SPANISH GOLDEN AGE POETRY IN MOTION

THE DYNAMICS OF CREATION AND CONVERSATION
Tamesis

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SPANISH GOLDEN AGE POETRY
IN MOTION

THE DYNAMICS OF
CREATION AND CONVERSATION

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AND
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TAMESIS
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Jealousy in María de Zayas’s Intercalated Poetry: Lyric Illness and Narrative Cure

DANA BULTMAN

Maria de Zayas’s dynamic use of intercalated poetry in her Novelas amorosas y ejemplares (1637) and Parte segunda del Sarao y entretenimiento honesto (1647) provides us with a sustained example of ‘poetry in motion’ across hundreds of narrative pages. Over the course of these works, Zayas intersperses lyric forms in her narrative, creating generic contrasts that are integral to the structure of both books and offering evidence for the gradual transformation of her central character, Lisis.

As readers progress through the frame that enfolds and interconnects the twenty novellas of Zayas’s two books, they follow the thread of the story of Lisis, the frame narrative’s protagonist and, as some critics have suggested, Zayas’s alter ego. Lisis first appears at the opening of the Novelas amorosas as a poet, weakened in body and mind because Don Juan has spurned her. As the sarao begins she is lying on her couch, sickened by the sort of early modern ‘amorous jealousy’ Steven Wagschal has defined as ‘a group of emotions, feelings, thoughts, bodily changes, and attitudes that are experienced in relation to guarding the exclusivity of a relationship that one possesses from a rival and/or avenging the loss of that which was possessed’. Through the course of the works as a whole, Lisis makes a systematic conversion from poet to narrator as well as from illness.


to health. She undergoes these changes in her mental and physical state as she overcomes Don Juan’s rejection. Meanwhile, her lyric preferences also shift.

Zayas’s many narrative voices, including that of Lisis, often reflect upon and critique the lyric poems and poets that appear in the tales, demonstrating that amorous poetry, even when produced in a register of apparent sincerity, can make inexperienced women and men prey to their own emotions. Love poetry’s least harmful effect is to perpetuate a mistaken overestimation of jealousy’s value and importance. At its worst it persuades, deceives, seduces and awakens desires in characters who, after listening to or reading a poem, tend to lose their self-control and make destructive judgements. Why then does Zayas remain tenaciously engaged with amorous poetic discourse until the very end of the Parte segunda, even while building a case against it? I believe a plausible interpretation of Lisis’s retreat from the role of poet and her recovery from lovesickness in the Novelas amorosas and the Parte segunda begins with the premise that all the intercalated poetry of Zayas’s two books serves both an important overarching structural purpose and a philosophical one. To use Rita Felski’s categories of aesthetic response, Zayas’s generic contrasts offer the reader absorbing and enthralling ‘enchantments’ of the mind and senses that alternate with analytical ‘recognitions’, or cognitive insights into the self, that are meant to break the pleasurable spells of love poetry and restore a healthy rationality. This movement correlates with the necessary steps for recovery from lovesickness by Lisis, accompanying her deepening understanding of her own self-destructive jealousy and attempts to distance herself virtually from it.

Studies by Ruth El Saffar, Lia Schwartz and most recently Anna-Sophia Buck have all noted the key role Zayas’s intercalated poetry plays in the striking *mise en abîme* effect of structural embedment in the two books. In the frame narrative, the principal poetic performers are the talented Lisis, her disloyal suitor Don Juan and later, in the Parte segunda, Lisis’s intimate friend, Isabel. Each of these characters takes a turn, along with other frame characters, as a narrator of one of the twenty novellas. As poets, the poems they perform in the frame create indirect dialogue between Lisis, Don Juan and the other frame characters. Meanwhile, within the novellas they narrate, the intercalated

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poems by characters in the tales resonate thematically with the jealousy-based conflict of Lisis’s story in the frame. This complex web of characters’ feelings, rationales and performances at various levels of Zayas’s literary construction produces a dazzling play of reflections and ironies. This play has the effect of contrasting amorous poetry’s persuasive power with the didactic potential of the novella, a comparison that may be the raison d’être for all the poetry Zayas included in her prose work.

In her Novelas amorosas and Parte segunda Zayas includes seventy-five varied forms of lyric composition, not all of which can be traced to her own pen. She embeds sonetos, sometimes with estrambote, as well as décimas, endechas, madrigales and romances relatively equally across the ten novellas in each book and the narrative frame. The critical consensus on Zayas’s inclusion of lyric compositions – her own and those of others – is that they serve multiple and diverse purposes. Zayas includes the poems in her narrative work not simply as a decorative nod to the convention of variety but, as Julian Olivares observes, to establish the thematics of the novellas, put amorous conflicts in place, provide omens, prefigure, be rhetorically persuasive, advance plots, create irony, project mental states and produce musical effects. Shifra Armon has shown that Zayas employs poetry to provide a braking effect in the novellas to increase narrative tension while also using the content of individual poems and the quality of a particular speaker’s poetic voice to depict a character’s ‘verbal capacity’ and ‘social position’. Elías Rivers was first to note the primacy of the theme of celos, or jealousy, in Zayas’s intercalated poetry.

