

**The *Cuartanas* of Lisis: The Remissive Etiology of the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* by
María de Zayas y Sotomayor**

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The *cuartanas* fever, commonly known as love melancholy, is overwhelmingly the most popular—and gravest—ailment of Early Modern Spanish literature.¹ In the 17th century, the illness appears in such works as María de Zayas y Sotomayor's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) and its sequel, *Desengaños amorosos* (1647), Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *El príncipe constante* (1629), and Lope de Vega's *Caballero de Olmedo* (1620). The needless decision of Lope's titular *Caballero* to play the lovesick admirer of *amor cortés*, assuming a "cuartana" of love for his lady (2.1.24),² contributes to his untimely death; and the self-loving *cuartanas* of the Moorish princess Fénix, lamenting the mortality of her beauty (1.1.81-82), opens Calderón's *Príncipe*. In Zayas's novels, the fevered, female protagonist, Lisis—sickened with a *cuartanas* of love for the deceitful don Juan and confined to her residence in Madrid—convenes nightly "saraos," parties in which Lisis and her guests share music, poetry, and stories of love and deception to aid her convalescence.

Due to its abundance and synonymy with lovesickness, literary criticism has often considered the *cuartanas* merely an ornament necessary to win the favor of an author's audience, but not necessarily essential to that author's narrative purpose. Such has been the case with critical attention paid to Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*. Contemporary critical scholarship has established that Zayas's embedded narratives and active female protagonists politicize the female body in order to expose the neglect, incompetence, and abuse of the 17th century Spanish patriarchal discourse.³ The task of the present investigation, then, is to define the relationship between this proto-feministic purpose and the *cuartanas* Lisis suffers.

Persephone Hernández-Vogt and Ingrid E. Matos-Nin have approached illness in Zayas's embedded narratives, but relegate the *cuartanas* to either a metaphorical stratagem or merely a representation of feminine social crisis, inessential to its cure. In *Locas atrevidas en la literatura española de los Siglos de Oro*, Hernández-Vogt dichotomizes the political function of maddened jealousy and illness in Zayas's novels; she argues that the 'sickness' of Zayas's women is entirely subversive and metaphorical as opposed to actual (79). While Matos-Nin's "Lisis o la remisión de

¹ Although the present investigation elaborates the *cuartanas* fever's affiliation with lovesickness and Hippocratic theory, it should be known that Early Modern science was not ignorant of aspects of the fever that later led modern medicine to identify the *cuartanas* as malaria. Hippocrates observed that still waters in the heat of summer caused many ailments, including the *cuartanas* fever in *On Airs, Waters and Places* (8). However, the association between these causes of fever and malaria did not gain official recognition until the 20th century (Nájera, et al. 22).

² For a critical study of the *cuartanas* fever in 17th century Spanish literature beyond María de Zayas, see Enrique Martínez López's "La cuartana de amor del *Caballero de Olmedo*."

³ Current and established research into Zayas's texts corroborates Zayas's *Novelas* as, to varying degrees, a call to improve women's rights. Recently, Mary Elizabeth Perry has situated her study of Zayas within the history of confinement and limitations faced by women in 17th century Spain, while Victoria Martínez Arrizabalaga and Adriana Cecelia Milanesio have argued, respectively, that Zayas's reconfiguring and writing the novel as a woman subvert masculine discourses of novelistic form and authorship, creating a new place and voice for women in the Baroque. In the past few decades, Marina S. Brownlee has envisioned the feminism of Zayas through a postmodern perspective. Sandra M. Foa has explored the feministic intent of Zayas's narrative techniques. Margaret Greer has argued the relevance of themes of violence, love, hate, and "courtly rhetoric" in the *Novelas amorosas* to the modern discussion of women's rights (15). In addition, Lisa Vollendorf has included Zayas in a compilation of authors that she views as expressive of Spain's feminist tradition in *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition* (2001).

la enfermedad del amor en las novelas de María de Zayas y Sotomayor” acknowledges Lisis’s illness, the author limits the ailment to a lovesick manifestation of female suffering, separating the *cuartanas* from the curative agency she perceives in the *Novelas*’s protagonist. As indicated by her article’s title, Matos-Nin evaluates Lisis’s narrative function according to the medical etymology of her name:

Lisis es una palabra de origen griego que llega a nosotros con varios significados. *El Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* define [lisis] como: *diluirse, disolverse y relajarse*. La remisión de una enfermedad, o aún más, de una calentura es lo que en medicina se reconoce como *lisis*. Podremos ver que la protagonista del marco de las narraciones que muestra María de Zayas representa el deseo de *relajar* las ideas de su sociedad. Lisis parece tener las mismas cualidades que definen al término que encontramos en el diccionario.

Lisis también enmarca la presentación que realiza la escritora de la situación desventajosa en que vive la mujer española del siglo XVII en lo que se refiere al amor y honor. (102)

As Matos-Nin stresses, the reflexive forms of the verbs “to dilute,” “dissolve,” and “relax” imply the autonomy that Lisis—and the women she represents—express in the “remission” of their gendered crisis over the course of Zayas’s *Novelas*. However, incorporating Early Modern medical thought into the critical assessment of the fever Lisis suffers reveals that self-remissive *lisis* is also a crucial property of the very ailment the protagonist must cure: the *cuartanas*.⁴ Evaluating Lisis’s *cuartanas* as a mixed medical and literary etiology of gendered social crisis, therefore, offers new insight into both Zayas’s *Novelas* and the Early Modern understanding of illness present in literature.

