CHAPTER SIX

Upon Being “Badly Married: The Figure of the malcasada in Cervantes’s Novella
El celoso extremeño

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The malcasada or malmaridada (the unhappily married woman) populated stories, plays, and ballads throughout medieval and early modern Europe. Medieval French folk songs addressing the mal-marieé and Spanish folk songs dedicated to the malmaridada were composed and sung within this popular tradition. The typical context of the malcasada casts a young bride who is mistreated by her older husband. This topic appeared in poetry as early as the jarchas and later fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poets including Juan de Mena composed texts within the cancionero corpus dedicated to this figure. Within Spain, the ballad tradition developed from the early sixteenth-century romance de la malmaridada (ballad of the unhappily married woman). Iberian in nature, Lucero de Padrón explores the roots of this genre showing that some credit Portuguese noblewoman Doña Leonor with inspiring this literary tradition, while others say the genre developed purely from the relatability of the topic (319). In fact, during this period within Iberia, a genre developed that was dedicated to the malcasada and her role in the social order, and principal Golden Age authors including Cervantes and Lope de Vega wrote prose fiction about this figure. Although many of the extant texts featuring this figure have male authorship, because women sang songs of the malcasada and “popular poetry overwhelmingly voiced female concerns, while cultured poetry articulated male interests,” the topic of the malcasada contests the idea that this genre was produced by one gender (Cruz, “La bella malmaridada” 146). As this figure simultaneously challenges and upholds marriage as the ultimate social goal for women, analyzing literary texts through this lens directly provides a valuable critical apparatus to explore social relations in early modern Spain.
We find many examples in literature that protagonize the figure of the unhappily married woman, such as the case in the text that I analyze in this essay: the 1613 novella written by Cervantes, *El celoso extremeño* (*The Jealous Extremaduran*).⁠¹ One of twelve novellas in the collection of *Nuevas ejemplares* (*Exemplary Novels*), I explore how the female protagonist Leonora is closed within the marital space of the home. I argue that the extremity of her physical and mental enclosure binds her within contemporary social norms and marks this tale as exemplary. By analyzing *El celoso extremeño* through the lens of the *malcasada*, I am able to focus on how being “badly married” shapes Leonora’s person and experiences. According to Alban Forcione, a major aspect of the text is the “theme of confinement and the action of penetrating barriers” (35). I examine the specific boundaries and mechanisms of her enclosure and consider how Leonora moves between different gendered spaces from the family home, marital home, and convent throughout the text. In this short yet complex tale, we will see exactly how these boundaries are created and exposed, penetrated or left untouched. In agreement with William Clamuro, “The superficial simplicity of these stories masks numerous levels of self-critiquing negative irony and socio-cultural inequity and stability” (1).

The tale is simple: northern-born Carrizales moves to the New World. He returns home a wealthy and elderly man who discovers that all his friends and loved ones are long gone. Instead of returning to his place of birth, he chooses to live in the dynamic and complex border city of Seville. As a man who understands his own jealous nature, he decides not to marry, however, upon meeting the innocent thirteen-year-old Leonora, Felipo de Carrizales makes a deal with her parents. He says: “Esta muchacha es hermosa, y a lo que muestra la presencia desta casa, no debe de ser rica; ella es niña: sus pocos años pueden asegurar mis sospechas” (Cervantes 112) (This girl is very handsome, and to judge from the appearance of the house, her parents cannot be rich).² Carrizales and Leonora are both members of a noble society from birth, yet Carrizales loses his fortune and only regains it through his work in the New World. As Eduardo Ruiz shows, Carrizales’s colonial exploits fund his reincorporation into Iberian society (“Cervantes’s Celoso” 149–50). His marriage goes forward by feudal agreement with Leonora’s parents because he pays a hefty dowry to help restore their coffers.³ Caught between feudal and mercantile systems that limit and enable his return to Iberia, Carrizales straddles the two sides of a changing economic and social landscape. Whereas early modern commercial systems are in flux, the text presents gender roles within contemporary social norms that increasingly enclose and restrict the movement of women.
Situated in the primary port city that connects Spain to its colonial enterprise, the location of this text helps create a chaotic space populated with peoples from different backgrounds. The placement of the home in the center of Seville is significant because it is carefully crafted to be isolated from the surrounding city. In choosing this location, the author creates a hyperbolic dynamic where his male protagonist has to work even harder to defend privacy and keep it secret. In fact, the role of the casa-puerta vestibule and the black eunuch gatekeeper who meticulously guards access to the home directly parallels the role of Seville as gateway to the New World. The casa-puerta stands between the city and the home, creating a type of third space. Employing the eunuch Luis as a liminal figure between these two worlds reinforces a gendered difference in the text.

