In Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s La Dama Duende (1629), protagonist Don Manuel and his servant Cosme encounter a series of mysterious occurrences within the home where they are residing as guests during their stay in Madrid. Their suspicions become acutely aroused when they return to their locked chambers and find their belongings strewn about the floor and coal in the place where Cosme kept his money. Such signs lead Cosme, the gracioso (fool) of the play, to conclude that there must be a duende (phantom) haunting the house. In accordance with Spanish folklore, this paranormal entity is known to carry out precisely these sorts of mischievous acts. On the other hand, Manuel, the galán (hero), takes a strikingly materialistic approach to the situation by refuting the existence of such supernatural phenomena and seeking empirical evidence to solve the mystery. When the two discover a letter on Manuel’s bed that appears to have been written by a woman in distress, Cosme links the two events and feminizes the ghost he imagines is lurking about the house by dubbing her the “dama duende” (Phantom Lady). The figure of the duende emerges from the anxieties experienced in Spain during the Counter-Reformation that were generated by shifting conceptions regarding what constituted superstitious belief as well as the proper role of women, particularly widows. Indeed, Catholics had been developing strategies to rebuke accusations of superstition since the Protestant Reformation, one of which was the publication of various treatises labeled as “anti-superstitious” during the early seventeenth century. Social expectations for women regarding their modesty, silence, and solitude prominently advocated by Juan Luis Vives a century before La dama duende in Formación de la mujer cristiana (Education of the
Christian Woman) (1523) had also begun to loosen by the 1620s. The duende in Calderón’s play thus becomes the enigmatic locus where superstitions about ghosts and cultural assumptions about women converge to be targeted and lampooned. It is only when Manuel finally debunks the superstitious belief in duendes that those theories concerning the lustful, if not downright “evil,” nature of women follow suit, all of which ultimately allows for a satisfying closure in the play’s finale.

As fantastic and paranormal beings, monsters in general embody similar cultural anxieties to duendes. Scholars from a variety of disciplines agree that monsters throughout folk tales and legends incite dread and horror in whatever form they manifest themselves in and can reveal much of a culture’s axiology. Along with the epistemic structures that underlie a cultural structure, monsters simultaneously expose both a community’s fears and the resources they have to fight off evil forces in order to preserve their most cherished values. In fact, the etymological roots of the word “monster,” in Latin, equate the term with the acts of revealing (monstrum) and warning (monere). Likewise, the origins of the word indicate that monsters typically reveal or warn of the uncertainties or contradictions within a culture that create friction and a sense of crisis. For this reason, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen states that the monster “is always a displacement” that “inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again” (4). Similarly, David Gilmore treats the monsters he finds in folklore from around the world as a literary device and cultural metaphor to discover the factors that create such pressure points in their respective communities as well as the role the monster plays in mitigating its tension (1). In this manner, we can understand how monsters help human groups negotiate and delineate the boundaries between those behaviors they want to promote and those they would prefer to censure. As we acknowledge this worldview-shaping function of monsters, it is not surprising that eerie preternatural beings such as duendes appear from behind obstructing walls when traditional values come into question and subsequently begin to change. As new values take shape and threaten to overturn old ones, such as those being contested in Counter-Reformation Spain concerning how widows should behave and the nature of women in general, new monstrous images spring forth; images that, in their own distorted and frightening forms, manifest, and thereby reflect, the fear and anxiety infusing such precarious moments of transition.

The strange events that led Cosme to believe their host’s house is haunted are no mystery to the audience. Early in the play, we are introduced to Ángela, a young, beautiful, and very much alive woman who has recently lost her husband. She explains that her newly widowed status has motivated her to move to Madrid to live hidden and confined within the home of her two brothers,
Juan and Luis, where they believe she cannot pose any threat to her family’s honor. Unable to tolerate such restrictive conditions, she resorts to veiling herself in order to go out on escapades. Upon one such outing, she and her servant, Isabel, enter their guests’ room and rummage through their belongings. As a play within the capa y espada (cloak and dagger) genre, the fear and awe that Ángela’s ghostly performance incites in the men she encounters leads the audience to laugh at such superstitious beliefs, not to take them seriously or to become afraid. In fact, how Manuel and Cosme react to the numinous traces she leaves behind raises a very important question concerning which epistemologies are most effective at gaining reliable knowledge about such a mysterious phenomenon as that of a ghost. Along with the issue of the supernatural, Ángela’s representation as a duende also calls attention to the distorted and unrealistic, even monstrous, conceptions still held about women in seventeenth-century Spain. Calderón’s use of dramatic irony therefore positions the audience in a privileged space of knowledge at a distance from the mysterious events, and encourages them to favor the skeptical approach of the galán when dealing with an allegedly paranormal phenomenon.

Julio Caro Baroja’s description of the common beliefs in Spain regarding duendes sheds light on the qualities of this numinous entity that Calderón incorporates in his play. Ontologically speaking, duendes are generally considered lowly household demons or apparitions that often take human form (145–47; 152) and appear wearing religious garb. For this reason, some believe them to be suffering souls in purgatory (172). The body of the duende has been represented at times as having distorted, animal-like features, such as big feet (149; 153) or one hand that is soft and another that is hard. In fact, one of the more bizarre descriptions of duendes comes from the late seventeenth-century “anti-superstition” writer, Antonio de Fuentelapeña, who believed that they were simply invisible animals “engendrados de la corrupción de los vapores gruesos” (born from the corruption of heavy vapors) (cited in Caro Baroja 148–49). Regarding their powers, duendes were not generally known to harm the living. Instead, they were considered more of a nuisance, believed to hide people’s valued possessions, though turning these objects into coal was one of their more notorious pranks (147). Some believed duendes could also induce supernatural visions in their victims (150). Conversely, other mysterious occurrences with more positive consequences were also attributed to duendes, such as certain domestic chores mysteriously carried out without the person knowing about it (150, 153).