Expanding upon earlier scholarship, the present investigation argues that Zayas’s framed narratives elaborate a fever that is not only representative, but, more significantly, curative and, ultimately, creative. In order to achieve this purpose, this article first provides a brief medical and literary history of the *cuartanas* and Early Modern perceptions of illness, justifying the dual scientific and metaphorical understanding with which I approach the fever in Zayas’s *Novelas*. I then use this definition to identify the symptomatology of the *cuartanas* in Zayas’s narrative, thereby demonstrating the fever’s widespread infection of the novel: sickening person, setting, and text. This essay then addresses the purpose of the fever afflicting the *Novelas*, using the *cuartanas*’s relationship to remission and love melancholy to reveal the fever as the primary enabler of female agency in the text. Finally, I use the humoral theory of Zayas’s prologue, “Al que leyerere,” and Early Modern humanism to explain why one should perceive the feminine agency enabled by the *cuartanas* as relevant to the social dilemma of Zayas’s Spain. In so doing, I demonstrate that the *cuartanas* of Lisis not only represents the suffering of women in 17th century Spain, but also elaborates their cure, transforming the *Novelas* in its entirety into Zayas’s remissive etiology of Early Modern Spain’s gendered crisis.

In order to propose a united medical and metaphorical interpretation of the *cuartanas* at work in the *Novelas*, one must first understand the Early Modern concept of illness, for which purpose I adapt the etiological perspective of Lilian R. Furst. In *Idioms of Distress*, Furst embraces the American Psychiatric Association’s renaming of psychosomatic disorders as “culturally

⁴ In the present analysis, Lisis with capital “L” and un-italicized refers to the name of Zayas’s protagonist. *Lisis*, italicized and with a lowercase “l” (unless beginning a sentence), refers to the process of remission of a disease or fever.

shaped idioms of distress' that express concern about a broad range of personal and social problems" (x). In other words, illness is composed of hidden concerns that distress the person and manifest themselves as real and varied physical symptoms. Furst proceeds to remind her reader that "'Until the mid-nineteenth century. . . , all medicine was necessarily and ubiquitously 'psychosomatic'" (Rosenberg qtd. in Furst 19). Before modern dualistic thought, medicine took a holistic approach to understanding illness, using personal background, society, and even literature to understand the body and its ailments. This is to say that today's binary between the Sciences and Humanities was irrelevant to 17th century Spain, when explicitly medical treatises frequently came alongside Classical literature to form a united "idiom" of illness.

Concerning the *cuartanas*, Hippocratic thought converged with Ovidean literary tradition to create a fever with both a curative and lethal potential.⁵ From Hippocratic philosophy, the *cuartanas* took its definition as a chronic, intermittent cerebral fever resulting from an imbalance of the cold and dry melancholic humor.⁶ Due to this imbalance, the humor overheats, producing vapors that rise to the brain and compromise the mind.⁷ This fever or "*calentura*" recurs every fourth day (Hippocrates 77), and is capable of alleviating other, more grievous ailments.⁸ The melancholic imbalance causing the *cuartanas* may be instigated by a variety of factors, including climate or—as is often the case in literature—amorous deception. As above-mentioned, in the plays, poetry, and prose of Early Modern Spain the *cuartanas* fever assumes the identity of Ovidean lovesickness, a descendant of Hippocratic philosophy that confuses the mind with jealousy and rage verging on mortal sadness, and resulting in lethargy, suicidal tendencies (Sena 349), and even death (Matos-Nin 108).⁹ These amorous *cuartanas* may only be cured, according to Ovid's

⁵ As José María López Piñero and Bertha M. Gutiérrez Rodilla recognize in their respective texts on 16th and 17th century medical theory, Hippocratic theory defined the social and academic comprehension of medicine and fever in the era of the *Novelas amorosas*. The invention of the printing press and the preponderance of translations, commentaries and evaluations of Hippocrates, Galen, and other authors of Greek and Roman antiquity contributed to the dominance of the Classical understanding of fever in the public consciousness (González Blasco, et al. 16). As a result of the economic crisis and the isolationist mentality of the religious *Contrarreforma*, medical innovation greatly diminished in the Spanish Empire, which, therefore, depended upon Classical traditions of medicine for approximately the first three decades of the 17th century (González Blasco, et al. 42).

⁶ Galen writes that different fevers correspond to different humoral imbalances: "Ac vero terti[us] genus intermittenti[um] febrium, quartana [s]cilicet exqui[s]ita quoties *ex humore mela[n]cholico* [s]olo efficitur frigidus [s]icco[que]" [emphasis added] (63), which is to say that the *cuartanas* is an intermittent fever resulting from an overly cold melancholic humor. Affirming Hippocratic humoral tradition, royal physician Juan de la Torre outlines the melancholic origins of the *cuartanas* fever in his *Especulo de la philosophia* (1705): "las [fiebres pútridas particulares] se diferencian entre si por el principal humor que las causa. . . ; y la *quartana*, de melancolia" (200).

⁷ Discussing the melancholic condition of the Israelites in his *Examen de ingenios* (1575), Juan Huarte de San Juan describes the process of melancholic heating or "adustion" that causes fevers affecting the brain: "Porque la continua tristeza y vejación hace juntar los espíritus vitales y sangre arterial en el cerebro, en el hígado y corazón; y estando allí unos sobre otros, se vienen a tostar y requemar. Y, así, muchas veces levantan calenturas; y lo ordinario es hacer melancolía por adustión (de la cual casi todos participan hasta el día de hoy), atento a lo que dice Hipócrates: metus et maestitia diu durans, melancholiam significat" (516-17; ch. 12).