The condition of the jealous man and the innocent woman is a hyperbolic account of the social relations between the genders in early modern Spain. Carrizales’s jealous nature is presented as static and unchangeable; he is described in the text as “el hombre más celoso del mundo” (112–13) (He was naturally the most jealous man in the world). This condition is exteriorized and affects even his physical appearance: “cuya ligereza no nacía de sus muchos años, sino de sus muchos celos” (127) (His thinness was the result not so much of his age as of his extreme jealousy). Carrizales’s notion of control and the manifestation of his jealousy is especially tied to Leonora’s body. We see an almost humorous presentation of extreme jealousy in the scene when Carrizales would not risk that Leonora be fitted by a male tailor to make her new dresses. We read in the text: his “condición celosa fue no querer que sastre alguno tomase la medida a su esposa de los muchos vestidos que pensaba hacerle” (112–13) (The first proof he gave of his jealous temper was in resolving that no tailor should take measure of his betrothed for any of the many wedding garments he intended to present her). Instead, Carrizales had other women of similar size measured and then dresses made based upon these models.

Carrizales creates an all-female environment, hyperbolically mimicking the separate male and female worlds that continually gain popularity in early modern Iberia. Besides himself, the enuco (eunuch) is the only other male figure that Carrizales permits within the edges of the household, underscoring his inability to penetrate the boundaries of either sex. It also reflects Carrizales’s sense of masculinity, which contains a deep-seated paranoia of being penetrated. In this tale, this paranoia is taken to a ludicrous degree. To further exaggerate the situation even the animals kept within the household were female, there wasn’t a single “animal que fuese varón . . . todos eran del género femenino” (116) (animal that was male . . . all were of the female gender) (my translation). Cervantes creates this female-only world that is highly monitored...
and controlled, pointing out expectations for women in early modern Iberia. Given this harem-type marital compound and its location in Southern Spain, Américo Castro labels this text as a Hispano-Arabic tale. The home, come island within the middle of Seville (Molho 763), for Forcione, is labeled as the “false paradise of confinement” (35). As the compound is left isolated with highly monitored contact with the outside world, it is a fishbowl that allows readers a glimpse into a fictionalized early modern marriage where the woman is a type of *malcasada*. Although this novella has been widely studied within the contemporary Italian humanist tradition and for its role within the transatlantic and colonial encounters by scholars including Eduardo Ruiz and James D. Fernández, it has not been analyzed through the lens of the *malcasada* tradition as is the subject of this essay.

“La bella malmaridadada”

In order to understand the literary *malcasada* genre, let us review the popular ballad version of “La bella malmaridadada.” Compiled by Juan de Molina in 1527, this text has garnered much critical attention and emerged from the oral tradition sung by women throughout Iberia and France. This romance version is only twenty lines and clearly portrays the basic characteristics of the many *bella malmaridadada* (unhappily married) variants.

La bella malmaridadada  
de las más lindas que yo vi,  
véote tan triste, enojada,  
la verdad dila tú a mí.  
Si has de tomar amores,  
por otro no dejes a mí,  
que a tu marido señora,  
con otras dueñas lo vi,  
besando y retozando,  
mucho mal dice de ti:  
juraba y perjuraba  
que te había de herir.”  
Allí habló la señora,  
allí habló y dijo así:  
“Sácame tú, el caballero,  
tú sacásemese de aquí.  
Por las tierras donde fueres  
bién te sabría yo servir.”
Ellos en aquesto estando,  
su marido helo aqui.³

(Beautiful, unhappy wife  
the most beautiful I’ve seen  
I see you so sad and angry  
tell me the truth.  
If you were to take a lover  
don’t abandon me for another,  
as your husband, my lady  
with other women I’ve seen  
kissing and gallivanting:  
he speaks poorly of you,  
he swore time and again  
that he would do you harm.”

At this, the lady spoke,  
she spoke, and said this:  
“Take me, oh, knight.  
Take me from here.  
Wherever you may go  
I’d know to serve you well.”