Building upon these observations I propose that the characters Zayas portrays, both in the frame and in the novellas, never find a remedy for their internal conflicts in the abundant love poetry she inserts there, but rather a poison that aggravates their sufferings and contributes to the illness of passion. With the work’s structure Zayas achieves a marvellous aesthetic effect – in the Baroque sense of ‘marvellous’ as extraordinary and surprising – which estranges read-

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6 El jardín engañoso, the last tale of the Novelas amorosas, is an exception. The possible reasons for the lack of intercalated poetry in this novella are discussed below (pp. 153–4).


10 For how ignorance brings about the ‘illness’ of passion in Neo-Stoic poetry, see Amanda Powell’s essay in this volume.
ers from the pleasures of familiar amorous poetry, and above all from indulging in poetry that relies upon jealous desire for its creative impetus, in order to cure them of this passion. Considered as a whole, Zayas’s two books forcefully teach a lesson about thinking rationally using what Maravall would have identified as the effects of suspense, astonishment and instability to move and convince the reader, paradoxically, of the value of non-conformism to the social norms of gendered relationships destructive to women.11

A reader experiences this unsettling estrangement from love poetry slowly and in intervals over the course of Zayas’s novellas. While a marked change in tone does exist between the Novelas amorosas and the Parte segunda, what Elizabeth Rhodes has called the two books’ ‘profound difference in creative registers’; we can nevertheless see a clear aspect of the work’s continuity in Zayas’s consistent use of intercalated poetry.12 At no point does Zayas abandon the layers of narrative and lyric that she utilizes to build the rhetorical complexity of these books, even when she shifts to the dark themes of torture and murder that characterize the Parte segunda. This continuity of structure is accompanied by a similar continuity in Zayas’s portrayal of the potent rhetoric and negative impacts of conventional amorous poetry, in which she explores lyric speakers’ differing moral stances, abilities to use reason and varying degrees of self-control over their own appetites and desires.

To find evidence for the relationship between Lisis’s recovery, her retreat from poetry and her eventual performance as narrator it is necessary to trace how Zayas develops this contrast between poetry and narrative prose in her Novelas amorosas and Parte segunda. So, rather than extract the lyric corpus from its embedded context, or examine the dynamics of lyric and narrative within a single novella, it seems most productive as an initial step to evaluate – admittedly barely skimming the surface in this short study – the stages of Zayas’s conceptual treatment of jealousy with a wide lens as it unfolds in the poetry across the work as a whole. In what follows, I first focus on changes in Lisis’s poetic voice and then turn to the issue of her lovesickness and recovery.

Using Michael Solomon’s study of medical discourse, particularly his analysis of the ways texts were employed as ‘discursive instruments’ with healing powers,13 my objective is to shed light on how Zayas casts conventional amorous poetry as a carrier of the illness of erotic appetite that, for the sake of readers’ health, is best engaged in a mode of parody.

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12  Rhodes, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 8.
Novelas amorosas y ejemplares

The frame story of Zayas’s Novelas amorosas takes place over five nights of festive tale-telling. Lisis tries, but fails, to fully overcome her paralysing emotions for her former suitor, Don Juan, who has lost interest in her to pursue a potential marriage with her cousin instead. Readers initially encounter Lisis expressing her celos over Don Juan’s capriciousness with a naively direct and sincere lyric voice which would have been, for Zayas’s public, recognizable as belonging to the conventional poetic and musical tradition of pastoral romance now integrated into the courtly novella. Lisis, introduced in the frame as ‘hermoso milagro de la naturaleza y prodigioso asombro de esta Corte’ for her exceptional ability as a poet, sings the first romance of the work to the audience of frame characters, accompanied by a duo of musicians. Its opening verses display Lisis’s disappointment with Don Juan, ‘la causa de sus celos’ (p. 168):

Escuchad, selvas, mi llanto,
oíd, que a quejarme vuelvo,
que nunca a los desdichados
les dura más el contento.
Otra vez hice testigos
a vuestros olmos y fresnos,
y a vuestros puros cristales
de la ingratitude de Celio. (p. 171)

This traditional introspective mode was familiarly worn, and ripe for critique, by 1637. It belonged to the type Cervantes had parodied decades before in the Marcela and Grisóstomo episode of the Quijote. The conflation of Lisis’s desired love object with celos itself, evident in the choice of the name Celio for the beloved, is an error in reason that Zayas’s text points to and then begins to address. The opening night of tale-telling also includes a questioning of the sources of a lover’s firmeza, or resolve, raising more doubts about the qualities of true love and jealousy’s role in it.