⁸ Concerning the levity of the *cuartanas* fever, Hippocrates writes: "La más segura de todas, la más llevadera y la más larga de todas es la *cuartana*; pues no sólo ella es así por sí misma, sino que también *libera de otras enfermedades graves*" [emphasis added] (75), emphasizing that the *cuartanas* is not only the least harmful of fevers, but also has the potential to cure other serious illnesses.

⁹ The Early Modern, literary tradition of *amor cortés* and medical treatises evidence the presence of Hippocratic literature in the formation of 17th century medical and literary thought. Themselves literary appropriations of Hippocratic medical theory, Ovid's *Ars Amandi* and *Remedia Amoris* informed the concept of *amor cortés*, beginning with Andreas Capellanus's 12th century *Tractatus de amore* (Cortijo Ocaña 4). Although the Spanish "teoría amorosa" of courtly love began in scholastic debate – heavily influenced by the 15th century humanist Alfonso de Madrigal or

Remedia Amoris, by sexual fulfillment, distraction, or denouncement of the beloved (Sena 349). In other words, the cure for the *cuartanas* requires creative action by the lovesick patient, either consummating the desired relationship—condemnable according to the code of *amor cortés* and, so, not a cure available to the women of 17th century literature—or inventing a new fascination for the lovesick mind. This imaginative treatment involves performance and a reconfiguration of the beloved as the sum of his or her faults, convincing the fevered imagination to transform that desire into *desengaño*.

Zayas engages the medical and literary models of the *cuartanas* in the opening of the *Novelas*'s framing narrative, portending the pervasiveness and generative capacity the fever realizes in her text.¹⁰ The story's first sentence introduces both illness and protagonist:

Juntáronse a entretener a Lisis, hermoso milagro de la naturaleza, y prodigioso asombro de esta Corte (a quien *unas atrevidas cuartanas* tenían rendidas sus hermosas prendas), la hermosa Lisarda, la discreta Matilde, la graciosa Nise y la sabia Filis, todas nobles y ricas, hermosas y amigas, una tarde de las cortas de diciembre, cuando los hielos y terribles nieves dan causa a guardar las casas y gozar de los prevenidos braseros[.] [emphasis added] (23)

Zayas's introduction of the *cuartanas* achieves two functions. Firstly, the situation of the fever at the beginning of the narrative identifies the *cuartanas* as the motivation for the events of Lisis's story, and, therefore, the novel itself. The *sarao* and its entertainment, which constitute the *Novelas*, exist exclusively for the remediation of Lisis's *cuartanas* (Rodríguez-Guridi 133). Secondly, the opening description of the illness proposes its literary and medical composition. The illness infects Lisis during the winter months, when the coldness of the climate was believed to exaggerate melancholic ills, particularly the *cuartanas*.¹¹ Lisis also experiences the effects of love melancholy, confirmed further into the same paragraph, where Zayas identifies romantic disenchantment as the trigger for Lisis's ailment:

[Convidaron a] don Juan, caballero mozo, galán, rico y bien entendido, primo de Nise y querido dueño de la voluntad de Lisis, y a quien pensaba ella entregar, en legítimo matrimonio, las hermosas prendas de que el Cielo le había hecho gracia, si bien don Juan, aficionado a Lisarda, prima de Lisis, a quien deseaba para dueño, negaba a Lisis la justa

"El Tostado" (Cortijo Ocaña and Recio 9-10) – its principles rapidly pervaded Medieval and Early Modern Spanish literature (Cátedra 11). Sentimental and pastoral fictions arose as a type of "*artes amandi*" for *amor cortés* (Cortijo Ocaña 302), depicting a system for courtly loving that ultimately condemned "*amor heroes*" or sexual desire (Cortijo Ocaña 257-58). Regarding the medical influence of Hippocratic texts, the description of lovesickness in Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* (and in Avicenna's 11th century treatment of said text in the *Liber Canonis*) was adapted into the medical texts of Golden Age Spain. Of note, physician Pedro García Carrero returns to Avicenna in his 1628 commentary and translation, *Disputationes medicae, et commentaria in fen priman libri quarti avicennae* (Sánchez Granjel 23-24). In England, psychologist Robert Burton's widely acclaimed *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) dedicates the first several chapters of text to defining love melancholy (Sena 353).

¹⁰ In support of Lisis's storyline as representative of the struggles of the women of the Spanish Baroque, Vollendorf acknowledges the situation of the *Novelas*'s action in contemporary Baroque Spain, referencing the novel's mention of the Moorish expulsion from Spain (1609) by Felipe III (1578-1621) and stating: "The poem dedicated to Philip IV [(1605-1665)], which appears on the third night of the *Novelas amorosas*, also provides a clear temporal setting for the novellas. Through these references Zayas locates her novellas in their time, place, and culture" (1995, 274).

¹¹ According to Galen, the dry and cold state of melancholy predisposes the humor to imbalance during the cold and dry weather of autumnal and winter months (57).

correspondencia de su amor, sintiendo la hermosa dama el tener a los ojos la causa de sus celos, y haber de fingir agradable risa en el semblante, cuando el alma, llorando mortales sospechas, había dado motivo a su mal y ocasión a su tristeza[.] (23-24)

Zayas communicates the superiority of Lisis to Lisarda through the association of legitimacy, justice, and Heaven—“legítimo matrimonio,” “justa correspondencia,” “el Cielo”—with her protagonist; whereas the author describes don Juan’s preference for Lisarda as an unwarranted affection. Don Juan prefers the physical beauty of Lisarda to the spiritual beauty of Lisis, and therefore unjustly denies her matrimonial wishes. This abandonment gives “motivo a su mal” (24), instigating the *cuartanas* of Lisis. In the first paragraph of her tale, Zayas has already merged the medical and literary symptomatology of the *cuartanas*, and, more importantly, established the fever as genesis for her novelistic creation.

