

# Mujeres esquivas and the Paternal Function

## La función paterna y la mujer esquivia

**Erin Alice Cowling**

Grinnell College  
ESTADOS UNIDOS  
cowlinge@grinnell.edu

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**Abstract.** Using the psychoanalytical concept of the paternal function, this article will explore the ways in which two similar plays, *Lo que son mujeres* by Francisco Rojas Zorrilla and *El desdén con el desdén* by Agustín Moreto diverge in their endings, hinging on the function, or lack thereof, of the father figure.

**Keywords.** Literature, Theatre, Psychoanalysis, Comedia, Rojas Zorrilla, Moreto, *Mujer esquivia*.

**Resumen.** Se usa el concepto psicoanalítico de la función paterna para cómo las comedias *Lo que son mujeres* de Francisco Rojas Zorrilla y *El desdén con el desdén* de Agustín Moreto empiezan casi iguales pero terminan de manera tan disímil. La diferencia entre estas dos obras se encuentra en la actitud y acciones del padre, o, en el caso de la de Rojas Zorrilla, la falta de la figura paterna.

**Palabras clave.** Literatura, teatro, psicoanálisis, comedia, Rojas Zorrilla, Moreto, *mujer esquivia*.

*Lo que son mujeres* by Francisco Rojas Zorrilla and *El desdén con el desdén* by Agustín Moreto both center on *mujeres esquivas*; women who refuse to marry any of the suitors that come to them by conventional means. Through the use of *graciosos* and deceit, both protagonists are, by the end of the plays, willing participants in potential marriages. Though they are both resigned in the end to follow the normal path of marriage, only one of the plays, *El desdén con el desdén*, ends in marriage. *Lo que son mujeres* lacks many of the key elements found in plays of the period, which might account for the disparities between the two plays' endings. The similarities between Diana in *Desdén* and Serafina in *Mujeres*, deviate according to the portrayal—or lack thereof, in the case of *Mujeres*— of the father figure, the father-daughter relationship, and the prescribed female roles within a society

based on a code of honor. The father figure, therefore, is the link to society that shapes the ending of each of these plays. The respective presence and absence of such a character can be used to explain how these two similarly plotted plays can have such disparate denouements. There are many other comedias that could be considered comparable with these two, yet *Lo que son mujeres* and *El desdén con el desdén* contrast starkly in their conclusions, dependent exclusively on the status of the father figure.

The female protagonists of both of these plays begin with a firm belief that any potential suitor would be unsuitable or undesirable, and possibly even damaging to the inheritance with which they are entrusted. In spite of their differences in inheritances —Diana's as the daughter of the conde of Barcelona and Serafina's in a family of new wealth— both fiercely defend their right to rule over it. Female protagonists such as these need the guidance of a father figure, as prescribed by psychoanalysis to help guide them and incorporate them into their prescribed place in society<sup>1</sup>. The use of psychoanalysis in the study of these plays calls attention to the strong roles played by parental figures, in particular father figures, within the Golden Age. Diana of *Desdén* has a father, albeit a weak one, while Serafina and Matea in *Mujeres* have neither mother nor father and must therefore find a value system of their own to measure their worth. The father figure in particular is necessary for the development of the child as it is the reflection of his desires and his boundaries that shape the child's understanding of right and wrong<sup>2</sup>.

As Lacan explains, «It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which [...] has identified his person with the figure of the law»<sup>3</sup>. Since, in French «nom» and «non» are homonyms, the «name of the father» becomes the Name/No of the father, as it is the first denial that the child receives. Without such denials, the child cannot become a functional adult. This is the case with which all three of the female children of these two plays contend. In order to resolve their desires and achieve *jouissance*<sup>4</sup> all three women must submit to this Name/No of the father, also described in psychoanalysis as the phallus. For Lacan, the phallus is not an object that one or both genders might possess, but rather a signifier that represents desire, a desire for that which the subject does not have<sup>5</sup>. Thus both women and men can be signifiers of lack, but denial can only be enforced if there is in fact a signifier present in order to signify. Without mother or father acting as the phallus, the children of these plays are unable to understand their proper function within social boundaries. *Mujeres* in particular lacks any phallic parental figure and thus there is nothing to act as the prohibitive function.

At first glance, the two plays are extremely similar. Both protagonists are strong willed and have convincing arguments against marriage. The *graciosos* act as *alca-*

1. Egginton, 2000, p. 116.

2. Fink, 1995, p. 106.

3. Lacan, 2006, p. 230.

4. A difficult term that Lacan translates as «a combination of "enjoyment" and "lust"». Lacan, quoted by Braunstein, 2003, p. 103.

