection of works is to convince women not to marry), the play does not. Obviously, the limitations placed on a *comedia* in terms of form and subject matter strongly contributed to this lack of an overtly strong pro-women advocacy on the part of Zayas in her theatrical work.

*La traición en la amistad* is the one known example of Zayas’s work as an early modern playwright. Nonetheless, it is possible that she wrote other theatrical works that remain anonymous or unknown to the modern reader. The play is undated, although most scholars date it somewhere around or prior to 1632 due to textual evidence and the mention of a *comedia* written by Zayas in a work by Juan Pérez de Montalbán from 1632 (Hegstrom, *La traición* 16). All evidence suggests that a staging of the play never occurred during Zayas’s lifetime as Barbara López-Mayhew notes in the introduction to her recent edition of *La traición en la amistad* (15).

María de Zayas y Sotomayor wrote in a literary atmosphere which flourished in Spain during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Referred to by many as the “Golden Age,” the early modern era saw a proliferation of literature, from authors such as Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), Luis de Góngora y Argote (1561-1627) and Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas (1580-1645). The output of dramatic texts was no less immense, as evidenced by the wide variety of plays written by Félix Lope de Vega Carpio (1562-1635), Tirso de Molina (c.1584-1648) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681). Aided by the invention of the printing press more than a century earlier, Spain achieved a prowess as a literary power which reflected a deep and resounding affirmation of the Spanish national character.
While the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may have been the “Golden Age” for literature in Spain, it was decidedly less golden for many of the citizens who inhabited Spain during the same period. Flush from the discovery of the Americas by Columbus in 1492 and the emergence of Spain as a superpower, expectations were exceedingly high. Historians such as Mary Elizabeth Perry, however, document realities which told a different story as time went on. In the time of María de Zayas y Sotomayor, the wealth received from the New World actually was below expectations, and Spain saw itself slowly fall behind other European countries. The economy was wracked by rampant inflation resulting from economic woes, which directly related to the Spanish military’s unsuccessful wars with other countries.

In her influential book *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville*, Perry discusses the world in which Zayas wrote, characterized by an air of disillusionment, where strict gender prescriptions were promoted. She writes, “For officials of this period, restoration of the social order required the sword of authority repaired and the wandering woman restrained” (13). As a result, a type of gender ideology was imposed in an attempt to restore order to a more and more unstable society.

In her article “Crisis and Disorder in the World of María de Zayas y Sotomayor” Perry also notes that a startling ninety percent of non-noble women needed to work outside the home in order to survive in Zayas’s era (35). The need to both stave off poverty through work and at the same time play the role of the subservient meek female was a tall order indeed for women of the early modern era. In any case, the intended effect of this imposition of normative ideology was clear – in order to solve societal problems, the weak and immoral nature of women had to be controlled. Such a society
teetering precariously on the edge of disarray could not tolerate a woman who did not know and observe her proper place in society.

The role of gender ideology cannot be underestimated, particularly when it perceives women as weak, untrustworthy and prone to disorder. Imposition of order via means of strict gendered prescriptions on behavior was one solution used to restore order in a society where famine, inflation and disease were serious problems. Attempts to reinforce a normative ideology based on gender were evident in several ways, among others, in conduct literature. Conduct literature very effectively advocated social norms which imposed upon women the “virtues” of silence, chastity, and passivity at the hands of the male figures in their lives.

Perhaps one of the most famous examples of conduct literature comes from Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540). His *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (originally titled *De institutione feminae christianae*), was dedicated to Catherine of Aragon, wife of England’s Henry VIII, and designed as a conduct manual for their daughter, Princess Mary. Divided into three sections dedicated to the three stages of a woman’s life (the unmarried state, married state and widowed state), it covered in elaborate detail how a proper woman should act, including details pertaining to her dress, conduct in public, interactions with other women, and with her own husband and family as well (before and during marriage).

Vives makes his view of women clear from the start of his treatise. According to Vives, the sole and central concern of a woman’s life is her chastity. Chastity is everything and without it there is nothing: “En cambio, el cuidado exclusivo de la mujer es pudicicia” (986). It is this point that guides Vives throughout the entirety of his work. Thus, according to Vives, a woman must be a guardian of her own chastity; if she is
unchaste the consequences will be dire for both herself, her husband and her family. He writes, “La castidad en la mujer hace las veces de todas las virtudes” (1010).

Vives also raises interesting points regarding women in relation to men. Men, according to Vives have much more to concern themselves with than chastity. Thus, they must be granted special allowances, which it would be unthinkable to provide to their female counterparts. He explains:

Lo primero que debe considerar la mujer es que el marido es superior y que a ella no le está permitido lo que a él; que las leyes humanas no exigen en el marido la honestidad que imponen a la mujer; que en todos los órdenes de la vida los hombres tienen más anchura y libertad; que los maridos deben atender a muchos negocios; la mujer no más que a uno: a su castidad. (1113-14)

Earlier, Vives argues that in marriage, the husband takes on God’s place on earth. It is to the husband (God’s earthly representative) that a woman should dedicate all her energy, love and considerable devotion. The husband takes the role of all others in her life, even her most beloved parents, brothers and sisters (1080).

In his section on jealousy, Vives also clearly delineates the sacrifices women are expected to make in a society dominated by men. In his opinion, a woman is never to be jealous and even if her husband cheats, she is exhorted to embrace him and the woman with whom he has strayed. He instructs women to follow the example of a wife whose story he recounts. When confronted with her husband’s infidelity, she tells her husband: “Tú, marido mío, no puedes arrancarte a este amor ilícito ni yo lo pretendo de ti; sólo te pido que no la ames con tan grave peligro de tu vida…” (1115). The woman has her husband invite the adulteress into their home, where the wife treats her with kindness and
as her own sister. Vives states that after a year the husband eventually grows hostile to his mistress and throws her out. Thus, according to Vives, the moral of the story is that the truly virtuous wife will embrace her husband’s infidelity.

Conduct literature such as this work by Vives and another influential work, *La perfecta casada* by Fray Luis de León (1527-1591) served to establish the means through which women, physically and emotionally prone to weakness, had to be contained by a patriarchal society. Although often written for a noble audience, the ideals espoused in these works permeated down to the very basic levels of society. They served to color the ways in which men and women acted both in the public domain and the private, domestic realm. They also served to keep in check women who might have the desire to aspire to something other than marriage, the convent or a life of prostitution. Perhaps most importantly for feminist scholars of the early modern era, conduct literature serves as a striking example of the circumstances in which Golden Age women writers were forced to work, and the challenges they potentially faced in engaging in the less than mainstream act of writing secular works.
Chapter Two -
Defining the comedia

While not specifically espousing a strict set of prescriptions on gendered behavior, the theatrical form known as the comedia nonetheless served to demonstrate to audiences of the time how women should act and what role they should play in proper society. Ironically, the Spanish comedia was at its peak just as the Spanish empire began to falter further. Thus, the effect of the medium as a form of self-assurance for Spanish society was tangible. In assessing the effectiveness of theatre during this era, Melveena McKendrick clearly hits upon its appeal in her book Theatre in Spain: 1490-1700:

At a time when Spanish military hegemony was beginning to yield to outside pressures and social tensions and economic decline started to gnaw at the vitals of Spain’s self-confidence, the corrales responded with a national drama of epic achievement and individual self-assertion which allowed the Spaniard, when he gazed for a while into its mirror, to burnish his self-image and go away reassured.

(74)

Such a positive, self-affirming aspect of the comedia is brought about by a reliance on specific conventions and techniques, which were first outlined by the prolific dramatist Lope de Vega in his Arte nuevo de hacer comedias and which McKendrick expounds upon further in her above mentioned analysis of the Spanish theatre. According to McKendrick, theatrical pieces contained a repertoire of stock characters, among them at least one pair of lovers (or a male and female with the potential to be lovers), some sort of comic servants such as the gracioso, figures of authority who often serve to complicate action such as fathers, husbands or brothers (but never mothers, who rarely appeared in the action of the plays), as well as some subversive figures such as enemies, rivals or
rejected suitors. These figures were always defined at first by their role rather than their personality, which serves to demonstrate the formulaic nature of the *comedia* as a theatrical and social text (73).

Plots offered a wide array of subjects ranging from focuses on religion (the Bible, lives of saints) to an emphasis on history, legend, myth and romance, to portraits of daily life in towns and in the country. Plots dealing with love and intrigue or honor were also popular, and all were presented in a complicated and action-packed manner and at an accelerated and compressed rate. Consequently, the emotions present in a *comedia* were intense and often exaggerated, particularly when dealing with themes such as love and honor. The result was a work that could be understood and appreciated by the masses. In one way, the *comedia* entertained so as to hold the audience’s interest with a wide variety of theatrical spectacles and conventions. In another way, the genre enlightened so as to reflect a vision of society and the people in it, and how following models of behavior served to contribute to the proper functioning of society. In this way, the *comedia* reflected what McKendrick terms a “philosophy of life” in which society depends on an adherence to order by all involved in order to function properly. (*Woman and Society* 173).