Zayas then composes her novel as the textualization of the fever’s etiological process.¹² Maintaining the correspondence between context and temperament perceived by Early Modern medicine, the *sarao* manifests the *cuartanas* of its protagonist. The setting of the text is limited by the wintery climate’s propensity to aggravate Lisis’s fever. Rather than abandon the city for a countryside villa, which distinguishes the *Novelas* from its literary predecessor, Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (Colón Calderón 144), the women of Zayas’s narrative seek urban enclosure from the harsh and sickening climate:

Pues como fue tan cerca de Navidad, tiempo alegre y digno de solenizarse con fiestas, juegos y burlas, habiendo gastado la tarde en honestos y regocijados coloquios, porque Lisis con la agradable conversación de sus amigas no sintiese el enfadoso mal, concertaron entre sí (pues el vivir todas juntas en una casa, aunque en distintos cuartos, cosa acostumbrada en la Corte, les facilitaba el verse a todas horas), un sarao, entretenimiento para la Nochebuena, y los demás días de Pascua[.] (24)

The affiliation of the *cuartanas* with the winter dictates the enclosed setting of the *sarao*. Further, the extended duration of the festivities—“Christmas Eve through Easter”—corresponds to the chronic nature of the fever.

Likewise, the color scheme of the *sarao* and attire reflect Lisis’s lovesick malaise. The palette of colors imbuing the party evokes the greens, yellows, browns, and blacks of melancholy, particularly in the events of the opening night:¹³

Coronaba la sala un rico estrado, con almohadas de terciopelo *verde*...haciendo competencia a una vistosa camilla, que al lado del vario estrado había de ser trono, asiento y resguardo de la bella Lisis, que como enferma pudo gozar de esta preeminencia, era

¹² While the current essay limits its examination to how the *cuartanas* relates the personal, textual, and social in the *Novelas amorosas*, Elena Rodríguez-Guridi identifies a similar interplay at work in the *Desengaños amorosos*, using Kristeva’s theory of the symbolic and semiotic to argue that the novelistic discourse “surja de una simbiosis de texto, cuerpo, y espacio” (107).

¹³ Martínez de Toledo identifies citrine as the color of those with a particularly melancholic disposition: “Hay hombres que son melancólicos...color tienen de cetrinos” (148). Huarte maintains the classical definition of the melancholic humor as black (372; ch. 9), and, in his depiction of the sin of lust, identifies the lovesick man as “flaco y amarillo” (258; ch. 5). Finally, humoral theory’s relationship between melancholy and earth affiliates the humor with the color brown.

asimismo de brocado *verde*, con fluecos y alamares de *oro*, que como tan ajena de esperanzas en lo interior, quiso en lo exterior tenerlas.

...Lisis, que *vestida de la color de sus celos*, ocupaba la camilla, que por la honestidad y decencia, aunque era el día de la cuartana, quiso estar vestida.

...don Juan...de *pardo*...Siguióle Lisarda y don Álvaro, ella de las colores de don Juan, y él de las de Matilde, a quien sacrificaba sus deseos. Venía la hermosa dama de *noguerado* y plata; acompañábala don Alonso, galán, de *negro*, porque salió así Nise, saya entera de terciopelo liso, sembrada de botones de *oro*; traíala de la mano don Miguel, también de *negro*, porque aunque miraba bien a Filis, no se atrevió a sacar sus colores, temiendo a don Lope, por haber salido como ella de *verde*, creyendo que sería dueño de sus deseos. [emphasis added] (25-26)

By dressing her protagonist in “la color de sus celos” (read, citrine), situating her upon a green and golden seat that presides over the festivities each night, and dressing her guests in the green, gold, brown, and black affiliated with the disease, Zayas saturates the *sarao* with the colors of Lisis’s amorous *cuartanas*. Therefore, the protagonist’s fever not only determines the nature of her own suffering and the location of the *sarao*, but also the appearance of the festivities and its guests. The setting of the *Novelas* embodies Lisis’s sickness.

Through the interplay of the *cuartanas*’s symptoms between protagonist, setting, and text, Zayas depicts a fever that transcends the person and figuratively infects the entirety of the *Novelas*. In agreement with Rodríguez-Guridi, “La enfermedad por amor es una constante a lo largo de las historias que se narran en el sarao, y la descomposición gradual del cuerpo y la muerte de sus protagonistas condiciona la composición de la narración, de modo que el cuerpo pasa a sustituirse por un cuerpo inscrito, incorporando así la descomposición corporal en el sistema de producción textual” (133). Lisis’s disease becomes the illness of her narrative world, simultaneously producing and infecting the *Novelas*, while bespeaking the universality of the male problematic in Zayas’s tales.

Zayas expands Lisis’s amorous deception from the confines of the protagonist’s chambers to the society of her narrative through the stories told to ease her suffering. True to the title of Zayas’s collection, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, lovesickness pervades the *maravillas*. Adriana of “Aventurarse perdiendo” falls ill out of unrequited desire for don Felis and later dies upon his declaration of love for Jacinta. Leonor of “El imposible vencido” swoons and temporarily dies upon encountering her great love, Rodrigo, whom she believes dead. Finally, Claudia of “El juez de su causa” suffers a love for Carlos, knowing that it is a “Locura grandísima desestimar la vida por un devaneo, y desear la muerte por un gusto liviano” (338).