5. Lacan, 2006, p. 579.

*huetes* —Gibaja, the *gracioso* of *Mujeres*, announces himself directly as «Casamentero»<sup>6</sup> while Polilla in *Desdén* suggests to Carlos, somewhat more subtly, that he will find a way to «daros un remedio»<sup>7</sup>— who eventually 'trick' the female protagonists into falling in love. Both do so by having the suitors pretend to find another woman attractive, thus planting the seeds of jealousy that propel the women to throw off their disdain and agree in the end to marry.

The greatest difference between the two plays comes in the final scene. At the end of *El desdén con el desdén* Diana is engaged to her suitor, Carlos, who was simply pretending to be interested in another to rouse her jealousy. In *Lo que son mujeres*, Serafina's suitors all simultaneously reject her, as there was no love interest in the first place. As McKendrick points out, this is an unusual ending for an *esquiva*: «The disdainful woman is normally humbled by her lover because he loves and wants her, but all that Serafina's suitors want is their revenge»<sup>8</sup>. She cannot marry because none of the suitors actually loves her. In fact, they were not even aware of her before the intervention of Gibaja. The suitors lack of awareness of the sisters comes from Serafina's ability —through the money inherited from her family— to create a space for herself and her sister devoid of contact with the outside world, thus depriving them both of potential suitors. Diana, on the other hand, as the daughter of the most important man in Barcelona, is thrust into the public sphere and must take part in the rituals of courtly society, in spite of her vehement protestations.

The play's opening acts also differ significantly. At the beginning of *Desdén*, Carlos explains his predicament of loving Diana, all the while sure that he will be rejected by her as all her suitors have been. The play then centers on his desire to conquer the *mujer esquiva*. In *Mujeres*, Serafina is the first character to speak, and thus the plot centers on her rejection of all men, and her desire to remain an *esquiva*. The audience suspects that, deep down, Serafina and Diana actually desire to conform to the norms of society through marriage, but the world Serafina lives in denies her that conformity: «Sospechamos que Serafina, igual que Diana en *El desdén con el desdén*, tenga ganas secretas de entregarse a un amor profundo y auténtico. Pero Rojas nos da a entender que ella vive en una sociedad falsa y superficial en que su deseo no puede realizarse»<sup>9</sup>. However, here is little evidence in the text that Serafina really desired such a love prior to her encounter with Gibaja. She herself indicates early on that she has no desire to entertain male visitors when Gibaja is announced by her *criada* Rafaela:

SERAFINA	Nadie hombre entero me nombre.
RAFAELA	Señora, no entre por hombre, entre por acaponado; mira que ser tan cruel con los hombres es error.

6. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 860.

7. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, v. 483.

8. McKendrick, 1974, p. 154.

9. MacKenzie, 1994, p. 92.

SERAFINA            Ahora estoy de buen humor,  
entre por reinos dél<sup>10</sup>.

Serafina allows Gibaja to enter for two reasons: one, she is in a good mood and will use him as entertainment, and, two, he is not an «hombre entero» but castrated, as Rafaela states, and therefore poses no sexual threat to her. Although Serafina is squarely against the idea of marriage, Gibaja claims that he will be able to someone for her to marry, if not for her looks, then at least for her money:

porque me han dicho  
que tenéis sobre lo hermoso,  
sobre lo airoso y lo lindo,  
cuatro mil y más de renta<sup>11</sup>.

In spite of her obvious antipathy towards marriage, she consents to receive the suitors, solely for entertainment purposes. Once she has met them she refuses them all, but Gibaja has a plan. He tells the suitors to propose to the younger sister, Matea, in order to pique the jealousy of Serafina. Gibaja then tells them of a play he is composing, which is a retelling of their story, a metaplay that shares the play's title. Serafina and Matea recognize their roles in this 'play within a play,' but are still unable to foresee their fates. In spite of her protestations to the contrary, after Gibaja's play it is Serafina who is enamored of the idea of marriage and would take any of the suitors and Matea who is disdainful of all men. In reality, not one of the vengeful suitors truly wants to marry either of the sisters. Since there is not possibility of marriage, Zorrilla's play ends with an announcement by the *gracioso* Gibaja:

Y don Francisco de Rojas  
un vítor sólo pretende,  
porque escribió esta comedia  
sin casamiento y sin muerte<sup>12</sup>.

