Refiguring Authority: Reading, Writing, and Rewriting in Cervantes

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John E. Keller, Editor
For Emma and the guys,
who read and write a lot and
never cease to question authority
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Acknowledgments

This book began to take shape twenty years ago, when I was asked to teach Don Quijote to undergraduates at Georgetown University. Though a medievalist by profession, temperament, and choice, I reluctantly agreed to do so and embarked upon a journey of enlightening discovery, which led to an abiding interest in Cervantes. As I, a philologist by training, opened the book to prepare my first lectures, I realized I could sympathize with and savor the artifice of the text, said to be composed from disparate redactions of the hero’s story. The links between my own practice of philology—my personal struggles to read, collate, and define authoritative versions of texts from multiple manuscript redactions—and Cervantes’ narration at that moment instilled in me a profound admiration for his genius and invention, as well as an ironic appreciation and the beginnings of a deep distrust in the objectivity of my own craft. To be sure, it prompted me to explore the inscription of textual variation in the novel and to write an early version of chapter 4.

As I read Cervantes again, and again, and as the years progressed, my initial taste for Cervantes grew into a craving, and I implored chairs and deans to let me teach Don Quijote, as well as other courses on his work. This craving, coupled with questions raised by my students, some of whom I can now say with pride are respected Cervantistas cited in the bibliography, led to further exploration of this exceptional writer and reader, and ultimately to my personal questioning of the possibility of an objective positivist philology. Indeed, it was under the charm of reading Cervantes that I discovered the powerful tools of contemporary literary theory and the insight of such formidable readers and writers as Genette, Foucault, Kristeva, de Man, Jauss, and Said, all of whom have now left a deep and different imprint on my work as a scholar,
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A Note on Translations and Editions

Although all English translations of Cervantes are imperfect (Allen 1979), and all translators, as an anonymous Toledan Moor confirms and as the Italians are apt to say, are traitors to the text, I have chosen to cite the following English versions next to the original Spanish, albeit trusting that most readers will comprehend the latter: Miguel de Cervantes, *The Deceitful Marriage and Other Exemplary Novels*, trans. Walter Starkie, Signet Classics 157 (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1963). For reasons of personal preference and chronological proximity to the original, I have elected to divide the English citations from *Don Quijote* between the two following translations: Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote of the Mancha*, trans. Thomas Shelton, The Harvard Classics (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1937), for all quotations from part I, and Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Tobias Smollett (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986), for all quotations from part II. Translations from *El galardo español* and *El retablo de las maravillas* are my own.

Introduction

Reading, Writing, and Rewriting in Cervantes

Yo soy aquel que en la invención excede
a muchos, y al que falte en esta parte,
es fuerza que su fama falta quede.

I am he who in matters of invention
surpasses many, and he who lacks this facet,
perforce suffers in his fame.

—Cervantes, Viaje del Parnaso

Parts of four of the six chapters in this book have appeared elsewhere in different form, in disparate and sometimes obscure places, over the course of the last fifteen years. These have now all been reread, substantially rewritten, and gathered around a central theme—namely that reading, writing, and rewriting, more than a guiding principle of academic publishing, is central to the process of invention and textual composition in Cervantes. Although each of the six chapters is devoted to a separate work, or to a significant portion of a larger work, each in its own right seeks to demonstrate from a different perspective the pervasiveness and variety of the dynamics of reading, writing, and rewriting in the Cervantine imagination. However, each of these vantage points by definition also limits each perspective presented by restricting the questions they raise and the answers they provide. Thus, while every chapter affirms a position relative to the material it examines, the volume does not, of course, resolve all the complexities informing textual production in Cervantes, nor does it lead to fashioning a comprehensive theory of composition applicable to all his works. Indeed, the latter is probably impossible to achieve since, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1988) and David Bleich (1978) persuasively argue, all critical viewpoints, like the texts they survey, are just that—outlooks
resulting from particular identities and the interactions of unique times, places, personalities, and circumstances.

In the absence of a global theory of composition, it is nevertheless clear that Cervantes, when he wrote, would not just respond to specific literary forms, as when in the prologue to *Don Quijote* he explicitly writes that the work was conceived with the express purpose of undoing the pernicious moral and literary example of the romances of chivalry. Rather, he did this and often much more: as he wrote he would critically read, assimilate, deconstruct, and as it were, rewrite—often write against—not just discrete literary traditions but also a broad spectrum of texts and discourses ranging from abstract Renaissance literary theory to specific legends, textual typologies, even his own prior versions of a passage.

Indeed, writing as reading and reading as writing is perhaps the major trope shaping the theoretical underpinnings of Cervantes' masterpiece, *Don Quijote*, a book as much about books and the readers and writers of books as it is about the mad adventures of its redoubtable protagonist and his amusing squire. As the text is laid out before us we realize that its telling is a reading, that its redaction is a relation first by an anonymous voice—who from the beginning invokes the existence of many authored versions of the tale—then by an unnamed Toledan Morisco translator, and finally by a dubious Arab historian named Cide Hamete Benengeli, who is accused of being dishonest and is capable even of discrediting his own authority. As this happens and as the voices and the perspectives shift and overlay one upon the other, readers of *Don Quijote* slowly realize that the text is reading itself as we are reading it, and we come to appreciate the protagonist's dementia. We, too, fail to distinguish between what is told and what is read, what is written and what is real, and finally what is mediated and constructed by our imaginations. Reading thus becomes the focal point of writing, not just as the curate and the barber critically condemn the heresies in Don Quijote's library, but as the story in chapter 9 takes flight with the narrator's confession of his own lectomania (“y como yo soy aficionado a leer, aunque sean los papeles rotos de las calles” 93), leading to the fortuitous recovery of the story's lost threads in a casually surveyed exotic manuscript.

Modern literary theory has explicitly confirmed what Cervantes and his seventeenth-century contemporaries intuitively knew—that reading and writing are two closely linked dimensions of the literary enterprise. Elaborating upon the phenomenon of intertextuality, or the
way in which a work may reflect at the level of discourse another work or textual tradition, for example, Julia Kristeva remarks that literary discourses “apparait comme un langage de textes: toute séquence se fait par rapport a une autre provenant d’un autre corpus, de sorte que toute séquence est doublement orientée: vers l’acte de la reminiscence (évo- cation d’une autre écriture) et vers l’acte de la sommation (la formation de cette écriture)” (1968, 58) (“appear as a language of texts: every sequence is constructed in relation to another originating in another corpus, so that each sequence is oriented in two directions: toward a reminiscence (toward an evocation of another text) and toward a summons (the formation of a new text”). Similarly Jonathan Culler, reviewing Paul Valéry’s statement that of all the arts literature is “the one in which convention plays the greatest role,” concludes that “to write a poem or a novel is immediately to engage with a literary tradition” (1984, 104); that is, to read and to interpret that tradition as one writes.1

Intuitively aware of the role of custom, precedent, and convention in formulating literary discourse, Cervantes and his contemporaries ceaselessly imitated one another, reading and glossing one another’s works, dismembering and reconstructing them, writing both for and against one another, while often ostentatiously playing sophisticated games of literary and intellectual one-upmanship. The result is that literature in late Renaissance Spain is often, rather than a simple matter of source and imitation, of Quellen und Nachahmen, a palimpsest-like process of appropriation, inscription, erasure, and transformation that forges endless series of texts from other texts, thus linking closely the practices of reading, writing, and rewriting.