This “philosophy of life” which McKendrick discusses is fully evident in the *comedia* written by María de Zayas y Sotomayor. She uses many of the standard stock characters and the plot itself deals with, among other themes, the common early modern subject of love which has been lost and must be regained. In short, it seems Zayas took pains to make sure that on the very surface, her work adhered to the most basic tenets of the theatrical form, so as to achieve acceptability to the widest audience possible.
Summary of *La traición en la amistad*

*La traición en la amistad*, set in Madrid, begins with the character of Marcia relating to her friend Fenisa, the glories of her new love, Liseo. Upon seeing his portrait, Fenisa is immediately entranced by the sight of Liseo and makes it her goal to have him as well. It turns out that when faced with a choice between loyalty to friendship or amorous desire, Fenisa chooses her own desire, as she states in the first act of the play, “en mi alma hay lugar / para amar a cuantos veo” (60).\(^3\) Immediately upon seeing his portrait, Fenisa pursues Liseo, who happily entertains her intentions.

Liseo, in addition to wooing Marcia to be his wife and entertaining Fenisa as a lover, is also involved with a third woman, Laura. Distraught over the cold and uncaring behavior which Liseo has shown her after taking her virginity and promising to marry her, Laura sets about to reveal to Marcia her beloved’s indiscretions. As soon as Marcia learns of Liseo’s actions, she declares her intentions to sever her relationship with him. Upon discovering that her supposed friend Fenisa has not only been involved with Liseo, but also her cousin Belisa’s adored Don Juan, Marcia embarks on a quest to set things right with the aid of Laura and Belisa. Working together, the group sets about changing the course of the situation.

Laura sends a letter to Liseo stating that, because of his cruel and indifferent behavior, she has decided to join a convent. Jubilant that he is free from having to honor his obligation to Laura, he brags that he will continue to enjoy the affections of his two other women. He will take Marcia to be his wife and keep Fenisa as his lover. His attitude towards both women is distinct. For example, he praises Marcia’s beauty, nobility and “su raro entendimiento,” all traits necessary and acceptable in a wife. By contrast, Fenisa

\(^3\) All quotations cited are taken from Hegstrom and Larson’s edition of the text published in 1999.
is viewed as just another woman to be used and disposed of: “A sola Marcia mi nobleza aspira. / Ella ha de ser mi esposa, que Fenisa / es burla” (108). After receipt of the letter from Laura, Liseo is lured to Marcia’s balcony to speak with her. In a classic example of early modern mistaken identity, Laura pretends to be Marcia and Marcia to be Belisa in order to trick Liseo into signing an unnamed written promise of marriage to Laura, whom Liseo actually believes to be Marcia.

Meanwhile, Fenisa continues to entertain Liseo, Don Juan and a third man named Lauro (a friend of Liseo). Fenisa reveals the motives for her pursuit of multiple men and compares her men to the Ten Commandments, referring to them as “los mandamientos de la gran Fenisa” (122). She insists there is plenty of room to love and serve each and every one, noting that it is a sin in and of itself to love only one and worse yet an act of cowardice, particularly when a woman has been left alone by an absent, dead or angry man. She claims her love for many men is a means to repay them for the trickery in which they constantly engage women.

Fenisa’s delight in grooming her stable of men is shattered when Don Juan discovers her trickery and shares the information with Liseo and Lauro, who promptly sever their ties with her. Angered by the sudden loss of her lovers, she angrily confronts Belisa and Marcia. However, in a plot where the bonds of loyalty in the female community are paramount, she is left powerless and alone. Liseo, upon discovering that he has been tricked into signing a marriage vow to Laura, agrees to marry her. Belisa forgives Don Juan for his infidelities with Fenisa and agrees to marry him, while Marcia finally gives her hand in marriage to the noble Gerardo who has faithfully pursued her for more than seven years.
Literary Criticism of La traición en la amistad

Scholarly analysis of La traición en la amistad has focused primarily on critiquing the unique nature of Zayas’s piece and its relation to and differences with other comedias of the early modern period. Most focus specifically on the role of the four protagonists: Marcia, Belisa, Laura and Fenisa and how the actions of the first three women can be analyzed against the wildly disparate actions of the fourth.

In her article “María de Zayas’s (Un)Conventional Play, La traición en la amistad,” Teresa Soufas notes that Zayas questions standard social and literary conventions through her depiction of noble class courtship. She argues that Marcia, Belisa and Laura conform to traditional literary expectations, moving in reaction to what is done to them and failing to envision alternate possibilities for interaction with men by agreeing to marry in the final scene (152). By contrast, Fenisa attempts to provide a new model for behavior, based largely upon the patriarchal, male model but is doomed to fail for moral and theatrical reasons. Thus, Fenisa’s failed attempt to break free of traditional constraints on behavior and interaction with men is Zayas’s way of condemning the entire system of courtship depicted in the comedia form (151).

Similarly, Constance Wilkins interprets Zayas’s play as a critique of the social norms in an early modern era which favored men over women in her article, “Subversion through Comedy?: Two Plays by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and María de Zayas.” Like Soufas, she focuses most of her analysis on the character of Fenisa. Wilkins interprets Fenisa as a cause of “social instability” because of her actions, which run counter to those prescribed for women within a male-dominated society (114). She interprets Fenisa’s rejection by the other women and loss of female friendship as her true punishment at the
end of the comedia, rather than the loss of her lovers Don Juan or Liseo. Nonetheless, despite being left without friends or a husband, Wilkins opines that it is likely Fenisa will continue to wreak havoc elsewhere in society because of her seemingly endless desire to be with as many men as possible.

Laura Gorfkle examines the ways in which bonds of female friendship are used to convey messages of chastity in her study “Female Communities, Female Friendships and Social Control in María de Zayas’s La traición en la amistad: A Historical Perspective.” Gorfkle argues that Zayas uses female community (or what she terms “female youth groups”) in the play as a method of exerting control over younger women’s behavior, bringing it into accordance with the standard societal norms of the period (615). Gorfkle notes that the author represents the positive nature of a female group, which uses mentoring and instruction of women by their peers in order to bring them in line with behavior expected by society. Simultaneously, Zayas outlines the danger involved when women attempt to abandon societal limits and navigate their own way. Fenisa exemplifies this attempt at independent navigation, which is bound to fail without the support and instructional example of her fellow women. Gorfkle closes by noting that the play displays subtle instances of female solidarity, which Zayas uses to redress the relationship of power between men and women (619).

Differences in friendships between men and women are discussed in Matthew Wyszynski’s study, “Friendship in María de Zayas’s La traición en la amistad.” He argues that the play demonstrates men and women’s different methods of social interaction, noting that the women in Zayas’s play are successful precisely because they do not imitate techniques of social interaction used by men (28). He notes that, while the
concept of female friendship was a relatively non-existent term during the period (not being mentioned in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, which formed the basis for definitions of friendship in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe), Zayas’s play clearly demonstrates several examples of what would later be termed female friendship. Through a distinct type of friendship, Wyszynski believes women realize their own individual goals of marriage which, while conventional, are obtained in a unique way.

Valerie Hegstrom Oakey analyzes María de Zayas’s use of masculine/feminine and active/passive oppositions in her study, “The Fallacy of False Dichotomy in María de Zayas’s *La traición en la amistad*.” She notes that women take on roles of active dominance, while the male characters assume roles which are much more passive, resulting in a switch of gender roles (60). She notes that the final scene of the *comedia* is an intriguing example of this switch because it is the women who pronounce who will marry whom, rather than the men, as is typical in other *comedias*. Thus, women engaging in roles of active dominance over men engaged in roles of passivity, control the order that is so typically restored at the end of the *comedia*. Occupying herself with the character of Fenisa, Hegstrom Oakey notes that she becomes part of an “excluded middle,” terming her a “monstrous mix of masculinity and femininity” (68). While Liseo’s behavior can be clearly defined as “masculine,” it is not as easy to classify Fenisa as strictly either masculine or feminine. By placing Fenisa in this position of “excluded middle” she argues that Zayas makes a pointed statement on double standards in her *comedia*, where any attempt to act outside of the masculine/feminine dichotomy fails.
Chapter Three - Theories on Community

As several theorists have pointed out, the concept of community can be difficult to categorize. Indeed, misreading, or perhaps more appropriately, misuse of the term has been commonplace for centuries, as people with various interests and backgrounds offer their interpretations on its meaning and use. As Adrien Little points out in his book, The Politics of Community: Theory and Practice, the term community remains elusive and is “an idea that is perennially resistant to ideological categorization” (7). While some may argue over its use and meaning, it is hard to dispute Little’s reasoning when he offers a classification of community as a “key ingredient in the complex matrix of social organizations and individual self identity that characterizes modern life” (7).

Debate over the nature of community as an idea dates back to Aristotelian times as Gerard Delanty explains in his book Community. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Little, he relates the search for community to the search for belonging in a sometimes chaotic world. Delanty points to a deeply-rooted duality of community as both an abstract idea and a social phenomenon. Citing what he terms an ambivalence which has existed since ancient Greek times, he points to one definition of community in terms of locality with a focus on that which is familiar and close (or the human order of the Greek polis). As Delanty notes, emphasis has traditionally been placed on this locally-based characterization of community. The other side he points to is of a more general nature, citing community as something more universal, involving the participation of a large group of people (or the universal order of the Greek cosmos). Such a dual-sided nature is central to those seeking a firm, distinct definition of community.
Benedict Anderson offers a decidedly unique take on the idea of community in his groundbreaking 1983 book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Reflecting on the creation of and the spread of nationalism (particularly in Asian countries, but also throughout the world as a whole), he offers a theory on how nationalism manifests itself. He argues that the nation should be defined as an “imagined political community,” which is both limited and sovereign (6).

