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Marriage, Honor and Religion: Three Social Constraints Challenging
Women's Lives in Miguel de Cervantes' *The Ingenious Gentleman Don
Quixote of La Mancha*

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Senior Honors Project

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Introduction

Throughout the course of a history dominated by men, women have often put forth great efforts in order to achieve the same rights and status as their male counterparts. Those who are interested in this topic might argue that this power struggle still continues today, while others might see it as something of the past, mentioning certain milestones such as the emergence of women's suffrage or their entry into the workforce in the twentieth century. It is important to note that for centuries, certain conventions have served to restrict women in one way or another. Considered by many scholars to be the first modern novel, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* (*El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*) sheds light on some of those conventions. In his text, author Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra recounts the story of various female characters who lived in the Iberian Peninsula during the seventeenth century. A close analysis of the female characters living in Spain during this time period reveals the societal rigidity and control that women were subjected to under the three conventions of honor, marriage and religion. The situations of the female characters of Maritornes, Dorotea, Dulcinea, Marcela and Zoraida demonstrate how Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra reveals the harsh realities of women, and how the aforementioned conventions restricted their status or mobility in Spanish society.

Background

When analyzing the various aspects related to gender and social inequality in *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, one must take into account the underpinnings and structure of Spanish society during the seventeenth century. In order to best understand such structures, one must look at Spain's history dating back to earlier times and pay close attention to the roles that women possessed. During this process, it is

essential to take into account the enormous influence that Catholicism, honor and marriage had on the structure of Spain's society.

The conquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Moorish armies from North Africa in the eighth century created a society in which people of Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths had to coexist in the same land until 1469, when the Catholic Spaniards regained control of a great portion of the peninsula after the union of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabel of Castile. Under the cooperative reign of these two rulers, Spain would see the unification of all its dominions and its transformation into a dominant world power belonging to the Catholic faith (Casey 100). Shortly after their marriage, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel introduced the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, an institution whose goal was to establish Catholic orthodoxy within the borders of the Spanish crown. The Inquisition would continue working towards its goal well into the nineteenth century.

By the time Queen Isabel ascended to the throne, there were numerous written works concerned with the nature and role of women in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Many of those works attempted to challenge the dominant view of women that was derived from the Bible and early church figures. The existing view, that women as descendants of Eve were manipulative, sinful, gullible and frail would unfortunately remain unchanged in Spain until the eighteenth century. During the seventeenth century, being "a good woman not only meant staying at home, but also meant managing domestic affairs" (Smith 24). For a good Christian woman, the possession of effective skills in household governance was considered very important. For a married woman, the set of rules to which she had to conform was even longer, as she was expected to be loyal, dedicated, and

obedient to her spouse. She was also to "dress appropriately, covering her face in public... and not allow any man into her house without her husband's permission" (Smith 25). While obedience and dedication determined a woman's honor, a "husband's honor stemmed from his ability to control his wife and ensure she remained virtuous" (Smith 25). These ideas stemmed from the publication of conduct books for women that were written in the sixteenth century by individuals such as Juan Luis Vives and Fray Luis de León. There were many writers, however, who opposed the view that women were inferior to their male counterparts. Perhaps one of the best-known writers who criticized this view was María de Zayas y Sotomayor, who argued for women's education and claimed that "Because men preside over everything, they never tell about the evil deeds they do, they only tell about the ones done to them" (Smith 26). Her stories of women as victims of domestic violence reveal some of the problematic aspects of Spain's social structure. Stories of women being victimized by their husbands or being murdered for losing their honor serve to illustrate the struggles of women living during Cervantes' time.

Women played an important role when it came to religion. In the process of establishing a Catholic orthodoxy, Spain's Jewish and Muslim populations would be forced to convert to Christianity or be expelled from the territories belonging to the Spanish crown. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel issued a decree expelling all Jews from their kingdom. The followers of Islam remained for the time being, making up the majority of the population in some areas of Spain (Véquez 106). The Muslim population was an essential component of Spain's agrarian society, and thus, people belonging to this faith could not be expelled immediately due to economic reasons. Doing so would rid the country of effective agricultural techniques and disturb the aristocracy, who was in control

of the country's agriculture (Casey 140). The followers of Islam met the same fate as their Jewish counterparts when they were expelled in 1609. It is important to note that individuals of the Jewish or Muslim faiths that had converted to Catholicism continued to be persecuted by Spanish authorities. House searches were commonly performed in order to find any prohibited materials and sacred texts such as the Koran. In such cases, women were often times found guilty of hiding prohibited materials and sacred texts. They were the ones who continued practicing their faiths, teaching the children about the religion of their ancestors. Without women keeping their old religions alive, it is more than likely that the elements of Judaism and Islam marking Spanish culture would not have been as strong. The country's mass conversion to Christianity would also have been an easier task for the Catholic monarchs.