While they were thus engaged,  
Lo, the husband appeared)⁶

The basic elements in this ballad include a young and beautiful woman married to an old man who mistreats her. She confides in a male friend and narrator about her unhappiness and her husband’s unfaithfulness. The poem concludes upon the husband’s return. The many subsequent versions of the bella malmaridada reveal the popularity of the ballad and as Lucero de Padrón explains: “Creemos que el romance que estudiamos señala la expression hispánica de un tema de más vastas proyecciones: el de la mal casada, comúnmente cantado en la poesía románica” (308) (We believe that this romance under inquiry reveals the vast Hispanic expressions of the theme of the unhappily married woman, commonly sung in romance poetry) (my translation).

The novella El celoso extremeño shares many central characteristics with the ballad tradition of the bella malmaridada. The three main characters in this novella are the young wife, her old jealous husband, and the young rogue that intends to penetrate the walls of her marital home and her body. Reflecting her limited agency, the female protagonist does not speak until the end of the text in both the ballad and the novella. Unlike the ballad tradition where-upon the wife is desirous of the potential young lover, in El celoso extremeño,
Leonora is wary of the interloper who through disguise and trickery makes his way into the household. Both the ballad form and the novella share the fact that a physical relationship between the two young people remains unconsummated. In the ballad, this is due to the husband’s return “Ellos en aquesto estando, / su marido helo aquí” (19–20) (While they were thus engaged, / Lo, the husband appeared), whereas in the novella, Leonora does not consummate the relationship out of a sense of internalized honor and morality. We read in the novella: “Pero, con todo esto, el valor de Leonora fue tal, que en el tiempo que más le convenía, le mostró contra las fuerzas villanas de su astuto engañador, pues no fueron bastantes a vencerla, y él se cansó en balde, y ella quedó vencedora, y entrambos dormidos” (Cervantes 142–43) (Such, nevertheless, was Leonora’s rectitude, and so opportunely did she manifest it, that all the villainous arts of the crafty seducer were of no avail; till both of them, wearied by the contest, the baffled tempter and the victorious defender of her own chastity, fell asleep). Whereas in the ballad, the young wife asks the suitor directly to remove her from her unhappy situation: “Sácame tú, el caballero, / tú sacáseme de aquí” (15–16) (Take me, oh, knight. / Take me from here) and in the novella, Loaysa remains an unwanted intruder in Leonora’s eyes. In fact, she successfully resists his sexual advances.

The theme of trickery and deceit in the “engaño” by one’s spouse is something that haunts both the young wife in the ballad and the old jealous Carrizales. Although the “ballad takes on an essentially sympathetic view of the woman” (Cruz, “La bella malmaridada” 154), as Anne Cruz shows it also “emphasizes women’s role in medieval and early modern cultures as dependent primarily upon a husband, with little regard to their personal happiness or desires” (146). Leonora’s feelings about her match are never considered when her marriage is arranged. In the ballad, the wife is presented as both sad and angry while Leonora is denied any active feelings about her situation. The manner in which Leonora lives throughout her marriage compares to the female protagonist in the ballad; both are based upon the desires of her husband. Leonora is an unhappily married woman; although she is not beaten or physically mistreated by her husband, her marriage is based upon control and the denial of personal freedoms.

Enclosure, Control, and Honor

Between Carrizales and Leonora, marriage constitutes female enclosure and control over her person. Carrizales reinforces the patriarchal hierarchy by casting himself as teacher to young Leonora. In fact, given that he is two generations older than his wife, Leonora’s new role as wife is cast as the logical
extension of her position as daughter in the beginning of the tale. We read in the text: “casarse he con ella; encerrarla y harela a mis mañas, y con esto no tendrá otra condición que aquella que yo le enseñare” (112–13) (say that I marry her; I will keep her close at home, I will train her up to my own hand, and so fashion her to my wishes that she will never have a thought beyond them!). In fact, Carrizales chooses Leonora specifically because she is young and malleable enough to succumb to his domination: “ella no tenía otra voluntad que la de su esposo y señor, a quien estaba siempre obediente” (115) (She had no other will than that of her lord and spouse, to whom she always owed obedience). Carrizales becomes both a husband and a father figure to Leonora. In this way, the tradition of the malcasada dialogues with the many behavior manuals and moralizing texts written within medieval and renaissance Iberia to control and regulate women and their bodies including *Instrucción de la mujer Cristiana* (*Instruction of the Christian Woman*) (1524), *Coloquios matrimoniales* (*Matrimonial Colloquies*) (1550) and *La perfecta casada* (*The Perfect Wife*) (1584). With her childlike simplicity, Leonora is a doll instructed to play with other dolls. Instead of sexualizing his young wife, Carrizales admires her for her youth and innocence. Carrizales infantilizes his child-bride and creates a play-land for her, we read in the text: “Leonora andaba a lo iqual con sus criadas, y se entretenía en lo mismo que ellas, y aun dio con su simplicidad en hacer muñecas y en otras niñerías, que mostraban la llaneza de su condición y la terneza de sus años; todo lo cual era de grandísma satisfacción para el celoso marido” (115–16) (Leonora lived on a footing of equality with her domestics, amused herself as they did, and even in her simplicity took pleasure in dressing dolls and other childish past-times. All this afforded infinite satisfaction to the jealous husband). There is not much partnership in this marriage; any community that Leonora finds in her household is carefully stocked with girls of her own age. Carrizales sweetens this fantasy world with honey and sugar in order to “maintain this female world in ignorance” (Forcione 39). This marriage is designed to mimic the hierarchal and unequal position of the genders in early modern society. Carrizales builds a home that is literally walled-up so that neither his wife nor its other inhabitants could see or participate in the outside world. We read in the text about the world that he creates:

La segunda señal que dio Felipo fue no querer juntarse con su esposa hasta tenerle puesta casa aparte, la cual aderezó en esta forma: compró una en doce mil ducados, en un barrio principal de la ciudad, que tenía agua de pie y jardín con muchos naranjos; cerró todas las ventanas que miraban a la calle, y dioles vista al cielo, y lo mismo hizo de todas las otras de casa. (114)
(The second sign that Felipe gave was that he did not want to be together with his wife until she was in a separate house. He addressed this in the following manner: he bought one that cost twelve-thousand ducats, in one of the best neighborhoods in the city, that had water and many orange trees. He closed all the windows that looked out on the street and gave them a view of the sky, and he did the same with all the other windows in the house.) (my translation)

Although many times in the early modern world, women and men’s worlds were distinct and maintained separate through the private/public dichotomy, Carrizales constructs an architecture around this gendered discourse and manipulates it in the text. Typically, the domestic sphere is female-centered, however, Cervantes reimagines the domestic realm. Any agency that women garner from independence in this space is denied Leonora. Beyond the state of ignorance in which Leonora lives, this enclosure functions to deny her both agency, physically denying freedom of movement and mentally controlling her so that she does not seek to undermine Carrizales’s exaggerated patriarchy.

Dialoging with the figure of the emparedada or the immured woman in late medieval and early modern Spain, this text features the commonly held ideology whereby young women were “under threat of corporeal disappearance” (Cruz, “Walled-In Woman” 356). Immured women were usually lay-women who were removed from the public eye and Sevillano emparedamientos (immurements) had existed since the thirteenth century (Perry 75). Some attached themselves to monastery walls and lived within small, unadorned cells. Although Leonora is not walled-up within a religious space throughout most of the novella, she is walled into the highly gendered domestic sphere of the marital compound. She lives in a house that the text describes as more closed-in than a convent: “No se vio monasterio tan cerrado, ni monjas más recogidas, ni manzas de oro tan guardadas; y con todo esto, no pudo en ninguna manera prevenir ni excusar de caser en lo que recelaba; a lo menos, en pensar que había caído” (Cervantes 117) (Never was there seen a convent more closely barred and bolted; never were nuns kept more recluse, or golden apples better guarded; and yet for all his precautions poor Felipe could not help falling into the pit he dreaded,—or at least believing that he had so fallen). Moreover, the servants and slaves that populate the house describe their treatment in the household through the lens of enclosure as well saying: “aquí nos empaderaron” (125) (They walled us in here) (my translation). Immured women would deny themselves material possessions and food in order to spiritually commune with God, through this type of sacrifice, these women attained a higher status within the social order.
The prayer of the walled-in woman “Oración de la emparedada” dated to the mid-sixteenth century. Likely known by Cervantes, the prayer was popularized by the text *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Giles 231). Featuring a female protagonist and celebrating a spiritual woman that was not under control of the church hierarchy, this type of prayer was considered dangerous to the social order as shown by its inclusion on the 1559 index of prohibited books (231). Giles explores the link between “immured women and uncontrollable wives,” linking a “traditional threat of husbands consigning unruly brides to confinement” (233). Carrizales preemptively uses this method to anticipate any issues with his wife, although as we learn from his jealous nature, this need to enclose his wife had more to do with himself than Leonora’s behavior. Cavero Dominguéz describes immurement as an “entierro en vida,” or live burial (107). This relationship is applicable to Leonora’s position within her marriage as she is denied almost all contact with daily life in Seville and is not allowed to participated in life beyond the walls of her enclosure except to attend church in the early hours of the day.

