

## Melancholy, Rape, and the Gendering of Poetics in Zayas's *Desengaños*

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Alongside Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* (1613), the two collections of ten novellas each, set in a contiguous frame tale, by María de Zayas (Madrid, 1590–1661) have become the most studied prose fictions from seventeenth-century Spain.<sup>1</sup> In Zayas's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) and *Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimiento honesto* (1647)—or *Desengaños amorosos*, as the second collection is more commonly known—the plot usually begins when a nobleman falls in love with a beautiful and chaste noblewoman in some Spanish city (Rhodes, 81).<sup>2</sup> In these tales, the proclivities of enamored men to make poetry, suffer from melancholy and violate women appear as inevitably imbricated and are meant not only to warn women readers against the perils of jealousy and melancholy, as Dana Bultman suggested (162–63), but also to theorize about poetics and gender. Such is the case of “Desengaño quinto” or “La inocencia castigada,” from the second collection. At first sight of the virtuous and married Doña Inés, Don Diego “se enamoró, y ... con tan loca desesperación mostraba y daba a entender su amor en la continua asistencia en su calle, en las iglesias, y en todas las partes que podía seguirla” (266–67). The chief way through which Don Diego conveys his love is the verse that he composes and performs for Doña Inés, given that he “cantaba y tenía otras habilidades” (267). But her unshakable marital faithfulness plunges him into sadness and confusion. An astute procuress notices this and hires a sex worker to pose as Doña Inés and, extracting gifts from the gentleman, have intercourse with him for two weeks. When Doña Inés finds out about the ruse, she tells the truth to Don Diego and reiterates that she does not requite his desire, which causes his lovesickness to worsen, degenerating into a life-threatening “cruel melancolía” (276).

The narrator speaks of Don Diego's love as a malady, referring to a subspecies of melancholy, the kind of madness then understood to be caused by the excess of the black humor.

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<sup>1</sup> For an authoritative and very recent introduction to Zayas's works, see Greer 2022. For an updated biography, see Rodríguez de Ramos. For concise and accurate plot summaries that might assist the reader unfamiliar with Zayas's intricate tales, see Greer 2022, 179–97. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers as well as Sonia Pérez Villanueva of Lesley University, Elizabeth Rhodes of Boston College, John Slater of Colorado State University, Elizabeth Spragins of the College of the Holy Cross, and Elizabeth Treviño of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México for providing extensive feedback on different drafts. This essay also benefitted from questions and comments at a seminar in the 2021 Renaissance Society of America meeting, which I co-organized with Elena Casey of University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire and where Julia DeLancey, Luis Fernando López González and José Luis Gastañaga Ponce de León also presented; and at session of the Cambridge Renaissance Seminar in June of 2022, organized by Jessica Hagley, Marina Perkins and Simone Monti of the University of Cambridge. This essay is dedicated to Stephanie Merrim, in whose legendary course on early modern women writers at Brown University I first read Zayas (“Desengaño quinto” and “Desengaño décimo,” as a matter of fact) and who endeavored to teach me how to write and advance arguments.

<sup>2</sup> *Desengaños amorosos* is the title that Agustín González de Amezúa y Mayo gave to the collection in his 1950 edition because all narrators in the frame tale refer to the novellas as *desengaños*, just as the ones from *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* refer to them as *maravillas*. It seems that Zayas intended a common title for her two volumes of novellas: *Honesto y entretenido sarao*, in two parts, but that the publisher of the first part chose to rebrand it, out of commercial and literary considerations (Olivares, xxv, xxviii–xix). In the original 1647 edition of *Parte segunda*, only the first *desengaño* bears a title, “La esclava de su amante.” The other nine titles come from the 1734 Barcelona edition and not from Zayas's own pen. On top of being apocryphal, these titles “privilege the experience of a male character” (Rhodes, 11). The titles of the *maravillas*, conversely, appear in the first edition published during Zayas's lifetime.

In *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancolie érotique* (second edition, 1623), the French physician Jacques Ferrand affirms that “love or erotic passion is a form of dotage, proceeding from an inordinate desire to enjoy the beloved object, accompanied by fear or sorrow” (238). Denial intensifies the melancholic’s desire and whips it into desperation. Sure enough, desperation pushes Don Diego to hire a *Morisco* necromancer who furnishes him with a magical means of overpowering Doña Inés. When at night Don Diego lights the candlewick on top of a doll in the image of the lady, bewitchment renders her unconscious and she goes over to his bedchamber. Once there:

doña Inés no respondía palabra; que viendo esto el amante, algo pesaroso, por parecerle que doña Inés estaba fuera de su sentido con el maldito encanto, y que no tenía facultad para hablar, teniendo aquéllos, aunque favores, por muertos, conociendo claro que si la dama estuviera en su juicio, no se los hiciera, como era la verdad, que antes pasara por la muerte, quiso gozar el tiempo y la ocasión, remitiendo a las obras las palabras; de esta suerte la tuvo gran parte de la noche. (277–78)

Don Diego clearly realizes that Doña Inés lacks the capacity to give consent and acknowledges that she would withhold it, yet nevertheless he decides to rape her. Early modern Spanish law understood rape as sexual penetration, conveyed by verbs like *gozar*, *conocer* or *tener*, without consent and through the use of force (Rodríguez Ortiz, 44; Barahona, 259). Thus, in “Desengaño quinto” the frustration of erotic desire worsens the melancholy that already afflicts the male protagonist, who is conspicuously characterized as a poet that composes and performs poems in two different occasions (267–68 and 275). Supposedly compelled by pathological melancholy, he resorts to rape as a means to fulfillment.

The present article proposes to untangle this knot of melancholy, erotic desire, rape and the gendering of poetics in Zayas’s *Parte segunda* or *Desengaños* in order to parse her views on the difference between masculine and feminine poetics. Poetics here means making through language in two senses: the narrow sense of composing poetry, like Don Diego does, and the broad sense of feigning plots, ruses, hoaxes and lies by manipulating language, like many men of similar traits and in similar situations do throughout Zayas’s tales. For these men, rape is an integral part of their lovemaking and constitutes a means of poetic activity, of making in the world. Spanish treatises on poetics from the turn of the seventeenth century authorize this understanding of poetics in the double sense. Alonso López Pinciano explains in *Filosofía antigua poética* (1596) that “la poética hace la cosa y la cría de nuevo en el mundo y por tanto le dieron el nombre griego que, en castellano, quiere decir ‘hacedora’; como poeta, ‘hacedor’” (174; epistle 5, fragment 1). Luis Alfonso de Carvallo elaborates in *Cisne de Apolo* (1602) that “Poeta es nombre griego, es lo mesmo que en latín *factor* y en el español *hacedor*, o *criador*, porque viene del nombre griego *poieo*, que significa *hacer*” (276). López Pinciano includes lying and deceiving, as the present essay proposes to do, as poetic activities when he defines poets as those who “son menester ... que turben y mientan para quietar y deleitar los ánimos de los hombres” (101; 2.4).