Gibaja has to remind the audience that it is time to applaud, and thus announces the play's end, despite the lack of wedding or funeral.

As there is no fatherly or kingly character in *Mujeres* there is no possibility for the play to end in a way that would have been seen as normative for the period. Serafina and Matea never learn to react to men in an acceptable way because they have no contact with male figures. Likewise, there is never any mention of the whereabouts of a motherly figure, aside from her maid, Rafaela, who acts as Serafina's confidant and 'doctor' of her love sickness<sup>13</sup>.

10. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, pp. 857-858.

11. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 860.

12. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 1004.

13. The absence of a mother as a trope in Golden Age plays is well documented, though there are exceptions to every rule (see E.H. Templin, 1935). It is not my intention to assume that there should be a mother here by any means, but the lack of either parent creates a void that cannot be filled.

Character archetypes were extremely important in guiding the Golden Age audience through the meaning of any given play. The missing presence of a father or king character in *Mujeres* can thus explain the lack of a predictable ending to the play. The play does not end with a marriage or death and the audience must be informed that it is over and it is time to applaud. We know that Serafina and Matea's father died, leaving all of his property to Serafina, without any kind of male 'regent' to guide her. Though it is not unprecedented to have a female heir, Serafina is not equipped to properly fulfill her role as guardian of either her inheritance or her sister. At the beginning of *Mujeres* Serafina is vain, reminding everyone of her beauty. She goes so far as to claim that anyone who cannot handle her disdain is unworthy of her: «¿Vos no veis / que no merece mi amor / quien no probó mi desdén?»<sup>14</sup>. When one suitor, don Roque, takes her abuse and still proclaims his desire for her she rejects him: «Pues ahora que yo sé / que me queréis, idos luego»<sup>15</sup>. At the beginning of the play Serafina is one of the women who Gibaja supposes «adoradas aborrecen», while Matea is of the «aborrecidas adoran»<sup>16</sup>. Matea is told constantly by her sister that she is not as pretty or desirable, yet she appears to understand the natural relationship between men and women, as well as the honor code of the period far better than her older, 'father figure' of a sister.

In the end, neither sister 'relinquishes the phallus' or submits to the normal moral order, and thus they are both marginalized by society. Even if the code of honor is the responsibility of the king in sixteenth-century Spain and as a stand-in for the father<sup>17</sup>, there is no monarch present in *Mujeres* to set the honor code straight in the end and/or arrange marriages to preserve the honor of the sisters and their inheritance.

Just as there is no father to fulfill the paternal function in *Mujeres*, there is also no mother to distinguish the male and female roles through desire. Serafina and Matea have skewed views of their potential interaction with male counterparts because they have not been exposed to either the paternal function or the maternal desire. In fact, without one there cannot be the other —there is no father to function as the phallus and no mother to demonstrate desire. As previously mentioned, both maternal desire and paternal function can act as a phallus; there is no need for a person to possess a penis in order to be phallic<sup>18</sup>. For Serafina, the lack of a phallus in the form of either a mother or father has led to her disdain of all men. She knows well that she cannot marry without jeopardizing her inheritance, but neither can she pass on the legacy of her ancestors without bearing a child to inherit it:

SERAFINA	Mi abuelo (que tenga Dios) dejó por su testamento un mayorazgo fundado, que heredó con mejor suerte
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14. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 890.

15. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 892.

16. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 998.

17. Egginton, 2000, p. 116.

18. Lacan, 2006, p. 579.

mi padre, y yo, por su muerte,  
 como mayor le heredado;  
 que no se reparta y venda  
 entre otras hijas mandó,  
 y no puedo serlo yo  
 por no ser libre mi hacienda,  
 y la he de dejar perder  
 por no casarme<sup>19</sup>.

She admits that marriage is a necessity, yet insists that there is no man who will convince her to marry, and that her sister is foolish for being so desirous of men<sup>20</sup>. Serafina belongs to the group of women that Marion Woodman defines as «soul-makers»:

They reject collective masculine values as an intrusive imposition, but their search for a personal identity from within almost inevitably brings them collision with the very forces they are struggling to integrate. In the effort to liberate themselves from the very real restrictions of a patriarchal culture, they ironically, even at a highly conscious level, tend to become its victims<sup>21</sup>.

She is exercising the only authority she has by refusing to marry. Yet without a fruitful marriage, she will also never have an heir.