The female protagonist that seeks to attract the attention of her male counterpart by feigning different personalities is a common quality of several of Calderón’s capa y espada plays (De Armas, Invisible Mistress 124). Many critics of La Dama Duende have analyzed the theatrical skill with which
Ángela is able to act out her persona as a phantom lady in order to pull off her pranks of making things appear and disappear in Manuel’s room. However, a crucial component to the plotline of this play is that it is Cosme, not Ángela, who broaches the topic of duendes as an explanation to the mysterious events. Though the young widow purposefully sneaks into her guests’ chambers, her intention is not to make them think she is a ghost. Rather, it is Cosme who jumps to this conclusion with his imagination previously primed by his demon-filled worldview. We see an example of this when he humorously appears on the stage dropping luggage and shouting, “Docientos mil demonios / de su furia infernal den testimonios” (697–98) (May 200,000 demons / in their infernal rage be my witness). No doubt this reference to demons is meant to add to the play’s theme of evil spirits, but it also reveals what is already in the gracioso’s thoughts before any alleged paranormal activity occurs. We find another example of Cosme’s worldview when he defends his claim that there is a duende in the home and swears that, “dos mil demonios me lleven / si no es verdad” (964–65) (May two thousand demons take me away / if it is not true). Isabel has apparently noticed this rhetorical feature of Cosme’s speech, for she ridicules it while replacing his money with coal and pronouncing that he will cry out, “¿Dónde demonios lo tiene esta mujer?” (874–75) (Where the hell does this woman keep it?). When Cosme sees a mysterious hooded figure, whom the audience knows to be Ángela in her widow’s headdress, he informs Manuel that he has seen a human form of the duende with his own eyes. Cosme’s supernatural description of the enigmatic person becomes even more absurd when he affirms that it must have been a Capuchin duende because it resembled a small friar with a little hood. This statement obviously elicits laughter from the audience; however, it also demonstrates how readily Cosme resorts to folk beliefs to explain the inexplicable. Even the odd detail that duendes have one soft hand and one hard is useful to explain the duende’s harsh treatment of him, yet he treats Manuel agreeably, for he tells his master that the spirit must have “Para ti mano de lana, / Para mí mano de hierro” (1707–08) (For you a wool hand, / for me an iron hand).

Moreover, the manner in which Cosme conflates his conception of duendes with folkloric representations of evil women renders the image of the phantom lady as comically horrific. As Cosme timidly returns to his room anticipating the presence of the duende, he calls out to the phantom referring to it as “Señor Dama Duende” (1569) (Sir Phantom Lady), thus adding to its monstrosity by creating ambiguity around its gender. The gracioso employs this gender-bending imagery to an even greater degree when he finds himself in Ángela’s presence and attempts to convince her, as well as himself, that he is not afraid “porque al mismo Lucifer / temerle muy poco puedo / en hábito de mujer” (2630–33) (because I can’t fear Lucifer / when dressed in women’s
clothing). He then provides cultural authority to his feigned courageous stance by recounting a folk tale concerning how the Devil had once tricked a shepherd into making love to him by disguising himself as a maiden. Nonetheless, to the surprise of the Devil, who intended to teach him of the dangerous illusions of the flesh, the shepherd is unaffected by the revelation of his lover’s diabolical identity and instead invites the “diabla” (she-devil) to return the next day for another amorous rendezvous because “aun horrible no es / en traje de mujer un demonio” (2661–62) (even a demon is not so horrible / in a woman’s dress). Despite the great comic effect, Cosme’s story truly demonstrates Cohen’s assessment that the monster’s body is a medium through which “fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space” (17).

Considering that the monster’s strange morphology is typically one of its most salient attributes, an examination of the gendered signs mapped onto its body reveal the anxieties felt by a community that are specifically related to gender and sexuality. In “Monstrous Gender: Geographies of Ambiguity,” Dana Oswald observes how “the problematics of gender . . . overlap with and are highlighted by the monstrous” (344) and that the monster’s capability of exaggerating or bending normative constructions of gender is often one of the main features that characterize monstrosity. Similarly, Cynthia Freeland argues that horror films in our times have the ability to “question the traditional values and gender roles associated with patriarchal institutions such as religion, science, the law, and the nuclear family” (4) and that this genre of cinema often employs spine-tingling creatures because they “raise the specter of evil by overturning the natural order, whether it be an order concerning death, the body, God’s laws, natural laws, or ordinary human values” (8).

As a comedic capa y espada play, La dama duende obviously does not fall into any horror-like category that existed in the seventeenth century. However, as Donald Beecher demonstrates, Calderón utilizes tropes, which despite being satirical, are designed to create suspense and horror as a means to challenge our notions of safety and decency. Indeed, the ghost motif in La dama duende is commonplace in both Spanish folk tales and medieval romances whose conventions Calderón exploits to undercut lingering superstitions regarding ghosts and women. La dama duende has the ability to carry out the same subversive functions Freeland observes in certain horror films that “stimulate thoughts about evil” and challenge us to reflect on them (3). Though the duende is the first obvious sign of evil in the play, the fact that this entity is exposed as an illusion directs our attention to the much more real problem created from the unjust confinement of certain women. The audience recognizes in Ángela’s predicament the unnecessary suffering a woman experiences as a result of being locked away, especially when confinement was not
her choice nor due to any fault of her own. Indeed, the motivation to isolate the widow did not stem from her actions but from the manner in which others perceived her body as a threat to men’s virtue or simply as filthy. Discussing the historical and literary examples of the confined “walled-in woman,” Anne Cruz observes the fears surrounding the new perceptions of traditional values and gender roles rising in Spain during the seventeenth century and argues that “both voluntary and involuntary immurement reflected the social anxieties provoked by women’s perceived power and served as a means of control” (349). The figure of the duende in Calderón’s play is, therefore, an effective device of reflection on this strategy of confining women and on the arbitrary, indeed superstitious, beliefs articulated to justify it. Significantly, whereas other literary genres with phantoms typically invite belief in the existence of evil spirits, even if only momentarily, Calderón’s play undermines superstitions about the paranormal and reveals the human-created circumstances from which such fictitious creatures are born. This not only diffuses the suspense that this literary figure would normally create, but also returns to it a human face.

It is important to note that the monstrous rhetoric Ángela employs to describe herself arises from her immurement and not from her own nature. Just as monster theorists have identified hybridity and its resulting ambiguity as typical qualities of the monster’s ontology, Ángela describes herself and her chambers in antithetical terms that blur the lines between categories traditionally considered static and impermeable. A semantic map of the phantasmagoric imagery that obscures the border between life and death reveals how Ángela’s role as a duende emerges from these social anxieties that supposedly justify her confinement.