In Zayas’s *Parte segunda*, masculine poetics, or the poetry and thought surrounding it produced by men, consists in the enactment of male supremacy, often culminating in rape; and her proposed feminine poetics, or the poetry and thought surrounding it produced by noblewomen in defense of their kind, in the construction of a haven for virtuous and high-born womanhood. The first part of this article focuses on melancholy men and their poetics, which

culminates in the sexual violence they perpetrate against women. In seventeenth-century Spanish masterpieces such as Miguel de Cervantes's "Novela del curioso impertinente," included in *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (1605), Luis de Góngora's epyllion *Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* (1612), and Pedro Calderón de la Barca's plays *El médico de su honra* (1635) and *El pintor de su deshonra* (ca. 1645), the male protagonists stand as allegories of the melancholic male artist. All of them victimize the woman they purportedly love as part of their poetics. In the last play, the painter Don Juan Roca murders his wife Serafina as the means to finish the portrait of her that he otherwise could not accomplish: "que quiere hacer el dolor / que retrato que el amor / erró, lo acierten los celos" (318–19; act 3, lines 3043–45). He thus reveals, as Laura R. Bass argued, "the violence at the other side of the creativity" that the excess of melancholy grants to men (75; see also Valencia 2021, 29–30). With respect to this tradition, Zayas goes a step further and figures rape as an extension of that masculinist poetics. The second part of the article turns to what melancholy entails for feminine poetics in *Parte segunda*; that is, for the poetry and thought surrounding it that in Zayas's estimation noblewomen should produce for their kin. We will pay special attention to the melancholy of prominent women characters, particularly Florentina in "Desengaño décimo." As we will see, Zayas appropriates melancholy for women poets despite its troubling implications because of the poetic potency it affords.

The present essay also draws a few relevant examples from the ten novellas or more properly *maravillas* that make up Zayas's first collection, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, and particularly from early modern medical treatises on melancholy. In Zayas's time, melancholy was a medical term that meant four things: one of the four humors of the body, also known as *atra bilis* or black bile; the temperament of a body in which said humor prevails; a kind of madness caused by the excess or scorching of that humor; and, by metonymy, sadness, an affect thought to derive from black bile (Valencia 2021, 22). Three medical texts prove relevant in our reading: on melancholy, creativity and gender, *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575, rev. 1594) by Juan Huarte de San Juan; on women's melancholy, Alonso de Santa Cruz's *De melancholia* (ca. 1569, but printed in 1622); and on erotic melancholy, Ferrand's *De la maladie d'amour*. Zayas clearly knew Huarte, she surely had deep familiarity with the Galenic framework, and although she likely did not read the latter two works, they nonetheless reflect views broadly held throughout Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century on the relationship between melancholy, women and love.<sup>3</sup>

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Zayas's narrators consistently characterize men who unrequitedly claim to love women, such as Don Diego, as ill with melancholy.<sup>4</sup> Narrators of these tales underscore the melancholy signs and symptoms of men in love to signify two things: that they are poets and that their desire is pathological. The first notion derived from a Pseudo-Aristotelian text of great influence in the Renaissance, which famously begins, "Why is it that all those men who have become extraordinary in philosophy, politics, poetry, or the arts are obviously melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are seized by the illnesses that come from black bile ...?" (Aristotle, 277; *Problems*, bk. 30, ch. 1, col. 953a). In its wake, at the close of the fifteenth century, Marsilio Ficino identified melancholy with the *mania* or *furor* that Plato ascribed to poets (see

<sup>3</sup> On Zayas's dialogue with Huarte, see Greer 2000, 66–71; and Thiemann, 124–26.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance the male protagonists in the second *maravilla*, "La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor" (Zayas 2004, 217); the fourth, "El prevenido engañado" (313); "Desengaño tercero" (1983, 203–4); and "Desengaño octavo" (389). For overviews of the lexicon of erotic melancholy in Zayas's narratives, see Buck, 180–81; and Gumbrecht, 54.

2002b, 116; *De vita*, bk. 1, ch. 5). The Pseudo-Aristotle further drew a link between melancholy excellence and love when he remarked, “the majority of melancholic people are lustful” (283; 953b). Indeed, melancholy, erotic desire and the making of poetry are of a piece in Zayas’s fiction. Besides Don Diego, consider Esteban in “Desengaño sexto,” who for desire of Laurela “andaba loco y desesperado, y tan divertido en sus pensamientos ... [que] [p]aseaba la calle, dábala músicas de noche, componiendo él mismo los versos, alabando su hermosura y gentileza, porque en esto era tan pronto, que si cuanto hablaba lo quería decir en verso, tenía caudal para todo” (296).

The correlation between love, melancholy and aptitude for poetry in Zayas’s fiction not only includes poetry in the literary sense of composing and in some cases performing lyric with a musical accompaniment, but also poetry in the broader sense of things feigned through words. Male melancholics in Zayas’s fiction devise clever plots and manipulate language as part of their efforts of erotic persuasion. Hence the insistence on the part of her narrators, particularly those of *Parte segunda*, that enamored men are *engañadores* or “deceivers,” makers of *engaños* or “deceptions.” In “Desengaño primero: La esclava de su amante,” Doña Isabel puts it succinctly: “don Manuel dio en quererme, o en engañarme, que todo viene a ser uno” (131).

Besides characterizing these men as lovers and therefore poets, references to their melancholy cast their erotic desire as pathological. The malady, Ferrand teaches us, is erotic melancholy. And as Ficino explains in his influential commentary on Plato’s *Symposium*, erotic melancholy sets on due to an immoderate contemplation of the object of desire within the subject’s imagination or phantasy—one of the three faculties of the rational soul along with memory and estimation or judgment (2002a, 155; *De amore*, oration 6, ch. 9). Such hypertrophy of the imagination comes at the expense of good judgment. Thence Ferrand’s remark that “the essential faculties of the brain are corrupted by the blackish vapors that rise from the hypochondries to the citadel of Pallas, that is to say the brain” (236). In such state, the melancholic’s “senses wander, his reason is deranged, his imagination becomes depraved” (252). Consequently, Zayas’s narrators draw from common medical knowledge of their time and speak accurately. This helps them cultivate credibility, which the all-women team of *desengañadoras* needs given that their hostess has tasked them with narrating “casos verdaderos” (118).