Prior to the second half of the sixteenth century, the Inquisition mainly focused on the persecution of Jewish and Islamic minorities that converted to Catholicism. The commanding positions of the authorities in charge of this task were controlled by Catholics, who often abused the Jews and Muslims until they rebelled in some cases. Under the leadership of the Inquisitor General Fernando de Valdés, the Inquisition was able to permeate all levels of society through effective local level administration and its use of educated members of the clergy (Nalle 558, 574). The Catholic Church and its clergy played a key role in the success of establishing Catholic orthodoxy within the borders of the Spanish crown. When discussing this topic in his text titled *Early Modern Spain*, James Casey writes:

The Catholic Church had played its part, alongside the state, in making Spaniards aware of their human resources. Its care was to police its flock, and as elsewhere in early modern Europe, it began to keep records of baptisms, marriages, Easter communions, confirmations and burials.... The system was only set in place

gradually. One of its preconditions was the catholicization of this frontier society- the forced conversion or expulsion of the large Jewish population...and Moors.... (20)

Such awareness and change was made possible through the establishment of a new position within the hierarchy of the Inquisition known as the comisario. This position was filled by well-educated priests from communities all over Spain. Comisarios were responsible for taking and sending denunciations to the Inquisitors, essentially providing them with the evidence needed to make a case and prosecute the accused. Without having to investigate or interrogate the accused, the Inquisitors' productivity skyrocketed, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of cases during the second half of the sixteenth century (Nalle 559). The Inquisition also had various tribunals established across the country in order to achieve its goal of establishing Catholic orthodoxy.

As mentioned before, the expulsion of Muslim and Jewish populations from Spain was done in hopes of creating a homogeneous society that the King and Queen had envisioned. When describing this phenomenon, Casey writes, "The country had emerged in 1492 from a long internal war between Christian and Moor, and the process of recolonisation was to continue for some time after that" (23). Prior to the events that took place at the end of the fifteenth century in Spain, "where seven centuries of Christian, Jewish and Muslim cohabitation resulted in heightened fears about miscegenation, controlling women's reproductive bodies was of critical importance" (Smith 23). Individuals went to great lengths to make sure that their family trees were clean, lacking any trace of Jewish or Moorish blood. As women were viewed as easily gullible, protecting their purity and honor was of the utmost importance.

Spain was concerned with "creating a stable social hierarchy, which meant that government must be reserved to men of good family" (Casey 119). Precautions were also taken in order to prevent former merchants from becoming nobles. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, many merchants were required to abandon their businesses before becoming "honored citizens" and those who had ever worked with their hands were barred from holding any position in a municipal office. Such restrictions were instituted in order to prevent merchants from taking advantage of the suppliers who would be working for them" (Casey 119). The restrictions placed on the general population limited both social mobility and the opportunity to create change. Since men were the ones who owned a business, they were the ones that were affected. On the other hand, women, whose responsibilities dealt with raising children and managing the house were affected indirectly by the restrictions that were placed on their husbands.

With this information in mind, it is much more practical to understand the mentality and structure of Spanish society during Cervantes' time. The author lived in a society in which Catholicism permeated all levels of society and controlled the lives of women and men. When writing *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, Cervantes had to take certain precautionary measures in order to criticize the various aspects that revealed his nation's religious, political, and societal rigidity and how it affected women. During the seventeenth century, criticizing the nobility and the Catholic Church was strictly forbidden. One could not openly talk about the mistreatment of the Muslim or Jewish populations by the Holy Office of the Inquisition or say that the upper class held all the power or criticize the roles of men and women. Those who dared to do so faced a gruesome death.