For a poet like Gongora, for example, the more recondite allusions and abstruse glosses of other works in his own work confirm not only the brilliance of his imagination and his astonishing erudition but also the need to engage the active collusion of a learned audience so familiar with his subtexts, so well schooled in their themes, methods, and language, that even the most obscure reference to another text could be instantly recognized by a competent reader. Put simply, then, other texts constitute an important source not only for understanding how Cervantes’ works were composed but also for establishing how these were read, received, and even rewritten by him and by other authors, and, finally, for comprehending the craft, wit, irony, and subtle conceit that often lie at the heart of seventeenth-century Spanish literature, of which Cervantes is the most imposing figure.

Reading Cervantes may be likened to peeling an onion—one
laughs and cries and is astonished as one advances from the dry exterior mantle and discovers multiple translucent layers of rich discourse built one upon another—all of them genetically connected, yet all separate, all distinct, and all with their own bite and texture. All of Cervantes' texts, it seems, point to multiple referents as they produce and multiply resonances and significations—confirm, deny, or equivocate. As Cervantes composes he appropriates, combines, naturalizes, and effaces other texts by rewriting them and displacing them with his own themes, images, style, and ideology.

This method of composition is neither surprising nor unique, though mastered to an astonishing degree by Cervantes. It points to an economy of mind and a habit of thought at the center of Renaissance humanism and textual culture in general (Greene), and reflects the latter's origins in the venerable tradition of textual glossing at the heart of the humanistic enterprise since the early Middle Ages. Glossing combines commentary with the text on the page, and calls for a synthesis of the dual operations of reading and writing—a process that to this day, as Bloom (1973, 1975) has shown, continues to drive literary invention. The product of this synergy is an entirely new text, a rewriting, or a novel, yet recognizable, text and idea intellectually and discursively linked to the original by residual rhetorical and conceptual traces that may either complement, parry, or contradict.

Reading such works as *La gitanailla* (The Little Gypsy), *El licenciado Vidriera* (The Man of Glass), or *El gallardo español* (The Gallant Spaniard), thus transcends an exclusive focus on the obvious and commands a savoring of the often puzzling incongruities they contain. Each depends upon and presupposes a wider, subtle familiarity with the textual antecedents Cervantes assimilates, deflects, or disputes in their composition. It requires, as well, an appreciation of the fiendishly competitive mental atmosphere in which they were written. Indeed, a text's deliberate disjunctures and disparities may often conceal more than error or a simple gloss—a bizarre lapse or an unpretentious rewriting—and disclose various elements of a literary tradition plus a formidable effort to surpass them, as that tradition is recast to fashion or make room for an entirely new one. Glossing thus permits Cervantes not only to comment upon a prior text but also to exercise and exhibit fully his own intellectual and artistic virtuosity.

To be sure, with characteristically mischievous ambiguity Cervantes refers to his art in the *Viaje del Parnaso* (Journey to Parnassus) as one that constitutes a *desatino*, a word that may mean either a bit of nonsense
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or a deviation from a course or path. He was doubtless very much aware of the unique, aberrant nature of his writing. As Alban Forcione writes about the Novelas ejemplares (Exemplary Novels), "far from being inhibited by the pressures of his culture and captive to its reactionary literary preferences, Cervantes in his aspiration to be the first to novelar in Spanish, proceeds with absolute freedom and sovereign control of his medium. His engagement with all available literary resources is that of a writer who thoroughly understands their potentialities and exploits them independently for his own particular needs. . . . there is hardly a tale that fails to deviate in some radical way from the expectations that its traditional ingredients would rouse in its audience" (1983, 28).

Although the strategies at work in Cervantes' fiction are often uncomplicated when measured against the labyrinthine intertextual techniques of some of his contemporaries, especially such poets as Góngora, they embody equally bold manipulations and inventions. He may explicitly undermine his reader's response through bizarre inversion, nothing less than a monstrous contradiction and gloss of a canonical character as in the figure of Don Quijote or, at other times—when least expected—may teasingly recall a model by the subtest of allusions—a word, a gesture, a place name, or another tenuous sign. Regardless of the referent, however, the latter is almost always interpreted ironically, or functions in that way within the confines of his text. Ironic reversal followed by reconstruction, in fact, is the most easily discernible pattern in the relation of text to subtext in Cervantes. More than a sign of his genius to compose, it demonstrates his dazzling critical acumen—his ability to read and penetrate the surface of a text in order to understand not just the mechanics of its composition but also its driving ideology.

To be sure, not all rewriting in Cervantes may be understood as humorous parody whose aim is simply to surprise and to delight at recognition of novel deviances from a norm. In its broad sense parody is, as Linda Hutcheon explains, "a repetition with critical distance" focused upon "another work of art or, more generally, another form of coded discourse" (1985, 16), and may possess a deadly serious end. There are often solemn moral and ideological struggles taking place in Cervantes' writing, as he assimilates, critiques, and reconfigures. His extended gloss of the legend of the destruction of Spain, played out in counter example by the Captive's tale in Don Quijote, for instance, represents a sophisticated literary expropriation, an interpretive refacimento of an original legend, and a statement embodying an earnest ethical position
vis-à-vis the racist ideology lying at the legend’s core. Indeed, it can only be fathomed within the larger sphere of the reading, writing, and practice of history in late-sixteenth-century Spain as a deadly serious parody of an imposing text, and as an extended inversion and consumption of Spanish history. Cervantes’ writing may constitute, then, both feats of intelligent interpretation and complex, inventive recastings of ideologically contradictory texts.

As Cervantes’ rewritings do this, they authenticate the artistic and ideological centrality of his sources, yet distinguish and distance themselves from those sources. As he appropriates disparate texts, he amalgamates, sometimes comically distends, and always reshapes the texts so that his prose or verse emerges as part of a new idiom—his own—that at once seeks to incorporate and surpass the imaginative daring and invention of his models. By adopting certain discrete images from a story, Cervantes inscribes his texts within traditions defined by other authors. Yet new, highly ingenious forms and meanings emerge from his grappling with the authority of his prestigious or imposing sources. In his mischievous interpretation of the linguistic, ideological, and formal codes of the Lopean theatrical canon, enacted in his El retablo de las maravillas (The Puppet Show of Marvels), for example, he for all purposes survives and transcends the artistic challenge laid down by Lope de Vega in his Arte nuevo de hacer comedias (New Art of Making Comedies). As Cervantes writes his interlude he finds and explores other hidden resonances, ambiguities, and textual possibilities in the comedia nueva, an invention credited to Lope, and finally questions the very legitimacy and motivating convictions of the form. The result is a humorously transgressive reading and a serious rewriting of an originally transgressive text that leads to both an expression of liberal ideology and an inquiry into the ontology of theater. Through his poetic dismemberment and comic reconstruction of a comedia de labradores, Cervantes pays ironic homage to Lope’s virtuosity while demonstrating that he, too, had fully mastered Lope’s lessons in literary insurrection and was capable of doing considerably more. (On Cervantes and Lope and the challenges to classical standards, see Rivers 1967.)