While Zayas entrenches the *cuartanas* of love in the *maravillas*, she expands the fever’s significance by indicating myriad, social causation and consequence. Love not only clouds the mind but also endangers women’s public selves, their *honra*, due to their insufficient preparation and defense for the deceptions they face. The responsibility for this neglect falls squarely upon the men of Zayas’s tales. Greer observes the absence of mothers and the lack of fatherly management of their daughters’ education to be a fatal oversight, opening the female protagonists of the *Novelas*’ stories to emotional manipulation (101), a perspective validated by the events of “Aventurarse perdiendo” and “La burlada Aminta y la venganza del honor.” In the former, Lisarda narrates how the neglect of Jacinta’s education by her father leads to her ultimate misfortune:

Faltó mi madre al mejor tiempo, que no fue pequeña falta, pues su compañía, gobierno y

vigilancia fuera más importante a mi honestidad, que los descuidos de mi padre, que le tuvo en mirar por mí y darme estado (yerro notable de los que aguardan a que sus hijas le tomen sin su gusto). Quería el mío a mi hermano tiernísimamente, y esto era sólo su desvelo, sin que se le diese yo en cosa ninguna, no sé qué era su pensamiento, pues había hacienda bastante para todo lo que deseara y quisiera emprender. (37)

After her mother's death, Jacinta's father ignores his daughter's education at the same time that he attends to that of his son, despite the fact that he is monetarily able to afford the tutoring of both; this neglect denies her a parental steward of her virtue and the information necessary to protect her "honestidad" (Greer 101), which she later sacrifices first out of love for don Felis (who drowns before they can be married) and then for the false and cruel Celio. Likewise, beautiful and noble Aminta's parents die before she may receive a proper education, and though they instruct her uncle to look after her learning, his absence from the majority of the tale's action indicates his failure to do so. As a result, she easily falls into scandal and disrepute with the deceptive don Jacinto (87). In the case of both women, fatherly absence leaves them open to the exploitation of malevolent men—and women—who quickly and easily defame them.

The *maravillas* advance the masculine *engaño* in the framing narrative to include transgressions beyond the strictly amorous, including neglect, abuse, and other forms of misconduct that achieve the same effect as the corruptive vapors of the *cuartanas*, exploiting and compromising women's minds, bodies, and public selves. As Lisa Vollendorf recognizes:

In María de Zayas's two framed novella collections, at least thirty women are physically victimized by male-authored violence which includes abuse, rape, torture, and murder... In an oft-quoted statement, Laura, the protagonist of the fifth novella in the *Novelas amorosas*, gives testimony to Zayas's indictment of the oppressive treatment of women: '¿Por qué, vanos legisladores del mundo, atáis nuestras manos para las venganzas, imposibilitando nuestras fuerzas con vuestras falsas opiniones, pues nos negáis letras y armas? ¿El alma no es la misma que la de los hombres?' Pleading to men, who are, after all, relegated authority over domestic, social, and political affairs in patriarchy, Zayas's character protests the oppression of women. (1995, 272)

Embedded in Laura's plea is the claim that men, by withholding instruction from women, prompt the crisis of intellect that imperils their personal and public health.¹⁴ Lisis's fever instigates the telling of the *maravillas*, whose characters similarly manifest the jealousy, sadness, rage, and deception of lovesickness. However, their depiction of causation transforms Lisis's illness from personal sickness or amorous disillusionment into an overarching social crisis within the text.

The passing of Lisis's *cuartanas* into the text not only necessitates that she denounce the deception that ails her, but also exacts collective, female participation in its cure. To elaborate the particular agency of women, Zayas treats the *Novelas*'s lyrical forms—the poetry and *maravillas*—as the Ovidian recriminatory performances intended to cure her narrative and the fever's period of remission. In the framing narrative, Lisis must scorn don Juan verbally, representing and repudiating his actions, and the grievance they have caused her. The protagonist achieves defamation through poetry, song, and the stories told for her sake, using lyric as rhetorical weapon

¹⁴ For further moments in which the protagonists of Zayas's *maravillas* reaffirm the patriarchal "double standard" responsible for their crisis, refusing to educate women and then punishing and exploit them for their *naiveté*, see Carmen Hsu (202-5).

whose recriminatory attack all understand (Rodríguez de Ramos 155). For example, on the first night of the *sarao* all guests interpret the *romance* “Escuchad, selvas, mi llanto / ...de la ingratitude de Celio” (26, vv. 1,8) as a just decry of don Juan’s behavior (67). By simultaneously acting as the lovesick protagonist and participating in her own healing, Lisis fulfills the twofold purpose her name and fever imply.

The embedded *maravillas* further the remissive nature of the *Novelas’s cuartanas*. Physically, the symptoms of Lisis’s *cuartanas* do not recur on the fourth day of the tale (the day on which they should reappear), and are seemingly gone by day five (although the *cuartanas* is a chronic fever), when all the characters go to Lisis’s room and discover her “libre de sus enfadosas cuartanas” (333). Textually, although Lisis’s infection does not follow the accepted pattern of the *cuartanas*, Zayas’s intercalation of two *maravillas* between the events of the *sarao* recalls the fever’s symptomatic return every fourth day with two days of remission in-between, insinuating metaphorical—in lieu of personal—recuperation.