The community, in Anderson’s view, is imagined because its inhabitants have never known or encountered each other on a daily basis (except in regards to face-to-face contact that occurred in primordial village settings). Nonetheless, its inhabitants have a shared image of the community within their own minds. Expounding upon his argument, he states that this sense of kinship or shared community lying in the minds of many within a nation is often what motivates them to act towards community-wide causes or goals – even if it means killing or being killed in the process. Later, to substantiate his argument, he points to the American public, noting that although most Americans will never meet or know most of their counterparts, they are, in general, comfortable in an awareness that they are all engaged in their own type of “steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity” (26).

Anderson relies heavily on examples using forms of media, such as novels and books, in order to illustrate his points regarding the imagining of communities. He refers to them as the technical means for establishing his vision of community as an imagined entity. In one adept example, he describes a young boy reading a newspaper account of a

---

4 Anderson quotes the French philosopher Ernest Renan when offering his initial definition of community: “Or l’essence d’une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses” “The essence of a nation is that all its individuals have had many things in common but also that they have all forgotten many of these same things’ (qtd. in Anderson 6).
homeless man who has collapsed, dead, on the side of a road. The boy has not encountered the body, nor the area where the body was found, nor is he familiar with stench of death associated with a corpse. Yet, simply by reading the newspaper account of the horrific act, he imagines it from the newspaper itself (in an act that serves to further reinforce his own membership in the imagined community where the death occurred). Anderson also argues that the boy is less concerned about the individual body or the individual person who died, but rather with the body as a collective whole or “a representative body” as he refers to it (32).

Fiction, for Anderson, can also serve the same purpose of imagining a collective, representative act of community without being a central, active figure in how it transpires. Both examples (the newspaper and the novel) serve to further reinforce one of Anderson’s central points -- that the creation of the printing press and the growth of what he terms “print-capitalism” were key ingredients in the creation of a more acute awareness of the individual and those surrounding them in the imagined community: He writes, “…print-capitalism, [which] made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways” (36).

While Anderson focuses primarily on the novel and the newspaper as his central tools for the representation of an imagined community, I would argue that theatre could also prove to be a vital instrument in the representations of an imagined community. Anderson pays particular attention to the role of shared acts in everyday lives, including the act of reading, in demonstrating the kinship that occurs between individuals (however unknown or unrelated to each other) within a community. Thus, it is quite conceivable to add
theatre, or the shared act of being involved as a spectator in the theatrical experience, to the list of activities which are used to represent the imagined community. Just as one imagines the dead body, not as a specific, tangible person but rather as a representative figure, so too does the theatre-goer imagine the existence of a failed romance, a death or an act of familial deceit. Whether the experience has been lived or not, or is familiar or not, its sheer occurrence on stage in front of a community of theatre-goers allows each member the opportunity to imagine its existence specifically in his or her mind.

Anderson clearly dismisses the popular notion of community, which refers to groups of people bound together specifically by mere location. His way of interpreting and distinguishing community based on the style and manner in which it is imagined is intriguing. By expounding upon his idea of shared experiences of a representative nature, he directly opens up the exciting possibilities inherent in an interpretation of the nation as an imagined community.

Having reviewed some main principles and understandings by various theorists on the use of the word community, it would be useful to specifically delineate how community as a whole is defined for the purposes of this study. The duality in interpretations of the term community as outlined by Gerard Delanty proves fascinating because both the definitions of community (the familiar and proximate versus the universal) are present in La traición en la amistad. The focus in this thesis will be placed upon the smaller, locally-based community which is manifested through the experiences and actions of the women in the play. However, the impact of the actions taken about and performed at the local, proximate level will be examined in order to demonstrate their effect on the larger, more universal community outside the text (specifically, the viewers and readers).
While there does not exist time nor space to review the many distinct communities which comprised early modern Spain, those communities based upon the most general of distinctions, gender, deserve attention as they form the foundation for this thesis. The distinct characteristics of a community of women serve as important factors in forming a better understanding of how early modern Spanish society functioned, and how this functioning of society can be understood within the *comedia* by María de Zayas.

In the introduction to her book, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction*, Nina Auerbach posits several interesting theories about what characterizes a community of women and how such a community is manifested in literature. Although she focuses primarily on literature from the Victorian period in England, her theories are useful to gain a broader appreciation of how community could also be manifested in early modern Spanish literature, including the works by Zayas.

Auerbach begins by stating that a community of women in many novels is often granted a special type of power which she describes as “subtle” and “unexpected” (3). She notes that the idea of a community of women stands as a strong rebuke to the conventional theory that women live for and through men, attempting to gain respectability (or what she terms “citizenship”) into the larger community as a whole based on terms dictated by men. Rather, she theorizes that communities of women stand as “emblems of self-sufficiency” for women in literature (5).

Further expounding on her point, she notes, “The unformulated miracle of the community of women is its ability to create itself” (11). She also delineates a list of characteristics to use to define a community of women. Auerbach notes that they are often underground and not officially sanctioned, and defined often by the complex,
shifting, and at times contradictory attitudes they evoke (11). Nonetheless, according to Auerbach, these complex shifts and contradictory instances are evidence of the unique nature of literary communities of women, which call for diverging judgments and perspectives. In this way, a community of women is allowed the valuable opportunity to continually define itself, order its ideals and attitudes, and constantly work to create itself. Auerbach’s research is indeed useful because it is one of the first treatments of the idea of communities of women in literature.

Within Spanish society itself, gender both divided and united communities in ways which directly responded to the proper functioning of a patriarchal social system. Male community was often symbolized and strengthened through the multitude of actions and activities directly accessible to men but not to women during the era. There also existed the most general of communities – the mixed group in which men and women co-existed. Such a use of the term “co-existed” is misleading, in some sense, because this mixed group was hardly a true representation of the term “community.” As noted in the earlier analysis of conduct literature, the general community had its rules, regulations, norms, and standards of conduct set along highly male, patriarchal terms.

The other community which is most significant for the purposes of this study consists of an upper-class group of women. It should be reiterated here, as noted earlier, that Zayas was a member of the upper-class during the period in which she wrote. Her place within this upper-class group of women accorded her certain benefits and privileges, unattainable to those who resided at a much lower social level.

The functioning of the community on both a day-to-day and a higher, more general level is also central to the action that takes place in La traición en la amistad.
Furthermore, the results when these communities of women collide or rather, interact, with the general male community, is central to fully understanding how women successfully maneuvered their way through the social structures of early modern Spain. The end result is a demonstration through the work of this female dramatist, of the possible ways in which women coped with, looked beyond, and potentially surpassed those expectations and obstacles imposed upon them by the prevailing male patriarchy.

The distinction between this upper-class community of women also differs largely from the most common image of a community associated with women in early modern Spain -- that of the religious convent. Both the outer community of women and the community of women in convents share some similarities. For example, both imply a sense of shared space, perhaps most evident in the convent where communal living is required. More importantly, they both involve the existence of a supportive environment between women, which aids in fostering greater progress towards women achieving their goals. For those in the convent, these goals most often involve a greater, closer communion with God, while for those outside the convent as portrayed in Zayas’s play, the goals involved righting wrongs perpetrated by an unfair system of inequality in behavior among men and women.

**Applications of Feminist Criticism**

As she begins her influential 1981 essay “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” Elaine Showalter ponders the ways in which various groups of feminist theorists have attempted to analyze current and prior literary production by women. She centers on a thought from the famed feminist literary critic Annette Kolodny, who wrote:
All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts, and at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it. (qtd. in Showalter: 246)

This is an apt point for Showalter to start from as she ponders the ways in which women can and should begin to analyze texts by women writers from a distinct and decidedly different point of view. She notes that all feminist criticism is in some way revisionist in nature, questioning the ability of critical analysis already in place (246). By quoting Kolodny, she points to a central goal shared by many feminist literary critics: to celebrate the way in which women’s literary production is allowed to exist, to ask their own questions of the text, and to draw attention to challenges within the text which may be relevant to feminist scholarship.

From this point Showalter launches into a detailed analysis of four possible ways in which one could analyze women’s writing; via women’s body, women’s language, women’s psyche and women’s culture. She eventually settles upon an analysis based on women’s culture as being the most beneficial and in doing so, formulates an analysis upon which the theoretical basis for this thesis has been formed. Ultimately, as Showalter points out, a feminist theory based upon an analysis of women’s culture is most productive because it integrates ideas about body, language and psyche into its analysis.

Women’s culture, Showalter argues, is the most beneficial backdrop for analyzing women’s writing. Quoting Gerda Lerner and her article, “The Challenge of Women’s History,” she notes that the exclusion of women from history is not the deliberate result of some evil conspiracy, but instead because history has been considered only in strictly
male-centered terms. Rather than adopting a male-centered critique of women’s culture or asking questions of it in decidedly patriarchal terms, one should focus on analyzing it from a woman-centered point of view. Thus, as Lerner points out, a woman-centered inquiry will consider the rich possibilities of a female culture existing within a general culture in which both men and women exist (and which is dominated not surprisingly by the presence of the patriarchal male). This type of inquiry thus asks the vital question: “What would history be like if it were seen through the eyes of women and ordered by the values they define?” (qtd. in Showalter: 260). Later in the article, Showalter also notes Lerner’s aversion to the term “sub-culture” in describing the condition of women’s culture. As she persuasively argues, it is not possible for one to live in a sub-culture nor, is it adequate to describe the duality in which women experience culture in such terms. Instead, she proposes the idea of a dual-culture experience, in both the general culture of men and women as well as within the distinctive “parameters” of female culture.