Cervantes is a writer capable of producing a vast array of peripheral associations and inventive registers, whose sense can be fully actualized only in light of his clear-cut textual antecedents and the wider compass of seventeenth-century literary culture. Through his success at his imaginative literary game, it is easy to perceive why he was both admired and despised by his contemporaries, whose literary forms and social
ideology he surveys in his works with merciless abandon. Like all good
writers of his age, Cervantes expected his readers to be sufficiently well
read to recognize his sources and share his responses to their transfor-
mation. Hence, the reader of El licenciado Vidriera can understand it by
reference to prior knowledge of such texts as Lazarillo de Tormes and such
literary paradigms as the moralizing, open-ended picaresque given its
"definitive" form in Mateo Alemán's Guzmán de Alfarache. In order to
savor and decipher El licenciado Vidriera's premeditated inconsistencies,
one must be prepared to peruse it in a particular way shaped by a common
reading experience, since it only makes sense when viewed as a system
of literary conventions and social ideas appropriated by Cervantes and
mutually understood by his readers. In short, the informed reader is
central to the codification of meaning in Cervantine texts, since their
logic often relies on what Gerard Genette calls transtextualité, or "tout
ce qui le met en relation, manifeste ou sécrète, avec d'autres textes"
(1982, 7) ("all that relates a text, either manifestly or secretly, to other
texts").

In effect, the proper appreciation of Cervantes' anomalous narra-
tives may be achieved only within specific bookish contexts—his and
his readers' readings—and requires the active complicity of an informed
public educated not only in his themes but also in the textual strategies,
discourses, and ideology of his antecedents. In such compositions as La
gitanilla, El licenciado Vidriera, or the Captive's tale in Don Quijote, he
emphatically demonstrates that the picaresque, the roman d'aventure,
and medieval legends are integral parts of the "horizon of expectations" of
his audience, and that they were clearly on his mind as the principal
antecedents of his craft—as major textual traditions worthy of imitation,
yet that, because of their established canonicity, also called for subver-
sion or, at the very least, alteration (what H.R. Jauss [1972] terms
Paradigmaswechsel).

Furthermore, the ingenious echoes of other works in Cervantes'
writing allow us to conjecture as to the way a particular text might have
been understood and interpreted in the seventeenth century, and hence
permit us to explore its social postulates and ideology. The nature,
clarity, or obscurity of Cervantes' allusive writing invites speculation on
his and his contemporaries' sense of the referent and, therefore, prompts
us to test our own suppositions concerning the logic of our thinking
regarding its meaning. He reads other works not as mere descriptions
but as emblems, or evocations of themes and ideas, and in his rewritings
of them allows us to theorize on the historical, social, political, and
cultural conditions and consequences affecting the entire economy of textual production and consumption for the culture in which he moved. We are able to see that what were once thought of as self-sufficient philological, aesthetic, and disciplinary issues are, in light of their complex connections to other discourses and other texts, part of a larger cultural textuality—a synchronic cultural system whose identity and concerns are both historically accessible and formally recorded in his texts. A careful perusal of Cervantes' works leads to the realization that literary texts are in fact not ontologically different from other ones and that all texts produced by a culture in a specific chronological moment may be read in unison, permitting a consciously interpretive stance that recognizes that formal and historical concerns are not opposed but complementary considerations, and that their reciprocity may disclose the nature of a text's ideology.

The Captive's tale in *Don Quijote*, for example, though on one level a rewriting of a medieval legend, registers and promotes certain ways of thinking about the world in which Cervantes lived while it impedes others; and it constitutes a site of uneasy cultural struggle and a catalyst for change whose implications are ineluctably moral, ideological, and political. The relating of the Captive's labors to return to Spain accompanied by a mysterious Moorish maiden becomes the locus in which the dramatic battles of culture, caste, ethics, and the meaning of history are played out for Cervantes. To be sure, if we are at all to understand Cervantes and the clearly anxious religious and ideological climate that exists at the center of this interpolated narrative—and existed in Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century—we must strive to unravel how these forces are portrayed and how they worked for, with, and against each other in the composition of the text.

The notions of reading, glossing, and rewriting are, then, central to our mastery of the way in which Cervantine texts may be understood and were conceived in the author's imagination. In Cervantes, texts materialize from other texts, and writing becomes an extension of the act of reading, as well as a process of textual remembrance. Understanding this synergy involves not just searching for visible influences and facile analogies but also clarifying the fashion in which texts are subsumed and codified by other texts—determining the manner in which residues of established images and language are recollected, linked together, and redeployed in later compositions to produce new meanings and new paradigms. When we read Cervantes and seek to fathom his methods of composition, as well as measure the effects of
literary tradition upon them, we may be certain that other examples of wit, linguistic acumen, and textual manipulation are often not far below the surface. When he wrote, Cervantes' hand was firmly guided by his readings, as he sought both to challenge and reshape the response of his own readers.
Chapter 1

The Dialectics of Writing

El licenciado Vidriera and the Picaresque

Yo he abierto en mis Novelas un camino, por do la lengua castellana puede mostrar un desatino.

I have opened with my novels a new way, through which the Castilian language can demonstrate folly.

—Cervantes, Viaje del Parnaso

El licenciado Vidriera is one of Cervantes' most perplexing and intriguing works, seemingly disjointed and full of puzzling contradiction. Most critical approaches to this novela ejemplar usually address only one of two problems: the enigma of the sources for the figure of the mad licentiate, or the riddle of the conceptual and artistic unity of the work. With regard to the first question, some scholars have sought precedents in real personages or purely imaginative antecedents, while still others proclaim the complete originality of the character.¹ The second problem, the novelistic cohesiveness of El licenciado Vidriera, is, however, the most contested and significant point. Joaquín Casalduero (1943), Armand E. Singer (1951), Frank P. Casa (1964), Gwynne Edwards (1973), Edward H. Friedman (1974), Edward C. Riley (1976), and Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce (in Cervantes 1964) all argue that the work does indeed hold together and that it possesses a well-reasoned and well-developed intellectual and artistic structure. In fact, Casalduero perceives a clearly defined Baroque design and observes that in it it is possible to find a lucid objectification of the problem of original sin—the sin of responsibility in relation to the human intellect. Casalduero concludes that "con El licenciado Vidriera reaparece en el barroco la danza macabra gótica" (1943, 111) ("the Gothic dance of death reappears in the Baroque with The Man of Glass"). Radically at odds with this interpretation are Antonio Oliver (1954), William C. Atkinson (1986), and Ruth El Saffar (1974, 50-61). Atkinson, the most vocal critic, believes
that the licentiate's story is a loose narrative pastiche that exists merely as an excuse for Cervantes to hurl a string of harsh apothegms at a morally bankrupt society. Yet more interesting and probably more important than the question of the novella's plan or Vidriera's origin, however, are Cervantes' literary and ideological objectives in writing the story of yet another inspired madman. All critics, it appears, have failed to confront the more compelling problem of the novella's artistic genesis and its affiliation with other contemporaneous narrative forms in Spain. As remains to be shown, *El licenciado Vidriera* is, through its aberrant constitution, as much a response to the existence of the picaresque novel, and a rewriting of it, as *Don Quijote* is to the novels of chivalry.