In the sense of remission, the stories told are still “sick,” their protagonists deceived by various forms of masculine abuse; however, the symptoms of their fever have been relaxed, enabling the women in them to participate in the curative process. The women of the *maravillas* must use their own wits to evade, uncover, and recover from all forms of falseness (Diallo 256). Acknowledging this purpose, Lou Charnon-Deutsch writes: “women insist on playing an active role if not in the preservation of honor, which more or less catches them sleeping, at least in the reclaiming of it once it is lost. This can be done independently of fathers, lovers, husbands and brothers if the woman in question assumes the guise of one of these traditional guardians of a woman’s honor” (20). Stories in which women assume this male agency include “Aventurarse perdiendo,” “La burlada Aminta,” “El prevenido engañado,” “Al fin se paga todo,” and “El juez de su causa,” the last being the principal focus of Charnon-Deutsch’s analysis.¹⁵ In “Aventurarse perdiendo,” Jacinta dresses as a man and attempts a solo voyage through the Spanish countryside to find the fickle Celio, while Aminta and doña Hipólita of “La burlada Aminta” and “Al fin se paga todo” not only take possession of masculine objects (daggers) but also murder those who have dishonored them with these objects. The most expansive occupation of male agency by a woman occurs in “El juez de su causa,” in which Estela escapes servitude under the Moorish Fez by trading her female dress for male garb and assuming the name “don Fernando,” which enables her to enter the military service of Holy Roman Emperor Carlos V (350). She fights so valiantly that Carlos V awards her various titles, including Viceroy of Valencia (352). By granting women agency to avenge and regain their honor, the stories of the *sarao* amplify the twin fevered and remissive condition of Zayas’s protagonist to a social level. Beyond “rewriting” the deceptions of Lisis’s life to punish don Juan and Lisarda (Farmer 258), they express a remission for all women.

However, the nature of *lisis* limits the agency Zayas grants the ladies of the *maravillas* and her protagonist. Remission signifies a temporary recuperation, not the final cure, implying that women alone cannot treat their condition; men must also take part in the disease they have caused. Understanding women as *lisis* illuminates the function of Zayas’s wicked, intellectual women and her decision to have her protagonists ultimately relinquish their masculine roles.

If the remissive purpose of women is to model both disease and treatment for the men of society, then even the wicked among them function as a means of teaching men proper and honorable conduct. Zayas describes many wicked women who scheme the demise of protagonists alongside men. The appropriately named Lisarda of the *sarao* welcomes don Juan’s affections,

¹⁵ Hernández-Pecoraro and Matos-Nin provide extensive analyses of female agency and male corruption in “La fuerza del amor” and “El jardín engañoso.”

paining her cousin; and both Flora of “La burlada Aminta” and Claudia of “El juez de su causa” conspire against the protagonists in their respective *maravillas*. In spite of this recognition, Zayas defends the value of the discrete—and potentially malevolent—over the naive woman, as best illustrated by don Álvaro’s summary of the moral of “El prevenido engañado”:

yo le tengo de haber dado fin a esta maravilla, para que se avisen los ignorantes que condenan la discreción de las mujeres; que donde falta el entendimiento, no puede sobrar la virtud; y también que la que ha de ser mala, no importa que sea necia, ni la buena, el ser discreta, pues siéndolo sabrá guardarse. Y adviertan los que prueban a las mujeres, al peligro que se ponen. (191)

The discrete woman, if good, knows how to protect her virtue and, if wicked, knows how to disguise her sinful nature. The foolish, however, knows neither how to protect nor feign virtue and is easily dishonored. Further, the presence of villainous, manipulative women underscores the weakness of men. Elizabeth J. Ordóñez sustains with this interpretation in her discussion of the seductive and industrious women of “El prevenido engañado,” Ana and Violante: “though the play pays conventional lip service to the evils of female enchantment, the reader cannot help but respond to the ingeniousness of the two women as they push baroque theatrical devices to the limits of parody and shape them according to their will” (12). The dastardly comportment of the men in “El prevenido engañado,” desiring affairs with the two women, grants Ana and Violante an impressive degree of control over their lovers, and dramatizes the destructive void of masculine honor and valor.

While the wicked women of the *Novelas* address the dearth of masculine honor by aiding and abusing male cowardice and misconduct, Lisis and the virtuous women of the *sarao*’s stories communicate the need for patriarchal reform by resuming feminine behavior and passivity after modeling and receiving proper masculine conduct. Aminta marries her accomplice Martín after murdering Flora and Jacinto; Hipólita goes to the convent after killing don Luis; and Estela marries don Carlos, transferring the titles and masculine occupations Carlos V has bestowed upon her to her husband while she assumes the feminine title of “princesa de Buñol” (358). As a summary of the Estela’s agency in “El juez de su causa,” Charnon-Deutsch declares: “[Zayas’s] injunction to women to take up swords to defend their honor...seems in this context not so much a lesson on the empowerment of women, as a challenge to God, the king and men to do their job by women” (21). Rather than maintain the dynamism their occupation of male agency offers them, the women of Zayas use their power only as a temporary means of avenging their wronged honor, thereby instructing men in proper masculine behavior and reaffirming the identity of the societal distress that infects them.

The fate of the *sarao*’s protagonist concludes this purpose. At the close of the *Novelas*, Lisis appears to resolve her *cuartanas* through her festivities and, ultimately, marriage to don Diego. However, the opening of the *Desengaños amorosos* informs the reader that the illness of Lisis lasts a full year, leaving her near death, relapsing and recovering until finally conquering the fever and initiating the action of the sequel to the *Novelas* (391).¹⁶ The *Novelas* textualize *lisis* for the *cuartanas* of its society, not the cure.

¹⁶ The *Desengaños amorosos* again confirms don Juan as the cause of Lisis’s *cuartanas*, stating: “Bien sentía el ingrato don Juan ser él la causa de la enfermedad de Lisis...Más de un año duró la enfermedad con caídas y recaídas” (8).