As Showalter correctly points out, the ideas of Lerner directly parallel those brought forth by the famous cultural anthropologists, Shirley and Edwin Ardener. Edwin Ardener, in his groundbreaking work, “Belief and the Problem of Women,” proposed the idea of a muted and dominant culture represented in abstract terms by intersecting circles. In Ardener’s theory as laid forth in Showalter’s analysis, men and women find cultural identity in various ways. Men have the cultural sphere that they share with women as well as a separate sphere of culture which is male-centered and exists without the presence or influence of women.

Accordingly, in this example, men dominate the general culture shared by both men and women, through use of cultural means, such as language and cultural institutions,
such as dowries and marriage. Conversely, women also experience culture through two
types of communities: the general community which they share with men, and also a
separate, distinctly female community outside of the influence or presence of men.
Ardener refers to the latter as the “muted group” but Showalter more aptly terms it “the
wild zone,” an area which focuses on criticism, theory, literature and art in women-
centered terms.

By illustrating the idea of the woman-centered community, Showalter provides the
basis for a new understanding of the role and significance of women’s writing. As she
points out: “The difference of women’s writing, then, can only be understood in terms of
this complex and historically grounded cultural relation” (264). This theory also only
begins to scratch the surface of exploring the literary contributions of women who
possess membership in what Ardener terms the muted group. The author offers the
example of a Black American woman poet who, in her writing, is a member of three
groups: the dominant one shared by men and women, the one referred to earlier
belonging to the female community, and finally, a third belonging to Black women in
their own right. This thought offers intriguing possibilities, for it can be applied in other
ways. For instance, in focusing on the comedia being used in this study, the author could
conceivably belong to three groups: the dominant community, the female community,
and finally the Spanish female community.

Although published more than twenty years ago, it is hard to ignore the influence that
“Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” has had on those who study works by women
writers. The seemingly universal and never-ending idea of women belonging to dual
communities, and their ability to successfully maneuver their way in and out of them,
seems an ideal fit for those who study diverse works, from the Spanish *comedias* of the early modern era to the works of more contemporary Spanish women writers. This criticism is also a way to provide another perspective on literary history by highlighting the important role women authors such as María de Zayas y Sotomayor played.
Chapter Four -
The Members of the Community of Women

The character of Fenisa is perhaps the most compelling and complex characters portrayed in Zayas’s comedia. Some critics, such as Matthew Stroud, have opined that she is a type of Doña Juana, exemplifying many of the traits associated with the traditional Don Juan character. Other critics, such as Valerie Hegstrom, take a slightly different approach, choosing to classify Fenisa as an example of the mujer varonil (La traición 16). I argue that Zayas resists the temptation to turn the character into a complete female equivalent of the Don Juan figure. She does not entirely adapt the attributes of Tirso’s burlador. Rather than wooing and then eventually abandoning men like a typical burlador, she seems to truly enjoy the company of each one of her conquests. She does not want to abandon them and delights in deceiving each one and receiving their affections.

Instead, Fenisa is shown to be the equivalent of an outsider within her own community, by way of her decision to attract and deceive as many men as she can. She is also held up as a model of what occurs to those who dare to defy traditional gender norms, which are formed by the male community and which are, correctly or not, subtly reinforced by other members of the female community. She is a figure who does not just stray beyond the community of women. She acts out of the bounds of what the general culture and the group of women define as acceptable behavior. In her decision to go her own way by adopting a different set of moral and sexual values, Fenisa directly rejects a role in the close-knit group of women led by Marcia. This results directly in her fate at

5 Stroud writes: “Fenisa exerts real power over the other characters, seducing men with promises of love (sex) and betraying her women friends in the process. She is, in short, a kind of Doña Juana” (543).
the end of the play, and serves as an example of what happens to those who consciously and explicitly reject the tenets of the community of women.

Fenisa very openly explains the rationale behind her decision-making process throughout the drama. In the beginning of the work, when she sees the portrait of Liseo, she is immediately smitten, although troubled by small pangs of guilt. She laments, “Marcia y yo somos amigas. / Fuerza es morir. ¡Ay amor! / ¿Por qué pides que te siga?” (42). These feelings of guilt are fleeting, however, and she compares the decision-making process (to either maintain her friendship with Marcia or to pursue Liseo) to a battle between the forces of friendship and love. “El amor y la amistad / furiosos golpes se tiran. / Cayó la amistad en tierra, / y amor victoria apellida. ¡Téngala yo, ciego Dios / en tan dudosa conquista!” (44-46). In the second act, her deliberations are complete and she consciously abandons friendship for the pursuit of love (or more aptly, lust). Confronted with her deception by the criada Lucia, she briefly expresses remorse only to follow with a final, blunt rejection of friendship.

This evolution of Fenisa’s thought process, from initial guilt, followed by a preliminary decision to abandon friendship for pursuit of men, to a then final, decisive rejection of Marcia and the others, is crucial. She consciously chooses to abandon friendship and the community she has formed with Marcia and Belisa for other purposes. By choosing to pursue separate personal goals on her own, she consciously rejects any membership within a larger community of women working for change from within. By making such a decision, she also, unfortunately, opens herself up to the possibility of considerable scorn and punishment, which she ultimately receives in the final act.
What are Fenisa’s exact motives for rejecting the women around her for the pursuit of multiple men, particularly in a society which explicitly frowns upon such behavior? Just as Fenisa is extremely open in explaining her thought-process in her deliberations over love versus friendship, she is equally as outspoken in explaining her desire for so many men. In a fascinating soliloquy turned aside to the audience in the second act, Fenisa provides insight into her thinking when she declares, “Hombres así vuestros engaños vengo.” Shortly thereafter, she turns her ire towards women who do not dare to act in the same way she does: “¡Mal haya la que sólo un hombre quiere! / Que tener uno solo es cobardía. / Naturaleza es vana y es hermosa”(118). This quote is intriguing for it reveals Fenisa’s attitudes towards both men and women. Men are to be punished for tricking women, while women, meanwhile, are deemed foolish if they do not dare to act in the same way Fenisa does, enjoying the pleasures of as many men as possible.

Fenisa’s punishment for abandoning the idea of a female community and her friendships with other women in the play, and for engaging in amorous trickery with a variety of men, is severe, although not as severe when compared to that of other “wicked” women of the era. She becomes a social pariah, alienated and abandoned by everyone around her. Finally, she becomes the subject of considerable ridicule, particularly at the hands of León, who is only more than happy to mock Fenisa after she physically beats him on multiple occasions earlier in the play. By contrast, Liseo, who has likewise engaged in behavior as poor as that of Fenisa, is left relatively unscathed.

It is quite conceivable that Zayas makes a statement against a system of values of the day, which fail to condemn men for deceiving and tricking women and which are quick to condemn women for attempting to act the same way. Teresa Soufas asserts as much
when she notes that Fenisa is criticized throughout the play for doing the same things
Liseo does, but without the loss of his social status (“María de Zayas’s (Un)Conventional
Play” 159).

While inequality in punishment certainly plays an important role in the comedia, it is
also probable that Zayas wishes to use Fenisa as an example of what happens when a
woman decides to forgo her solidarity with other women in any type of community, large
or small, for her own self-interests. Fenisa is a model for women of how not to behave,
and of how consciously rejecting community with other women for selfish and immoral
reasons can lead to one’s demise. She is left alone and without any friends, which could
conceivably be seen as the worse punishment of all.

* * * * * * * *

Lucía, the maid to Fenisa, plays a fascinating role in the action of the drama. While
not a central character, she nonetheless has some significant moments in the play,
especially in scenes with her mistress. At first there appears to be an essence of both
realism and envy which defines Lucía’s relationship with Fenisa. When she learns that
Fenisa has decided to deceive Marcia in her pursuit of Liseo, she is not pleased.
However, mere moments later, she expresses awe and a sense of envy as Fenisa joyfully
extols the virtues of entertaining amorous affairs with many men. She congratulates
Fenisa, saying, “¡Bravamente / entretienes tu gusto!” (120). She even goes as far as to
compare Fenisa’s love of men to a story told to her as a girl by her own mother. In it, men
are compared to cloves of garlic being crushed in a bowl. It is always good to have a few
extra on hand just in case one of the cloves being crushed jumps out of the bowl and is
lost.
This moment of shared enthusiasm between Lucía and Fenisa is rather short-lived, and as the action of the play further progresses, one can argue that Lucía somewhat takes on the role of Fenisa’s conscience. As the romantic relationships Fenisa has worked so unscrupulously to cultivate begin to unravel around her, Lucía serves to remind her of the error of her ways. And quite often, Fenisa is unwilling to hear the observations of her criada. One particularly pointed exchange occurs when Fenisa discovers that Don Juan has returned to Belisa. Lucía notes to Fenisa, “¡Caso pesado!, / de tu condición castigo. / Pues del amor te Burlabas / y a tu servicio admitías / a todos cuántos querías, / puesto que a ninguno amabas.” Fenisa sharply responds, “No tienes que aconsejarme” (164). However, Lucía does need to remind her mistress of the severe consequences of her behavior, for without these reminders Fenisa has no one else in her world that is capable of doing so. This does not stop Fenisa from engaging in increasingly erratic and irrational behavior, most notably when she proclaims that she will go to Marcia’s house to kill all the men and women she believes have deceived her.