Cervantes' utilization of his works as a subtle and penetrating form of literary criticism needs no documentation. His deep-seated preoccupation with the pastoral, sentimental, and Byzantine romances, the *novela morisca*, and other literary forms extant prior to the composition of *Don Quijote* is well documented. Uniformly throughout his writing career Cervantes' creative imagination was also engaged by the challenges presented by the picaresque novel, a form that had achieved its optimum expression and popularity at the time he was composing *Don Quijote*. Shortly after the appearance of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), it is easy to discover the introduction of picaresque themes and concerns in Cervantes' works. In *Don Quijote* alone, for example, we are confronted with numerous characters and episodes attesting to his awareness of the narrative and ideological conventions of picaresque novels. It is to the *Novelas ejemplares*, however, that one must turn in order to appreciate fully the repercussions of the picaresque upon Cervantes' writing. It is commonly recognized that three of the novellas, *La ilustre fregona* (The Illustrious Kitchen Maid), *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (Riconete and Cortadillo), and *El coloquio de los perros* (The Dogs' Colloquy), inscribe picaresque motifs as they subject them to critical scrutiny and reconfiguration. In fact, according to Blanco Aguinaga, the last two novellas constitute deliberate rejections of the form (1957, 328-29, 340-41), while all three are interpreted by Dunn (1993, 205) as daring deconstructions and transformations of the picaresque that at once memorialize and alter the canon as it had been defined by *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) and *Guzmán de Alfarache*.

Cervantes possessed an acute appreciation of the problematics of form and literary convention and grappled with them always as he wrote. In fact, as he tells us, the immediate impulse to write *Don Quijote* was
driven by his desire to counter what he felt were the failings of the novels of chivalry. In his prologue to that work he decisively announces that his objective is to "deshacer la autoridad y cabida que en el mundo y en el vulgo tienen los libros de caballerías" (25) ("diminish the authority and acceptance that books of chivalry have in the world" (9)). While no such direct intentional pronouncement may be found in *El licenciado Vidriera*, a close inspection of the text reveals many conspicuous allusions to the picaresque, which indicates that this work is at once a parody of and a theoretical response to the novels of roguery—a characteristically bold engagement with and rewriting of the picaresque. At the very outset of *El licenciado Vidriera*, for example, Cervantes thrusts his reader into a patently picaresque context. Indeed, aside from the episode of the galley slaves in *Don Quijote* where Lazarillo is specifically invoked and Guzmán more than suggested, this scene provides perhaps the most explicit and coherent reference to a picaresque subtext in any of his works. He begins *El licenciado Vidriera* with an overt allusion to the geography and the main character of the *Lazarillo de Tormes*: "Paseándose dos caballeros estudiantes por las riberas de Tormes, hallaron en ellas, debajo de un árbol, durmiendo, a un muchacho de hasta edad de once años, vestido como labrador; mandaron a un criado que le despertase; despertó, y preguntáronle de adónde era y qué hacía durmiendo en aquella soledad" (29) ("One day two gentlemen students, strolling along the banks of the Tormes, found a lad sleeping under a tree. He was about eleven years of age and dressed like a laborer. They told a servant to wake him, and when he did so they asked him where he came from and what he was doing asleep in such a lonely spot" (146)).

This reference to one of the major landmarks of picaresque geography, coupled with the description of a young boy reminiscent of Lázaro, constitutes far more than a minor act of homage to a literary tradition or a momentary intertextual echo. It, in fact, prompts an awakening of the picaresque subtext, distinctly calls the reader's attention to it, and sets the stage for what is both an implicit and explicit orderly undermining and redefinition of the picaresque tradition—a critical scrutiny and rewriting of those elements of the latter that Cervantes found either aesthetically paradoxical or morally objectionable.

Once the action in *El licenciado Vidriera* has been situated in a picaresque setting, Cervantes begins to inscribe, dismantle, and reconstitute what had become the most salient and persistent features of the literature of delinquency as defined by Lazarillo and Guzmán—the delineation of the pícaro's roots and personal identity by means of
references to his family ancestry and geographical origin. Significantly, the as-yet-unnamed youth, when asked by the gentlemen students to identify himself and state his origins, “respondió que el nombre de su tierra se le había olvidado, y que iba a la ciudad de Salamanca a buscar un amo a quien servir por solo que le diese estudio” (29) (“replied that he had forgotten the name of his birthplace and was on his way to Salamanca to seek a master whom he might serve, on condition that he be helped to pursue his studies” (146)). While consciously alluding to the central picaresque motif of the search for a master (búsqueda de amo), Cervantes here also emphatically disavows from the outset the picaresque's ideological determinism, which obliged characters to furnish an a priori identification of themselves while outlining their genealogy, naming their place of origin, and giving an account of their social status. Instead, the young man willfully refuses to supply his curriculum vitae and the anticipated genealogical details, establishing both his and the narrator's belief in the primacy of the individual dissociated from a prehistory that circumscribes his actions or places into question his liberty or personal moral worth. In short, Cervantes repudiates the principle of family lineage (linaje) in a literary as well as a social sense and opts for the confirmation of the preeminence of the person as the foundation for the portrayal of his character.

That the future Licenciado Vidriera is of dubious social origins is clear, for he knows at a very tender age how to read and write: “Preguntaronle si sabía leer; respondió que sí, y escribir también” (29) (“They then inquired if he could read, and he answered that he could, and write also” (146)). Through this reference to literacy, Cervantes implies that his character is, as are all good pícaros, both a writer and a converso (a Christian descended from Jews or Moors), since the ability to read and write in seventeenth-century Spain was often associated with religious heterodoxy, specifically with Jews and converts, in the popular imagination (see Castro 1961, 182-83). Should this crucial point in the boy's characterization go unnoticed, however, one of the gentlemen interrogating him provocatively underscores it in his reply: “Desa manera... no es por falta de memoria habésete olvidado el nombre de tu patria” (29) (“So it is not from want of memory that you have forgotten the name of your country” (146)).

The boy explains that he has resolved to conceal his origins until he is capable of bestowing honor upon his family and his homeland. And with this we confront the central theme of seventeenth-century Spanish picaresque texts—honor, or honra, as it is related to questions of family,
moral worth, and social perception. As Marcel Bataillon perceptively observes, “los temas favoritos picarescos se organizan no alrededor del tema del hambre, de la indigencia y de la lucha por la vida sino alrededor de la honra” (1969, 215-16) (“the favorite themes of the picaresque are not organized around the theme of hunger, nor indigence, nor the struggle for life, but around the theme of honor”). Cervantes doubtless recognized this and in his attempt to censure the moral and ideological weakness of picaresque narrative as he reconfigured it, made honra the principal theme of El licenciado Vidriera. His definition of the term, however, radically disputes the popular interpretation voiced in such picaresque fictions as Lazarillo de Tormes, where it is likened to wealth, lineage, social approval, and self-display. For Cervantes, honra cannot be found in public approbation, social recognition, or family ties, but in an intrinsic, private moral worth entailing understanding and personal virtues attained only through introspection, study, willingness to do good, and the unwavering adherence to Christian principles. Asked, then, how he intends to obtain honor, the young boy in El licenciado Vidriera responds with an unexpected answer: “con mis estudios . . . porque yo he oído decir que de los hombres se hacen los obispos” (29) (“By making a name through my studies, for I have heard it said that out of men bishops are made” (146)). With this emphatic egalitarian declaration of his belief in the possibility of the individual’s moral, intellectual, and social perfection, couched also in a religious context, Cervantes inaugurates the young man’s ironic quest for honor—a quest that ultimately leads to frustration, to disillusionment, to defeat, and, finally, to a tragic but noble death in the service of a higher good.