Zayas embeds her narrative in real and contemporary socio-political situations to confirm the representative relationship between the remissive sickness of her textual world and the social crisis of 17th century Spain. Vollendorf references the novel's mention of the Moorish expulsion from Spain (1609) by Felipe III (1578-1621), stating: "The poem dedicated to Philip IV [(1605-1665)], which appears on the third night of the *Novelas amorosas*, also provides a clear temporal setting for the novellas. Through these references Zayas locates her novellas in their time, place, and culture" (1995, 274). The events of Zayas's tales span the length of the Spanish Empire, from Madrid to Zaragoza, Sevilla, Sicilia, Nápoles, Cataluña, and Aragón. "[L]os viajes descritos por María de Zayas en sus novelas nunca son imaginarios sino que se instalan en la más absoluta veracidad geográfico-narrativa" (Pilar Couceiro 296). The literary society that Zayas infects resembles the atmosphere of 17th century Spain.

Zayas's prologue, "Al que leyere," presents an etiological theory of misogyny that corroborates the social reality of the gendered crisis present in her *Novelas*. The prologue's principal concern matches that which is essential to the *cuartanas* of her protagonists: a crisis of female intelligence and education. "Al que leyere" begins by acknowledging the popular, contemporary correlation of women's (lack of) intellect to the physical disparities between male and female bodies: "habrá muchos que atribuyan a locura esta virtuosa osadía de sacar a luz mis borrones, siendo mujer, que en opinión de algunos necios es lo mismo que una cosa incapaz" (17). In Huarte's humoral theory, as recognized by Isabel Jaén, women "lack the faculty for judgment or understanding" due to their moist and cold temperaments (193), a condition that renders women unfit for leadership and other intellectual, male enterprises, including authorship.¹⁷ However, Zayas's ensuing reiteration of Huarte's humoral assessment of the gendered soul assumes the equality between women and men's blood, organs, and spirits, enabling her to contest the gendered argument against her authorship and, ultimately, the inherency of an inferior and malevolent female intellect:¹⁸

Si esta materia de que nos componemos los hombres y las mujeres, ya sea una trabazón de fuego y barro, o ya una masa de espíritus y terrones, no tiene más nobleza en ellos que en nosotras; si es una misma la sangre, los sentidos, las potencias, y los órganos por donde se obran sus efectos son unos mismos, la misma alma que ellos porque las almas no son hombres ni mujeres, ¿qué razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y presuman que nosotras no podemos serlo? (17)

Referencing the spiritual and physiological equality of men and women accepted by contemporary medicine, Zayas separates wisdom from its previously gendered affiliations, and thereby departs

¹⁷ According to Huarte, women's cold and humid temperaments, inherited from the first woman, Eve, inhibit them from possessing the intellect of their masculine counterparts: "Porque pensar que la mujer puede ser caliente y seca, ni tener el ingenio y habilidad que sigue a estas dos calidades, es muy grande error; porque si la simiente de que se formó fuera caliente y seca a predominio, saliera varón y no hembra; y por ser fría y húmeda, nació hembra y no varón...La verdad desta doctrina parece claramente considerando el ingenio de la primera mujer que hubo en el mundo: que con haberla hecho Dios con sus propias manos, y tan acertada y perfecta en su sexo, es conclusión averiguada que sabía mucho menos que Adán...Luego la razón de tener la primera mujer no tanto ingenio le nació de haberla hecho Dios fría y húmeda, que es el temperamento necesario para ser fecunda y paridera, y el que contradice al saber; y si la sacara templada como Adán, fuera sapientísima, pero no pudiera parir ni venirle la regla si no fuera por vía sobrenatural" (614-5; ch. 17).

¹⁸ Margaret Greer notes that Zayas's claim for women's spiritual equality to men corresponds to Juan Huarte de San Juan's understanding of male and female souls (65).

from Huarte's humoral theory.

Zayas diverges from Huarte in order to argue for what Jaén identifies as "empathy" between the sexes.¹⁹ Rather than invert the intellectual and moral positions of men and women, Zayas argues that the likeness of their souls and flesh disposes them to the same dual potential for wisdom and wickedness:

Porque si en nuestra crianza, como nos ponen el cambray en las almohadillas, y los dibujos en el bastidor, nos dieran libros y preceptores, fuéramos tan aptas para los puestos y para las cátedras como los hombres, y quizás más agudas, por ser de natural más frío, por consistir en humedad el entendimiento, como se ve en las respuestas de repente y en los engaños de pensado, que todo lo que se hace con maña, aunque no sea virtud, es ingenio. (17-18)

That which in Huarte's theory condemns female intellect—women's quick reproaches, tricks and general aptitude for deception—affirms, in Zayas's reimagined humoral theory, the equality of masculine and feminine intelligence, and anticipates her complex portrayal of women in the *maravillas*.

If women and men are created in a state of inherent physical and spiritual equality, then the intellectual weakness of women is a socially nurtured imbalance rather than innate, gendered defect. As in the case of the fever of Zayas's fiction, this imbalance results from disloyal and oppressive male authority: "Esto no tiene a mi parecer más respuesta que su impiedad o tiranía en encerrarnos y no darnos maestros, y así la verdadera causa de no ser las mujeres doctas, no es el defecto del caudal, sino falta de aplicación" (17). By manipulating Huarte's humoral theory into an argument for the social causation of gendered intellectual disparity—the intellectual and physical enclosure of women and the abusive conduct this enclosure allows their male caregivers—,²⁰ Zayas "turns the determinist argument of humoral difference on its head" (Greer 83). Her prologue's etiological theory converts the dilemma of the female intellect from inherent state into an illness of patriarchal deception.