Although both men and women faced similar consequences and punishments during this time, especially in regards to the Inquisition, the conventions of religion, honor and marriage affected women on a more personal level. The following analysis will show the effects of these aforementioned conventions on women and reveal that *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* is more than just the tale of an old man who is infatuated with books of chivalry. Throughout this process, Miguel de Cervantes' ingenuity of being able to indirectly criticize Spanish society during a time of censure will also be validated once the reader takes a closer look at the female characters of Maritornes, Dorotea, Dulcinea, Marcela and Zoraida.

Maritornes: Honor and Marriage

A female character that faces the consequences set forth by the conventions of honor and marriage is Maritornes. A close analysis of this character and her situation in society is a perfect example of structural inflexibility. Maritornes, who is found in the first volume of *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, works as a servant and a prostitute at an inn. When introducing her in his text, Miguel de Cervantes describes her as "una moza asturiana, ancha de cara, llana de cogote, de nariz roma, del un ojo tuerta y del otro no muy sana. Verdad es que la gallardía del cuerpo suplía las demás faltas: no tenía siete palmos, de los pies a la cabeza, y las espaldas, que algún tanto le cargaban, la hacían mirar al suelo más de lo que ella quisiera" (Cervantes 237). These words paint her to be an unattractive woman with an undesirable occupation. Maritornes' simple interaction with Sancho Panza and Don Quijote at the inn reveals the motivation behind her actions. The fact that Maritornes bought some wine for Sancho Panza with the little money she had steers readers toward seeing her as the "Good Christian." Maritornes was born into the low

social class, in which mobility was practically nonexistent due to her lack of honor. Honor can be understood as "a code that determined social behavior, notably by defining women's identities in terms of sexuality and by limiting their behavior" (Taylor 1079). During the seventeenth century, honor was attributed to women belonging to the noble class. Based on his research involving women and honor in a Castilian town in the 1600's, Taylor provides convincing evidence to show that ultimately, honor in the seventeenth century was "not a set, agreed-upon structure or values, but a flexible tool that came alive only when women (and men) chose to use the rhetoric of honor to establish themselves as the arbiters of their own position in the community" (1097). Although honor existed at all levels of society, it was typically a defining characteristic of the higher social class.

Without any honor, Maritornes had to resort to prostitution in order to survive. Although her action of buying wine and caring for Sancho Panza illustrates qualities attributed to the "Good Christian," her occupation takes away from that image. When discussing this in her text titled "Woman in Don Quijote," Edith Cameron writes, "The hideous unchaste Asturian maid of the inn. That she is not an altogether hardened sinner is shown by her apology for her life on the score of hard knocks. Her ministrations to the blanketed Sancho, especially the paying for the wine, show her kindness of heart" (141). With no money and honor, Maritornes was unable to change her status in society.

The convention of marriage also influences Maritornes' life. During the seventeenth century in Spain, families often married each other's children in order to gain assets and influence in society. The woman's dowry, which served as inheritance in the form of liquid assets (cash, jewels, furnishings) was essential for establishing such connections (Casey 200). Some parents would give all of their property to their first daughter in order to ensure

an advantageous marriage, leaving the remaining daughters without any dowry. Girls who found themselves in this situation "were often condemned to lose perforce their freedom and take an estate in life which they do not desire and must take on sufferance- that is, they would have to become nuns" (Casey 200). This situation, of course, would often times only be available to women who had an honorable status and no money. Married women outside of the aristocracy were kept busy with the responsibility of raising children and helping their husbands with farm work or any other self-sufficient family businesses that generated the essential income needed for survival. Maritornes, finding herself without any honor or opportunity to get married because of her occupation, was stuck in a situation in which social mobility was unattainable.