The consistent characterization of the love that Zayas’s male protagonists profess for women as a malady also underscores its inherent moral sickness and with it, the latency of rape. Take the case of Federico in “Desengaño noveno,” who like Don Diego and Esteban composes and sings lyrics (420–22). At the beginning of the tale, he travels to England holding the proxy of his brother, the king of Hungary, to marry princess Beatriz. Hopelessly in love with his now sister-in-law and queen, Federico spends the wedding festivities

con tanta tristeza, que daba qué sospechar a cuantos le veían tan melancólico, y más a la reina, que, cuantas veces le miraba, le hallaba divertido en contemplar su hermosura. Y como era bien entendida, no dejó de imaginar la enfermedad de Federico, y sus melancólicos accidentes de qué procedían, y se determinó a no preguntarle la causa, por no oír alguna atrevida respuesta. (412)

The queen’s marital faith holds despite Federico’s glances and obvious melancholy. In fact, “la hermosa reina ... como más acertado médico, había entendido de qué accidentes le nacía la enfermedad de Federico, y hallando sin remedio la cura, pedía a Dios le abriese los ojos del entendimiento para que, conocido su error, saliese de él” (414). The narrator likens her insight to

that of a canny physician because medieval and early modern medicine understood, following the teaching of Avicenna, that the only proper cure for erotic melancholy was the fulfillment of sexual desire (Beecher and Ciavolella, 81).

A year passes, and when the king leaves for a military campaign, one day in the presence of the queen's retinue, Federico addresses her thus:

Cierto, señora, que hoy me han contado un caso que pasa ante la justicia ordinaria de esta corte ... y es que dos hermanos que hay en ella amaban una mujer, y el mayor, por más rico, o más dichoso, la mereció esposa, con que el menor quedó tan desesperado que viéndose morir, hallando ocasión, por fuerza gozó a su cuñada. Hase sabido, y está preso por ello, y no se atreven a publicar sentencia contra él, porque el marido, que está inocente del hecho, no lo entienda, y no saben qué remedio tomar en el caso. (417)

Federico has managed to declare his feelings for Beatriz in public through a fictional story that outlines a possible outcome of their situation. He threatens to rape her so he can satisfy his desire and insinuates that she will have to keep it quiet lest the loss of honor pushes her husband to kill her. When Beatriz retorts that the just dessert for such offence is death, he asks whether a man ought to be put to death just for being in love. She affirms that “ese hombre no amaba, sino apetecía el deleite” (417). Federico does not yield. Beatriz finally concedes that his is indeed “amor,” albeit “deshonesto” (417).

From an early modern perspective, both are right. In Christian and Platonic terms, Federico's love is of a lowly sort, unworthy to share a name with the love that is Christ, according to the Apostle John (1 John 4:16). Renaissance Neoplatonism maintained that love leads us to contemplate heavenly beauty. Invoking the distinction made in Plato's *Symposium* between Aphrodite Urania and Aphrodite Pandemos, Ferrand writes in *De la maladie d'amour*:

we must recognize ... that ... there are two loves, sons of these two goddesses: divine love and common or vulgar love. Metaphysicians and theologians discourse of the essence and properties of the first, while physicians deal with ordinary physical love, which is either honest or dishonest. They teach the means for preserving the former in marriage, and they prescribe the sovereign remedies for healing and preserving men from that lascivious, unchaste love. (225)

As one that never leads to good marriages, makes men physically and morally sick, and is susceptible to be described in medical terms, love as practiced by the male characters in Zayas's narratives is “vulgar” and “dishonest.” The narrator of “Desengaño quinto” deems that men like Don Diego loved “ilícita y deshonestamente” (266). Ferrand would agree and underscore Don Diego's penchant for poetry. He finds incitements to erotic melancholy in “poetic fables, dirty sonnets, and odes; lascivious verses, songs, and the like” (243)—that is, in the ancient, medieval and early modern genres that inform Don Diego and Federico's amatory discourse and whence their verse and letters draw tropes and figures.

That conception of love is one of those “literary representations that so authorize sexual violence as to make rape virtually indistinguishable from or an integral part of lovemaking,” as Barbara J. Baines wrote of early modern English texts (84). Hence, rape occurs frequently throughout Zayas's narratives as “a logical and necessary component of a patriarchal social, economic, and ... aesthetic order” (Nelson, 66), “indistinguishable” for practical purposes from

“heterosexual sexuality” (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 201), at least as male characters conceive it. It is attempted but foiled in the nick of time in “Desengaño noveno” (Zayas 1989, 445) and the *maravillas* “El imposible vencido” (2004, 456) and “El juez de su causa” (499). It is accomplished through deceit and without the use of force in the *maravillas* “Al fin se paga todo” (437) and “El imposible vencido” (466). Men rape the female protagonists while unconscious in the *maravilla* “La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor” (234) and “Desengaño primero” (1983, 137). Conversely, in “Desengaño segundo” (193) and “Desengaño quinto,” they do so through overwhelming physical and psychic force, which renders the victims unconscious.<sup>5</sup>

The *maravilla* “El imposible vencido” illustrates the degree to which Zayas’s male characters tend to view rape as a legitimate form of lovemaking. In Spanish-occupied Flanders, Arnesto bribes one of the servants of his neighbor Doña Blanca, regularly breaks into her house at night disguised as a ghost and haunts it so, through fright, he can render her incapacitated by frightening her and thus rape her. When Don Rodrigo exposes the ruse, the Duke of Alba, as head of the Spanish administration, orders Arnesto’s arrest and prosecution. Don Rodrigo, the very man who brought Arnesto to justice, pleads in his favor. This is because he sees Arnesto as a man driven by love and therefore not really guilty: “más piadoso que admirado escuchaba don Rodrigo al flamenco, disculpando su yerro con su amor, y al uno y al otro la hermosura de doña Blanca” (457). Don Rodrigo will later help his friend Don Beltrán in pursuing Doña Blanca by tricking her into believing that the man who has entered her chamber under the cover of night is him, whom she loves, when in fact it is Don Beltrán, with whom she has sex although in fact she would not want to. The rape culture within which these men operate also sets up discourses that present rape as inevitable and even encourage it. Sohaila Abdulali, speaking of modern-day rape cultures with systems “built to support and condone abuse” such as “homophobic laws ... the unbridled power of spiritual leaders” or a “network of collusion and complicity” (48–49), speaks of “institutional consent: you know you can get away with it because the whole system is set up to help you get away with it” (49). In Zayas’s fiction, erotic melancholy functions as one such discourse that lets men get away with rape.