Although immured women have a very specific historical position, I argue that this literary text relies upon the familiarity that a contemporary audience would have with this figure and would draw connections to Leonora’s role. Cruz shows the wailing-in of women is highly charged and conflictive in nature, as wailing-up was used in contradictory ways, in order to exalt, protect, and punish the female body (“Walled-In Woman” 251). As we will see at the end of the text, Leonora chooses to close herself within the most enclosed monastery in Seville upon the death of her husband. The symbolic wailing-up of the female protagonist that Cervantes creates by covering the windows and making the domestic interior space the only option for the young bride reflects the contemporary environment that sought to maintain women in isolation.

Honorable obedience is a major theme in this tale of enclosure. We see the terms for enclosure in “clausura” (cloister) and “encerramiento” (closing in) employed throughout the text (126; 115). Cervantes exaggerates the early modern code that idealizes feminine obedience. Leonora’s primary function within her marriage is to obey, we read about Carrizales’s household in the text:

Hecha esta prevención y recogido el buen extremeño en su casa, comenzó a gozar como pudo los frutos del matrimonio, los cuales a Leonora, como no tenía experiencia de otros, ni eran gustosos ni desabridos; y así, pasaba el tiempo con su dueña, doncellas y esclavas, y ellas, por pasarle mejor, dieron en ser golosas, y pocos días se pasaban sin hacer mil cosas a quien la miel y el azúcar hacen sabrosas. Sobrábales para esto en grande abun-
dancia lo que había menester, y no menos sobraba en su amo la voluntad
de dárselo, pareciéndole que con ello las tenía entretenidas y ocupadas,
sin tener lugar donde ponerse a pensar en su encerramiento. (115)

(Having thus laid down the law for the government of his household,
the worthy Estramaduran began to enjoy, as well as he could, the fruits
of matrimony, which, to Leonora’s inexperienced taste, were neither
sweet-flavoured nor insipid. Her days were spent with her dueña, her
damsels, and her slaves, who, to make the time pass more agreeably, took
to pampering their palates, and few days passed in which they did not
make lots of things in which they consumed a great deal of honey and
sugar. Their master gladly supplied them with all they could wish for in that
way without stint, for by that means he expected to keep them occupied and
amused, so that they should have no time to think of their confinement and
seclusion.)

Leonora is neither given the choice to reject Carrizales nor is she given the tools
to challenge her marriage and the status quo that her elderly husband-figure
creates. We know that Leonora was a virgin upon her marriage, which is confirmed
by her textual description as a maiden or doncella of only thirteen or fourteen
when he first saw her. Similarly, the other female servants are constructed as
innocents: “somos doncellas como las madres que nos parieron” (135) (We are
all of us virgins here as truly as the mothers that bore us). As Ruiz states, the
elaboration of figures who are innocents, there is a type of “resurrection of co-
medias (play) honor code” within the text (“Counter-Discoursive” 202). As a
bride, Leonora is taught to accept the authority of her husband and comply with
his expectations. In early modern Spain, male honor was gained in large part
through that of his female family members and especially his wife. Carrizales’s
main preoccupation is reflected in his dream “dormía el sueño de la muerte de
su honra” (142) (Whose sleep was the death of his honour). It is precisely this
fear that guides Carrizales’s actions throughout the text. Notions of honor bind
Leonora and dictate her actions, when presented with the possibility of a meeting
with Loaysa, she describes a feeling of lost honor in her soul. We read in the text:
“le pesaría en el alma, pues desde allí le podían ver y oir a su salvo y sin peligro
de su honra” (129) (She was shocked to hear them mention it, for they could hear
and see him well enough as it was, without danger to their honour). She has fully
internalized the code of control that organized her life. Leonora is constructed in
the text as chaste in the extreme, who is carefully chosen precisely because of
her naivety and willingness to fulfill the role that the patriarchy constructs for her.
Unlike the husband in *La bella malmaridada*, Carrizales remains faithful, but this fact is mostly explained by his old age, sixty-eight, and the fact that he already sowed his wild oats. Creating a type of circularity between Carrizales and Loaysa, the young Loaysa is described as a *galán* (handsome man) and more specifically a *virote* (bachelor). The text takes particular care to define Loaysa as both young and unmarried. Whereas Carrizales’s character is fully fleshed out, Leonora’s personality is intentionally limited to archetypal descriptions common in the early modern period; she is beautiful, young, and obedient. She is infantilized so as to have freedom, but her freedom of expression is as limited as her options; she is passive and accepts her new marital status quo. Leonora’s identity is essentially immutable; she remains virtuous and honorable to a husband and in extension a system that maintains her ignorance and denial of basic freedoms. This tale presents a humorous conflict between an impotent man’s paranoia versus a virile man’s lust for sexual conquest. We laugh at that paranoia rather than sympathizing with the woman’s plight. Both versions of the *bella malmaridada* describe the same bad marriage, but only one allows the woman a critique of a world that could allow this situation. In the woman’s version, society builds the wall and her grievance shows her desire to peer over it. In the man’s, the impotent man builds the wall and he peers inside. In this male-authored account, what is inside is an object and this is why the female figure is immured. Ultimately, the corporeal disappearance of Leonora is perpetrated by the narrator; he takes the content of a song of dissatisfaction but removes the tune and the singer. Leonora is closed-in and disappears. Let us now explore what lay beyond the walls of the harem-like compound authored by our male protagonist.