Analyzing the dama cast as a supernatural and sinister duende begs the question: what ghost-like characteristics does Ángela possess that could lead spectatorship to link this ordinary woman with such an extraordinary being? The fundamental source of this connection seems to reside in Ángela’s status as a widow. The analogy of widowhood as a living death was commonplace for Calderón and his contemporaries. In the opinion of the sixteenth-century humanist Juan Luis Vives, once a wife has lost her husband, she herself should live as if she too had died, for “[n]o desapareció para ella la mitad de su alma . . ., sino que el alma entera le ha sido sustraída y ha perecido” (Formación 357) (It is not that half of her soul disappeared . . ., but rather her entire soul has been taken from her and perished). Indeed, in Concordia y discordia, Vives links solitude with death when he says, “la consideramos como una muerte” (92) (we think of it as a kind of death). The etymology of the word viuda does seem to suggest that widows are fragmented and incomplete (Boyle 50), yet by speaking of the widow as a half-dead soul with one foot in
the world and the other in the afterlife maintaining contact with her deceased
husband, Vives offers the term a more transcendental value. *Duendes* were
often associated with souls in purgatory. This leap from a natural-material
understanding of widowhood to one imbued with supernatural significance,
associates Calderón’s ghost-like widow with a soul in purgatory.7

As a hybrid entity that is unmarried yet possesses the married woman’s
sexual knowledge of the bedroom, widows were perceived as defiled and
threats to socially approved sexual relationships. In Vives’s discussion of wid-
owns, he mentions on several occasions his suspicions of the widow’s carnal
desires. He begins with explaining that while “en la doncella se permite el em-
bellecimiento, en la viuda repugna” (*Formación* 374) (beautification is im-
possible for the maiden, for the widow it is repugnant). Concerning widows
that express a desire to remarry, he incorporates the rhetoric of monstrosity
in his question, “¿Quién no sentiría repulsión por aquella mujer que, después
de un primer marido, todavía desea casarse y declara abiertamente que está
deseando otro y tras repudiar a Cristo, su Esposo, se une primero con el diablo
y luego con el hombre, siendo a la vez viuda, esposa y adúltera?” (374) (Who
wouldn’t feel repulsion for the woman who, after her first husband, still de-
sires to marry and openly declares that she desires another husband and after
repudiating Christ, her Husband, she unites herself first with the devil and
later with a man, being at once widow, wife, and adulterer?). He repeats this
imagery in the grotesque likeness he creates of the half-dead widow arguing
that she who seeks pleasure in “la vida externa” (the external life) may appear
to be alive, “pero si alguien pudiera echar una ojeada a lo más recóndito de
sus entrañas, o mejor dicho, a los arcanos de su mente, vería su alma pecadora,
alejada de Dios, yacer privada de vida” (374) (but if one could see into the
depths of her heart, or better yet, into the mysteries of her mind, they would
see her sinful soul, far from God, laying deprived of life). Even more explic-
itly, he says that widows in their newfound freedom “dan rienda suelta a los
vicios con gran ímpetu” (376) (give free rein to vice with great vigor) and
advises that widows who want to remarry should not give excuses but rather
confess their true carnal desires, for “[r]ealmente no hay ninguna mujer que
se case para no acostarse con su marido” (390) (truly there is no woman who
marries to not lie with her husband).8

It is unambiguously clear that Ángela is not a half-dead spirit-demon in
the text. That she is not this mythical creature of folklore is obvious to the au-
dience since Calderón demystifies the cultural assumption of the vilified wid-
ow. Furthermore, the fact that Ángela is not a *duende* provides the audience
insight into each character’s mode of thinking concerning gendered roles. As
the characters describe how they perceive the *duende*, they likewise construct
the phantom and its corresponding gender in their imagination. Moreover,
their words reveal the cultural traditions from which such images originate. As we will see, Cosme’s belief in duendes and demonic women derives from the oral folk tales he has learned as a commoner. Manuel, for his part, though skeptical of duendes and most supernatural phenomena, resorts to the spiritual language of medieval romances when he likens Ángela to an angel. By anchoring the belief in duendes and other female supernatural figures in these literary genres, Calderón humorously exposes the oral and written stories in Spanish culture that have propagated a distorted view of reality and women. Indeed, Ángela’s “haunting” in La Dama Duende seems to have a similar function as that of Walter Benjamin’s conception of the dead who, if awakened by the angel of history, would subsequently force the living to recognize their trauma buried beneath the myths that the latter created (257–58). Similarly, observing Ángela in her distressed state as confined-woman and faux-phantom places a mirror before the audience that reflects the fissures that spectactorship has assisted in creating within the social fabric in which their fellow non-normative citizens have fallen. Bringing Ángela out of the shadows of confinement thus reveals that she is a charming and witty woman of flesh and blood, and not something diabolical or otherworldly to fear. In this manner, the folkloric figure of the duende reflects and parodies the anxieties surrounding the competing epistemologies that had begun to alter traditional beliefs and values held in Spain during its Golden Age. Social values regarding both the supernatural and confinement of women, specifically widows.

Similar to ghosts, Ángela confesses that she feels dead when she equates living her numinous life with dying. She expresses this sentiment at the opening of the play after she approaches Manuel, cloaked in her veil, and begs him to help her escape from her pursuer. As she dashes off, she cries, “¡Adiós, adiós, que voy muerta!” (112) (Goodbye, goodbye, I’m dead!). Ángela is alive; however, her reference to death insinuates that she is on the threshold between life and death, thus blending mutually exclusive categories that duendes blur. We find her making a similar statement during her second appearance on stage while safe in her room she laments, “¡Válgame el cielo! Que yo / entre dos paredes muera” (379–80) (God save me from / dying between these walls). This feeling is further pronounced when she likens her black widow headdress to a “mortaja” (shroud) and the room in which she is trapped to a dark “tumba” (tomb) where “apenas sabe el sol quién soy” (381–82) (even the sun hardly knows who I am). Moreover, by blaming the “pena” (pain) she feels on her “suerte cruel” (372) (cruel fortune) that has damned her to live immured within this tomb-like room, Ángela casts herself as a suffering soul desiring liberation from the purgatory that is the gloomy and secret netherworld of her brother’s home.
The connections between these various images therefore allow us to appreciate Calderón’s use of the *duende* motif as a literary device and cultural metaphor that represents Ángela’s non-binary status as a widow who lacks proper social place and function in Spanish society.⁹ Like the liminal space between the terrestrial world and the otherworld with which these spirits are associated, Ángela’s status as a widow likewise places her in an interstitial category between that of a *casada* and a *doncella*. She is a woman who, on the one hand, is no longer married and who, on the other, is no longer a virgin (or so it seems safe to assume). Indeed, *casada* and *doncella* are the two clearly defined normative categories meant to situate women in their proper social place and to assign them specific tasks to fulfill their role. Being that Ángela does not neatly fall into either of these categories, she is described in terms of what she is not, thus leaving behind only ghostly traces of her identity. For Juan, his sister is now merely a blurry stain that has soiled their family’s honor, an insult he explicitly fires at her, stating “de nuestro antiguo honor mancha primera” (2982) (the first stain on our long-standing honor). It therefore does not seem to be a coincidence that the domestic chore Ángela mysteriously carries out for Manuel, as if a *duende* were in the house, is that of cleaning the linens for his bed and his clothing.