In the first novella, Aventurarse perdiendo, the character Jacinta’s firmeza in her love for Felix, her source of happiness, appears to be a positive trait. But the virtue of Jacinta’s resolve is undercut in the narrative when the reader sees that, upon Felix’s death, Jacinta’s strong desire arises anew for a less deserving beloved, named, as in Lisis’s opening romance, Celio. The novella demonstrates

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14 Buck, “‘Triste estás, dueño querido …’”, p. 178.
that Jacinta’s desire is cyclical, permeated with jealousy and independent of the worth of the object of her love. This is the case as well for an analogous male character in the second novella, Jacinto, who confuses his own lust with a more exalted firmeza in a sonnet he composes (pp. 217–18). With the two novellas of the first night, Zayas establishes that pastoral declarations of everlasting love are often deceptive and even self-deceiving products of erotic appetite. She highlights the rhetorical uses of celos in poems intended to seduce while also beginning to examine the differences between love and appetite. The inevitable negative effects of celos are shown to be particularly disastrous for women, who are more vulnerable than men to the inconsistencies between courtly love and the honour code.

On the second night in El castigo de la miseria the tale’s main character, Marcela, sings that men do not know how to love, ‘Murmurad a Narciso que no sabe amar’ (p. 258). Within this novella the figure of the miserly Don Marcos proves Marcela’s perception when he demonstrates that not only is lustful appetite often the basis of desire mistaken for love, but this appetite can often be accompanied by the immoral goal of obtaining wealth at the expense of women’s honour and happiness. The following novella of the second evening, El prevenido engañado, then argues that virtue and knowledge are not mutually exclusive, but instead closely related: ‘donde hay falta de entendimiento, no puede sobrar la virtud’ (p. 340), suggesting that to be capable of virtuous love and deserving of honour one must possess the understanding and refinement provided by knowledge and education. The events of the frame narrative immediately mirror this emphasis on learning and experience when, during this second evening, Lisis resolves to accept an alternative suitor, Don Diego, who is also attending the sarao. Lisis’s reason prevails as she comes to view her former suitor Don Juan as a ‘falso amante’ who enjoys publicly displaying his preference for her cousin, Lisarda, while still engaging Lisis in a continual battle of ‘desengaños y sinrazones’ for sport (p. 292).

So, while Don Juan exchanges meaningful looks with Lisarda in front of the guests gathered at Lisis’s home, and sings a comic romance that mockingly includes a defence of the prudence of celos in an attempt to sting Lisis’s emotions, ‘Necios llaman a los celos,/ mal los conocen, pardiez,/ que antes el celoso peca/ de advertido y bachiller’ (p. 291), the narrator of the frame reveals that Lisis has decided, with new insight gained perhaps from the examples in the novellas, to abandon her jealousy towards him. The wisdom of this decision is reflected in the fact that at the end of the close of the second night Lisis recovers sufficiently from her lovesickness to rise to her feet and dance: ‘y danzó tan divinamente que a todos dio notable contento’ (p. 341).

When the guests reconvene on the third night of the sarao Lisis’s return to physical health is accompanied by a shift in her poetic voice. She changes her
choice of poetic form, prefacing the recommencement of the tale-telling with a sonnet praising the king, and punctuating the evening with a burlesque madrigal about fleas. Lisis’s choices deflate the value of erotic appetite and add dimensions of irony and derision to her voice, which is no longer naively direct. She compares love both to King Felipe IV, figured as the sun, and to the trivial annoyance of a biting flea. As El Saffar has observed in her incisive reading of these two poems, they ‘contextualize the love politics being enacted among her fellow noble men and women’ as a negotiation between the interests of wealth, prestige and common ‘fleshly hunger’ (p. 194). The following novella, *La fuerza del amor*, parallels this devaluation of erotic love, showing it to be often no more than conventional appetite mistaken for something of greater value, and instructing the reader on how to escape its deceptive power. The next novella, *El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud*, argues clearly, and in spite of Don Juan’s earlier comic defence of *celos* as the wise reaction of a true lover (p. 291), that *celos* do not signify the presence of true love (p. 377).

By the fourth night of the *Novelas amorosas*, Lisis’s poetry no longer openly expresses the suffering of amorous desire but instead has become a vehicle for reasoned critique. Her critical décimas at the beginning of the fourth evening, ‘Quien oye a un hombre decir a una mujer que es mudable, siendo su amor variable, ¿podrá dejar de reír?’ wound Don Juan enough that he retreats from engaging her in further poetic battles (p. 410). And, on night five, the last evening of the *Novelas amorosas*, Lisis again sings a pastoral romance but explains to her listeners that these verses ‘eran agenos’, so no one confuses them with her previous verses about her feelings for Don Juan, which she publicly claims to have overcome (p. 484).