Upon identifying himself as Tomás Rodaja, the narrative pace of the story suddenly acquires the accelerated tempo of a succession of actions described in abstract terms. On the surface, the novella abruptly takes on the picaresque’s peripatetic stride and fragmented plot structure, adopting a travelogue-like progression, as it evokes key destinations and itineraries encountered in well-known contemporary narratives of roguery. This is the case with Tomás’s accompanying his newfound masters to the university, an important setting for picaresque novels such as Quevedo’s Buscón. The travelogue of Italy, notably the arrival in Genoa and the visit to Rome, also summons echoes of Guzmán’s analogous odyssey in Mateo Alemán’s classic novel.

These parallels are not pursued, however, and remain no more than superficial allusions to picaresque geography as the spatio-temporal dimensions of the picaresque are at once commemorated, reduced, and
reconfigured by Cervantes. We must look elsewhere in El licenciado Vidriera—to the part that relates Tomás’s madness—in order to find the most profound affinities with the novela picaresca. It is during the period of Tomás’s dementia that we discover a unity of purpose between the novel of roguery and Cervantes’ novella: in the latter work’s insistence upon presenting a critical, cutting view of a social reality. It is here we encounter what Richard Bjornson has termed “the essential picaresque situation,” that is, “the paradigmatic confrontation between an isolated individual and a hostile society” (1977, 4). From the perspective of a marginalized observer similar to the pícaro’s, Cervantes’ licentiate confronts the community in which he lives, mercilessly exposing hypocrisy, dishonesty, and deceit wherever he perceives it. Occurring in an urban setting—Philip III’s court in early-seventeenth-century Valladolid—this hiatus discloses the work’s solidarity with exemplary picaresque narratives and its intention to function as a moral agent. In Vidriera’s commentary, in which he attacks and undermines the parade of moral degenerates that passes before him, it is easy to perceive a systematic assault on ethically unacceptable forms of social conduct symptomatic of works like Guzmán de Alfarache. It is, however, from the unmolested vantage point of madness rather than from the guarded watchtower of life that society is critically scrutinized to expose, in a manner reminiscent of the novels of roguery, an inner rotten core in Cervantes’ novella: the unhappily married couple (39-40); the sanctimonious ragwoman (ropera) marked as one of the “filiae Hierusalem” mentioned in Luke 23.28 (39-40); the vehemently zealous parishioner who tries to conceal his Jewish ancestry by attending daily mass (40-41); the prostitutes (40), bad poets (42-44), conflictive fathers and sons (40), greedy go-betweens (45), morally bankrupt sedan chair lackeys (45), and other wicked and duplicitous characters. It is significant, too, that in a novella written by an author as name-conscious as Cervantes, all the characters, with the exception of the protagonist and Captain Diego de Valdivia, lack names (García Lorca 1965). All those portrayed in El licenciado Vidriera are identified as social archetypes, boticarios, alguaciles, eclesiásticos, jueces, and other personifications of vices who evoke their fallen brethren in picaresque texts as they stroll across the Plaza Mayor of Valladolid. While the pícaro is obliged to move vertically through society in order to blast the targets of his ridicule, Cervantes in this novella changes perspective and makes the butts of his satire parade horizontally before his critic who stands and mocks at the center of the public square.

In the Licenciado Vidriera, then, it is possible to perceive both a
unity of purpose and close external parallels with picaresque narrative. Nonetheless, the latter appear in the work with a radically different aim than in the novels of roguery. Whereas it is clear from these analogies that Cervantes must have thought of the novels of roguery when he composed *El licenciado Vidriera*, upon close examination it is equally clear that he inscribed picaresque motifs in his work in order to bring to light not only his ethical and didactic discrepancies but artistic ones as well, with the devices employed by picaresque novels to counter and undermine objectionable moral conduct. In *El licenciado Vidriera* the allusions to picaresque themes exist as critical counterpoints—markers indicating Cervantes’ opposition to them as well as his search to create an alternative narrative form, one that could efficiently and succinctly compress the picaresque’s goal of presenting a cutting, satirical view of the world into a concise narrative pattern and economy of telling. In this way, *El licenciado Vidriera* is the result of an influence à rebours akin to the one in the pastoral, chivalric, sentimental, and Moorish romance sequences in *Don Quijote*, in which the narrative tradition is subverted, reshaped, and redefined; that is, the identifying markers of a model are exploited as enabling stimuli that serve to revolutionize the very model from which they spring.

The references to the picaresque works and motifs in *El licenciado Vidriera* exist in a consciously diminished and even inverted manner. We have already heard Tomás Rodaja’s unorthodox opinions on his methods to obtain honor, as well as his dismissal of the importance of family and geographical origin (matters of central concern to the constitution of character in the novels of delinquency). Rather than reproduce the European travelogue in the first third of the story, Cervantes chooses to gloss over it in a densely packed narrative that subtracts from the importance accorded the peripatetic element usually identified with picaresque novels. Cities, regions, and entire countries are but a terse list of place names in his text. By accelerating and compressing time and movement through space and generalizing description, Cervantes seems to disavow the emphasis placed upon description and the kinetic and mimetic components in picaresque fiction. Thus, what in Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* is rendered as a meticulously recounted, rhetorically extended, reified vision of Italy, in *El licenciado Vidriera* the same geography becomes a mere list, a backdrop enumeration of places possessing only secondary importance to the central, and by contrast almost static, part of the novella.7

Tomás Rodaja’s travel experience and the eight years he spent at
the University of Salamanca are deliberately minimized, condensed into a few brief paragraphs, in order to highlight the work’s slow-moving, socially critical, ethically dense nucleus (the period comprising the licentiate’s madness in Valladolid). As with a painting, Cervantes sets off the substantial center of his creation by the most unobtrusive of frames. The licentiate’s education and globe-trotting serve only as the necessary experiences that prepare him to pass judgment upon what he sees around him, and not as the center of narrative attention. His schooling and adventures abroad speak of the seasoning and worldly wisdom that ready him, albeit in a state of dementia, to uncover the deceit and fraud lying at the center of social reality. Yet Tomás Rodaja’s youthful learning is of little direct interest to the work’s immediate objective: the disclosure of a sordid human polity. The details of the formative program that enables Rodaja to formulate judgments are unimportant—only the fact that he is prepared ultimately matters. It is the knowledge and the wisdom acquired in those years that grants Vidriera the ability to place in perspective, define, and finally reject the dishonesty subtending the human relations he perceives. The picaresque novels dwell, of course, upon the peripatetic and formative experiences themselves, reifying them and, through discursive camouflage and euphemism, often may only hint at their moral underpinnings. El licenciado Vidriera intentionally inverts, then, the primacy of mimesis over allegory that is central to the artifice of the novels of roguery, restoring moral instruction to the center of narrative interest. In place of mimesis, and through the stratagem of his protagonist’s madness, Cervantes accomplishes this ethical undermining of social reality in a more rhetorically economical, direct, and meaningful fashion.