Clearly, the cultural fears entangled with the particular ghost of *La dama duende* are likewise of a sexual nature. Isabel not only reveals this nuance of fear within Spanish society, but also demonstrates how such anxieties feed into the reality-altering and rather monstrous rhetoric used to describe real widows that are nothing more than human beings.¹⁰ Isabel herself seems to completely understand why her lady’s brothers would express caution with their widowed sister who is young and beautiful, for, as she reminds Ángela, the status of widow is prone to “delitos amorosos” (408) (amorous infractions). “Delitos,” of course, are transgressions of any social or legal norm, and these trespasses, Isabel tells us, are of the amorous type. She informs Ángela that such offenses have become common “más en la Corte hoy” (409) (more at the Royal Court today), thus signaling a type of officially recognized loosening of moral values. Indeed, the feeling that social disorder is proximate stimulates the sense of crisis and urgency out of which monsters commonly arise.

The rhetoric Isabel employs to describe young widows speaks of them as two-faced and “viuditas de azahar” (little widow blossoms), a diminutive that flags sarcasm, for the image of the blossom is typically reserved for maidens. In fact, the term likens those widows that express amorous desire to courtesans, yet another hybrid image that highlights their duplicity since they are beautiful women in appearance, but beneath this surface, hide presumably perverse qualities.¹¹ She then adds that when they are dressed in their widow’s garb they seem “tan honestas, tan fruncidas, tan beatas y aturdidas” (414–15) (so virtuous, so
saintly, so modest, so circumspect), but when not donning such attire they wear perfume and “saltan más a cualquier son / que una pelota de viento” (419–20) (they bounce around more / than a ball in the wind). According to Boyle, it is this perceived “sinister ability to transform between saintly and sexual figures” that which puts the widow’s reputation at risk (49). Like Noël Carroll’s observation that the monster’s despicable body exaggerates our preoccupation with purity, Isabel’s description of the lurid stereotypes that young and beautiful widows like Ángela endure reveals once again seventeenth-century Spain’s concerns with a widow’s ostensible impurity as she is imagined to be passed between men. Such tense social conditions surrounding the role of widows are the fuel that impels Ángela and her brothers to hide her in the marginalized, dark recesses of the family home that is depicted much like the secret and forbidden lairs of monsters that dwell on the periphery of normalized society.

Cosme’s sexual innuendos concerning virginity further contribute to creating the thematic imagery surrounding widowhood and its underlying sexual anxieties. When prompted to engage in a duel, Cosme declares his sword to be a doncella that he cannot unsheathe “sin cédula o palabra” (179) (without a certification or promise of marriage) and that his purse “subió doncella y se apeó preñada” (766) (mounted as a maiden and dismounted as a pregnant woman); that is, it was empty until he filled it with stolen money. The first joke foreshadows the climax of the play when the only way that Manuel can rescue Ángela from her immurement is to marry her. The second witticism, on the other hand, seems to invert the order of events of the play. Ángela begins the action not expecting a child but having sexual experience, all of which is supposedly purified with the promise of marriage. Cosme, a believer in duendes, casting himself with virginal imagery, not only adds humor to the theme of widowhood in the play, but also provides another layer to his characterization of being sexually inexperienced. He is, therefore, ignorant to the worldview that Manuel, and by extension the play, promotes, all of which adds to his representation as a superstitious lackey.12

Calderón’s use of the ghost motif thus highlights the double stigmatization that widows endure in seventeenth-century Spain and exaggerates the sexual anxieties that they inspire. As a vilified, amalgamated, and impure being that is the vessel of the family’s honor and who is thus capable of tarnishing it, Ángela acquires the qualities of a spooky ghost. Her socially unacceptable trauma and experience are buried out of sight in the tomb that are her chambers, but her unjust treatment cannot be silenced and left for dead. Similar to a ghost that is simultaneously invisible yet somehow visible, Ángela is in fact present yet absent. And like most ghosts that represent the uncanny return of some repressed ill of the past, Ángela does not rest within her confinement. Instead of allowing these monstrous characteristics attributed to her to force her to succumb to a life
of living death, Ángela uses them to her advantage feigning the fictitious identity of a *duende*, which allows her to cross the physical and social boundaries imposed on her.

Indeed, Ángela refuses to be held captive in her chambers, which motivates her to discover different methods of crossing the dark threshold that separates her grim, interior world from the lively, exterior domain. This uncanny ability to break through impermeable barriers is a typical feature in the representation of monstrous entities. As Oswald indicates, “it is a primary function of monsters to challenge and to confirm the boundaries of the societies that create and ‘encounter’ them” and that “it is their very indeterminacy, their ability to slide between existing cultural, physical, and social categories, that makes them dangerous and therefore fascinating” (343). Ironically, the first scene of the play depicts a Madrid celebrating the baptism of the newborn prince, Felipe IV’s son Baltasar Carlos. Ángela, in contrast, has been tucked away in her room mourning the death of her husband. Caught between the social expectations of a widow living in reclusion and her desire to form part of an event that coincidentally celebrates new life, Ángela uses her shroud-like veil to walk the previously prohibited streets of Madrid and take part in the festivities. Not only does this action go against Vives’s recommendation that widows not enter temples, plazas, or any other spaces where men congregate (*Formación* 383–84), it also undermines his intended use of the veil (383), meant to be used for modesty’s sake. In this manner, Ángela fits into what Boyle calls the “unruly woman,” a common character on the Spanish stage that is “not merely a stock figure but rather [one that] dramatizes pressing and controversial issues for sixteenth and seventeenth-century Spain: the rapidly changing role of women and the increased bureaucratization of the state, which was manifested in the creation of institutions for women” (15).

Similar to other monsters whose mystery arouses curiosity, Ángela’s ambiguous persona generates fascination amongst the citizenry. Her brother, Luis, mentions that he saw men in the plaza listening to a *tapada* (a veiled woman; that is, Ángela) “a quien todos celebraron / lo que dijo, y alabaron / de atendida y sazonada” (478–80) (whom everyone celebrated / and praised for her / intelligence and wit). Unsurprisingly, Ángela’s illicit activity in this public sphere becomes problematic once Luis tries to identify the mysterious woman and approach her. This ends Ángela’s enjoyment of freedom that the identity-concealing veil afforded her. During her escape, Ángela happens upon Manuel and pleads for him to distract the man chasing her in order to protect her honor. Astonished by this veiled woman’s frantic plea for help, Cosme is the first in the play to inquire about her identity. As is typical in other monster narratives, he does so in ambiguous terms that blend the human with the non-human by inquiring if she was a “dama o torbellino” (113) (lady or whirlwind).
Ángela’s strategy of playing the *tapada* in order to break free from her confinement, however, quickly evolves into her more elaborate plot of carrying out acts that will lead Cosme to believe she is the *dama duende* haunting the home. She uses a hutch that, unbeknown to the guests, detaches from the wall providing access to Manuel’s room. She initially enters his room to secretly leave him a thank you note for aiding in her escape from Luis while at the public celebration. Later, she expresses her gratitude by leaving him freshly cleaned linens and clothes. That these items mysteriously appear before Manuel only stiffens Cosme’s resolve in his belief that there is indeed a *duende* in the home with the ability to pass through walls and carry out domestic chores. The hutch therefore becomes the main special-effects device of the play. When Luis expresses his fear that the only “defensa” (defense) between his sister’s honor and the new guest (Manuel) is this hutch filled with “vidrios, que al primer golpe se quiebran” (366–69) (crystal that shatters upon the first blow), he connects fragile crystal with honor, thus imbuing this central piece of the stage with sexual connotations and the social anxieties that stem from them. In this sense, the hutch represents a literary device that functions as a hole in the boundary that fictional texts place between monsters and civil society. Indeed, it is the kind of boundary that Cohen argues is “in place to control the traffic in women, or more generally to establish strictly homosocial bonds, the ties between men that keep a patriarchal society functional” (13). The hutch, therefore, is the intersection that not only brings the feminine and masculine spaces together, but also the theme of superstition tied to women.