On the final night of the *Novelas amorosas* the narrators are Don Juan and Lisis’s mother, Laura. Both of their tales cause the reader to reflect upon the contrasts between the world of literary fiction portrayed in the novellas and the ‘real’ world of the frame. Don Juan’s novella, *El juez de su causa*, gives his main character – the extraordinarily beautiful and virtuous Estela – fantastic power when, disguised as Don Fernando, she is named Viceroy of Valencia. She is able to choose her own spouse, but also tests his motives rigorously in public before revealing her identity and agreeing to marry him. Don Juan’s idealization of the character Estela, whom, as narrator, he calls not ‘mujer sino ángel’, and his tale of her improbable power, underscore how the fantasy of romance can lead readers to believe, erroneously, that women have a degree of control over their lives proportionate to their virtue (p. 510). As a corrective to Don Juan’s tale, Zayas gives Lisis’s mother Laura the final word on how best to employ narrative.

As Laura begins to narrate *El jardín engañoso*, the last novella of Zayas’s first book, she explains that she will not make an attempt at a realistic story,
but rather teach something surprising regarding the devil, which is, ‘Lo que más es de admirar que haya en él ninguna obra buena’ (p. 512). In Laura’s novella the figure of the devil is surprisingly capable of performing an act of good. The devil’s garden of the tale’s title is an enchanting fiction made on behalf of a jealous lover, Jorge. As a place of beauty, amazement, sensorial delights, labyrinths, harmony and birdsong, it is much like the ideal world of pastoral romance and amorous poetry. The devil’s improbable ‘obra buena’ consists of freeing Jorge from a contract for his soul when Jorge, in a tardy attack of ethical consciousness, renounces his adulterous claim to the already happily married Constanza. The devil then makes the deceptive garden he created as a trick to force the virtuous Constanza to accept Jorge disappear in a malodorous puff of smoke (p. 532).

Both El Saffar and Edward Friedman have seen in Zayas’s work, and in this novella in particular, evidence of a push on her part for generic transformation. El Saffar offers the salient observation that Zayas’s ‘characters are figures trapped in the fiction of romance. Echoing the early work of René Girard, one could say of the whole collection that it constitutes, through the characters of Lisis and her mother, Laura, a search for a haven beyond the “mésonge romantique”, a place of self-dominion where the devil himself is defeated’.16 Friedman sees in El jardín engañoso a discomfort with incongruities between abstract ideals and lived experiences, which leads to his evaluation of Zayas’s work as ‘a literary idealism headed toward realism’ that moves in the direction of more sophisticated representations of characters’ psychologies.17 Significantly, intercalated poetry is completely absent from this novella alone among all the novelas of Zayas’s two narrative books. Neither are there any more poems in the final part of the frame narrative that ends the Novelas amorosas. This unique absence of poetry in Zayas’s two narrative books suggests that at the close of the Novelas amorosas, the devil’s garden and its power to enchant corresponds with the persuasive power of amorous poetry. At the end of her first book, Zayas makes both the garden and poetry disappear, clearing the way for the shift from romance to realism and for Lisis’s passing of her poet’s wreath to her friend Isabel in the Parte segunda.

Considering that Zayas’s narrative models, Boccaccio and Marguerite de Navarre, did not use intercalated poetry, and that Cervantes did so not nearly as frequently or consistently in his Novelas ejemplares, why do lyric poems

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appear (or disappear) at decisive points in her work? I propose that Zayas repeatedly demonstrates the widespread acceptance conventional amorous poetry had with her contemporaries. Through the experiences of the characters in the tales she shows that such love poetry, despite its sensorial appeal, is no longer worthy of literary or social prestige. While Zayas richly exploits conventional amorous poetry in her narrative work – one might speculate that her parodies of bad love poems were amusing to write – she also demotes it, making it unlikely that she was attempting merely to display her poetic ability with the intercalated poetry she includes. A philosophical argument accompanies its presence.

Within the frame narrative of the first book, Zayas shows the systematic steps Lisis takes to develop a sophisticated poetic voice with critical distance from her own emotions. The reader witnesses Lisis’s shift towards a preference for burlesque and irony, accompanied by the moral affirmation that in order to love virtuously one must be ‘un amante firme y no fundado en el apetito’ (p. 406). To have the rational self-control to abide in love without the satisfaction of appetite is the honourable, and difficult, stance of the Platonism espoused by Zayas’s work. In Yolanda Gamboa’s essay on Zayas’s education and public life, she writes that Zayas’s texts provide a ‘memory chain … that connects us to the discussions held in the academies’.