The language employed to carry out this mission stands in stark contrast to that of the picaresque. Whereas the latter’s is often opaque, its intention hidden behind comical low-life jargon (germania) or resourceful euphemism, texts like Lazarillo and Guzmán are stripped of their periphrastic propensity and rhetorical disguise in El licenciado Vidriera. In contradistinction, their intentions are delivered by Cervantes’ character in the tone of pious parables and with the conclusiveness of proverbs. The concision and clarity of their sense evokes the subversive critique of picaresque diction fleshed out in Don Quijote’s dialogue with the galley slaves (I, 22), in which Cervantes enacts a clash of mutually unintelligible literary dialects. Don Quijote, who interprets the world through the linguistic prism of chivalric romance, and the galley slaves, who speak existence by means of esoteric euphemism and
criminal koine, fail to understand each other without the benefit of the mediation, translation, and interpretation of their words. Yet, when Vidriera speaks, he does so with aphoristic concision.

Tomás’s dementia thus allows Cervantes to express his nonconformity directly and to expose brutally the insincerity lying at the heart of human polity. Yet, unlike the pícaro, his “deranged” character is absolved of his temerity. In fact, in humorous contrast to the pícaro, Vidriera is at once socially sought after, yet candidly critical as he voices his unorthodox views to his orthodox patrons. Ironically, it is not until he is cured of his delusions and ceases to be critical that Tomás becomes a social outcast. After a charitable Hieronymite friar cures his madness, he attempts to reenter society but is ostracized by the very folks who, while he was mad, sought him out.⁸ Even then, however, Cervantes endows the licentiate with a significant measure of moral dignity and personal integrity: he turns his back upon Valladolid and leaves it for the wars in Flanders, where he dies the honorable death of a soldier in the service of his country. With this finale, Cervantes manages to confer upon his protagonist an ethical stature and respectability absent, indeed inconceivable, in the picaresque, whose negative protagonists often remain scoundrels and moral reprobates. When cured, the licenciado Vidriera is transformed into Tomás Rueda, a man who, like the literary rogue, is defeated at the hands of the world, yet who, unlike the rogue, emerges clearly redeemed and morally victorious after his struggle. In this way, Tomás Rodaja, the licenciado Vidriera, and Tomás Rueda embody in their three complex, altering incarnations the essence of both the heroic and antiheroic dimensions of human experience.

In El licenciado Vidriera, then, Cervantes expresses the deep-seated disabuse and irony, the same disillusionment and disaffection, of individuals like Mateo Alemán and the anonymous author of the Lazarillo de Tormes, yet he is not obliged to gloss over and sublimate his verdict in the elaborate deeds, amusing pranks (burlas menas) and double entendres that saturate the novels of roguery. By deliberately understating the importance of plot, rejecting the merit of genealogy, repudiating the notion of honor as social reputation, and refusing to degrade his principal character, all within a context defined by a clear frame of picaresque allusion, Cervantes asserts that the essence of the picaresque is found not in its form or its textual and ideological trappings, but in a stance, an attitude toward life—the same critically cast ethical outlook that shapes Vidriera’s commentary. As Amezúa y Mayo points out, “mientras que en El coloquio [de los perros] la sátira cervantina se emboza
El licenciado Vidriera esta sátira presentase franca, mordaz, agresiva, valiéndose para cada caso ... del aforismo" (1958, 2:184) (“while in the Coloquío de los perros Cervantes’ satire is cloaked and disguised in the episodes themselves, ... in El licenciado Vidriera this satire is frank, biting, aggressive, ... relying in each instance upon an aphorism”). Cervantes expresses his sense of disillusionment (desengaño) with the directness, candor, and concision of the epigram. As a result, in El licenciado Vidriera he invents the ingenious figure of the apothegmatic madman who, although deranged, is never unjudicious. Though thought demented by all who see him, he is judged from the critical distance provided by the omniscient narrator as “uno de los más cuerdos del mundo” (56) (“one of the sanest people in the world”).

Tomás’s madness is a complex metaphor. Figuratively, he is like glass: superficially he appears invisible and insubstantial, yet he is like that transparent medium capable of transfiguring the objects placed behind it. As an allegory of enlightenment, he is at once peripheral, yet in possession of an inner view. He is the comic object of public ridicule, yet also, on a deeper level, the liberated free-thinker unleashed upon a morally bankrupt society that allows no intellectual liberty. Capable of seeing through the darkened glass, during the years of his vitreous dementia Vidriera is responsible only to his conscience, to his inner self alone. By means of the glass imagery, Cervantes symbolically strips his character of his physical identity (and, therefore, also of his lineage and genealogy), and in his lunacy Rodaja becomes the very personification of thought—unworldly, incorporeal, intangible, and free. Equipped with the mobility of the pícaro, Vidriera moreover possesses an endowment not bestowed upon the pícaro—the ability to speak the truth freely at all times. Subtle, fragile, lucid, clear, and unencumbered by the constraints of human polity, the licentiate maintains a degree of moral freedom and expression impossible in a conventional picaresque framework. The fragile man of glass of Valladolid authorizes the exteriorization of the inner man as Cervantes strips away the opaque protective coverings of picaresque fiction. As Joaquín Casalduero observes, “al incorporarnos vitalmente a Vidriera, sus palabras cesan de ser lugares comunes, inocuos, son flechas penetrantes” (1943, 112) (“when we incorporate ourselves vitally to Vidriera, his words cease to be innocuous clichés: they become penetrating arrows”), and we might add, sincere ones. Through the window furnished by the man of glass it becomes possible to penetrate reality and to attain insight—we secure
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an unobscured vision of the hidden truths and the ignoble inner side of human existence. The vitreous image permits us to perceive below the surface of outward appearance and acquire an unobstructed view of fallen humanity, which preoccupied seventeenth-century thinkers, especially the authors of the picaresque.\(^\text{10}\)

Using the early allusions in the work to the picaresque as a point of departure, Cervantes rejects not only the narrative economy of that tradition but also the autobiographical perspective of the novels of roguery. From the outset of *El licenciado Vidriera*, the reader confronts an omniscient narrator, thus preempting the allegations of subjectivity and fragmentariness assigned to the first-person narrations of picaresque novels in the Galeotes episode of *Don Quijote* (I, 22).\(^\text{11}\) Cervantes recognized that the isolation of the autobiographical point of view distorted the representation of reality and was, in fact, a liability in texts whose task it was to illuminate and expose the world's corruption. The pícaro's judgments could easily be condemned as dogmatic and biased, coming as they did from the mouth of a delinquent (Blanco Aguinaga 1957, 313-14). Through the medium of an omniscient narrator, however, the marginalized character's observations suddenly acquire an objective representation and appear universal, relevant, and credible. Like Cervantes' masterwork, *El licenciado Vidriera* is a fictional biography, although in all the *novelas ejemplares* there persist instances in which, as Ruth El Saffar points out, the characters' and narrator's perspectives seem to merge and become indistinguishable (1974, 54). Significantly, this occurs in *El licenciado Vidriera* only in the madness sequences where the preponderance of the social antagonism is openly voiced and where, as we have indicated, the narrator underscores his character's moral lucidity. In this novella, the omniscient narrator is free to identify himself completely with his character at will, and, as a result, achieve the illusion of a point of view at times closely resembling, though not always identical to, the autobiographical perspective in picaresque fiction.