**Boundaries and Borders**

The carefully constructed boundaries of the home and their seemingly impenetrable walls attract attention. Upon hearing about Leonora’s beauty, young rogue Loaysa decides to penetrate the walls of the compound for sport. Breaking into the home is attractive because it is taboo, we read in the text: “Supo la condición del Viejo, de la hermosura de su esposa y el modo que tenía en guardarla; todo lo cual le encendió el deseo de ver si sería posible expuñar, por fuerza o por industria, fortaleza tan guardada” (117–18) (He learned the character and habits of the old man, the beauty of Leonora, and the singular method adopted by her husband in order to keep her safe. All this inflamed him with desire to see if it would not be possible, by force or stratagem, to effect the reduction of so well-guarded a fortress). Loaysa is attracted by the idea of entering a forbidden space, where social honor is carefully guarded.
and prized. As Forcione aptly writes, the “act of peering surreptitiously into forbidden space” is the temptress in this text (38). The *dueña*, Marialonso reinforces this idea of the enticement of that which is forbidden through a popular Sevillana tune that she hums:

> Dicen que está escrito,  
> y con gran razón,  
> ser la privación  
> causa de apetito;  
> crece en infinito  
> encerrado amor;  
> por eso es mayor  
> que no me encerréis;  
> que si yo, etc. (138)

(Appetite, ’tis said with truth,  
By privation groweth;  
Thwarted love, like flame confined,  
All the fiercer gloweth.  
Better therefore ’twere, methinks,  
You should not immure me:  
Don’t you know without my help  
You can not secure me?  
Close you watch me, etc.)

Although Marialonso ultimately betrays her young charge by convincing Leonora to extricate the key that grants Loaysa access into the house, Marialonso acts from a position of knowing disobedience. She clearly understands the social code and boundaries that she is breaking. In parallel construction, the house represents Leonora’s body and Marialonso knows that the key will provide entry to both of these spaces.

This closed-off marital home compares to the space of the New World, where Carrizales made his fortune. The “prison” walls that Carrizales builds are funded by his New World exploits. Ruiz shows that the same “riches that permit walls to go up and fulfill material and spiritual selfhood—also opens avenues of invasion by the other” (“Cervantes’s Celoso” 160). Carrizales reproduces the power he acquired over the indigenous populations within his household in Spain; as Fernández has pointed out, the “colonial experience informed domestic social relations on the peninsula” (973). In Seville, Carrizales is merely another Spaniard among his compatriots; however, in his walled-off marital compound, he is the only male and retains control over the actions of the rest of its female members. Although women already had
an inferior status within Spanish society, Carrizales exaggerates this position of dominance. In other words, “The anxieties placed onto women/‘indios’ are the same” (976). The emphasis by scholars thus far has been on how a fixed discourse of femininity is translated into a colonial context and onto those that are subjugated. The Spanish Empire grew their colonial relationships in the New World upon notions of a monolithic, Catholic State obsessed with female honor at home. There is a clear analog between the desire to penetrate boundaries of the unknown (colonization as sexual conquest), versus the paranoia the state has about maintaining constancy and its absolute truth in a world of movement and change. Upon the return of the colonizers to their home, these very restrictive types of control and paranoia waged in the New World upon indigenous populations are also reinscribed onto constructions of femininity.