The bulk of *La dama duende* is thus dedicated to Manuel and Cosme’s struggle to get to the bottom of these mysterious incidents. Manuel employs a rational and materialist approach that makes attempts at refuting that these incidents are caused by anything supernatural, while Cosme is comically frightened by the belief that a *duende* is carrying them out. Instead of a ghost, Manuel believes that there is some ingenious trick that allows someone to furtively enter and leave the room. He therefore advises his servant to not “creer / cosa sobrenatural” (1077–78) (to not believe / in anything supernatural). This blanket statement about the supernatural provokes Cosme to run the gamut of entities associated with the supernatural in Spanish folklore and inquire into the veracity of each one’s existence. After investigating the possibility of *duendes*, he asks about specific types of ghosts, such as *familiares* and *súcubos*, then *brujas*, *hechiceras*, *encantadoras*, *mágicos*, and *nigromantes*, which are all some type of witch or wizard in cahoots with the Devil to some varying degree. He also inquires about *energúmenos*, who were people believed to be possessed by a demon. For all of these figures associated with the supernatural, Manuel responds negatively to Cosme’s questions apropos their reality.
Curiously, when Cosme inquires into the existence of “diablos” (demons), Manuel does not outright deny the possibility, but rather assures his servant that they do not have any real power to fear. And when Cosme finalizes the list by asking if souls in purgatory exist, Manuel hesitates in denying their existence as well and instead simply refutes their power to enamor him. In fact, his final word in this passage, which also closes Act I, is that all of this talk of possible supernatural entities as an explanation to the strange events in the house is “necia bobería” (1091) (foolish idiocy). He is skeptical of using the supernatural to explain what might easily be explained in natural terms. Strikingly though, by not outright denying the existence of demons and souls in purgatory, Manuel seems very careful to only doubt the existence of those paranormal entities the Church would also deny and not those that its official dogma continued to affirm were real.

This struggle between reasonable and superstitious thinking continues in Act II where we see Manuel’s skepticism of the supernatural put under even more pressure. For the rational galán, fear of the inexplicable is what leads to the facile explanations that belief in the paranormal offers, and mustering up the courage to find empirical evidence is the way to avoid such pitfalls. However, in the final scene of Act II, we see Manuel’s resolve shaken. He and Cosme unexpectedly return once again to their room, where Manuel asks Cosme for a light and, suddenly, a light mysteriously illuminates within the room. Manuel is shocked and exclaims, “¡Válgame el cielo! Ya es / esto sobrenatural; / que traer con tal prisa / luz, no es obra humana” (2013–16) (Good heavens! This indeed / is supernatural; / for bringing light so quickly / is not humanly possible). Nevertheless, the audience sees that it is Ángela who has snuck back into Manuel’s room and coincidentally lit a candle. By staging the action in this manner, Calderón’s spectator bears witness to how such superstitious imaginings of the otherworld quickly become mapped onto a flesh-and-blood person like Ángela.

Manuel, as is typical of the gallant knight of medieval romances that he is pretending to be, immediately resorts to conventional descriptions of beautiful women by describing Ángela with the divine attributes of an angel, a quality that is ironically encoded in her very name. Bewitched by her beauty, he says that her eyes and the curls of her hair are like stars, and that each strand of hair is a ray of light. Cosme, on the other hand, resorts to the other stereotypical face of women by believing these signs to reveal her true diabolical nature. He claims that her eyes and the curls of her hair are indeed like “luceros” (lights), but in a play on this word with “Lucifer” he states that they are of the Luciferian sort. Regarding her hair, Cosme declares that each strand is truly a ray of light, not those emitted from heaven though, but rather from hell. According to biblical tradition, Lucifer was himself an angel. Consequently, Cosme agrees with
Manuel that the spectacular woman before them could be an angel, but he declares that if they could see her feet they would see she is “patudo” (2061) (hooved) and therefore devil-like because duendes are “malditos por el pie” (2058) (have cursed feet). In this tug-of-war between competing images of women, we find the blend of fear and desire that Cohen believes monsters inspire (16). Whether or not she is good or evil, both men become entranced and believe that they are beholding a supernatural vision, a state of mind that Caro Baroja’s study tells us is one that duendes were believed to induce in the people they haunt.

For Bradley Nelson, these scenes reveal how Calderón “subtly discredits a ‘scientific’ discourse by foregrounding its libidinous aspects as well as connecting it to the idea of self-delusion” (426). Quite to the contrary, however, it is precisely in this moment when Manuel’s discourse takes on unscientific language. Indeed, in his awe of Ángela’s beauty, the galán fails to let a more scientific epistemology guide him through a mysterious phenomenon, which results in him suddenly making absurd interpretations (that Ángela is an angel) that the audience knows are false. Manuel’s “enchantment” draws our attention to how easily susceptible people, including those with the best intentions of using a scientific method, are to their erroneous intuitions, imprecise subjectivity, and cultural biases. Such pitfalls are exactly what the scientific method warns of and attempts to identify in unsubstantiated claims about the material world. As Manuel begins to let his amorous desire distort his perception of reality with a sense of the supernatural, he does not show the “libidinous aspects” of “scientific’ discourse,” as Nelson would have it, but rather how one who tries to explain mysterious phenomena in material terms can fall short of their scientific standards by allowing the tropes of their literary culture to corrupt their reason. Furthermore, we should not exaggerate how transfixed Manuel becomes in this moment, for he recovers within a couple of verses. How? Through skepticism of the supernatural as an explanation for natural phenomena, reasoning based on material terms, proposing a hypothesis that can be falsified, and, as we will see, concocting an experiment that will produce empirical evidence. Cosme, on the other hand, who believes in duendes, is trapped in a worldview that the play has already debunked in the opening scene. At no point in the play does the audience give credence to Cosme’s explanation of duendes as the cause of mysterious events. And in the end, Manuel is proven correct, not his lackey.