The repudiation of a first-person narrative also possesses advantages for the protagonist's characterization. It allows the reader to discern a well-defined, rounded, and complete personality in the development of the main character. Avalle-Arce, for example, has noticed just this and traced the symbolic onomastic transformation of Tomás Rodaja into Master Glassman (*licenciado Vidriera*), and subsequently into Tomás Rueda. In this tripartite division of the hero's life he
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discovers a pattern corresponding "to three radically different vital stages: the formative, the critical, and the active" (in Cervantes 1964, 22). Without the omniscient narrator's ability to distance himself from his subject, such a clear-cut, explicit development of personality would have been difficult to achieve. To be sure, it would take the novel nearly three centuries of further development before someone deemed mentally incompetent could narrate his own story. And, even then, Benjy's perspective in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury required that it be refracted against other points of view in order to be fully intelligible.

The third-person narrative in El licenciado Vidriera allows Cervantes to define his protagonist in a seemingly objective fashion and give a complete accounting of his life. At the same time, too, it exonerates the narrator from responsibility for the things the madman says. In short, the third-person perspective makes the relation more credible and cogent as it skirts responsibility for telling the truth. Cervantes conceived his novella in terms of a complete artistic unity, the synthesis of a human life, rather than an episodic, undynamic, necessarily incomplete process like the one Don Quijote finds in the novela picaresca when he comments upon the indeterminate closure of Ginés de Pasamonte's written life (I, 22). In order to achieve the most comprehensive vision of his protagonist's existence, and in reaction to the picaresque, Cervantes adopts a narrative structure in El licenciado Vidriera that enables him to explore his character's pathology from a clinical distance, enter into and retreat from his point of view at will, and chronicle the reactions of those around him.

Moreover, Cervantes endows his protagonist with the same dynamic possibilities of self-development found in Don Quijote's characterization. Unlike the picaresque hero, Tomás Rodaja is deliberately divested of all the deterministic family antecedents of his literary forebears. From the beginning of the work, Cervantes immerses us in the story without the requisite catalog of preliminaries. Tomás, the narrator tells us, is there just as he is, asleep under a tree: we enter into the action in medias res. As with all his literary progeny, Cervantes grants his character the right and the liberty to define himself through his own words and actions. By alluding to his questionable heritage, his possibly tainted honra, yet refusing steadfastly to confer importance upon the matter ("de los hombres se hacen los obispos" (29) ("out of men Bishops are made")), Cervantes implicitly depreciates and overturns one of the
seventeenth-century Spanish picaresque novel's most salient themes: the de rigueur deterministic genealogy of the pícaro, which was not only morally but also artistically repugnant to Cervantes.

The imprecision of Rodaja's origins opens the possibility that he may legitimately change identity in accordance with the different circumstances of his life. In fact, in this novella there is a reciprocity between personality and situation. Tomás's life is determined by three factors that differentiate him from the pícaro: resolute personal volition, the ability to act, and an awareness of the meaning of the present—all of which contradict the picaresque's insistence on heritage and influence deriving from past forms of existence. As Carlos Blanco Aguinaga observes, "lo narrado a posteriori pero concebido con anterioridad a la historia no cabe en la manera cervantina de novelar" (1957, 338) ("what is narrated a posteriori albeit conceived before the story fails to fit in the way Cervantes writes novels"). In marked contrast to the picaresque, then, in El licenciado Vidriera the individual, who possesses both the power and the desire to mold his life, is placed above the literary type. Though Tomás fails to control the effects of the poisoned Toledan quince upon his body, his reason and will endure and remain free to fashion a moral vision of the world. As a result of this dynamic conception of character, founded upon the belief in the incorruptible integrity and freedom of the human soul, Cervantes is able to reject the picaresque's ideological inscription of determinism as well as certain key elements of its narrative economy. The result is a new narrative mode that allows for the direct and seemingly objective presentation of social satire and commentary.

In summation, then, when the early allusions to picaresque motifs in El licenciado Vidriera are read as a set of Cervantine clues to the work's literary intentions, it is possible to appreciate how this novella was in all likelihood conceived in terms of what Claudio Guillén calls "coutergenre," or the "negative impacts . . . through which a norm is dialectically surpassed (and assimilated) by another" (1973, 146). The picaresque, with its opaque language, dark characters, and darker ideology, presented a challenge to Cervantes' artistic genius as well as to his moral temperament, and in El licenciado Vidriera he tacitly brought to light all that he judged artificial, ancillary, and ideologically unacceptable in that tradition. When compared with a novel of roguery, El licenciado Vidriera is a lesson in literary economy and simplicity. Rejecting as a disadvantage the elaborate plot structures of the picaresque, the requisite autobiographical narrative point of view, and the meticulous
chronicling of the picaro's malfeasance as he moves through time and space, Cervantes ironically realizes the novel of roguery's mission to critically undermine social reality as he underscores the moral vision and integrity of his character.

Like Rinconete y Cortadillo, La ilustre fregona, El casamiento engañoso y coloquio de los perros, El licenciado Vidriera is one more shrewd, ironic Cervantine experiment in the quest for alternative fictional modes to the picaresque. Dissatisfied with the human and artistic limitations of that narrative model, Cervantes sought in response to devise a form that would succinctly achieve the aims of the picaresque without prejudicing the moral probity of his characters or the aesthetic integrity and the realistic, comprehensive representation of a human life as it comes into conflict with its social surroundings.

Cervantes' reading and rewriting of the picaresque in El licenciado Vidriera, though it articulates a hostile confrontation between an individual and society not unlike Lazarillo's and Guzmán's, avoids the spatio-temporal arrangement, the autobiographical crux, the ignobility of the protagonists, and the cyclical pattern of events of Lazarillo and Guzmán while alluding to them. In this way, the work corroborates Peter Dunn's assertion of the picaresque's centrifugal effect upon the Cervantine imagination (1993, 203-35). In a larger literary context, too, El licenciado Vidriera marks the beginning of the end of the picaresque as it was defined in those two works, just as it confirms Dunn's earlier statement that picaresque narrative in Spain may ultimately be defined as "the genre which denied itself, contradicted, and finally destroyed itself" (1979, 144).

After the publication of Don Quijote (1605) and its indisputable triumph, it is clear that Cervantes felt sufficiently confident to continue experimenting with, and confronting, the problems posed by different contemporary narrative forms, but especially those posed by the picaresque. El licenciado Vidriera, probably written between 1605 and 1610, according to Amezúa y Mayo (1958, 2:191-92), constitutes yet one more exemplary novel in both an artistic and an ethical sense, and persists as another important confirmation that Cervantes knew well what he was about when he proudly proclaimed in his prologue to the Novelas ejemplares (1613) that "soy el primero que he novelado en lengua castellana" (xxxv) ("I am the first to write novels in the Castilian tongue").
La gitanilla is traditionally viewed from the perspective of romance. Critics have been predisposed to view it only as one of Cervantes’ “idealistic” works because it tells a tale of love and adventure; it is organized around a test/quest motif; the characters portrayed in it remain more psychological archetypes than individuals; its resolution is serendipitous, involving chance, coincidence, and sudden recognition; and, finally, it is a story related in an elevated verbal style that often lapses into song and poetry. Frank Pierce, for example, best exemplifies this critical tendency when he asserts that La gitanilla is “a romance in that it illustrates the victory of true love.” This judgment, improvised from a cursory evaluation of the work’s themes, leads Pierce to conclude that the novella is an “enchanting fantasy . . . of love and marriage, of constancy and forgiveness” (1977, 283, 294). Yet, while all of this is so, it is so largely only on the surface. The romance elements singled out by Pierce and the majority of the critics are usually studied in isolation. To be sure, critics have failed to take stock of the manner in which these elements are organized within the text and how they are mirrored in circumstances that radically undermine their superficial idealism.