Simultaneously, these colonial relationships alter the way compatriots relate to each other on the peninsula. The other in this case is Loaysa who breaks into the seemingly impenetrable space of Carrizales’s home. Although it is a male figure who eventually breaks into this walled-up space, he does so through the help of the female protagonists including Leonora herself. Although some scholars have argued that this instance of free will shows that Leonora has matured through the text, I argue that she merely transfers an expected obedience from Carrizales onto the female housekeeper/governess figure of Marialonso.

The text ends with Loayso gaining access to the interior of the home, drugging Carrizales and sleeping in the same bed as Leonora, although she resists his sexual advances. We read in the text how Leonora maintains her honor: “Pero, con todo esto, el valor de Leonora fue tal, que en el tiempo que más le convenía, le mostró contra las fuerzas villanas de su astuto engañador, pues no fueron bastantes a vencerla, y él se cansó en balde, y ella quedó vencedora, y entrambos dormidos” (142–43) (Such, nevertheless, was Leonora’s rectitude, and so opportunely did she manifest it, that all the villainous arts of the crafty seducer were of no avail; till both of them, wearied by the contest, the baffled tempter and the victorious defender of her own chastity, fell asleep almost). Does Leonora mature throughout the span of the story? According to Forcione, when Leonora is forced to confront Loaysa we witness “the innocence, fragility, and the awakening instinctuality of the female world enclosed in the house” (39). Leonora’s marital situation changes at this moment. Whereas the old man dies believing that Leonora cheated on him, fulfilling his jealous nature, receiving the end he always feared and imagined, he also provides Leonora with opportunities as a widow that she did not have as a married woman. He seemingly overcomes his jealous identity in granting her the ability to marry Loaysa and provides...
generously for Leonora upon his death. Leonora does have a choice about her present reality at the end of the text.

Cervantes’s female protagonist ultimately emerges as victorious, however not heroic. Although she is not tricked into a physical relationship with Loaysa, she remains unable to communicate with her husband. He dies thinking that Leonora has been unfaithful and her behavior dishonorable: “Leonora no puso más ahínco en desculparse y dar a entender a su celoso marido cuán limpia y sin ofensa había quedado en aquel suceso; pero la turbación le ató la lengua, y la prisa que se dio a morir su marido no dio lugar a su disculpá” (149) (Leonora did not persist in exculpating herself, and explaining to her jealous husband how guiltless she had been in the whole of that unhappy business. But her extreme agitation paralysed her tongue at the moment, and the haste which her husband made to die, left her without another opportunity to complete her justification). Her tongue and the tongue of all the malmaridadas is now at the hands of a male narrator. Although the narrator presents the same bad marriage as is sung in the popular folk song, the woman in this tale does not speak. This is profoundly different than a woman articulating her own misfortune. According to Luce Irigaray’s theorization in This Sex Which is Not One, the patriarchal system that contains and defines women privileges a linguistic system that excludes them. In order to speak against the system, often women must use a patriarchal language that inherently contains bias. In this instance, Leonora cannot even access the patriarchal language to clarify her situation and speak against Carrizales’s misunderstanding. In this textual silencing, Leonora becomes a widow just as she became a bride—without comment.

The disturbance that Loaysa wreaked upon this unequal marriage ends in the freeing of the female protagonist. Although she escapes her marriage to Carrizales and then again Loaysa, she cannot escape society’s enclosure of women and ends in the convent—in a religious marriage. We read in the text: “Quedó Leonora viuda, llorosa y rica; y cuando Loaysa esperaba que cumpliese lo que ya él sabía que su marido en su testamento dejaba mandado, vio que dentro de una semana se entró monja en uno de los más recogidos monasteries de la ciudad” (148) (Leonora remained a mourning though wealthy widow; and whilst Loaysa expected that she would fulfil the desire which he knew her husband had expressed in his will, he learned that within a week she had become a nun in one of the most austere and rigid convents in all Seville). The patriarchal system of early modern Seville maintains its powers to enclose in the female body in this text.

The all-female space of the convent becomes a preferred option for women who have experienced unhappy marriage. We see this idea reflected in the malmaridada tradition in the following lines “De iglesia en iglesia / me
UPON BEING “BADLY MARRIED”

“quiero yo andar / por no mal maridar” (Frenk 145) (From church to church / I go walking / as not to unhappily marry) (my translation). Both the female protagonist from the ballad and Leonora chose the convent above another unhappy marriage. In accord with Lucy Sponsler: “Even in the lyrics of the Malmaridada, where woman is cursed with an unhappy union, we still find that the sanctity of marriage is unbreakable, and she is resigned to remaining faithful despite her husband’s philanderings” (53). Leonora remains faithful to her husband and to society’s patriarchal structure even upon his death.