Citing Monika Bosse, Gamboa explains, ‘The sarao would be not only a place of creativity but equally as important a place for debate about moral and aesthetic codes from a female perspective’ (p. 221). Zayas’s books of novellas use the logic of narrative cause and effect to reveal the fallacies inherent in idealistic amorous discourse, strategically deploying the moralizing and didactic qualities of prose as a contrast to the sort of amorous lyric used to persuade and seduce, thus calling into question what ‘good’ poetry is as well as suggesting a need for generic renewal.

Parte segunda del Sarao

Zayas’s readers, upon opening the more terrifying assembly of novellas in the Parte segunda published ten years after the first book, discover that in the shorter, fictional interval of a little over a year since the close of the Novelas amorosas, Lisis was overtaken by a longer bout of serious illness. As Lisis

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contemplated her pending marriage to her replacement suitor Don Diego she sickened, and, in danger of losing her life, only revived and returned to health due to her friendship with a new character, Isabel.\textsuperscript{20} Readers are told that Lisis, apparently moved by Isabel’s considerable literary talents and her own curiosity for Isabel’s mysterious life story, recovers and generates a renewed resolve to orchestrate a second sarao. These second festivities will consist of three evenings of unprecedented all-female tale-telling, with no male narrators. The speakers will perform for a mixed public of apprehensive women and sceptical men, including Don Juan and Don Diego. The narrators are instructed by Lisis to relate only true stories of betrayal and to call them disenchantments, ‘casos verdaderos, y que tuviesen nombre de desengaños’ (p. 118).

Zayas’s work reaffirms the reality of the problem of lovesickness from Lisis’s first illness in the \textit{Novelas amorosas} until the very last novella of the \textit{Parte segund\'a}, in which the character Florentina suffers from her own ‘frenesi celoso’ and explains her downfall, ‘dejéme perder sin remedio, con tal precipicio, que vine a perder la salud, donde conozco que acierta quien dice que el amor es enfermedad …’ (p. 487). By demonstrating women’s commonality of experience, Zayas’s text makes the case that women need a remedy which can be gained by sharing their experiential insights.

In the medical discourse Zayas and her contemporaries inherited from the Middle Ages, lovesickness, or obsession with the beloved, was considered a mental and physical disorder. Michael Solomon offers us a valuable way of understanding how jealousy, illness and literary texts interrelate with his study of medical treatises, \textit{Literature of Misogyny in Medieval Spain}. Those affected, overwhelmingly portrayed to be men in the treatises he discusses, displayed the following standard symptoms: ‘rapid mood swings, bursting out in laughter one moment, languishing in sorrow the next; they fell into deep depression, their pulse was quick and unsteady, and they suffered from insomnia. If left uncured, the disease led to madness and an untimely death.’\textsuperscript{21} These treatises’ remedies for lovesickness focused on the male patient, a notable difference from Zayas’s concern with Lisis’s, Isabel’s, and other female characters’ complaints. One widespread traditional cure was, according to Solomon, three levels of talking therapy based on the practice of \textit{confabulatio}, or ‘tempering of the body by discursively countering the accidents of the mind’ (p. 60). ‘In general the confabulator has to be a good teller of stories (\textit{recitator fabularum}) who could appropriate, alter, and employ the discursive instrument that would most effectively heal the patient’ (p. 60). The three levels of healing therapy based on

\textsuperscript{20} Isabel is disguised as the \textit{morisca} slave Zelima until the end of the first novella of the \textit{Parte segund\'a}, an autobiographical tale Isabel narrates, after which she reveals her identity.

\textsuperscript{21} Solomon, \textit{The Literature of Misogyny}, p. 58.
‘discursive instruments’ increased in potency from the gentlest type of distraction to actually causing the patient pain and fear in order to shock him out of the pathology of desire and sadness (p. 60).

The first therapy, simple distraction, was similar to Lisis’s mother’s intention at the opening of the first sarao to organize an event filled with pleasant conversation to relieve Lisis of jealousy and its physical symptoms. The second therapy was a powerful provocation of fear, terrifying the patient with words and stories that would shock and disgust him or her enough to temper erotic thoughts and, in turn, cure physical symptoms (p. 61). The change in tone between the two books of novellas and the turn towards the gruesome and violent in the Parte segunda parallels the shift from the first to the second of these therapies.

Medieval medical literature recommended a third therapy when the first two were not effective. It consisted of ‘transforming [the desired woman] from an object of desire to one of revulsion’ (p. 62). This step focused on repugnant descriptions of features of women’s bodies. This third therapy for lovesickness, however, is not found in Zayas’s work, at least not in the most direct sense of an inversion that distorts or vilifies men’s bodies or physical traits. Instead, Zayas’s work counters the diagnostic perspective and longstanding discursive construct that regards women as the source and cause of lovesickness in men. To dispel this assumption Zayas places jealousy, conventionally considered a male ailment responsive to medical treatment, at the centre of female characters’ experiences of desire also. She broadens her depiction of jealousy’s negative effects to include women’s minds and bodies as well as men’s. Zayas also uses intercalated poetry and the commentary in the frame to break down the concept of jealousy analytically, differentiating it from virtuous love and linking it to other negative emotions: fear of loss, and envy of others’ happiness. In Zayas’s text, characters’ own ignorance and appetite are the main causes of unhappiness for both women and men.