Rape in Zayas’s tales is the inevitable consequence of the erotic melancholy that afflicts the male protagonists who are also excellent poets in both the literal and the figurative sense. In the eyes of early modern medicine, the goal of melancholy desire is the sexual possession of the beloved; it intensifies with delay or denial; and it wanes once that possession is achieved by whatever means. The narrator of “Desengaño octavo” explains in Aristotelian terms the economy of such desire: “Pues todas las veces que yo dijere que deseo una cosa, teniéndola, engaño; que lo que poseo no lo puedo desear” (369–70). Beatriz, resembling a canny physician, understands that Federico’s desire can only be satisfied if they have sex. The problem is that nothing like delay or denial intensifies a desire such as his. When Federico finds himself “en todo punto privado del bien, creció con más fuerza el deseo de alcanzarle” (414).

In Zayas’s narratives, rape and poetic activity are contiguous in men because of the melancholy that afflicts them. Building on the tradition that situates masculinist violence against their female beloveds as what melancholy men poets do in order to create, for instance in Cervantes’s “El curioso impertinente,” Góngora’s *Polifemo* and Calderón’s *El pintor de su deshonra*, Zayas takes a further step by figuring melancholy poets such as Don Diego and Federico as rapists and, crucially, by figuring the rape act as a kind of poesis in itself. This is because through rape, men such as these in Zayas’s fiction effect transformations, both directly and indirectly, on the bodies of women, turning them into the objects of their poesis—of their

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the rape of women in Zayas’s fiction, see Valencia 2022.

making. These transformations are of two sorts. One is disfiguration: the destruction of the woman's *figura*. That is the word that Daphne employs to refer to her body and beauty in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when she begs her father to destroy it lest Apollo rape her: "'fer, pater,' inquit 'opem! si flumina numen habetis, / qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram! ('she ... cries out, / 'Help, father! If these streams of yours are holy, / destroy what makes me pleasing. Change my form!"; 1:40; bk. 1, lines 546–47).<sup>6</sup> The rapists of *Parte segunda* do not effect the disfigurations themselves, just like in the *Metamorphoses* it is not Apollo who turns Daphne into the laurel tree. But the relatives who perpetrate these disfigurations, like Daphne's father, do so in direct response to the rapes. In "Desengaño segundo," the rape of Camila brings public dishonor to her husband, who reacts by poisoning her, which results in her disfigurement: "fue el caso que no le quitó el veneno luego la vida, mas hinchóse toda con tanta monstruosidad, que sus brazos y piernas parecían unas gordísimas columnas, y el vientre se apartaba una gran vara de la cintura; sólo el rostro no tenía hinchado" (195). In "Desengaño quinto," after authorities have cleared her of guilt and punished Don Diego, Doña Inés's relatives immure her for six years, a horrific torture that likewise renders her grotesquely disfigured during that time (287).

The other manner of transformation of women's bodies that male victimizers effect in *Parte segunda* is to render said bodies more appealing for the masculine gaze through mortification. This they accomplish by themselves, like Don Juan Roca does in *El pintor de su deshonra*. Zayas's narrators reveal that many male characters subscribe to a trope that we could label after the line in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which the narrator remarks how terror renders Daphne lovelier: "aucta ... forma fuga est ('Her beauty grew with flight"; 1:38; 1.530). Several *desengaños* contain scenes, focalized by male victimizers, in which the narrator remarks on how suffering and death turns beautiful and virtuous women even more beautiful. This is the case of Roseleta in "Desengaño tercero" (211), Elena in "Desengaño cuarto" (254), Doña Magdalena in "Desengaño decimo" (482), and particularly the Doña Blanca of "Desengaño séptimo."<sup>7</sup> Of the last, Amy Williamsen observed, "Mourning becomes her" and "death becomes her even more" (622). Initially, "el luto que traía por la señora Marieta la hacía más hermosa" (Zayas 1983, 363). Then her father-in-law bleeds her to death, which sparks the desire of her husband. Since their wedding he had neglected the marriage bed and had engaged instead in a same-sex affair with a servant, which Doña Blanca at some point witnessed. Now that she is bleeding to death, however, he finds her sexually arousing:

A poco rato que la sangre comenzó a salir, doña Blanca se desmayó, tan hermosamente, que diera lástima a quien más la aborreciera, y quedó tan linda, que el príncipe, su esposo, que la estaba mirando, o enternecido de ver la deshojada azucena, o enamorado de tan bella muerte, volviéndose a su padre con algunas señales piadosas en sus ojos, le dijo:

—... os doy palabra que, cuanto ha que conozco a Blanca, no me ha parecido más linda que ahora. Por esta hermosura merece perdón su atrevimiento. (363)

<sup>6</sup> All translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are by Stephanie McCarter.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of how Zayas contests the tradition of "aestheticizing the representation of violence to women" found in plays such as *El castigo sin venganza* (1634) by Lope de Vega, *El médico de su honra* (1635) and *El pintor de su deshonra* (ca. 1645) by Calderón, see Jehenson and Welles, 189–93. Margaret Greer pointed to the "multiple reminiscences of *El médico de su honra*" in Zayas's "Desengaño octavo" (2000, 440n15).

This melancholy poetics that Zayas denounces in *Desengaños*, so entwined with rape, was gendered as masculine in her time for two reasons. First, because rape was even more gendered in early modern Spanish jurisprudence than it is now. The law only conceived of male perpetrators and female victims (Rodríguez Ortiz, 65). Second, because of what Juliana Schiesari termed “the gendering of melancholia” (61). Even though the Pseudo-Aristotle mentions the Sibyls among the exceptional melancholics, the subsequent tradition held that only men, and not women, could excel thanks to the excess of melancholy (Valencia 2021, 24). Such gendering found a basis in the medical understanding of how melancholy works. The Pseudo-Aristotle recognized that melancholy seems to have contradictory effects: while it can make men excessive and exceptional, it can also plunge them into sadness and fear. He attributed such disparity of effects to the temperature of melancholy, whereby the cold melancholy humor makes men glum and cowardly, while the hot one renders them outgoing and even violent (287; 30.1.954a).