Despite the awe and bewilderment that Manuel feels paralyzing him as he gazes upon what he believes to be the spirit of a woman, it is his skepticism, not any biblical statement nor faith in God that he could have easily invoked, that helps him keep his fear in check and get back on track to solving the mystery. His certainty that mysterious occurrences must have a natural
explanation allows him to recover his nerve to confront the unknown entity before him. When he comes into physical contact with Ángela by seizing her with his hands, she employs common folkloric conceptions, pretending to be a *duende* that has taken human form and warning him not to touch her lest he lose his chance at salvation. Manuel, however, resorts to a more evidence-based approach to the phenomenon in question and instead conceives of an experiment that will empirically shatter the myth. He unsheathes his sword and threatens to slice through the *duende* to see if his weapon penetrates air or flesh. Considering that the sword will draw blood, Manuel’s act also suggests sexual connotations. Cosme had previously quipped apropos his sword being a *doncella* (that is, with no blood on it) (178–80) and the initial duel between Manuel and Luis left the former with a bleeding hand. Ángela, being mortal, would bleed if cut by the sword, but as a previously married woman, she would not spill any blood on the linens she had just cleaned should they ever cover her future nuptial bed. Though Manuel’s strategy resembles the experiments created by the Inquisition to provoke innocents into confessing themselves as heretics, we should note that Manuel’s experiment forces Ángela to confess the actual truth that she is a simple human being, not a witch or any other such fictitious entity grounded in folklore.

With the superstitious *duende* theory debunked as the cause of suspicious occurrences, the second illusory concept that we have been addressing must now be defrauded; the misrepresentation perpetuated in folkllore that portrays women as supernatural, whether celestial or infernal. Indeed, similar to Cohen’s belief that the monster is “a glyph looking for a hierophant” (4), Ángela struggles with the conceptions of widowhood within her cultural tradition as she searches for her own interpretation of what her new status means. When Manuel comes face to face with Ángela, he likens her beauty to that of the dawn, aurora, and sun, all of which she immediately refutes. Much like the ghosts that only leave tenebrous traces of their existence behind, Ángela’s deconstruction of herself leaves only what she calls an “enigma” (2374) (enigma). In even more ghostly terms, she says “ni soy lo que parezco, / ni parezco lo que soy” (2375–76) (I am not what I appear to be / nor do I appear as what I am), thus signaling her predicament as a widow whose unquestionable existence and desire to be re-assimilated into public life have been censured as a result of the distorted conceptions and social expectations placed upon women of her status. Indeed, when Manuel requests that she reveal her identity, Ángela hesitates as a result of what appears to be her fear of the false image that Manuel has constructed of her. Knowing very well the angel-demon binary in which women are traditionally perceived, she expresses her reluctance to show the *galán* who she really is when she states, “Si hoy aquesta luz me veis, / y por eso me estimáis, / cuando a otra luz me veáis, / quizá me aborreceréis”
PASSING THROUGH WALLS, TRANSGRESSING SOCIAL NORMS

(2389–92) (If today you see me in this light, / and for that reason you admire me, / when you see me in another light, / you might abhor me). This chiaroscuro imagery highlights the ghost-like features that Ángela harbors despite the fact that she is not a duende. As she herself declares, she is a type of “fingida sombra” (2990) (feigned shade) and “sepulcro vivo” (2992) (living tomb). Curiously, as Ángela affirms the monstrous paradoxes of her identity, she initiates their very unraveling. That is to say, the monster rhetoric she employs becomes the medium through which her problem is highlighted, negotiated, and ultimately resolved.

Of course, in true comedia fashion, the marriage between the galán and the dama in the final verses of the third act resolves the tension of the play. If, as Slavoj Žižek argues, what the undead need is a mechanism, such as a funeral, that allows them to be re-integrated into their community’s symbolic tradition (23), marriage in La dama duende becomes the optimal rite of passage at Ángela’s disposition that will allow her to regain a normative social status. As a living woman, a burial will obviously not help her find a place of reconciliation within her community. Indeed, her confinement to her room is symbolic of a living death, a strategy that does not integrate her into the community but rather marginalizes her efforts to form part of it. By foregrounding Ángela’s immurement and making it the source of tension in the play, La dama duende materializes this cultural practice of confinement on stage for the audience to confront and reflect upon. The play thus makes visible a social phenomenon that has been taken for granted, and therefore rendered invisible, so to speak, giving voice to those women that have lived in silence behind such walls.

In her study of ghosts in literature, June Pulliam argues that it is the need to resolve unfinished business and to move on that motivates ghosts to seek out the living (17). Similarly, Ángela, who is misconceived as a duende, desires Manuel and the return to life that a union with him would bring. The traditional rite of passage that is marriage thus becomes the medium through which the monstrous blemish of widowhood, the family’s “mancha” that Luis refers to, is cleansed. However, the remarriage of a widow, as we observed in Vives’s comments, was also highly frowned upon. This renders the comedia’s typical solution of marriage as likewise problematic. Significantly, this did not stop Calderón from employing this literary device. As Manuel and Ángela come face to face and recognize each other for who they really are, the social anxieties regarding duendes and widows are simultaneously dispelled upon the promise of marriage.

The path that Manuel takes to this climax is striking. While in Act I we watch him boldly assert his disbelief in the supernatural, in Act II, we find him hesitating and almost caving to the easy and unsubstantiated solutions provided by superstitious thinking, a course of action that could not lead to
any type of happy ending. By the end of the play, however, he is emboldened in his conviction that there must be a rational, natural explanation for the mysterious events that have happened, an intuition that is ultimately confirmed and validated in the play’s finale. This series of events brilliantly depicts the conflicted feelings of many Catholics challenging the superstitions of their tradition during the early modern era, yet at the same time, not wanting to take its logic to the next level of complete denial of all things supernatural. After all, the Church had confirmed during the Counter-Reformation that it did accept that some claims concerning the supernatural were true (demons and souls in purgatory, as mentioned above). Calderón’s apparent skepticism of the supernatural was not without precedent. Teresa de Jesús attributed most demonic visions to physiological conditions brought on by excessive prayer and meditation. It therefore seems reasonable to give Calderón a place on Spain’s path toward what will eventually be termed the Age of Enlightenment, but one that does so still within the boundaries of the Catholic Church. Indeed, La dama duende would later inform Benito Feijoo, a priest who advocated scientific and empirical thinking in order to dispute certain superstitions still lingering in the nineteenth century, including the belief in duendes.