Without father or mother to demonstrate the paternal function for Serafina and Matea their growth is stunted and they are unable to function normally within their society –that is, to get married to an appropriate suitor. Serafina's development has been inhibited by the death of her father and lack of a mother. Her total inheritance of his property removes the prohibition and could be quite upsetting for society. At that time there was concern that if women were property holders, they would chose a successor based on emotion rather than lineage: «women who had property to bequeath commonly did so on the basis of affection rather than strict kinship, and more often in favor of female than male relatives. [...] To the extent that women could independently hold and pass on property, they represented a potential perturbation to patrilineage and finally to patriarchy»<sup>22</sup>. The act of choosing an heir to a piece of property –rather than birthing one– had the potential to disrupt social order. In order to avoid this, men, who were considered the rational sex, had to be in charge of all property, whether they or their wives brought it into the marriage<sup>23</sup>. Since there is no other prohibitive presence, Serafina acts as the paternal function in her household, which she demonstrates with her attitude toward her sister's love of all men:

¿No quieres tú que me asombre  
 si en la vida ha visto hombre

19. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 867.

20. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, pp. 867-868.

21. Woodman, 2000, p. 202.

22. Jordan, 1990, p. 42.

23. Jordan, 1990, p. 4.

que no le parezca bien?  
 El chico, por lo donoso;  
 el grande, por lo entallado;  
 el puerco, por descuidado;  
 el limpio, por cuidadoso; [...]   
 jamás ha visto hombre alguno  
 que no le cobre afición<sup>24</sup>.

Serafina decides that life in a convent is the only way to cure her sister<sup>25</sup>. Without a father there is no paternal function to restrict their actions, and without this submission there is no way for the daughters to understand their societal role. The lack of prohibition unbalances both women and the sisters take on opposing and extreme positions of desire —Serafina having none whatsoever and Matea having far too much. In her attempt to impose the prohibitive paternal function Serafina goes too far and invokes hysterical reactions in herself and her sister. The hysterical subject, in Lacanian terms, is «a subject who consumes the lack, and this is very much a jouissance, but it is not a living jouissance. In other words, to get off on the lack and to get off on the flesh are very different things. What defines the hysterical position very precisely is the will to leave jouissance unsatisfied»<sup>26</sup>. In this case, the woman who simultaneously desires and rejects men, as it appears both Serafina and Matea do at different points in the play, is a hysteric.

Without true prohibition there is no possibility for either sister to have a normal relationship with their desires. The same could be said of Diana in *Desdén*. Her father, while still alive, is unable to fulfill the role of the father function. As Carlos explains to Polilla her father refuses to even speak to her about marriage, worrying that it will irritate her, hoping that she will become interested in some suitor or eventually feel the pull of familial obligation on her own<sup>27</sup>. As long as her father is unable or unwilling to provide her with the Name/No function, Diana is not required to —nor can she— make a choice to submit to the phallus in marital terms.

Diana only acknowledges that marriage is necessary at the end of the play when she is just about to submit to Carlos and her desire, but also uses it as part of her ruse to trick him into falling in love:

Carlos, yo he reconocido  
 que la opinión que yo llevo  
 es ir contra la razón,  
 contra el útil de mi reino,  
 la quietud de mis vasallos,  
 la duración de mi imperio.

24. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, pp. 855-856.

25. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 856.

26. Soler, 2003, pp. 60-61.

27. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, vv. 209-230.

Derminada a casarme,  
 apenas cedió el ingenio  
 al poder de la verdad  
 su sofisticado argumento  
 cuando vi, al abrir los ojos,  
 que la nube de aquel yerro  
 le había quitado al alma  
 la luz del conocimiento<sup>28</sup>.

Unlike Serafina's confession, Diana proclaims a desire to marry rather than simply admitting that it would be the right thing to do for her lineage.

Matea, unlike Diana or Serafina, has had the opposite reaction to the lack of parental guidance. She, instead, desires every man she sees. She tells Serafina how natural it is for women to love men:

Ser inclinada a los hombres  
 ni es liviandad ni flaqueza;  
 este es un buen natural,  
 y aunque algunos riesgos tenga  
 de pesarle a una mujer  
 que no la estimen ni quieran,  
 aunque pesa el desdén tanto,  
 vale el amor lo que pesa<sup>29</sup>.