In his influential *Examen de ingenios*, Huarte makes three relevant claims regarding the relationship between melancholy, creativity and women. First, that cold melancholy “no vale nada para el ingenio, antes hace los hombres necios, torpes y risueños porque carecen de imaginativa” (372). Conversely, “cólera adusta” or the hot melancholy that results from the scorching of cholera is the one “de la cual dijo Aristóteles que hace los hombres sapientísimos” (372). Second, that the resulting “temperamento ... caliente y seco” drives men to all sorts of “maldad” such as “adulterios, robos, temeridades, rapiña, audacia, enemistad, engaños, mentiras” (268). Thus, Huarte establishes a connection between “creativity and violence” through melancholy (Valencia 2021, 37). Third, he affirms, “tengo por cierto, y es imposible, ninguna mujer ser templada ni caliente: todas son frías y húmidas” (Huarte, 612). Indeed, by that time Galenic medicine had come to understand coldness and wetness as the constitutive qualities of femaleness, while heat and dryness were the ones of maleness (Valencia 2021, 32–33). Huarte concludes that God created Eve “fría y húmida, que es el temperamento necesario para ser fecunda y paridera, y el que contradice al saber” (614–15). Within this Galenic framework, in Santa Cruz’s dialogue *De melancholia*, women who suffer from hot and dry melancholy merely fall into depression, instead of becoming creative (Blanco Pérez, 177).

Through an allusion to the myth of Apollo and Daphne in “Desengaño quinto,” Zayas denounces the entrenchment of this melancholy, misogynistic and properly masculine poetics in the imagination of her time. When describing the doll of Doña Inés crafted by the *Morisco* necromancer to allow Don Diego to rape her, the narrator remarks that if the doll were life-size, he would fall in love with it and “con ella olvidara el natural original de doña Inés, a imitación del que se enamoró de otra pintura y de un árbol” (277). The latter allusion is to the myth of Apollo’s “amor” or love for Daphne (Ovid, 1:34; 1.452), which constituted one of the most recurrent templates for erotic desire in early modern poetry, most notably in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, where the beloved is named Laura after the laurel tree into which Daphne’s father transforms her lest Apollo succeed. The former allusion may be to Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection upon the water, which would look like a “pintura.” As José M. Hidalgo noticed, Don Diego’s love resembles that of Narcissus and Apollo because his beloved would flee rather than let him touch her (136); and he also evokes Pygmalion, who fell in love with a statue (140–41). By raping Doña Inés, Don Diego emulates Apollo and Pygmalion, heroes of art in the early modern imagination. Their desire to rape initiates a chain reaction that will result in the transformation of their beloveds—not necessarily by their hand, but definitely because of their desire to rape. Daphne became the tree with which to crown victorious athletes, generals



and poets because Apollo loved her, addressed a tender love song to woo her and, in the face of her disdain, tried to rape her. Venus breathed life into Pygmalion's statue of a beautiful woman when the sculptor, infatuated by his own creation, began to fondle it, obviously without asking for consent (see Ovid, 2:84; 10.280–81).

In view of such models, it is inevitable that when melancholy poets like Don Diego or Federico find their love unrequited, they take recourse in rape, even though they aspire to seduction. Hence Federico's veiled warning to Beatriz, or a set of *endechas* that he writes and that hired musicians perform for her also in front of her retinue sometime later. Federico's poetic persona likens his beloved to "Dafne, que a Febo ultraja, / porque la sigue Febo" (421). He identifies with Phoebus or Apollo and implies that her refusal constituted an *ultraje* that left him no other choice, just like the nymph's refusal leaves the god no other choice but to try to rape her in Ovid's version: "sed enim non sustinet ultra / perdere blanditias iuvenis deus, utque monebat / ipse Amor, admisso sequitur vestigial passu" ("The youthful god / would waste no more sweet talk. As Love himself / urged him, he chased her footprints at full speed"; 1:38; 1.530–32). Don Diego similarly feels "algo pesaroso, por parecerle que doña Inés estaba fuera de su sentido con el maldito encanto, y que no tenía facultad para hablar, teniendo aquéllos, aunque favores, por muertos" (277–78). And as he continues to rape Doña Inés every night for an entire month, "si el acedia de ver que todo aquello era violento no le templara, se volviera loco de alegría" (278). "Acedia" designates here the bitter aftertaste of regret or dissatisfaction.<sup>8</sup> Yet despite his acedia, Don Diego continues to rape Doña Inés. Such is the only means of fulfillment he deems available and that is how, as Zayas denounces, many men of her time conceived of a properly masculine way of making things—that is, a poetics.

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The characterization of most men as melancholy tracks with the oft-stated goal of the narrators of *Parte segunda*: to disabuse or *desengañar* readers, particularly noblewomen, about the tricks or *engaños* of most men. When, at the beginning of the frame tale, Lisis convenes her friends and relatives for three evenings of narrative entertainment, she decrees that in this occasion, in contrast with the frame tale of *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, only women will serve as narrators and that they must relate "casos verdaderos, y que tuviesen nombre de desengaños .... Fue la pretensión de Lisis en esto volver por la fama de las mujeres" (118). The denunciation of the iniquities of melancholy men is only credible and effective if the women making it are trustworthy. What should we make then of the melancholy that prominent female characters display throughout *Parte segunda*? What are its implications regarding feminine poetics? Given that melancholy leads men in Zayas's fiction to perpetrate the sexual violence that is inseparable from their poetics, wouldn't instances of female melancholy undermine the feminine poetics of Lisis's team of *desengañadoras* and their case on behalf of women? The following pages elucidate this question because thus we fully appreciate what melancholy

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<sup>8</sup> As Pedro Malón de Echaide writes in *La conversión de la Magdalena* (1588), sinners "están enemistados con Dios por el pecado, mas quedan con un enfado y desabrimiento contra él y con una cierta acedia del vicio, que consigo mismo se corren y avergüenzan" (293; pt. 3, ch. 23). The *Diccionario de Autoridades* came to define the noun as "el sabór acedo y acerbo" (s.v. "acedia"). The word also designated since the early Middle Ages the sin of sloth, whereby the sinner gives up on the faith and works that would earn him salvation out of an erroneous certainty of damnation (Valencia 2021, 26). In that sense, *acedia* in Zayas's writing also seems to name the mourning over the loss of something that was never fully possessed to begin with. In "El desengaño amando y premio de la virtud," sixth *maravilla*, as Don Fernando puts off the fulfillment of his promise to marry her, Doña Juana experiences acedia: "porque cuando consideraba que en no estar casados estaba tan a pique de perderle, esta acedia perturbaba su contento y le daba congojas de muerte" (2004, 383).

reveals about Zayas's project of a properly feminine poetics; that is, poetry by noblewomen, intended for noblewomen and addressing the issues that, in Zayas's view, should concern noblewomen the most. As Elizabeth Rhodes compellingly argued, the women that Zayas's *Parte segunda* addresses and seeks to defend are specifically "noblewomen" (51).