The examples set forth by Calderón, along with Teresa de Jesús and Feijoo, corroborate Ray Porter’s warning regarding perceiving the history of science as a linear and steady victorious march, ever-progressing forward instead of as a push and pull between religion and science (6). Stuart Clark takes this even further by advising that “we would do better to associate demonology with the advancement of science than with its stagnation or decay” (225), for despite the fact that demonologists were studying “subjects now thought to be incompatible with science, they were handling them in a manner consistent with contemporary scientific values—indeed, with those values that were becoming important for the ‘new’ science” (245). Therefore, we can appreciate how European epistemology in the seventeenth century was at what Cohen might call a “metaphoric crossroads” and it is from such a crossroads that monsters tend to arise (4). In Andrew Keitt’s research on the Church’s campaign to root out spiritual imposters, he finds that despite its renewed enthusiasm to systematically employ reason and objective scrutiny in this endeavor, “magic, miracles, demons, and visionary experience were by no means on their last legs as subjects of learned discourse, inevitably retreating before an onslaught of critical rationalism. In reality,” he continues, “it was a time when many fields of knowledge we now deem superstitious were indistinguishable from, and indispensable to, scientific inquiry” (7). Keitt’s overarching view, however, is that the Church’s preoccupation with impostures seems to be “less as a confident assertion of Counter Reformation disciplinary power and more as a symptom of profound conceptual turmoil and epistemological uncertainty” (6–7).
In Spain, self-described “anti-superstition” treatises abounded during the seventeenth century; so much so that it could be considered its own literary genre. According to Fabián Alejandro Campagne, this new brand of literature in vogue at the time demonstrates that the *homo supersticiosus* became yet another heretical group that certain sectors of the Church attempted to eradicate. Ironically, however, though not surprising, these treatises were themselves riddled with their own superstitious beliefs, such as a firm belief in *duendes*. The many texts of this skeptical nature reveal the high level of uncertainty felt by seventeenth-century thinkers that agitated their anxiety and contributed to a sense of an epistemological crisis. Such a sense of crisis awakens monsters in the imagination who are summoned forth to “police the border,” as Cohen would say (12), that separates what one must believe is true from what must be believed to be false. Though it could be possible to see Calderón’s anti-superstitious sentiment in *La dama duende* as aligning with this type of anti-heretical propaganda, it should be noticed that, whereas the anti-superstition treatises foment the idea of demonic power in its justification of eliminating superstitious people, Manuel outright denies it. Calderón’s conception of superstition thus seems to be more in line with what will be the Enlightenment’s definition of the term and not simply a synonym for idolatry, as is the case for many Christian writers before this time period.

We might therefore think of plays such as *La dama duende* as a medium that helped fill the epistemic void left by a conundrum and that provided a sense of closure and understanding that, although illusory, nevertheless could temporarily ease this anxiety. Indeed, as Leonardo García-Pavón observes, putting “on stage that which is supposed to be buried” was a typical feature of Spanish baroque theater (223). Ángela’s representation as a *duende* reflects the contradictory images and conceptions regarding women, particularly widows. As Ángela’s identity as a young and beautiful widow doesn’t fit into the normative categories prescribed in her community, she is perceived as being monstrous and as a threat to decent society. This monster qua revelation or warning (that is, *monstrum*) exposes the problem within her community that is being ignored and that needs to be brought out from the shadows and normalized. Her identity as the *dama duende* reflects, or is a metaphor of, her identity as a real *dama* that she once was before her husband died, the shadow of her former self that no longer is, at least according to the social norms of the day. It is not the death of her husband therefore that has stripped her of her identity, but rather the perceptions of those around her that believe her ontological status has changed as a result of her loss. By changing this belief and formulating a more realistic conception of widowhood, the widow’s status should no longer generate the anxiety that leads to her depiction as any form of a monster whatsoever.
This is precisely what Calderón’s play brings to light. In a Spain in which the moralist’s advocacy of women’s enclosure was losing ground, Ángela seems to ask her audience the same questions that Cohen claims all monsters force upon us for reflection: “These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression. They ask us why we have created them” (20). Calderón’s response in La dama duende seems to suggest that it is by perceiving reality through the prism of a distorted conception of honor that which allows for one to imagine what is not there (that is, stains, impurity, duendes; in short, monsters) and to dehumanize women. The play suggests that love and marriage, on the contrary, break down walls and humanize the dehumanized, which allows for a relatively greater inclusivity to be achieved in the community.

Clearly, the superstitious belief in duendes on the one hand and the monstrous conceptions of women on the other are the two antagonistic forces that Manuel and Ángela must overcome in order to find each other and seal the happy ending of the play. By containing Ángela behind walls, Juan and Luis see themselves as heroic defenders of their family’s honor. However, the unjust and monstrous representation of Ángela’s status and the labyrinth-like depiction of her chambers from which she must be rescued put Manuel in the role of hero and cast the brothers as antagonists. In a word, the brothers are portrayed as the monstrous figures that “police the borders of the possible” and prevent mobility (Cohen 12). The brothers’ character, ironically, is not represented with the rhetoric of monstrosity, for their actions symbolize their society’s cultural values and therefore are not considered deviant. However, the appearance of the transgressive duende on the stage raises, as Freeland would say, “the spectre of evil,” which is really not Ángela as some evil being but rather the threat she represents in exposing the irony of this situation.

The ghost motif is therefore the literary device that Calderón employs to represent the commonly accepted delusions in contemporary Spanish society that act as obstacles on the path preventing the two lovers from coming together. It becomes evident that the social anxiety concerning a woman’s honor precedes her monstrous representation, which demonstrates that the conception of women as some form of monster does not stem from their own nature but rather from the cultural fear concerning their sexuality. Since Ángela is no longer fit for the role of a common housewife as a result of her widow status, she ends up playing the role of a household ghost. She performs the role of a duende that, not unlike the domestic spirit-demon of Spanish folklore, does not pose any harm, but she is nevertheless capable of disturbing the peace by haunting and crossing boundaries that keep relegated from spaces.
where she does not belong. Just like the fate of many other paranormal or supernatural phenomena that have lost their prefixes as rational thinking and scientific experimentation brought them into the fold of a normal and natural understanding of the world, the removal of the “duende” portion of the title of this play simply leaves us with a flesh-and-blood and very human “dama.”

NOTES

1. Blázquez Miguel affirms that “la creencia en las apariciones de las almas en pena es una constante en las tradiciones de todos los pueblos de España” (170) (the belief in the apparitions of condemned souls are a constant in the traditions of all towns throughout Spain).

2. For example, see Boyle, De Armas (1976, 1993), Greer, Larson, Martino Crocetti, Mujica, Nelson, Schizzano Mandel, and Ter Horst.

3. Dann Cazés Gryj seems to be the only scholar that explicitly draws our attention to this fact in his analysis of how the “mentira sobrenatural” (supernatural lie) is created. In more general terms, De Armas observes a formula here in Calderón’s work. He shows that there are several of Calderón’s plays in which a female protagonist carries out pranks that are so elaborate that those around her believe her to be a witch, an enchantress or, in this case, a duende (Mistress 130).