When structuring Lisis’s, and later Isabel’s, recoveries from lovesickness in the frame, Zayas as author takes the role of physician. Lisis, after her second illness, is finally purified of her deluded jealousy and appetite. But Zayas’s text continues to work on diminishing jealousy’s power over Isabel and over readers by applying further specialized ‘discursive healing techniques’. In addition to distraction and fright, Zayas’s Parte segunda teaches through redoubling, a rhetoric of intensification, rational analysis and the modelling of self-control.

At the beginning of the Parte segunda, Lisis relinquishes to Isabel her role as the foremost poetic performer at her own sarao.22 This Lisis does in spite of

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her respected status as the principal poet among her noble peers. Isabel, effectively disguised from everyone – including Lisis – as the morisca Zelima, asks Lisis if she can take over the position of poet and if Lisis will make her the first person present at the party to lose her illusions about love. While the circle of invitees recognizes Lisis’s wit and ability to demonstrate a considerable poetic talent superior to that of the charming Don Juan, Lisis retreads from this role and chooses Isabel as her substitute for the rest of the work. This move effectively distances Lisis from exercising the direct lyric voice of the first book. Isabel then narrates the first novella of the Parte segunda (p. 119), and her own cycle of recovery is initiated through her act of narrating the story of her own lovesickness. Isabel’s transformation is made explicit when, as ‘Zelima’, she reveals her true identity at the tale’s end and shifts from being Lisis’s ‘slave’ to being her friend. Isabel’s turn at narrating the suffering of desire is a redoubling. In Isabel’s process of working through her own frustrated emotions, Zayas’s text revisits the flaws of the naive lyric voice Lisis has already left behind. Lisis, for her part, continues to adamantly maintain to the other characters in the frame that celos are not evidence of love, but rather that they are closely related to fear and envy. She debates strongly with Isabel on this point (p. 196), showing Isabel’s recovery to be in progress and still incomplete.

Meanwhile, in her new role as orchestrator of the sarao, Lisis’s voice becomes sophisticatedly layered, influential and potentially ironic as she cues Isabel throughout the Parte segunda with poetic selections that serve her intentions to structure the performance and its effect upon those in attendance. While clearly characters’ celos continue to provide the conflict that drives the action of the novellas and the impetus for their composition of love poems, Zayas’s text promotes a rational understanding of jealousy’s negative effects. This intensifies with the enumeration of unhappy cases, all similar to one another, disarming critics with what Armon calls a rhetoric of ‘sheer cumulative force’.23 The Parte segunda affirms that jealousy is, like fear and envy, a base emotion unsuitable to be used as a measure or proof of true love.

In the Parte segunda a new motif also appears in the intercalated poetry. Zayas begins to represent appetite in male form with multiple allusions to the mythological figure of Tantalus. Tantalus initially appears on the first evening of the second sarao in the décimas Isabel includes in her opening tale of personal lovesickness and betrayal (p. 146). Through examples such as this, Zayas leads the reader to recognize the paradox of unfulfilled appetite’s relationship to suffering and self-destruction, presenting the issue squarely with critical observations such as, ‘que por la mayor parte se apetece lo mismo que viene a ser cuchillo de

nuestras vidas’ (p. 202). Tantalus, as a conventional figure for appetite, begins to replace celos as the cause of characters’ sadness and repeatedly illustrates how only misery can come from worldly hungers (pp. 175, 255, 316, 503).

At the beginning of the second evening, Zayas’s narrative voice in the frame remarks that after the four novellas of the previous night, the mood among the attendees of the sarao is not one of unified approval (p. 258). To disarm their critics in the audience, Lisis and Isabel greet them more richly dressed than the previous evening and begin night two with Isabel’s performance of a prestigious romance (p. 259). It is now clear that Zayas’s readers should be able to distinguish between poetry meant to provoke the appetite and poetry of a higher status deserving of respect. In this case Isabel’s exemplary romance is a model of the self-discipline involved in spiritualized, monogamous love. The romance, written on an occasion when the Conde de Lemos was absent from his wife, celebrates married love. The poem’s portrayal of the divine aspects of true love perhaps foreshadows Lisis’s and Isabel’s eventual retreat to convent life that comes at the end of the Parte segunda. Platonic love continues to be the standard of true love throughout the novellas. But even in the case of Platonic love, Zayas makes the reader aware in the Parte segunda of idealism’s destructive potential when deployed for false purposes. For example, in the sixth novella, when the deceitful character Esteban seduces Laurela with the beautiful philosophy, ‘amar sin premio es la mayor fineza’, he then betrays her and sets off the chain of events leading to her death (p. 317). After this novella, on the evening of the second night, Lisis explicitly wishes to abolish the fashion of lying to women (pp. 331–4).