Though the play claims that men who find themselves loved will become uninterested, the suitors, having been rejected by Serafina, all propose marriage to the quick-loving Matea. Matea, however, finding herself suddenly desired, quickly rejects matrimony and the two sisters exchange roles. Serafina finds herself rejected by the four men she herself disdained, and, aided by the new presence of a male prohibition, becomes desperate to marry, so desperate that she proposes to all four suitors, and, upon their rejection, asks a servant to be her husband. Matea, on the other hand, has become convinced of her superiority and rejects all four proposals<sup>30</sup>. This is termed intersubjectivity by Matthew Stroud, a phenomenon in which a love-relationship is formed only because «[e]ach subject wants to be the object of love, care, affection, and interest by the other without itself giving anything toward the needs of the other or even acknowledging its existence»<sup>31</sup>. This explains the role reversal of both sisters: Serafina only desires men when she is no longer the object of their interest while Matea no longer desires anyone upon finding herself the object of their affections.

The play within a play put on by Gibaja in *Mujeres* emphasizes the fickleness of women, a point further underscored by the titular refrain sung by the musicians:

28. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, vv. 2317-2334.

29. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 876.

30. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 997.

31. Stroud, 1996, p. 69.

«Si aborrecidas adoran, / si adoradas aborrecen, / lo que son mujeres!»<sup>32</sup>. Neither women nor men retain desire at the end of *Mujeres*, as they realize that they were all playing a game and none of them ever had true feelings:

SERAFINA	Pues si son éstos los hombres...
DON MARCOS	Pues si éstas son las mujeres...
GIBAJA	Si esto es ser casamentero, pues no hay quien se case adrede...
SERAFINA	Pues aman aborrecidos...
JACOBO	Pues queridas aborrecen...
DOÑA MATEA	Para que escarmienten todas...
DON MARCOS	Porque todos escarmienten...
ESTEBAN	Canten uno y otro coro...
GIBAJA	Repitan una y mil veces...
TODOS Y MÚSICOS	¡Mujeres, lo que son hombres! ¡Hombres, lo que son mujeres! <sup>33</sup>

All of the characters, male and female, are now entirely disillusioned and the play cannot end traditionally. Instead, Gibaja's claim that no one marries *adrede* is a scathing critique of the state of marriage, whether arranged or disdained. If the suitors do not take their potential marriages seriously in *Mujeres*, at least they do not follow through on their ill-advised partnerships. In *Desdén*, however, Carlos' reaction to rejection is to fall in love with the woman who ignores him. In the opening scene he explains to Polilla his first meeting with Diana and how, at first, he is completely uninterested in her. Yet, when she rebuffs his advances, he has a change of heart:

Pues para que se conozca  
la vileza más indigna  
de nuestra naturaleza,  
aquella hermosura misma  
que yo antes libre miraba  
con tantas partes de tibia,  
cuando la vi desdeñosa,  
por lo imposible a la vista,  
la que miraba común,  
me pareció peregrina<sup>34</sup>.

This corresponds to Lacan's idea that the ego is the manifestation of frustration: «Not frustration of one of the subject's desires, but frustration of an object in which

32. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, p. 998.

33. Zorrilla, *Lo que son mujeres*, pp.1003-1004.

34. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, vv. 1253-1262.

his desire is alienated; and the more developed this object becomes, the more profoundly the subject becomes alienated from his jouissance»<sup>35</sup>. Carlos, upon Diana's rejection, immediately focuses his attention on that which he cannot have. The rest of *Desdén*, right up to the last scene, is comprised of the games played between Carlos and Diana, as facilitated by Polilla/Caniquí, in which they both feign disinterest in one another in order to trick the other into falling in love. This is further emphasized by Polilla's commentary, which «uses terms appropriate to card games, croquet, fencing, and hunting to comment upon the battle of wits between Carlos and Diana [...] in his opinion courtship is just another game that has very little to do with love's everyday realities»<sup>36</sup>. Courtship might not have much to do with what Polilla considers everyday reality, but it is an integral part of the code of honor. Without these courtship games Diana's honor could be compromised —if she appears too eager or too forward she might damage both her father's honor and her own— and the game would end without the possibility of a marriage, as demanded by the expectations of both the *comedia* genre and seventeenth-century society.

Stroud's intersubjectivity can also explain the relationship between Carlos and Diana. Diana never cared for any of the suitors that paid attention to her, but rather chooses Carlos, the one suitor who decides to return her disdain. Carlos humbles Diana with his own disdain, feigned to throw her off-guard. Once Diana has fallen into the trap set by Polilla and Carlos, her disdain turns to love, but she continues to act coldly towards Carlos, in a strange symmetry of feigned disdain and hidden love. This is reflected in the play's title but is not as simple as it seems, according to Ion Agheana:

La dinámica de esta comedia no funciona en base a una simetría convencional, como a priori sugiere el título, sino en base a una simetría invertida, de aparente paridad. La simetría convencional, asentada aquí sobre una fingida correspondencia de naturalezas [...] sostiene la acción, pero la asimetría auténtica —la verdad— la resuelve<sup>37</sup>.