Interestingly, it is Lucía who has the opportunity to address the audience in two clever asides, which occur during Fenisa’s breakdown upon learning that she has been abandoned by Don Juan, Liseo, and Lauro. First, she somewhat jokingly admonishes the women in the audience: “Señoras, las que entretienen, / tomen ejemplo en Fenisa. / Huigan destos pisaverdes” (172). Later, as she is summoned to accompany a hysterical Fenisa to Marcia’s house, she turns Fenisa’s words around on her: “Digan, señoras, ¿no mienten / en decir que quiere a todos? / Cosa imposible parece, / mas no que quiera una muger que vive mintiendo siempre / pedir verdad a los hombres. / Necias serán si lo creen” (174).
These two comments to the audience, while referring specifically to the state in which Fenisa finds herself, hold a sense of universal appeal and significance to the audience (particularly the female members of the audience). Both contain admonishments against acting the way Fenisa does. In this way, they reflect a didactic message on the part of Zayas to the audience as a whole. It seems Lucía plays a distinct role from the other members of the community of women. She is not a member of the group of three, and really cannot be a member because of her relationship with Fenisa. Despite comments which may hint otherwise, she has a strong sense of personal devotion to her mistress. Instead, Lucía plays a different role. She is not cognizant of what the group of three is attempting to do, reunite Laura and Liseo and bring about an end to Fenisa’s trickery. In some ways, she indirectly supports the ideals of the group by admonishing Fenisa to change her ways.

Perhaps more importantly, Lucía serves as a messenger of one of the secondary themes of the play. If the predominant theme, as this thesis argues, is that women can create strategies for change through working in a community, the secondary theme is that a foolish woman like Fenisa cannot successfully act without fear of punishment in a society which clearly has limits. Indeed, learning to act within the limits of society and not creating disorder is one of the most predominant overall themes of the comedia.

Lucía also serves as an important figure for Zayas to gain credibility and acceptance from a greater audience. While the themes of community and social possibilities for change are accessible to women in the audience (and like-minded males), the themes of punishment for loose women and the dangers of acting in ways which directly
compromise one’s honor are universal, and accessible to every single member of the audience, regardless of their gender.

* * * * * * *

Marcia, in contrast to the other women in the play, is the strongest person in the work and regarded as a leader within her small group of females. She is the figure who is benevolent and virtuous enough to welcome Laura into her home when she discovers how Liseo has treated her. She not only embraces Laura, but in doing so disavows the possibility of any future with Liseo, whom she so lovingly and passionately describes in the beginning of the work. Marcia is also the one to spearhead the group effort (along with the help of Belisa and Laura) to trick Liseo into returning to, and marrying, Laura.

Marcia shows a strong sense of character in not just solely welcoming into her home, but also embracing someone who has come to her door and altered the course of her future. In doing so, Marcia consciously gives up desire for friendship, an important point which is noted by various critics in their analyses of the play. Furthermore, she takes the initiative to subvert the results of what male community behavior has brought to her doorstep through her plan to reunite the unwitting Liseo with Laura. She even goes as far as to entreat Laura to leave the planning to her, advising her to, “déjame el cargo a mí” (96). Marcia’s reaction to the situation and plans to resolve it (which are discussed shortly in further detail) show a deep and profound strength of character and generosity. They also serve to reinforce an intriguing statement which Marcia makes in reference to her strength of conviction, which will shortly be shown to Fenisa: “Vamos, Laura, y tal maldad / así paga los extremos / de mi voluntad Fenisa” (98).

---

6 For a deeper exploration of the friendship concept in La traición en la amistad, see Larson and Wysznyski.
Marcia is obviously a central figure in the creation of the community, because no community can exist without the presence of some sort of leader, either appointed or otherwise. It is through her guidance and leadership that Laura and Belisa begin to take the steps to trick Liseo into following through on his commitment to Laura and her honor. Marcia is also an intriguing figure when juxtaposed alongside the characters of Fenisa and Laura. Fenisa, as discussed earlier, is ultimately a rebellious outsider. She is a representation of what happens when a woman of the period chooses to stray outside gender norms established for her. Laura on the other hand, starts out as a rather meek and almost pitiful creation in Zayas’s work. As opposed to the strong-willed Marcia and her equally strong-willed cousin, Belisa, Laura herself seems almost resigned to her fate as evidenced by her frequent soliloquies on the pain of love and the cruel betrayal of her betrothed, Liseo.

Nonetheless, she ultimately makes the decision to seek out the assistance of Marcia (aided in large part by her criado, Félix), and in doing so becomes a more active agent in affecting change in her own life. Marcia plays a crucial role in affecting this personal evolution in Laura by encouraging her in times of difficulty. A prime example is contained in the crucial mistaken identity scene in the third act, when Laura pretends to be Marcia and Marcia pretends to be Belisa. A frazzled Laura is having difficulty with the charade to which Marcia responds, “Mucho desdices / de quien eres. ¿Qué es aquesto?” (148).

It is intriguing for the reader to watch as Marcia (in a way which bears some resemblance to the character of Leonor in Ana Caro’s Valor, agravio y mujer) controls the action aided by Belisa and Laura, and on behalf of Laura. She serves as the person in
this group of three for the other two to rally behind. Belisa can become carried away with her hatred for Fenisa, who attempted to steal her beloved Don Juan (witness the fight between the two in the third act) and Laura can be overly emotional and bordering on hysterical at times early in the play. By contrast, Marcia is a model of consistency, never wavering in her leadership, her sense of calmness, or her confidence that the situation will be firmly resolved and that the community of three’s goals will be achieved. It is only at the end of the play, in the final confrontation with Fenisa, that Marcia drops her calm exterior, at one point telling Fenisa that if she were not a woman, she would throw her down the stairs. Despite this fiery reaction, Marcia remains a model for the strength of character and personal morality that Zayas aims to represent in her comedia.

* * * * * * *

While conviction of character and strength of action, (whether for good or for bad), are the most potent characteristics of the two principal characters in the play, Marcia and Fenisa, the same can not be said for the character of Laura. Introduced at the end of the first act as the long-suffering fiancé of Liseo, Zayas portrays her frequently as a sobbing mess of a woman, bordering at times on hysterical. Yet her plight, that of being practically abandoned by Liseo in almost all senses of the word, is the main catalyst for action in the play. The previously loose group of women in this upper-class setting band together to solve Laura’s problem, which is similar to so many others portrayed in early modern literature – the deceived woman.

The status of a woman such as Laura within society at large bears some mention. Without parents and seemingly without friends, (with the exception of her criado Félix), she appears to have no one to turn to for consolation or advice throughout the difficulties
she experiences with Liseo. While the absence of one or more parents is never truly surprising in Spanish drama, Zayas seems to place particular attention on Laura’s case when she emphasizes the tragic nature of Laura’s upbringing (her parents dying when she was too young to fully remember them). Without family, she seems also to be without a strong friend or supporter, either male or female. While Félix is shown to provide moral support for Laura, he is powerless to do more than provide a sympathetic ear and a few words of condemnation for the man (Liseo) responsible for his mistress’s sad, lonely state. Therefore, it is no wonder that a woman such as her was an easy mark for a man like Liseo to deceive.

Laura ends up finding the acceptance and assistance of others, ironically in some ways, from the woman to whom Liseo has shifted his intentions, Marcia. In her relationship with Marcia, and to a lesser extent Belisa, Laura ends up finding the acceptance and approval of fellow women and also a solution to her problem with Liseo. Her interaction with her fellow characters in this small community of women is intriguing. While Marcia and Belisa are active figures and agents for change (namely punishing Fenisa and tricking Liseo into honoring his marital vow to Laura), Laura starts out as a much more passive figure, prone to fits of hysteria. This is evidenced by her fainting spell at the start of the third act when she mistakenly learns that Fenisa and Liseo are married and further in the act when she fails to control her emotions while masquerading as Marcia to Liseo from Marcia’s balcony.

While she bears some resemblance to the tricked women in some of Zayas’s short stories, Laura seems even more passive and more timid than most victims of amorous engaños in other Zayas works. Whether Zayas uses her for dramatic effect or to illustrate
that every community of men or women has more active and passive agents for change, is
certainly debatable. Nonetheless as the play goes on, Laura gains a certain strength of
conviction and purpose. Her growth culminates in the final scene when, referring to
herself in the third person, she informs Liseo (who has finally been confronted with his
trickery and abandonment of Laura) that the situation will be resolved on her terms: “Eso
será cuando quiera / Laura la licencia darte” (190). It is a pointed example of Laura’s
slow but steady evolution as a character, buoyed by her membership in the small
community of women and aided by the strength of conviction displayed by her
counterparts, Marcia and Belisa. Furthermore, Laura exemplifies the room for personal
growth and development which membership in a close-knit female community allows.

One note of interest that should be illustrated at this point is the social class of Laura.
She makes sure to emphasize her social status upon first meeting Marcia: “Sabel,
bellísimas primas, / cuyos años logre el cielo, / cómo nací en esta corte / y es noble mi
nacimiento” (90). Even Belisa takes notice at the start of the act, when informing Marcia
of Laura’s presence, of her possible noble appearance. As stated earlier, it is crucial when
discussing the most local, tangible community of women as outlined by Zayas, to note
that class did assume a basic role. Zayas wrote as an upper-class woman, not surprisingly
for an audience that while not entirely comprised of the upper-class, was nonetheless full
of the elite.