Melancholy afflicts noblewomen throughout *Parte segunda* either when they suffer the terrible consequences of male desire or when they themselves experience a desire that in its erotic nature and destructive consequences is akin to that of melancholy men. Among those in the first group are Doña Inés, Queen Beatriz and Doña Isabel. The first finds herself "tan triste y casi asombrada" by what she believes to have been "descompuestos sueños" and are in fact memories of her nightly victimization by Don Diego (279). Then, regarding the six years during which she suffers torture at the hands of her family, the narrator calls her a "triste mujer de tan desdichada vida" (284). She inhabits a "triste cuerpo" (283). She too describes herself as "una triste y desdichada mujer" (285). The more Beatriz rebuffs his advances in "Desengaño noveno," Federico "se atrevía, cuando la veía, a decirle sentimientos de amor, y a vestir de sus colores, y ya a darla músicas en el terrero, con lo cual la santa reina andaba tan descolorida y triste, que en ninguna cosa hallaba alivio" (419). In "Desengaño primero: La esclava de su amante," Doña Isabel tells that, after her rape, "apenas tenía aliento para vivir. Este suceso dio conmigo en la cama, de una peligrosa enfermedad, que fomentada de mis ahogos y tristezas, me vino a poner a punto de muerte" (138). She even describes the hatred of self and suicidal ideation that physicians, most famously Freud (162), have recognized in melancholics since Antiquity: "yo estaba tan aborrecida, que si no me la di [i.e., death] yo misma, fue por no perder el alma" (138). Soon after she clarifies the object of that hatred: "aborrecida de mí misma" (139).

Although these noblewomen are virtuous, as in theory befits their estate, Zayas suggests that they have made mistakes that either precipitate their victimization or at least worsen it. Doña Isabel is one of those "unwed female characters who suffer the extreme effects of ingenuity," like Rhodes observed (74). Married women, conversely, suffer the extreme effects of righteousness; and like virtuous unmarried women, their suffering takes on the dark hue of melancholy. Beatriz rashly destroys Federico's first love letter, which contains irrefutable proof of his betrayal to his brother and of her faithfulness. The narrator remarks, "no fue pequeño desacierto" (Zayas 1983, 418). For her part, Doña Inés possesses "hermosura; por ésta le vino la desgracia, porque siempre la belleza anda en pasos de ella" (266). Just like the Biblical Dinah in the eyes of early modern Catholic churchmen, Doña Inés makes the fatal mistake of letting her beauty be seen: "Fue vista de todos, unos alabando su hermosura y la dicha de su marido en merecerla, y otros envidiándola y sintiendo no haberla escogido para sí, y otros amándola ilícita y deshonestamente, pareciéndoles que con sus dineros y galanterías la granjearían para gozarla" (266).<sup>9</sup> Within the rape culture that surrounds Zayas's characters, Doña Inés's honesty becomes a liability: "Sólo amaba a su marido, y con este descuido, ni se escondía, y si estaba en el balcón, no dejaba de asistir a las músicas y demás finezas de don Diego" (267).

The melancholy of these virtuous noblewomen casts a shadow over them because, in Zayas's fictional world, the black humor constitutes the hallmark of ill-fated and rather unruly female desires. Good noblewomen who fall in love with men who seem good but are cruel and

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<sup>9</sup> See Genesis 34.1–2: "And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her." In seventeenth-century Spain, Dinah was "virtually always used by the preachers as an emblem of the dangers to which a woman exposes her honor when she leaves the home" (Salstad, 427).

deceitful suffer from melancholy.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, melancholy features prominently in the characterization of a female protagonist of noble status who, like so many of the men we have seen, is at once the subject of overwhelming erotic desire, proves superlative at crafting language and behaves in a questionable manner: Florentina of “Desengaño décimo” or “Estragos que causa el vicio.” In Florentina’s own words, when her step-sister Doña Magdalena married Don Dionís, “yo triste y desesperada, viéndome en todo punto desposeída del bien que adoraba mi alma. No sé cómo os diga mis desesperaciones y furiosos celos, mas mejor es callarlo, porque así saldrán mejor pintados, porque no hallo colores como los de la imaginación. No digo más, sino que a este efecto, hice un romance” (488). She proceeds to perform that ballad with guitar accompaniment for the enjoyment of her narratee, Don Gaspar.

Don Gaspar finds himself listening to Florentina’s tale because one night he discovered her severely wounded in the middle of the street. He had fallen in love with her earlier, upon noticing her at mass. On this night, she has barely survived a mass murder carried out by her brother-in-law and which, in addition to his own by suicide, claimed the lives of Doña Magdalena and their ten slaves and servants. Once she has recovered and has provided a deposition to the authorities in which she omits information “por no ocasionarse el castigo” (484), Florentina eventually falls in love with Don Gaspar and discloses to him that she conducted an affair with Don Dionís for four years and that she believes that she bears an indirect responsibility for the murders. When she confided in her attendant that she and Don Dionís had promised to marry each other once Doña Magdalena died, her maid came up with a “remedio ... cruel” (493): to frame Doña Magdalena and one of the household pages as lovers so Don Dionís would kill her. But in his wrath, he went on to murder the rest of the household for supposedly facilitating the affair.

Florentina’s foreknowledge of and acquiescence to the attendant’s plot has led prominent scholars to consider her a bad woman and draw momentous conclusions for the interpretation of Zayas’s work. Margaret Greer considered that Florentina “unleashed” the murders and placed her within a larger pattern:

Many of [Zayas’s] tales include at some point a sexually aggressive female antagonist. The general pattern in such tales is that of supportive female relatives versus the “bad woman” who is unrelated—the stranger. The pattern, however, is broken in three very significant places. In the frame narrative, the heroine Lisis’s antagonist is a cousin [i.e., Lisarda], and in the last story in each collection, the competition is between two sisters. (2000, 309)

Resembling the case of the *maravilla* “El jardín engañoso,” Florentina would be “the *enemy within* Magdalena’s house” (312) and the house of women more generally, an allegory for the uncontrollability of female desire (313). Edward Friedman argued that Florentina’s behavior and fate bring to the foreground the “feminist impasse” in which the *Parte segunda* finds itself: “the need simultaneously to work within and against the patriarchal system, within and against history” (475). At the end of the *desengaño*, Florentina receives a royal pardon, inherits all of her step-sister’s and brother-in-law’s considerable wealth, and becomes a nun, just like Lisis, her mother Laura and Doña Isabel renounce the world of men and enter a convent at the conclusion of the frame tale. Friedman wrote, “With her female accomplice, Florentina becomes the

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<sup>10</sup> Such is the case of the female protagonists in the fifth *maravilla*, “La fuerza del amor” (2004, 349); the seventh, “Al fin se paga todo” (433); “Desengaño sexto” (1983, 321); and “Desengaño séptimo” (342–43).

victimizer in a double sense; she does harm to her sister and others, and she damages the reputation of all women. In other words, she belongs to the worst category of women and to the worst (and larger) category of men” (474). Through this seemingly “counterproductive” (472) choice of protagonist for the final *desengaño*, Zayas highlights the “inappropriateness” and “abnormality” of Florentina and the maid relative to other women in the collection (474).