Highlighted through the genre of the unhappily married woman, Leonora might question the status quo but is not able to break the chains of social norms and morays, she remains until the end obedient and closed-up. The narrator ends the text describing the unnecessary nature of all of these walls both physical and metaphorical and the misguided attempt to control another’s freedom:

Y yo quedé con el deseo de llegar al fin deste suceso, ejemplo y espejo de lo poco que hay que fiar de llaves, tornos y paredes cuando queda la voluntad libre, y de lo menos que hay que confiar de verdes y pocos años, si les andan al oído exhortaciones destas dueñas de monjil negro y tendido y tocas blancas y luengas. (149)

(For my part I was long possessed with the desire to complete this story, which so signally exemplifies the little reliance that can be put in locks, turning-boxes, and walls, whilst the will remains free; and the still less reason there is to trust the innocence and simplicity of youth, if its ear be exposed to the suggestions of your demure dueñas, whose virtue consists in their long black gowns and their formal white hoods.) (20)

The free will that the narrator suggests in the end of this story does not belong to Leonora. In this passage, the narrator is describing Leonora as innocent and simple in her youth, but also suggests that while her free will should not be trusted nor should she be locked up. In other words, managing this conflict better is a way to have a better marriage. This seems a long way from a woman articulating her own bad lot. In agreement with Ruiz, El celoso extremeño is a “Tale of frustrated goals” (“Counter-Discoursive” 202). Carrizales breaks from his jealous identity only on his deathbed and Leonora is unable to break from the mold that her social structure requires. Leonora participates in the tradition of the malmaridada first as a wife and then later as a widow.
NOTES

1. Analysis in this essay is limited to the 1613 published version of *El celoso extremeño* by Cervantes. There is one other version of this text and an *entremés*, *El Viejo celoso* (1615), that treats many of the same themes. The extant Porras de la Camara manuscript version of this novella was written between 1600–1609, it includes some significant changes to the story including the consummation of a physical relationship between Lenora and Loaysa. For further information on commonalities and differences see the scholarship of Maurice Molho, Edwin Williamson, and Alison Weber who carefully analyze this corpus of Cervantes’s works.

2. Unless specified, all the translations belong to Walter K. Kelly.

3. Questioning the shifting social order in the early modern period, Nina Cox Davis explores the economy of capitalism through Carrizales’s character.

4. Clamuro explores the role of Seville within the text: “As the port, the city of thieves, and he link between the exploitable, fantastic possibilities of the New World and the rigidities, limits, and decadence of the old, Sevilla is the appropriate setting and symbol for Carrizales’s initial exhaustion of his wealth, his illusion of return and success, and his final destruction” (188).

5. This is the Molina version as quoted in Anne J. Cruz’s “La bella malmaridada: Lessons for the Good Wife” (164–65).

6. Translation, Cruz, note 16.

7. The ballad of the *malmaridada* crossed geographical and temporal boundaries. Cruz traces the origins of the unhappily married women, noting that it was part of both the written and oral tradition in the Italian novella and the French *chanson de la malmariee* in the thirteenth century. Many different variants of this ballad were published in the popular Hispanic lyrics as *cuartetas*, refrains, ballads, and glosses. Gil Vincente in Portugal (1515) wrote about this figure and longer versions were published most notably longer by Lorenzo de Sepúlveda in *Romances nuevamente sacadas* (1551), Javier Quesada, and Juan de Coloma (1554) (Cruz, “La bella malmaridada” 150–60).

8. Translation, Cruz, note 16.

9. A principal difference between the published version of *El Celoso extremeño* under inquiry here and the Porras manuscript is that the relationship between Leonora and Loaysa is consummated in the manuscript version.

10. We will see a further discussion of the immured women in this collection in essays by Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez and Gregoria Cavero Domínguez.

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11. The extreme and less practiced version of the emparedada was actually cementing her body into the wall of a monastery. For a more detailed understanding of the emparedada, see the essay by Gregoria Cavero Domínguez in this volume of Hispanic Issues.

12. Mary Elizabeth Perry in Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville explores how widows wielded much more power than their married counterparts in early modern Seville. They had economic freedom and wrote their own wills.

13. These two spaces are frequently provided for well-groomed early modern women as we see in Pedro de Luján’s behavior guide Coloquios matrimoniales (Matrimony Colloquials) (1550).

WORKS CITED