4. Decency in the context of La Dama Duende are those moral beliefs that circumscribe the activities that a woman, especially a widow, can engage in, which we will examine shortly. Other scholars that have suggested the play’s use of sexual indecency to create tension are Honig, who observes “flickers of incest” between Ángela and her brothers, and Mujica, whose analysis of the play’s “tragic elements” leads her to believe that the action teeters on the edge of tragedy despite finally resolving in a fashion in line with comedy.

5. Noël Carroll calls such hybridity “category jamming,” and Cohen remarks that the monster is a “harbinger of category crisis” and is therefore seen as a threat to all that is deemed normal (6). See also Gilmore, Asma, and Freeland.

6. He states, “Si hubieses amado a tu marido, tal como prescriben las leyes del matrimonio impuestas por el mismo Dios, de manera que pensarases que el otro eras tú, llevarías su muerte del mismo modo que si tú murieras” (360) (Had you loved your husband, as prescribed by the laws of matrimony imposed by God, such that you believed you were the other, you would bear his death as if you had died).

7. Surely it would be very risky to suggest that Calderón purposely named the two brothers in the play Juan and Luis in order to reveal Juan Luis Vives as the source from which he drew inspiration for La dama duende. However, the coincidence is striking. That
Vives not only discusses widows but also humanity’s “ansias de compañía, de hablar, de comunicarse, sin buscar en ello utilidad alguna, sino por mero impulso a la sociedad” \textit{(Concordia} 92) (longing for company, to talk, to converse, without desiring in it any utility whatsoever, but rather for the sheer impulse toward society), words that in effect sum up Ángela’s sentiment, perhaps adds a little more support to our speculation.

8. His words are, “Confiesa tu torpeza” (390) (Confess your weakness).

9. To answer the question about why Calderón made the heroine of this play a widow, Greer suggests that this feature of the female protagonist leads the audience to sympathize with her even more, for they knew widows were common victims of unjust claims on their independence and finances, and that they “had a legal right to independence, but this right, at least in the economic sphere, was not easily conceded” (96). Any suspicion of adultery could result in Ángela losing her dowry. Her immurement therefore could be used as proof that she was properly mourning in order to defend her against creditors that wanted their hands on her dowry (97–99).

10. Her words truly seem to resonate with Vives’s own when he says, “En estado de viudez conviene que la mujer actúe con mayor circunspección (sic), dado que todos los vicios se le imputan a ella igual que el elogio por las virtudes se centra sólo en ella” (376) (As a widow, a woman should act with greater prudence, given that all vices are imputed to her just as praise for virtues are centered in her).

11. Recall our earlier examination of Cosme’s story of the Devil who disguised himself as a beautiful young maiden and Vives’s description of the widow that appears alive on the outside but is dead on the inside.

12. We may also note Greer’s astute observation that Cosme does not marry Isabel at the end of the play, which would be the most conventional way to end it.

13. He first tells the widow, “no busques templos donde haya afluencia y concurso de varones, sino donde no haya más que soledad y no exista posibilidad alguna de pecar, pero sí la más amplia y segura ocasión para orar” (383) (don’t seek temples where men congregate, but rather where there is only solitude and no chance of sinning, only the safe occasion to pray), and later that, “La viuda nada debe hacer en la plaza, en las reuniones de hombres, entre la muchedumbre; en estos lugares existe un grave riesgo para esas virtudes que más se recomiendan a la viuda, a saber, el pudor, la castidad, el buen nombre y la santidad” (384) (The widow has no place in the plaza, in the gatherings of men, amongst the crowd; in these places lie a grave risk to the virtues that are recommended for widows, such as modesty, chastity, a good name and saintliness).

14. Anne Cruz observes the use of a wall as a common literary device to separate lovers (“Walled-In Woman” 350).

15. For a more detailed examination of the sexual connotations of this hutch, see María Martino Crocetti.

16. Ignacio Arellano makes the argument that we should not expect a big philosophical or ideological statement in \textit{La dama duende} because such qualities were not conventions of the \textit{capa y espada} but rather of those plays in the more religious-oriented genres. Paying attention to generic conventions is indeed excellent advice. However, making
some minimal reference to faith, the Bible, or God, to refute Cosme’s belief in duendes would have been easy for Calderón to include and would not be entirely out of place in this play given that it is a play about a fake ghost. The fact that there is an explicit refutation of the supernatural that wins out in this play and that when our playwright does incorporate the supernatural in other works he does so with the intention to teach some point of religious dogma suggests that the supernatural only becomes useful in its power to symbolize certain tenets of faith, not to represent the world as it actually is.

Her words are “no me toques, no me llegues, / que llegarás a perder / la mayor dicha que el cielo / te previno” (2093–96) (don’t touch nor come near me, / for you will lose / the greatest joy heaven / granted you).

Vives makes this explicitly clear when he says, “Porque es mucho menos conveniente que se embellezca la viuda, la cual no sólo no debe buscar por sí misma un nuevo matrimonio, sino ni tan siquiera admitirlo o aceptarlo si la ocasión se presenta. De mala gana . . . se dirige a las segundas nupcias la mujer honrada” (374) (Because it is not well that a widow beautify herself, who should not only not seek a new marriage, but not even admit nor accept it should the occasion present itself. An honorable woman goes into a second marriage unwillingly).

This seems exceptional in La dama duende since, as Vives tells us in his condemnation of a widow’s remarriage, the representation of second marriages was prohibited in the theater during the Classical Period (389). In the end, however, Vives follows St. Paul’s recommendation in I Corinthians by advising that if widows cannot control their carnal desire that afflicts them (he uses the verb “aguijonear,” (390) (to sting)), it is best they marry (391).

Vives advises that if young widows are to remarry, they should marry men “que no sean jóvenes, lascivos, alegres, imprudentes, complacientes, incapaces de gobernarse a sí mismos, a la esposa y a la casa, sino un hombre que haya sobrepasado la media edad, sobrio, riguroso, respetable, con experiencia en la vida, cuerno, que con su prudencia mantenga en el deber a toda la casa, que con su sabiduría lo modere y lo equilibre todo” (394) (that aren’t young, lascivious, drunks, imprudent, complacent, unable to govern themselves, their wife or their home, but rather a man beyond middle age, temperate, strict, respectable, with experience in life, sensible, that with his prudence maintains his home, that with his wisdom moderates and keeps everything in balance) and that, furthermore, the wedding should be done in silence so as to not draw attention to the anomaly. Manuel indeed seems to embody these qualities, though his precise age is not clear. And though the play does not stage a wedding, Manuel’s proposal of marriage takes place within the silent and isolating walls of Ángela’s chambers.

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