The flaw in this line of interpretation is that Florentina does not actually bear guilt for the murders and that it forgets her noble status, which sets her apart from other women antagonists in Zayas’s *Parte segunda*. It was Don Dionís who perpetrated the killings, not her; and it was the attendant who instigated the murder of Doña Magdalena and the page, not her. Florentina confided the secret cause of her melancholy in the wrong person, she allowed herself to be persuaded by the wicked attendant and then she omitted the full story in her deposition. Knowing Zayas’s fictional world, it was reasonable for Florentina to take this last step: the patriarchal authorities would have dealt with her harshly if they had known of her four-year affair with her brother-in-law. In fact, she is telling Don Gaspar the truth because she loves him and feels guilty: “como se hallaba inferior, no en la buena sangre, en la riqueza y en la hermosura ... sino en la causa que originó el estar ella en su casa” (484). In the end, she does not get her wish to be with Don Gaspar, who ceases to love her upon learning the truth (499). Lisis, the narrator, presents Florentina’s royal pardon as well deserved and emphasizes that, “sirviéndole de castigo su mismo dolor,” she has since led a “santa y religiosísima vida” (500).

Florentina does not belong to “the worst category of women” and should not be conflated with other “sexually aggressive female antagonist[s].” By heaping abuse on them, placing almost all of them outside of the nobility and keeping them in strictly secondary roles, Zayas’s narrators put those women in a distinct and separate set. Some of them are indeed wanton rivals of the respective protagonists: Alejandra, an older and married woman who seduces Don Manuel away from Doña Isabel in “Desengaño primero” (141–42); Angeliana in “Desengaño tercero,” who out of jealousy because of her beloved’s infatuation with Roseleta, seduces her husband and frames her as an adulteress, which drives him to kill her (220–21); and Clavela in “Desengaño octavo,” who also from jealousy, alerts Doña Mencía’s brother that someone pursues his sister, which prompts him to murder her (377–79). Another three are overtly evil and tellingly remain nameless. Doña Inés’s sister-in-law in “Desengaño quinto” is presented at the outset as “de lo cruel que imaginarse puede” (265), and together with her husband and brother-in-law relentlessly victimizes Doña Inés for six years (281–84). In “Desengaño décimo,” Florentina’s attendant unleashes Don Dionís’s rampage. Upon seeing the consequence of her lie, she cries, “¡Ya no hay perdón para mí en el cielo, ni en la tierra, pues por apoyar un mal con tan grande y falso testimonio, he sido causa de tantas desdichas!” (497). She acknowledges her guilt and does not inculcate Florentina. Finally, the Black slave in “Desengaño cuarto” accuses her mistress and her male cousin of having an illicit affair because the latter would not requite her advances. Believing the lie, the husband burns the cousin alive, subjects his wife to abject servitude for six years and replaces her in the marital bed and as lady of the house with the slave, on whom the narrator and she herself heap racist abuse (237, 251).

Instead, Florentina stands among the noblewomen in *Parte segunda* characterized as melancholy and who prove adept at poetry and manage to escape the brutality of men through beautiful lyrics, clever fictions or timely deceptions. Two of Zayas’s most virtuous female characters also belong to that group. In “Desengaño noveno,” Queen Beatriz “disimuló su enojo” when an ensemble of musicians performs for her and her retinue Federico’s amorous *endechas* (422). Soon after, she makes him walk into a cage where she can imprison him until the king

returns: “la reina tan falsa contra Federico, cuanto él lozano y alegre” (423). Toward the end of “Desengaño quinto,” Doña Inés learns from her bitter experience and likewise crafts language carefully to achieve her goals. After six years of immurement, she manages to alert the widow next door of her plight. Asked by the widow what is it she did, Doña Inés cannily responds, “Ya te he dicho ... que no tengo culpa; mas son cosas muy largas y no se pueden contar” (286). In the past, the public disclosure of her story did not save her from the victim-blaming violence of her relatives, and it likely will not save her from the victim blaming of her neighbor. Now Doña Inés knows that she needs poetic tricks like concealment and omission. But crucially, such women-authored poetic tricks are not malicious in nature and neither are they motivated by an erotic desire of such pathological nature that it will inevitably drive them to rape, as is the case of men-authored poetic tricks.

Florentina, moreover, is not the only female melancholic who masters language, survives masculinist violence and by the end of *Parte segunda* achieves an advantageous position. At the outset of the frame tale, Lisis asks her beautiful new *Morisca* slave to sing a ballad of her own to kick off the first soirée. Then the slave narrates the first *desengaño*, in which she reveals that she is Doña Isabel, a Christian noblewoman. Don Manuel raped her. When he fled so he could avoid the promise of marriage he made to appease her, Doña Isabel disguised herself as a slave, fashioned a prosthetic “clavo y S para el rostro,” the usual brand of chattel slaves in early modern Spain, and convinced a trusty servant to sell her so she could become “la esclava de su amante” and in that way covertly follow him (153). After the death of Don Manuel, she was sold to Lisis’s family. For the rest of the frame tale of *Parte segunda*, Doña Isabel delights Lisis and her guests in between *desengaños* by singing another eleven lyrics, sometimes alone, sometimes with musicians, practically all of them of her own authorship. Thus, characters in the frame tale and readers alike receive abundant evidence of Doña Isabel’s supreme talent for poetry in both the narrow sense of verses and the broad sense of all things feigned with words. Doña Isabel herself impresses upon her narratees what an excellent poet she is. She includes in her *desengaño* three of her sonnets and one set of *décimas*. Regarding her early years, she tells them, “Yo fui en todo extremada, y más en hacer versos, que era el espanto de aquel reino, y la envidia de muchos no tan peritos en esta facultad” (128). In a reading that echoes those we have seen of Florentina, Karlana Sakas has accused Doña Isabel of deceiving “her fictional audience through narrative ambushes” (809), of exploiting “the power of her beauty” (813) and of wheedling Lisis to grant her “freedom from servitude, and financial support” (814). Sakas considered Doña Isabel such an unreliable narrator that she even doubted her claim to having been raped (815, 818).