Ultimately, Laura could plausibly be a figure from either the upper or lower class and
be seen as believable in the play because the preservation of honor and the consequences
which occur when it is lost are themes which affected all levels of society in the early
modern era. Resisting men’s attempts to actively control women cannot merely be
labeled an upper-class phenomenon. This notion is pointedly demonstrated in Lope de Vega’s classic drama *Fuenteovejuna*. Instead, the effects of a system which solely tied a woman’s identity to her chastity resonated throughout the various levels of society.

* * * * * * *

The character of Belisa, in contrast, is quite active from the start, and clearly motivated to achieve solutions agreeable to the group of women, in many ways because of her relationship with Don Juan, which is troubled at the start of the play. The relationship between Belisa and Don Juan is fascinating because it juxtaposes Belisa’s strong, active voice for change with that of the repentant straying Don Juan, who briefly abandons his relationship with Belisa to woo Fenisa instead. Here Zayas almost describes a reversal of roles: the woman in the relationship, often the passive agent, is instead the active one. The man, used to the more dominant role, is instead forced into a lesser role. In this case, Don Juan appears to accept his role in a surprisingly non-reluctant manner. He, of course, has to repent for his romantic liaison with Fenisa. Being forced into a less active, but still important agent for change, is his way of doing just that.

Logically, Belisa has a strong desire to assist in delivering the comeuppance to the woman with whom her beloved went astray. However, her deeper commitment to the motives of the group and righting the wrong that Liseo has perpetuated is irrefutable. Laura Gorfkle even goes as far as to refer to Belisa as the leader of what she terms the “female youth group” in the drama, with Marcia acting as the follower instead (618). She is a prime source of support for Laura as the group’s plan to enact favorable change on its own terms is put into place. She also provides a strong sense of strength of purpose
(as does Marcia) which evens out the moments of panic-stricken hysteria as voiced by Laura. In the beginning of the third act, she confidently reassures Laura that the situation will be resolved on terms acceptable to all when she states: “No llores; no maltrates esos ojos. / Guárdalos para ver a tu Liseo / en tus brazos. Pues, ha de ser tu esposo” (142). Finally, she is clearly the feistiest member of the small community, as evidenced by her fight with Fenisa at the conclusion of the third act. She does not suffer fools gladly, unlike Laura, which makes her not only interesting to watch but also an intriguing model for alternate feminine behavior for Zayas to set forth.
Chapter Five -
Analyzing the Community

The strategies employed by three of the play’s central protagonists in the creation and implementation of their community deserve mention, as they are indicative of strategies that an outside, real-life community of women may have utilized. Specifically, the characters of Laura, Belisa and Marcia use acts of sisterhood or female solidarity, consciousness-raising and implementation of what I term the re-engañó, in their community. Likewise, Fenisa also attempts to use some of these techniques to her own advantage, but is not successful.

As an important hallmark of feminism, sisterhood between women also plays a crucial role as a strategy which the three group members utilize throughout the action of the play. The unity of interests which the three women share is a clear example of their sisterhood or solidarity. This concept of sisterhood provides a useful mechanism for holding together the community of women, as it attempts to combat a larger male establishment which seeks to ignore or disregard it. Pamela Abbott offers a useful definition of sisterhood which can be applied to the characters in Zayas’s play when she writes:

Sisterhood can more positively be seen as the support and nurturance that women can give one another: mutual support built on a special relationship that gives women strength in their daily lives. This type of mutual support, often based on kinship networks, has provided women with the basis for constructing their own lives in patriarchal society. (4:1855)

In their sisterhood, Marcia, Belisa and Laura are bound by a desire to right the wrongs caused by men and by the injustice of a gender system which punishes the deceived.

---

Although both sisterhood and consciousness-raising come from contemporary feminist thought, one can certainly call upon certain characteristics of these terms in analyzing a text from the early modern era.
woman rather than the offending man.

The sisterhood that the women share is also central because it directly eliminates the danger of a ‘go it alone’ mentality which can sometimes plague the lone female struggling against male oppression in literature.\(^8\) Able to clearly rely on the other members of their small community, Laura, Marcia and Belisa can further their efforts to achieve a solution to Liseo’s trickery. They are backed by the knowledge that a shared “pro-woman” sisterhood/solidarity will give them the strength to carry through until they achieve their goals on their own terms. There is a power evident in the coming together of a group of women, however small, which supersedes that of an individual and can be an effective catalyst for change. Because Fenisa attempts to act independently, and thus without that powerful support of sisterhood, her attempts at change fail to come into fruition.

Consciousness-raising was a central activity in the women’s liberation movement, but its characteristics, which involve the sharing of feelings and personal stories in a group setting, have universal and timeless appeal. At its core, consciousness-raising involves groups of women sharing their personal experiences. In the process, they realize that there are similarities in their stories that can help women who may believe the problems they face are personal and unique to their experiences. Indeed, consciousness-raising can be a useful mechanism for furthering an understanding of what it means for women to live in a patriarchal society. As Pamela Abbott explains, such consciousness-raising also, “enables women to realize that what they think of as resulting from their own personal

---

\(^8\) For a fine example, see Ana Caro’s Valor, agravio y mujer, which, while sharing many of the same pro-women traits as La traición en la amistad, nonetheless lacks the semblance of female community found in Zayas’s work.
inadequacy, or their own inability, may be the result of living in a patriarchal society – that the personal is often political” (1:221).

The benefits of consciousness-raising are innumerable. It not only allows women to better understand the challenges they face, but also provides them with the opportunity to work towards a new model of behavior and action, in which a greater sense of autonomy and confidence in a woman’s ability to make decisions for herself replaces a dependence on men and their decisions. The act of consciousness-raising also reinforces the constant need for dialogue and continued communication among women, which feminism so strongly advocates.

Some of the most fascinating sections of *La traición en la amistad* involve the continued dialogue which takes place between Marcia, Laura and Belisa. When Laura arrives at Marcia’s home and tells the story of her deception, it is not just an issue isolated to her alone. It also affects both Marcia and Belisa, who both have likewise been deceived by men in their own lives. It allows them the opportunity to come together, realizing that such deception occurred through no fault of their own. In doing so, the personal pain resulting from deception by men, who believe they can act without impunity based on a relaxed social view on standards of male behavior, transforms into something different: more than just a personal affront, the mistreatment becomes a political, social issue, which requires the women working together within their community to resolve. Such consciousness-raising is thus the first step for the women along their journey to create a satisfactory solution to meet their needs.

Consciousness-raising also involves the active use of listening as a tool for achieving social change, which the three women in the play demonstrate. For example, Marcia
clearly engages in active listening as act two opens, and Laura tearfully explains her predicament. Rather than turning Laura away, Marcia instead embraces her and fully allows her to relate her story uninterrupted. Marcia makes a point of not just stating directly that she is attentive (“Estaré atenta”) (90) but also to encourage a troubled Laura to continue speaking and unburdening herself. She urges her friend to share, saying, “Pues, dilo, / y deja ese sentimiento” (92). Through her use of active listening, Marcia also allows Laura to open up to the fullest extent possible, and in doing so creates an atmosphere of trust between herself, Laura and Belisa. This trust ultimately enables the community to communicate and achieve their goals in a much more constructive and effective manner.

Finally, the third strategy employed by the community is what I have coined the re-engaño. Specifically, this refers to the act of taking the deception itself (el engaño) and turning it around to ultimately deceive the person who originated the deception. The prime recipient of the re-engaño in this play is of course, Liseo. As outlined in the first chapter, Liseo engages in trickery to lure Laura into bed so he can take her virginity. Although he promises to marry her, he instead chooses to court Marcia and pursue Fenisa, essentially ignoring Laura after she fulfilled his original desires. The community responds with a re-engaño, by tricking Liseo using the same means (false words and promises under the guise of a marital promise from “Marcia”) in order to achieve their own successful conclusion based on their own terms.

Inherent in the act of re-deceiving someone is turning around a previously painful situation onto the individual who originally perpetrated it, in a similarly deceptive manner as the way in which the trickery was first executed. This is done in order to
achieve an ending which provides a proper sense of closure and personal satisfaction to
the one who engages in the re-engaño. Belisa quite cogently summarizes the goal of the
re-engaño when she states (in reference to Liseo): “Laura será tu muger; / a quien [es] tu
fe deudora, / que si engañando has vivido / y de ti engañada ha sido, / hoy tu engaño
pagarás, / y por engaño serás, / a tu pesar, su marido” (162).

Meanwhile, Fenisa, excommunicated from the community of women by her
involvement with Liseo and Don Juan, also attempts to employ the re-engaño. However,
instead of engaging in it to benefit the community as a whole, she does so for purely her
own personal benefit. While the act of deceiving Liseo by the community of women
directly benefits Laura (righting the wrong that was done to her), it also benefits the other
two women in the community in addition to the larger community of early modern
Spanish women as a whole. Seeing a fellow member of the community of women be
successful (as is the case with Laura) often has the added benefit of further inspiring
other women within the community to pursue their own attempts at future acts of
independence. By contrast, Fenisa attempts to engage in the delivery of the re-engaño, on
a much more symbolic scale. None of the men with whom she is involved with have
wronged her specifically, but she nevertheless defends her involvement with them as a
righteous form of deception, because men have done the same to women without
consequence in the past. She realizes this, reflecting, “Hombres, así vosotros engañaos
vengo” (118). Not surprisingly, her attempts at engaging in the re-engaño, are
unsuccessful.