Poetry and song are particularly dangerous. Already in the Novelas amorosas poetry is considered to be a potent weapon in the hand of a foe. As Don Diego observes, ‘Un poeta, si es enemigo, es terrible porque no hay navaja como una pluma’ (Novelas amorosas, p. 341). Regarding amorous poetry in particular, the Parte segunda suggests it might have a positive purpose; one might use it artfully and consciously as an entertaining test of wit. This notion is introduced explicitly on night two of the Parte segunda, and envisions well-constructed amorous lyric positively as an ‘entretenimiento de amor y prueba de entendimiento’ (p. 347), or a love game to test intelligence, rather than as a means of seduction. But the accumulation of repeated examples, in the plots of the novellas, of love poetry’s role in seduction and betrayal warns of poetry’s power to overcome the best of wits, and shows it to be too risky a game for most.24

24 La fuerza del amor, the fifth novel of the Novelas, provides an example of the role of conventional amorous lyric as it appears repetitively throughout the work as a whole. Diego makes his initial contact with Laura through a song about celos and eventually persuades her to act against her interests, causing her downfall, even though she recognizes as dishonourable the discourse with which he arms himself to seduce her (p. 350).
Alicia Yllera established the view that Zayas’s work inhabits an early modern literary zone between the texts of the cultured humanists and the severe moralists, a zone filled with conceptual obstacles to valuing women’s experiences.\footnote{Alicia Yllera, ‘Introducción’, in \textit{Parte segunda del Sarao}, ed. Alicia Yllera, p. 27.} By the end of the \textit{Parte segunda} the reader can observe Zayas’s handling of an artistic and philosophical aporia: how to represent women’s subjective consciousness and moral choices with the discursive tools she has at hand (pp. 501–3). Zayas has Lisis step away from the role of poet and ultimately become the last narrator on the third evening of the \textit{Parte segunda}, telling the culminating tale of the second \textit{sarao}. With Lisis’s performance as the narrator of the last novella the reader witnesses her final triumph over her own desire to possess Don Juan, an accomplishment dependent upon her self-control, discernment and ability to orchestrate well-timed revelations. The complexly orchestrated rhetorical performance by Lisis at the close of Zayas’s text characterizes her strategy for reconciling the discursive poles of the humanists and moralists. When Lisis and Isabel finally announce their retreat to the convent, their moral decision to separate themselves from the world makes their bid for female autonomy possible. Meanwhile, leading up to their decision to retreat is a lengthy and aesthetically rich experience that Zayas’s reader has shared, a detailed, humanist critical examination – via her literary work – of women’s experiences of worldly ‘love’. Lisis narrates the tale of Florentina who, under the influence of her powerful desire for her sister’s husband, causes the violent deaths of both. Florentina’s lack of self-control is evident in her romance, sung on the occasion of her sister’s engagement. It again echoes earlier romances of lovesick suffering by Lisis and Isabel, but with a more clearly self-destructive tone, ‘Ya llego, Cupido, al ara;/ ponme en los ojos el lienzo;/ pues sólo por mis desdichas/ ofrezco al cuchillo el cuello’ (p. 488). As a contrast to Florentina’s common weakness, Zayas offers the reader an alternative model of self-discipline and restraint in the example of Lisis’s carefully planned performance as narrator and orchestrator of the \textit{sarao}. At the end of Lisis’s tale, when she turns to Isabel to signal to her to sing the final lyric poem of the work, the text states that Isabel already knows her friend’s intention for ending the \textit{sarao} (p. 500). The closing poem of the \textit{Parte segunda}, an ironic and playfully awkward romance in esdrújulo verses, reflects their shared intention of rejecting conventional models of worldly love.

The poetic voice in this romance is feminine and, as a speaker, Zayas chooses a \textit{topos} familiar to the cultured reader: the lonely \textit{tórtola}, or turtledove, mourning its absent partner.\footnote{The turtledove is an ancient figure that appears in the Bible, Aristotle’s \textit{History of Animals} and Isidore of Seville’s \textit{Etymologies}. It was associated with humility, rationality and fidelity for its habits of mating monogamously and of appearing not to take a new mate after the death of its part-}
of the marriage partner and a sacred, allegorical figure for the human soul longing for God. The bird represents chaste matrimonial fidelity. Its lamenting call expresses yearning for an equally faithful spouse. Ending with this final lyric poem, Zayas alludes to the tradition of the humble turtledove and suggests, rather irreverently, that such an idealization of love between men and women is a fallacy. To add punch to the humorous effect, Zayas does not reveal the identity of the poetic voice until the poem’s very end.