Dorotea: Honor and Marriage

A woman's dependency on her male counterpart in order to achieve social mobility and status also played a key role in Spanish society during the 1600's. The convention of honor impacted the life of Dorotea, another character found in Miguel de Cervantes' first volume of *The Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote of La Mancha*. Having lost her honor after her noble lover Fernando refuses to marry her, Dorotea's position in society becomes dependent on him. As a wealthy farmer's daughter, marriage with a noble like Fernando would allow Dorotea to gain a title because individuals belonging to the bourgeoisie class possessed monetary wealth but found themselves without a title unless they married someone belonging to the noble class. Often times, marriage between the middle class and the nobility took place in order for a noble to secure wealth and for a middle class citizen to acquire a title. Thus, the convention of honor was intertwined with that of marriage, making the lives of women in Spain much more limiting in nature. If a woman did not have honor,

her chances of finding a spouse and getting married were much smaller. The prospect of marriage would become much less likely for Dorotea after she had lost her honor and purity due to her relationship with Fernando, who falls in love with another woman named Lucinda. Lucinda belongs to the nobility as well, and ultimately, this complicated love triangle leaves the wealthy farmer's daughter to fend for herself.

For Dorotea, the only manner of regaining her honor was to marry Fernando, and thus, marriage no longer served as an institution of love but rather as an escape from criticism and alienation from her counterparts in society. When describing honor in her article titled "A vueltas con la honra y el honor. Evolución en la concepción de la honra y el honor en las sociedades castellanas desde el medioevo al siglo XVII," María Martínez writes, "La honra, por su parte, aunque se gana con actos propios, depende de actos ajenos, de la estimación y fama que otorgan los demás. Así es que se pierde igualmente por actos ajenos, cuando cualquiera retira su consideración..." (1). Without honor, Dorotea was not seen as a desirable candidate for marriage with another man. When speaking to Fernando about her honor, Dorotea states "Si te parece que has de aniquilar tu sangre por mezclarla con la mía, considera que ... la verdadera nobleza consiste en la virtud" (Cervantes 515).

Unfortunately, this woman did not lose her honor on her own account but rather due to Fernando's refusal to marry her. It is important to note that for many women, marriage was "a delicate business, involving as it did the weighing up on each side of a variety of factors: geographical location of the family, wealth, honour, influence exerted by intermediaries" rather than an institution of love (Casey 202). As previously mentioned, a woman's honor was connected to the institution of marriage. When describing marriage in his text, Casey writes:

Rather than a simple transfer of a dowry and a bride, therefore, marriage involved the mobilization of a network of intermediaries and reinforced the clan structure of Spanish society. Given that so much property was pledged to and with women, their alliances were critical to the re-establishment of the family status at each new generation ... marriage was arranged where possible within a known circle of friends, given that it would effectively commit two family networks to a continuing interaction and cooperation over time. (202-203)

A woman with honor was seen as the only desirable candidate for marriage. Women belonging to the nobility also possessed the monetary means or status that made them even more important and desirable when it came to marriage. Women such as Maritornes or Dorotea, who lack either honor or wealth were not able to move up in the social ranks of Spanish society. The institution of marriage therefore reinforced the clan structure of Spanish society, considering that the property and wealth pledged with women were critical for the establishment of family status at every generation (Casey 202). As a wealthy farmer's daughter, Dorotea possessed the monetary means, and through marriage with a noble like Fernando, she could have transitioned from a member of the bourgeoisie class that was developing at that time to a woman belonging to the nobility.

Dulcinea: Honor and Marriage

Dulcinea, perhaps the best-known female character in the *Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*, serves as a perfect example of the conventions of honor and marriage. This character serves as Don Quixote's muse, his religion and reason for existence. Dulcinea inspires Don Quixote and gives him the strength and will to continue fighting for the greater good. She was part of the protagonist's rituals. After acquiring his armor and Sancho Panza, it was only natural for Don Quixote to choose a woman, who in this case turned out to be Dulcinea, a fabricated character that was based on a village girl named Aldonza Lorenzo. The fabrication of this ideal woman in the mind of Don Quixote

symbolizes the common misconception that women had to marry not out of love but rather out of fascination by their potential suitors. Dulcinea also serves as an intricate symbol of honor in Spanish society. Most, if not all of the interactions between Don Quixote and Dulcinea come from the protagonist's elaborate speeches and descriptions of this fair lady. Don Quixote always describes Dulcinea in a positive light, even defending her when he considers it appropriate. In the sixty-fourth chapter of the second volume of the text, Don Quixote defends his muse in the altercation he has with the Knight of the White Moon, claiming that Dulcinea is "la más hermosa mujer del mundo y yo el más desdichado caballero de la tierra, y no es bien que mi flaqueza defraude esta verdad. Aprieta, caballero, la lanza y quítame la vida, pues me has quitado la honra" (Cervantes 582). To the protagonist, an insult directed at his muse was an insult directed at him. In her article titled "El honor, o a la cárcel de las mujeres del siglo XVII," Grace Burbano Arias offers a good description of how a woman's honor was intertwined with the man's honor. She writes:

En el siglo XVII, aún era habitual considerar que todas las mujeres, a excepción de la Virgen María, eran las hijas de Eva, malas por naturaleza y culpables por llevar la mancha y la provocación en el cuerpo. Imagen que impulsó un control aún mayor en la época barroca sobre la mujer por ser esta la depositaria del tesoro más grande del hombre en el siglo XVII: el honor... La valorada masculinidad, en contraposición a la perniciosa feminidad, comprometía al hombre en el entramado de valores sociales que de ella se derivaban con el fin de integrar o mejor de ordenar a la sociedad, de preservar el honor a toda costa. El hombre debía así defender la honra de sus mujeres más cercanas (su madre, su hermana, su esposa, su hija) para evitar la disolución de la sociedad, la cual comenzaba en el núcleo, en la familia. (17-18)

These words sum up perfectly the actions of Don Quixote. It can be said that it was as much the man's responsibility to preserve the honor of the woman as it was the woman's responsibility to preserve her own (Burbano 19).

Marcela: Marriage

Before introducing Marcela's character, it is important to take notice of men's general opinion of marriage during the seventeenth century. Cervantes reveals the general opinion that men had of marriage in the scenes involving Lotario, one of the characters found in one of the chivalric manuscripts at one of the inns at which Don Quixote and his squire stayed in Chapter 33. This character describes marriage by saying:

Y entonces fue instituido el divino sacramento del matrimonio, con tales lazos, que sola la muerte puede desatarlos. Y tiene tanta fuerza y virtud este milagroso sacramento, que hace que dos diferentes personas sean una misma carne; y aun hace más en los buenos casos, que, aunque tienen dos almas, no tiene más de una voluntad. (459)

Lotario's words suggest that in marriage, the man and woman possess the same ideas. In reality, both sexes had differing opinions. This is evident when analyzing Marcela, a female character found in the first volume of the text. Her refusal to marry Grisóstomo demonstrates a woman's freedom to choose her potential suitor, which was something that was not common during Cervantes' time. As mentioned before, marriage served to preserve power. A woman's refusal to marry was not socially acceptable. After Grisóstomo's death, Marcela declares "Yo nací libre, y para poder escogí la soledad de los campos; con los árboles y con las aguas comunico mis pensamientos y hermosura" (Cervantes 224). These words symbolize a woman's simple desire: to live for herself and not be dependent on any man. When talking about women like Marcela in her article titled "Women in Spain," Sánchez and Escribano write "The Golden Age literature placed women on a Neo-Platonic pedestal. One of the stereotyped plots of this period is the right of a woman to choose her own lover and husband... Marcela refuses to accept Grisóstomo's love" (189). A woman's

desire to choose whomever she wanted was not acceptable 400 years ago. When discussing Marcela in her text titled "Woman in Don Quijote" Edith Cameron writes:

Among all heroines of Don Quijote, Marcela stands pre-eminent for her spiritual beauty and her independence... As a feminist her logic is incontrovertible. Why she asks, since chastity is one of the greatest virtues, should the girl yield it to him who employs every art to rob her of it simply because she is beautiful? She is innocent of the death of Grisóstomo for the reason that she never encouraged him. (141)

Such descriptions reveal that Marcela was a woman ahead of her times. Marriage was not an institution of love but rather seen as a way to preserve wealth and power between people of the higher social classes. Often times, the woman often married in order to achieve economic stability for her and her family, without having much input in regards to whom the groom would be.