It is arguable that Fenisa fails not for moral purposes alone, but rather as a
consequence of the alienation from the community that resulted from her behavior.
Laura, Belisa, and Marcia, in using the strategies of female solidarity and consciousness-raising, seize the opportunity to also make successful use of the third primary strategy, the *re-engañó*. Fenisa, by contrast, is unable to do the same because she does not have support from a community, and without the backing of a community, she is doomed to fail miserably. Indeed, the punishment she faces is even more severe because she has fallen outside the boundaries of what the group of women deems acceptable.

Marcia’s ire is not directed firmly at Liseo. Instead, it is directed most harshly at Fenisa in two passages from the second act. First, when Laura recounts the story of her betrayal at the hands of Liseo and his subsequent dalliance with Fenisa, Marcia is quick to respond to Laura, asserting, “No llores, / que ya he pensado el remedio, / tal que he de dar a Fenisa / lo que merece su intento” (94). Later, she makes an interesting observation about the perils of female friendship in light of Fenisa’s actions, reflecting “¡Mal haya quien en tal tiempo / tiene amigas!” (98). I interpret this reaction as a strong measure of Marcia’s strength of conviction against the clearly self-serving actions of Fenisa. This is also why the punishment imposed on Fenisa is so severe, as opposed to the one imposed on Liseo (if marriage to Laura can even be interpreted as punishment).

********

While the particulars of the communication and dialogue within the community of women have been outlined and discussed, the specific interactions between the women and men from outside their group have yet to be analyzed. These contacts between men, such as Gerardo and Don Juan, allow the women to draw on figures from the outside population who are sympathetic to their cause and who also serve to aid them in their objectives. Thus, there exists in Zayas’s play a change of roles in relation to contact and
work between men and women. Women, relegated to the supporting, helping roles in most cases, are instead the facilitators of the action. They oversee the decision-making process, deliberate on what should be done, outline ways to accomplish their goals and then execute plans to guarantee satisfactory results. By contrast, men, normally the facilitators of action and the dominant figures, in this case assume the supporting roles normally occupied by women. Rather than being at the forefront of the action, they take on a role in the background. Valerie Hegstrom Oakey even goes as far as to classify Gerardo, the long-suffering and rejected suitor of Marcia, as a type of “hombre mujeril” (“Fallacy of False Dichotomy” 63).

While the men are playing a supporting role and aiding the community of women, that does not necessarily make them a part of the community. Although they demonstrate the marks of those who are sympathetic to the causes of women, they are nonetheless allowed no concrete role within the community of women, just as women are not permitted any role within the dominant community of men, according to Showalter’s theories on the subject. Indeed, all of the planning for how to deal with Laura’s abandonment at the hands of Liseo takes place most often in the women-only zone. Any interaction between men and women falls more concretely into the shared, mixed zone. What differs though, in this diverse arena, is the existence of a mutual respect between the men and the women.

It is arguable that this could simply be misconstrued as efforts on the parts of Gerardo and Don Juan, to achieve the favor of Marcia and Belisa, whom they are simultaneously pursuing romantically throughout the play. This criticism could be refuted, however, by an occurrence at the conclusion of the second act in which Don Juan, upon learning of
Fenisa’s liaisons with not just Liseo, but also his friend Lauro, confronts Liseo with news of Fenisa’s actions. Belisa, without realizing any of this, is circumspect about Don Juan’s actions, even though they are performed in support of the overall goals of the community. She even shows a glimmer of sympathy for Fenisa’s situation, reflecting, “ninguna muger, / si se tiene por discreta, / pone en opinión su honor, / siendo joya que se quiebra. / Pues si lo fuera Fenisa, / esos engaños no hiciera. / Pues al fin pone su fama / en notables contingencias” (134). She thus implies that, if Fenisa really knew the error of her ways, she would behave differently.

The overriding importance of the collaboration that takes place between the women and the two men sympathetic to their cause is that it belies a tendency within the early modern Spanish society to support strictly defined gender roles. Obviously, support for women acting in a way in which they directly take charge of their own existence within society, could be termed a radical and inappropriate notion by many men (and women) of the period. One need only examine the conduct literature of Juan Luis Vives and Fray Luis de León for further proof. Rather than shunning the women for working towards their personal goals, as would be characteristic of men of the period, Don Juan and Gerardo choose to accept the decisions made by the community of women. This in and of itself is an example of the move away from typical masculine behavior which other characters in the play such as Liseo and León demonstrate. By placing male figures such as Gerardo and Don Juan in a position to directly demonstrate their support for women and their goals, the play effectively models the positive aspects of a community of women that seeks to maintain supportive relations with men.
Any analysis of a community of women (or men), should examine the factors that were involved in the development of the particular community. At the outset of the play, a small and locally-based community of women does exist in the personages of Marcia, Fenisa and Belisa. Nonetheless, when Fenisa makes her decision to focus on attracting Liseo, she ceases to be a member of the community. The dynamics change abruptly when Laura confronts Marcia with information on the true nature of Liseo. What was before a loosely-based local community of women quickly mobilizes, with a renewed focus on righting the wrong that Liseo has committed in his behavior towards Laura.

A more specific definition of what is meant by a “loosely based local female community” merits some attention. I would argue that, prior to the start of act two, the local community of women which consisted of Laura, Belisa, Fenisa and any other unnamed members of the Madrid upper-class elite of the time, were without a specific focus (with the exception of the typical interest in the affairs of the day, which for most women were largely romantic concerns). Indeed, from the start of the **comedia**, when Marcia relates to Fenisa the glory of Liseo and her burning desire for him, it is evident that the group of women does not concern itself with anything more than the casual (although deeply important) affairs of the heart.

All of this changes when more serious matters present themselves in the form of Laura who arrives on Marcia’s doorstep. Confronted by a double betrayal – one by a close friend and another by her suitor – Marcia must make a quick decision regarding the best course of action. By choosing to consciously abandon a romantic relationship with Liseo, and instead assist Laura and force Liseo to honor his commitment to her, she essentially
chooses to elevate the female community to a different level. Her response to the situation is impressive; what was once a relatively inactive community of women quickly becomes an active, pro-women group, focused less on the frivolous pursuit of romance (although that still plays a role) and instead on matters more profound. The women also become more socially aware, exemplified in their righting of wrongs perpetuated by unfaithful men and providing support for one another in times of difficulty.

A further characteristic of female communities is introduced by Nina Auerbach, who quotes from the book *Women of England* by Sarah Stickney Ellis, which hints at defining communities of women based on the aspect of shared pain:

> [Unlike men], women do know what their sex is formed to suffer; and for this very reason there is sometimes a bond existing between sisters, the most endearing, the most pure and disinterested of any description of affection which this world affords… [This bond] arises chiefly out of their mutual knowledge of each other’s capacity of receiving pain. (qtd. in Auerbach: 17-18)

She thus suggests a possible explanation for why the community of three women (Marcia, Belisa and Laura) comes together in the first place, and also combats the criticism that the three are unable to form a community because they are only three alone. While the shared pain Ellis describes quite accurately in her work includes the most obvious instance of shared pain experienced by women, childbirth, it is not marked by this instance alone; this of course can be attested to by the countless unmarried or childless married women in early modern Europe.

I would argue that a different type of shared pain allows the three women to form a communal bond together, which although a part of a much larger, community of women
as a whole, is nonetheless distinct and can be limited to just the three women. The shared
pain they experience results from deceit and trickery perpetrated by the men in their lives,
and a corresponding desire on the part of each one to remedy their situation. For Belisa
this comes in the form of Don Juan, who wooed Fenisa despite his early pursuit of Belisa.
It is the same for Marcia, courted by Liseo, who has taken away the chastity and honor of
Laura and who romances Fenisa as well. This is likewise the case for Laura, who suffered
considerable pain and damage to her reputation as the result of her involvement with and
subsequent rejection by Liseo.

Each of these three are engaged in a type of shared pain which binds them together as
a small group. Matthew Wyszynski refers to a blurring of identities that results when he
writes, “This deliberate blurring of identities becomes an important aspect of this
friendship. Each of the three women, to a certain extent loses her individual identity and
is part of a group, in this case a network with a specific goal in mind”(26). They are able
to form a community based on similar shared experience on a very local level, and
together work to find mutual solutions to remedy their shared pain. Numbers do not serve
to define this community; but rather, shared experience, communal pain, and local
proximity which give meaning to the community.

Accordingly, the character of Fenisa is unable to be a member of this small group of
women, although at the beginning of the play she enjoys a close friendship with Marcia
(and, arguably, Belisa as well). Although she partakes in the shared pain of living in a
society where women are assigned strict gender roles and limited in the types of behavior
deemed acceptable, she clearly does not share in the specific pain which Laura, Marcia
and Belisa do at the hands of men. Instead, regardless of her intention, she furthers the
pain they experience by being directly involved with the men who are wronging them as well.

Similarly, Fenisa also makes a conscious decision to abandon friendship (the fundamental tenet of this community of women) in the second act when she states to her criada, Lucía, “Enredo notable es éste. / Traición en tanta amistad… / mas, discurso sabio, tente / que no hay gloria como andar / engañando pisaverdes” (124-126). This is a crucial moment because, in briefly acknowledging the error of her ways and contemplating her actions, Fenisa becomes completely cognizant of her decisions. Rather than work collaboratively with the other women to create alternatives to life in a male-dominated society, Fenisa appears to be motivated by her own self-interest. This, in turn makes her subsequent decision to continue her own behavior all the more definitive. She thus abandons her membership in the small local community of three in order to continue deceiving men, often at the expenses of her “friends.”