Awareness of the flaws of Florentina and even of Doña Isabel, if one were to follow Sakas’s reading, should not entail a muddling of the clear distinction made by Zayas’s narrators between melancholy noblewomen like them on one side and the likes of Alejandra, the cruel sister-in-law, the slanderous slave, or Florentina’s attendant on the other. The latter women are not characterized as melancholy. Melancholy constitutes instead the hallmark of noble-born exemplars of women poets like Doña Isabel, Beatriz, Doña Inés and even the flawed Florentina. Here Zayas, like other women writers of early modern Spain (Soufas, 173–75), rebuts the exclusion of women from the creative gifts of hot melancholy in early modern medical thought. Instead, she appropriates the potency of masculine melancholy for a properly feminine poetics because women poets need the gifts that melancholy imparts on those it afflicts. For early modern literary theory, melancholy enhances the poet’s *natura* or *ingenium*, one of the main sources of verse, the other two being *ars*, or acquired technique, and *exercitatio*, or practice. Doña Isabel and the nameless narrator of the frame tale argue that feminine poetics is all about

*natura*. When she claims that she has been an exceptional poet from childhood, she adds that verses composed by women should be judged kindly, since poetry “es digna de más aplauso en una mujer que en un hombre, por adornarlos [i.e., verses] con menos arte” (128). The narrator of the frame tale argues:

aunque las mujeres no son Homeros con basquiñas y enaguas y Virgilio con moño, por lo menos, tienen el alma y las potencias y los sentidos como los hombres. No quiero decir el entendimiento, que, aunque muchas pudieran competir en él con ellos, fáltales el arte de que ellos se valen en los estudios, y como lo que hacen no es más que una natural, fuerza es que no salga tan acendrado. (259)

Women writers who thrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did so by inhabiting what Stephanie Merrim termed a “third space” where they could be simultaneously contained and accepted (31). Juan Pérez de Montalbán, the best-selling Spanish novelist of the seventeenth century and an old family friend of Zayas’s (Rodríguez de Ramos, xxxii), bestowed upon her the moniker of Tenth Muse in the 1632 miscellany *Para todos* (Greer 2022, 6). As Merrim explained, “the classical construct of the Tenth Muse (first applied to Sappho)” was again used in the early modern period “to frame a space of exceptionality for learned women. Should it be so desired, the learned woman would be celebrated as an *exception* to her sex, as prodigious, as a *rara avis*, as a *freak*” (30).

In Zayas’s *Parte segunda*, melancholy becomes that mark of exceptionality and freakishness for women poets. Zayas belonged to the generation of Spanish women writers, born from 1590 to 1605 and publishing from 1630 to 1650, who stopped apologizing for divulging their texts and instead sought to compete in equal footing with men writers (Baranda Leturio, 125). From that place of consolidation of a tradition of women’s writing in Spain, Zayas took a further step through her imbrication of melancholy, erotic desire, rape and the gendering of poetics in *Parte segunda*. Nieves Baranda Leturio has observed that seventeenth-century Spanish women writers were “sujetos social y literariamente desempoderados en el sistema de su tiempo, con el que interactúan desde la periferia y en los resquicios de expresión en que pueden acomodarse gracias a su propia capacidad para encontrarlos y expandirlos” (113). By characterizing women poets in *Parte segunda* as melancholy, Zayas locates and exploits one of those cracks in the patriarchal literary discourse, a crack where women writers can settle and thrive.

Zayas’s melancholy women poets in *Parte segunda* can be those of unimpeachable virtue, such as Beatriz and Doña Inés, but also those who are admittedly flawed, such as Doña Isabel and especially Florentina. In the case of the latter two, melancholy constitutes their necessary and characteristic flaw qua women poets, a flaw that in any case does not drive them to commit the rapes, tortures and murders that melancholy men poets perpetrate throughout the book. Melancholy does not even render them as radically other as the Blackness of the slanderous slave from “Desengaño cuarto” or the cruelty of the wicked sister-in-law from “Desengaño quinto.” Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar observed that figures of female authorship in nineteenth-century English and American literature engage in the “duplicity and bad faith” that they termed the schizophrenia of authorship (69). In the case of Doña Isabel and Florentina, Zayas’s version of that is melancholy. Her claim of melancholy for feminine poetics constitutes one of those “radical misreadings of patriarchal poetics” that Gilbert and Gubar theorized (79). As we have seen, in early modern Europe, melancholy in relation to creativity

had been gendered as exclusively masculine. Furthermore, ties between melancholy and creativity had significantly weakened or disappeared in Spanish literary theory since the turn of the seventeenth century, as evidenced by López Pinciano and Alfonso de Carvallo (96–100; see Valencia 2021, 218). Finally, the hot and dry melancholy that fostered creativity had been described as unfeminizing in Santa Cruz's *De melancholia*, according to whom the “vírgenes, viudas y monjas” (110) who are not engaging in sexual intercourse and therefore retain sperm, which putrefies in their wombs and scorches into hot and dry melancholy, develop hirsutism and become sterile (92), and therefore abnormal with respect to the norms governing the early modern understanding of the female sex (Valencia 2021, 34).

For Florentina and Doña Isabel, such melancholy is akin to the unsexing that in Gilbert and Gubar's account renders the woman writer a monster-woman (34). And like those monster-women (28), Florentina and Doña Isabel manage to escape patriarchal violence and even improve their material station. For Zayas, women poets should avail themselves of melancholy. It might cast shadows on their characters, but those shadows are worth it when it comes to develop the kind of poetry by and for noblewomen that addresses the issues that Zayas considers of their paramount concern. Through the characterization of Florentina, Zayas argues that women can be flawed and perhaps should be if that is what it takes to survive masculinist violence and craft the speeches and fictions that will set them free and will disabuse or *desengañar* fellow women. The first and most prominent of the *desengañadoras* in the frame tale is none other than Doña Isabel. Against those like Huarte, whose gendering of melancholy excluded women from the black humor's creative gifts, or those like Santa Cruz, who deemed female melancholics as unwomanly, Zayas endows several of her women protagonists with melancholy, despite its shadows, so they may develop a powerful poetics of their own.

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