Zoraida: Religion

The introduction of Zoraida at the end of the first volume of Cervantes' novel emphasizes the institution of religion. This convention was extremely important in Spain's society, given the country's consolidation under Catholicism at the expense of the Muslim and Jewish populations. Zoraida, who was a follower of Islam, had to convert to Catholicism in order to have the opportunity to establish a life with her Christian husband in the Iberian Peninsula. Known as Moriscos, Muslim individuals who had converted to Catholicism continued to live in the Iberian Peninsula. Many of the converts continued practicing their original faith in hiding. Women, who were most involved in family life, taught their children about Islam, which ultimately contributed to the existence of a Muslim presence in Spain even after political dominance from this group had ended. As a converted Muslim, Zoraida acted in a different manner to the social constraints that people like her experienced. Although it is unclear whether or not she continued to practice her faith, what

is evident is the fact that for Zoraida, liberation was found in her husband, who was not a member of the nobility. This relationship is extremely ironic, considering that Zoraida, a noble princess in her homeland, left behind a world of riches to be with a Spaniard who was believed to be part of his society's higher social ranks.

By converting to Catholicism, Zoraida was able to marry the man that she loved but she had to live in a land that was becoming increasingly more hostile toward Muslim individuals. When discussing this female character in her article titled "Handless Maidens, Modern Texts: A New Reading on Cervantes' The Captive Tale," Mary B. Quinn writes:

At best, in Spain after 1510, that is, in a Spain where Islam is prohibited, Zoraida can only be a troublesome Morisca. Both Zoraida and the captive, therefore, embody unattainable and anachronistic roles: the captive as a noble soldier, and pure Christian on the one hand, and Zoraida as sincere Muslim convert to Christianity on the other... At best, Zoraida represents a Christian ideal, but one that crushed its Muslim compatriot (her father) in its process... Zoraida's conversion is mad-made. And herein lies a final level of criticism aimed at the Spanish state: the choice for orthodoxy is clearly depicted as mortally and not divinely dictated. (227)

If she had not converted to Christianity, Zoraida would not have been able to live in Spain. One must be reminded that Catholicism was found at the center of politics and life in Spanish society. A follower of Islam, especially a woman, did not have the same rights as the Spanish citizens. After the union of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabel, the Moriscos became a common target, especially during the Inquisition. Discrimination against this group of people manifested itself in various ways: mosques were turned into churches, individuals over the age of eleven were enslaved and those who were younger were sent to good Christians to be brought up in good faith. Any uprisings were quickly suppressed by King Ferdinand's army (Banks 1).

Zoraida was placed in a position where she had to choose between her family and her husband. Her conversation with her father in Chapter 41 of the first volume of *The Ingenious Don Quixote of La Mancha* demonstrates the pressure that she faced. Zoraida's father tries to convince his daughter to stay in what is presently known as Algiers. After finding out that his daughter had converted to Christianity, the father is in disbelief. He curses:

¡Oh infame moza y mal aconsejada muchacha! ¿ Adónde vas, ciega y desatinada, en poder de estos perros, naturales enemigos nuestros? ¡Maldita sea la hora en que yo te engendré y malditos sean los regalos y deleites en que te he criado! ... Vuelve amada hija, vuelve a tierra, que todo te lo perdono; entrega a esos hombres ese dinero, que ya es suyo, y vuelve a consolar a este triste padre tuyo, que en esta desierta arena dejará la vida, si tú lo dejas. (Cervantes 558)

This was an extremely difficult situation for Zoraida. Accustomed to the finest things in life, this character left behind her wealth in order to start a life with the man she loved.

Conclusion

The conventions of honor, marriage and religion served to control women of all social classes. Whether it was to prevent social mobility, lessen the possibility of finding a potential suitor, or allowing one to live in a particular society, these three conventions limited a woman's means of finding happiness in Spain. This nation, which began associating itself with Catholicism, created a society in which women were made dependent on their male counterpart, or made reliant on other conventions, although both the characters of Marcela and Zoraida show that women had some choices. By identifying the ways in which women's mobility in Spain's society was restricted, one might conclude that the inequality between the sexes was rooted in both political and religious institutions. Further investigation relating to this subject mater will help identify other possible causes that have subjected women to other inequalities that still continue to this day.

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was a writer who was ahead of his time. As mentioned throughout the length of this paper, Cervantes pointed out some inequalities that existed in his society during a time in which open criticism of the pillars on which the Spanish crown was built was strictly prohibited. This ingenious writer's novel should serve as inspiration for all individuals who want to identify an inequality in society that exists today or those who want to work towards closing the gender gap that has been a part of human history for so many centuries.

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