The theory of female illness in Zayas's prologue validates the social etiology of the *cuartanas* in her fiction. In agreement with the manifestation of sickness in her text, "Al que leyer" presents a fever caused by masculine deception, neglect and other forms of patriarchal misconduct, and its effects compromise women's mental faculties, resulting in their physical and public sickness (dishonor). The similarities between the prologue's social etiology and the sickness dictating the framed narratives indicate that the author intends the *Novelas* to be the embodiment of a perceived, gendered social crisis.

However, the prologue not only demonstrates that Zayas desires her fevered narrative to express social illness, but also validates the remissive, instructional function of her text and its female protagonists by soliciting a compassionate male reader. Like the infected female protagonists within the *sarao* and *maravillas*, the *Novelas* in its entirety serves as a collection of "exempla" from which—through the "superioridad momentánea" of women (Colón Calderón 145)—men may learn correct, moral behavior toward their female charges (Jaén 189). The title, "Al que"

¹⁹ According to Jaén, by seeking empathy Zayas does not seek the victimization of women; rather, she argues that men and women should perceive each other as capable of the same abuses and the same grievances (197).

²⁰ In the 17th century, the exclusive, favorable social situations of women are positions of confinement within a male-dominated framework: either within marital arrangements or life inside the convent. Mary Elizabeth Perry defines these situations as "embedded" social contexts that encourage violence against women (26).

not “A la que” predicts a masculine readership.²¹ The close of her prologue confirms Zayas’s wish for an honorable male reader, one that will appreciate her novel for its educational value:

Con mujeres no hay competencias, quien no las estima, es necio porque las ha menester, y quien las ultraja ingrato, pues falta al reconocimiento del hospedaje que le hicieron en la primera jornada. Y así, pues no ha de ser descortés, necio, villano, ni desagradado, te ofrezco este libro, muy segura de tu bizarría, y en confianza de que si te desagradare, podrás disculparme con que nací mujer, no con obligaciones de hacer buenas novelas, sino con muchos deseos de acertar a servirte. Vale. (19)

By phrasing her argument as a matter of respect, intended only to “serve” her male reader, Zayas situates her stories within the humanistic discourse of patriarchal respect and responsibility as summarized by Jaén: “Zayas aligns herself with [Juan Luis] Vives and the Christian humanist tradition and thus views lack of shared feeling and an anti-compassion stances as the main problems behind the great gender inequality of her time...believed...not only to endanger society but also to go against our very human nature as social and compassionate beings” (Jaén 191).²² Like the remissive agency of the women in her *Novelas*, the prologue presents Zayas’s female authority as temporary and instructional, while charging men—those who are respectful, wise, honorable, and gracious—with learning from and curing, thereby, the gendered social ailment her stories express.

Understanding Zayas’s stories as the embodiment and remission of female crisis reconciles the patriarchal responsibility upheld by the *Novelas* with the author’s comparative pessimism for male social reformation in the *Desengaños amorosos*. With Lisis’s agreement to marry don Diego, her illness, along with her narrative, comes to an apparent end. However, as indicated by the recurrent nature of her fever and the social etiology of “Al que leyere,” the ending of her story does not signify the cure of her society’s ailment; rather, it solicits the participation of the male reader in that cure. The *cuartanas* of Lisis could be equal to the disillusionment that will cure her more basic sickness, her state as a woman in 17th century Spain, but that depends on what men do with her story. The if-and-only-if that looms over the fate of Zayas’s protagonist makes possible the “relapse” of Lisis’s sickened narrative should men fail to achieve Zayas’s reformative expectations. Therefore, whereas the conjugal ending of the *Novelas* indicates Zayas’s optimism for “enduring heterosexual love” and patriarchal social change (El Saffar 211), the return of Lisis’s story represents the author’s own disenchantment with men.

Through its fever, the *Novelas* elaborates a multi-framed etiology of infection, remission, and creation. Zayas manipulates the *cuartanas* of Lisis to establish a remissive etiology of female illness that she relates to the women and men of 17th century Spain through her prologue and *maravillas*. Then, the *Novelas* as a whole engages the trifold purpose of its illness; the text’s creation corresponds to infection, apparent (written) only when aggravated by patriarchal mistreatment of women and, otherwise, in “remission” while Zayas anticipates a male response.

²¹ In “Challenging the Code: Honor in María de Zayas,” Amy R. Williamsen interprets *Novelas* as call for men to reform their treatment of women, signaling Zayas’s employment of honor as a call to masculine attention, given that honor as the cornerstone of the Spanish patriarchy (148).

²² Carmen Hsu summarizes the humanist position regarding the accountability of men for the women in their care: “Opposed to the institutionalized misogyny of the Medieval Ages, which attributes the failure of marriage to women’s frailties, Erasmus was the first to claim moral responsibility of the husband. Vives further develops this idea in his *De officio mariti* (1528), attributing to the husband the responsibility of the good function of marriage. In other words...if the wife does not behave accordingly, the husband *is* the responsible one” (203).

Disregarding the reaction of Zayas's male audience, what the *cuartanas* of Lisis proves is that, even if women cannot heal, they can turn their sickness into a generative force, learning to live and create within the sick world in which men have confined them. Their sickness thereby issues a third, intellectual identity for the women of 17th century Spain that exists within and transcends their marital and monastic confines. Beyond wives and mothers, Zayas's fevered women are authors.

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