The eighty-four-line romance, from which I quote here only the first and last eight lines for the sake of brevity, does not evoke the familiar female bird just pining for her absent true love, but rather presents her hoarsely mocking her beloved’s unwillingness to love truly:

‘Al prado, en que espinas rústicas
crián mis humores sálicos,
que de ausencias melancólicas
es fruto que da mi ánimo,
salgo a llorar de un cruelísimo
olvidos de un amor trágico,
que si fuera dichosísimo,
cantara en estilo jácaro.
…
Que si amara lo inteléctico,
no le pesara ser Tántalo,
ni olvidara facilísimo
tiernos y dulces diálogos.’

Esto cantaba una tórtola
con ronco y fúnebre cántico,
sentada en un ciprés fúnebre,
que estaba en un seco páramo. (p. 503)

Zayas casts the ‘absent’ male addressee of these verses as a Tantalus figure who is as much the butt of the joke as he is privy to it. Isabel sings not in her own voice, as one might think when the romance begins, but parodying the humble grief of the well-worn voice of the tórtola, which appeared earlier in the work (in the serious romance for the wife of the Conde de Lemos mentioned above, where the bird represents the ideal of spiritualized monogamous fidelity).

This final intercalated poem abandons the idealization of worldly love altogether. And while the evocation of melancholy in much of the poetry of the
novellas takes part in what Olivares has analysed as a ‘poetics of women’s loss,’ Isabel’s guitar accompaniment and the tone of this final romance gives ‘loss’ an unusual twist.\(^{27}\) In keeping with the poem’s ending, the shift from this song’s parody of lovesick melancholy to the affirmation of a happy ending, at least for Lisis and Isabel, is swift and stunning. At the intersection between Zayas’s ideal of Platonic love and her tendency for moralistic judgement is this final bit of ironic humour which prefaces the abrupt completion of the frame’s narrative action. Zayas creates an ending that withdraws from literary play even while showing herself to be a consummate participant in the game.

The full aesthetic impact of this on the reader is held at bay, just until the end, by layers of prose and poetry poised in dialogic tension. Zayas’s structural technique, in which the intercalated poetry plays a central role and ends on a parodic note, compels the reader to give up naive desires. This startling effect can be seen in Zayas’s work, as Buck has shown us, to both evoke melancholy and to parody melancholy at the same time (p. 182). Perhaps in this way Zayas effectively relates melancholia more closely to the immaturity of acedia, or sadness, pushing melancholy conceptually from its pedestal as an intellectualized fountain of masculine productivity towards a morally negative state of wilful sickness.\(^{28}\)

At the close of the Parte segunda Lisis is empowered by a reflective critical distance from conventional amorous poetry. She is healthy and reportedly happy in her convent retreat among friends, principal among whom is the literary talent Isabel, adept at engaging Lisis in wholesome distractions. Meanwhile Don Juan, acknowledging and regretting his betrayal of Lisis when her cousin pays him in kind by marrying a richer suitor, falls ill, slips into a delirium and dies. The disappointed Don Diego goes off to war and also dies. In contrast, the recovery of Lisis from lovesickness is complete, as is the identification of the source of the illness. The source is ultimately recognized to be not women, not love or overrated melancholy, but lowly, erotic appetite and frustrations over disappointed aspirations to wealth and prestige – common passions experienced by men and women alike.

Over the course of Zayas’s two books of novellas she develops a critique of conventional amorous poetry’s destructive rhetorical power of such cumulative strength that, by the end of the Parte segunda, the rational reader must accompany Lisis in abandoning the combined discourses of Petrarchan and pastoral convention, or at the very least recognize that these discourses per-


\(^{28}\) Buck affirms in her reading that Zayas’s text shows that the reverse of baroque sensuality is melancholy, see “‘Triste estáis, dueño querido …’”, p. 187.
petuate an amoral form of persuasion that encourages naivety and unjustifi-
ably elevates jealous emotion and melancholy. The text’s interplay of lyric and
narrative prose provides the following insight: desire arises cyclically in amo-
rous subjects and does not necessarily correspond to how worthy or unworthy
the object of one’s love is. Zealousness, the kind that gives up this desire in
order to guard virtue, knowledge and honour, may not be humble but it is
admirable. Zayas’s structural and philosophical use of intercalated poetry tells
the reader that if the conundrum of cyclical desire cannot be completely over-
come, then to have the self-control to recognize desire without attempting to
satisfy one’s appetite is not only honourable behaviour, it is as intelligent and
rational as choosing health over death.