**Discussion**

In discussing the development of a community of women in *La traición en la amistad*, one might ponder how this community of three differs from solely being an example of female friendship or female solidarity in action. One might also wonder where friendship ends and community begins. I would argue that friendship between women and acts of sisterhood form the basis for a community of women. They are characteristics of a community, however small, in action. While friendship and sisterhood are not necessarily elements of the more universal, disparate community as a whole (this would be impossible according to the theories of Benedict Anderson), they do provide the
necessary binding for a smaller, more local community of women. Thus, at a local level, friendship between women, while remaining a distinct entity, does form one of the necessary bases for the functioning of a community of women, regardless of its size.

In beginning to assess any possible impact María de Zayas y Sotomayor’s drama may have had on early modern audiences, it is quite useful to return to the role of the *comedia* as a whole which was discussed earlier. The *comedia* served a dual role: both to entertain and to enlighten audiences of the period. Clearly, Zayas’s work is successful in the first regard. Elements of intrigue, love, jealousy and mistaken identity all effectively capture the interest of the audience. Humor, often bawdy and crude as provided by the *gracioso* León, also increases the entertainment value of the work. In regard to the second role of enlightening the audience, Zayas is also effective. Social order is restored when three of the four female protagonists marry at the conclusion of the play. Fenisa receives proper punishment for straying outside the norms of accepted social conduct, and the audience learns a lesson at the very end of the plot, which further reinforces its believability and overall merit as a didactic tool.

To dismiss Zayas’s drama as a merely entertaining and educational tool is, as I have argued in this thesis, a superficial analysis. Indeed, while she very successfully engages the dramatic form to produce a piece that is both enlightening and entertaining, Zayas also works to appeal to a specific section of the audience through her portrayal of the community of women. In doing so, she effectively creates another community, similar to those imagined by Benedict Anderson, between the characters in the play and certain members of the audience.
In an article entitled “Women in the Renaissance Theatre Audience,” Richard Levin notes that there is evidence in English theatre of a strong sense of identification between women in an audience and the female characters in a work, which is heightened when there is a conflict portrayed between men and women on stage (171). Levin’s argument points to the special appeal female characters, particularly those clashing with their masculine counterparts on stage, may have for women in the audience as a whole. I would argue that this idea of a mutual connection between women in the audience and on stage could be transferred to the larger idea of community, which can lead to a deeper understanding of both Zayas’s play, as well as the role of women in general in early modern Spain.

By portraying a community of women on stage, particularly one that successfully navigates its own way in a male-dominated society in order to achieve an appropriate ending dictated on woman’s terms, one might envision a separate community opened up between the women on stage and the women in the audience. Within this community, a world of female agency is imagined where women, while still required to behave according to sets of norms and behaviors instituted by society, are nonetheless free to work together to find ways to cope with their status and achieve satisfaction by working to gently subvert restrictions on social norms and behavior. They are free to imagine their own social possibilities for change, which are opened up by this concept of female community. Just as Anderson argues that a vision of community lies in the hearts and minds of all those citizens who envision it, so too can this idea of an imagined community of female agency do the same.
I would also argue that, while membership for men in the community of women in the play itself is impossible, it is still possible for an enlightened man in the audience to participate in the imagining of a community with the one portrayed on stage with all women. In this way, men too are allowed the opportunity to envision a world of female agency in which women are free to make personally beneficial choices and are able to create their own strategies for a successful existence in the society-at-large. The notion that there were many men who viewed this piece during the seventeenth century and actively chose to envision this community of female free agency is questionable; however, the possibility that this occurred nonetheless exists.

The idea of envisioning a community between women (and like-minded men) in the audience and women in the community as portrayed on stage can also be used to better understand the role women played in early modern Spain and their ability to cope with daily life. By viewing an on-stage community that does not passively accept its fate but rather actively works together to pursue mutually satisfactory conclusions, the audience sees a different model for female action. The true uniqueness of this arrangement as envisioned by Zayas, is that the existence of an imagined community between women on stage and parts of the audience is fully allowed to exist, and does not disrupt or arouse the possible discontent of the larger audience as a whole.

By suggesting this notion of an alternate community, Zayas also makes a strong but indirect criticism of the social circumstances of the women in the play, which are many of the same realities women in the audience may have faced as well. This criticism is decidedly less pointed than that contained within her novels. However, as noted earlier, the *comedia* as a public text did not allow for such an open declaration of pre-feminist
thought and criticism. In short, while she carefully follows the dramatic form, she also makes a critique of a system of gender inequality, where men are allowed impunity for their actions and where women are judged to a higher and decidedly less-just standard of chaste perfection.
Conclusion

The concept of community as a whole is not a theme which María de Zayas uses exclusively in her comedia. Instead, the theme of community also ties together her two subsequent and highly successful works of prose. The frame narrative in both brings together women (and men in the first work) to tell stories and to engage in instances of sisterhood and consciousness-raising. The bonds between a community of women, which Zayas develops in La traición en la amistad, reach a point of full gestation in her second book, with men excluded and each tale told under the frame narrative, involving a desengaño, or disenchantment by men onto women.

On its most basic level, community can be seen as a group of people held together by common interests. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the concept of community can have a variety of meanings and manifestations, both subtle and more complex. Whether imagined in the mind of the beholder in the style of Benedict Anderson, or ever-evolving and changing as outlined by Nina Auerbach, the notion of community, and more specifically, a community of women, continues to fascinate scholars who seek to understand how people interact and what motivates them to act in community-related settings.

It is no coincidence that community plays such a crucial developmental role in this drama by Zayas. Any woman author attempting to utilize the comedia format had to be aware of the conventions and specific nature of the Spanish drama as a whole. Zayas faced the challenge of writing a compelling and entertaining drama, which would not be viewed as straying outside the bounds of acceptability by both the theatrical and moralist communities. Zayas’s ideas on interactions between the genders and the limitations on
behavior and lifestyle placed upon women by a patriarchal society were controversial, and they were well-suited for the novel form for mass consumption by a wide and varied readership. Yet the *comedia* is entirely different. María de Zayas needed to appeal to an audience that expected social stability to be upheld in drama.

The concept of community, specifically a community consisting of women, proves to be the solution to this particular dilemma. On the surface, Zayas’s piece could be a case study in how the proper conventions and elements of a drama are arranged, portrayed, and upheld. The plot is molded in the *capa y espada* style, with all the characteristic stock characters and moral dilemmas of betrayal, love lost and regained, and jealousy intact. It culminates in an ending with restoration of order through the act of marriage, the symbolic joining of man who presumes to provide stability to the wandering, uncontrolled women. In short, the drama ends with an act of marriage that will serve, not just to bring order to the couple, but to society as a whole.

However, there is much more to the drama than mere convention. While social order is maintained, women at the same time work to create their own strategies for change via the creation of their own community. The patriarchal society might appear to have the final say in the ending of the *comedia* (through an ending resolved in marriage) but it is the women in the play who choose to truly end the drama on their own terms. It is the women who consciously enter into the marital act, which, although normally designed to control them, can instead be seen as controlling the men to whom they become betrothed. Marriage, used earlier to control the wandering woman, evolves into a vehicle for controlling the wandering man. By creating their own social possibilities for change, the women find ways to cope with the reality in which they live. Support within the
community is provided not just to endure their situations, but further to find potential solutions for change for each woman.

Ultimately, Marcia, Laura, and Belisa are successful in the execution of their plans for change because of the support she each receives from those around her. Likewise, as seen through the character of Fenisa, those who choose to consciously abandon the community’s internal network of support for their own selfish reasons will inevitably fail. Fenisa betrays not just friendship, as the title of the comedia implies, but also any membership in the community of women and the support it entails.

Discussing the implications of a work or the impact of an author, particularly one who wrote several centuries ago, is always a risky proposition. While clearly and accurately describing the specific impact of this drama on audiences and readers of the time is difficult, one can certainly suggest the potential impact it may have had, particularly for female viewers and readers. By presenting a vision of possibilities for social change amidst the inter-workings of a small, close knit community of women, a different option for women opens up. Continued subservience at the hands of men, life in a convent, or life as a prostitute, are not the only options for women. By working with others within the bonds of a distinct community, women can cope with social circumstances and achieve solutions to the problems they face. Further, by witnessing the examples acted out by the community of women on stage, another distinct community can be formed between the audience and the figures in Zayas’s work.

Nina Auerbach ascribes a type of subtle and unexpected power to women who act together in communities of their own. By realizing the potential they possess to work together strategically to improve their fate and to combat their reputation as second-class
citizens, women do achieve a unique, astounding power. By working together as a community, creating strategies for success, and finding solutions to their problems, the women portrayed in _La traición en la amistad_, achieve this spectacular brand of subtle and unexpected power that Auerbach describes. In doing so, they demonstrate the degrees to which women can be successful in an environment which does not always allow them to freely demonstrate the strength of their convictions. By writing about women working together, María de Zayas y Sotomayor makes a profound statement about the success women can achieve when they come together to form active and supportive communities.
Selected Bibliography

Primary Text:

Secondary Texts:
---. “Sisterhood.” Kramarae and Spender 1855.


D’Monte, Rebecca and Nicole Pohl. **Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities.** New York: St. Martin’s P, 2000.


León, Luis de. **La perfecta casada.** Madrid: Espasa, 1980.


---. Tres novelas amorosas y ejemplares y tres desengaños amorosos. Ed. Alicia