Love will cure Diana, yet it is not the love of her suitor that serves as her medicine, rather she must proclaim her own love for him in order for it to take effect. This corresponds to the lacanian theory of the enigma of sexual relationships: «it is not enough to be subjects of need or objects of love —they must hold the place of the cause of desire»<sup>38</sup>. Through the games played by Carlos and Polilla, Diana and Carlos come to understand that they both desire each other and are desired by the other. The *desdén* that they feign throughout the play for each other creates the space where this is possible. Serafina, on the other hand, becomes a subject of need but does not cause desire and therefore cannot be given the same happy ending as Diana.

35. Lacan, 2006, p. 208.

36. Exum, 1977, p. 99.

37. Agheana, 1997, p. 281.

38. Lacan, 2006, p. 580.

Thus, in the end, Diana is able to submit to the father figure's unspoken desire for her to marry, though she is allowed to choose from among her suitors, all things (or men, in this instance) being equal<sup>39</sup>. She has been allowed to make her choice by a father who respects her opinion and knows that—given the options—she will make a choice that suits his own designs. This gives her a certain amount of power within the decision, though there is never any possibility of an outcome that does not include her marriage to someone. Thus, by giving her the chance to make her own choice of suitors, she is allowed to feel empowered, but only to a degree. If, as her father claims, they are all equal then there is little chance that her choice could become problematic. Therefore she consents to marry Carlos, but must submit to the contractual obligations of marriage. Any inheritance she gains will turn over to her husband, and though she might have some power within the family dynamic, ultimately he will be the one in control: «women have power within the family and indeed in larger social settings; what they lack is the authority—the title, the office—to give that power a public and institutional character. They can persuade but they cannot rule»<sup>40</sup>. This is why for Serafina the idea of marriage is so distasteful; she knows that to marry would be to relinquish any chance she would have of ruling over her inheritance. When Diana makes her choice, she, like Serafina, chooses a suitor who has given her a taste of her own disdain—«el que vencer ha sabido / *El desdén con el desdén*»<sup>41</sup>— but, unlike the unfortunate Serafina, her choice accepts and the play ends with three proposals of marriage: Carlos and Diana, el Príncipe and Cintia, and Laura with Caniquí/Polilla. The audience would have been well aware of the play's closure, with or without an announcement, as the father resolves the social break by encouraging his daughter to marry. Without a proper father or mother figure, the female protagonists of *Mujeres* are unable to understand the male-female relationship and cannot submit to their role in society, which denies them the traditional *comedia* ending of a promised marriage. The missing element that so drastically changes the end of this play from others of the *mujer esquiva* genre is the lack of fatherly/kingly figure. Serafina and Matea's father is already dead, and no male figure of authority is introduced at any point in the play. Gibaja, the only man Serafina will directly interact with, is pointedly not an *hombre entero*. Serafina's conversion at the end is meaningless without a male authority to give his blessing and/or choose her husband from the suitors in order to adhere to societal norms. The cultural order has been threatened by her actions: her refusal to marry, and her long-standing place outside of society, combined with the lack of an authority figure, cannot allow for any other outcome. Her suitors reject her, a fitting punishment for her actions, as well as an overt warning to the audience.

*Desdén* is by far the more popular of the two plays. Moreto's version is able to present a traditional outcome by including the paternal element while still allowing for his characters to exhibit the use of free will and logic to come to terms with marriage, and with a far more desirable outcome. His inclusion of the parental element, as well as the more traditional ending makes for a far more credible play. As Cathe-

39. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, vv. 2903-2906.

40. Jordan, 1990, p. 4.

41. Moreto, *El desdén con el desdén*, vv. 2914-2915.

rine Connor argues: «real spectators do not consciously locate themselves entirely and specifically in the artistic realm or exclusively in society's 'real world' when participating the process of a play's performance»<sup>42</sup>. Spectators, then, are stuck in-between the suspension of belief brought on by the cathartic act of voyeurism and the need for verisimilitude. By offering them a more desirable version of events, Moreto is able to fulfill a need that Rojas Zorrilla's play cannot.

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