E.C. Riley has argued for the comprehensive and pervasive “coexistence in Cervantes’ prose fiction of two basic kinds of narrative,” novel and romance, and for “the likelihood that Cervantes did not evolve definitively towards one preferred form but to the end of his days was liable to write in either vein or in some combination of the two.” (1981, 70). More generally, Félix Martínez Bonati has distilled the notion of the persistent blending of different literary discourses in Cervantes’ writing, and speaks of the coalescence of dissimilar generic markers and styles in terms of the convergence and imbrication of “regions of the imagination.” The latter process implies “the juxtaposition of the diverse and the heterogeneous, and of the incongruous” leading to the
confrontation “of the multitude of beings, conditions, offices, and destinies on the plane of fiction and, metapoetically, [to] the contiguity and interweaving of styles of diction, figural archetypes, imaginary regions, and views of the world” (1992, 117; see also 39-75). Although “Cervantes did not invent narrative pluriregionality,” Martínez Bonati asserts that “he objectified the whole system of literary regions, [and] he ironized and subverted it” (75). A close investigation of the content and structure of La gitanilla reveals just such a mingling of imaginative regions and the generic shadings of both novel and romance, and points to the text’s complex literary configuration. The surface idealism of the story’s romance themes is throughout checked by a subterfuge of irony and contradiction that establishes a more lifelike, essentially ambiguous, vision of the events it portrays.

Theorizing upon the nature and development of realistic fiction in early modern European literature, Harry Levin cites the pronounced contrasts characterizing Spanish society during the Renaissance as the essential rationale for the appearance and consummation of the novel in Spain. Speaking of Cervantes in particular, Levin believes that Cervantes’ perception of social tension equipped him with a unique ability to refine a type of irony that “plays appearance off against reality and highlights contrasts between the ideal and the real,” a dynamic Levin deems typical of the novel (1966, 41), and one that is ubiquitous in La gitanilla.

The juxtaposition of the ideal and the real is central to the structure and narrative technique of La gitanilla. There is in it a kind of sustained situational and verbal irony that implicitly sets off words and events against each other while ultimately leaving any judgment of values to the reader. Contrast, contradiction, and ambiguity abound and seem paramount in the narrator’s mind from the outset of the work. Playfully alluding to the deceptive nature of appearances and the perils of generalizations in the opening paragraph of the novella, the narrator, as he stresses the word parece,warns mindful readers of the nature of the artifice that is about to unfold: “Parece,” he says, “que los gitanos y gitanas solamente nacieron en el mundo para ser ladrones” (1965, 1:3) (“Gypsies, both men and women, seem to have been sent into the world solely to be thieves” (37)). As Karl-Ludwig Selig remarks concerning this narrative gambit, the introductory invocation of the verb parece serves to distance the “intense pile up of repeated commonplaces about gypsies” in order to create a “state of non-reality” (1962, 274). Indeed, from the opening words of the story, the narrative is fraught with
misrepresentation and cunning illusion designed to defraud inattentive readers while leaving the interested ones with a sense of awe and satisfaction as they discover the work’s intricate complexity—subtle reversals, ironic contrasts, and internal parodic nuances.

Although when closely examined, the interaction of novel and romance, irony and idealism, are pervasive in *La gitanilla*, the phenomenon may be most succinctly illustrated by means of a discussion of the work’s major themes. Contrary to prevailing critical wisdom, the major themes of *La gitanilla* are neither love, Christian marriage, nor constancy (Forcione 1983, 147-57), but individual moral freedom, spiritual nobility, and the sense of personal honor based upon the observance of Christian principles and the private exercise of conscience; in short, themes not unlike those encountered in *El licenciado Vidriera*. Under the guise of a romance dealing with love and adventure, Cervantes relates a novelistic tale in which his characters in order to define themselves must contradict the very romance archetypes from which they spring. While they are originally conceived within a romance mold, they simultaneously stress their individuality through idiosyncratic action and volition to become internally motivated characters who confront dilemmas in manners determined according to their personal experience and particular circumstance. In *La gitanilla* characters expected to perform in a stereotypical literary fashion act in ways that fail to conform to the convention that gives them shape; the reader’s preconceptions about them are persistently undermined by situations that affirm a character’s nature only on the surface. While evoking the major elements of romance, in *La gitanilla* Cervantes subtly shifts perspective, clearly displacing his tale toward the morally ambiguous, highly individualized, and problematical imaginative region of the novel.

In romance, character is archetypically defined and never developed in any real sense. It is often determined by preexisting conditions surrounding the protagonist’s birth. Despite his mysterious origins and apparent low social caste, for example, the youthful Amadis of Gaul proves noble for no other reason than his hidden noble ancestry. His personality and actions, like those of all characters and actions in romance, are preordained by genealogy and defined by a providential scheme that determines a priori who he shall be and what he shall do. As Northrop Frye remarks, the configuration of romance gives us “patterns of aristocratic courage and courtesy, and much of it adopts a ‘blood will tell’ convention, the association of moral virtue and social rank implied in the word ‘noble.’ A hero may appear to be of low social origin,
but if he is a real hero he is likely to be revealed at the end of the story as belonging to the gentry" (1976, 161). Invoking just such a pattern in La gitanilla, Cervantes deceptively leads the reader into the theme of foreordained character when he announces that, apparently, all gypsies have been brought into the world to be thieves. This declaration sets into motion the complex contradiction that he is about to develop. Although Preciosa is the paragon of gypsy charm (gitanerías), she is through her discretion, chastity, and honesty an explicit deviation from the stated norm. Her actions, while at once incorporating the wit and liveliness of gypsies, do not wholly conform with the narrator’s assertion, and the reader’s expectations, that all gypsies are indeed destined to be thieves. The clue to Preciosa’s exceptional condition is tantalizingly offered in the narrator’s subsequent observation that “la crianza tosca en que se criaba no descubría en ella sino ser nacida de mayores prendas que de gitana, porque era en extremo cortés y bien razonada” (4) (“the rude upbringing she had received served only to reveal that she was extremely courteous, born of better stock, as well as lively in her conversation” (37)), an assertion that, as we shall see, is implicitly disavowed through action and circumstance at the end of the work.

The narrator’s comment offering the enticing possibility of Preciosa’s concealed nobility leads readers habituated to the patterns of romance to expect a celebrative finale in which the little gypsy’s hidden noble birth is disclosed and her apparently contradictory virtues are fully vindicated. As attentive readers note upon finishing the work, however, this opening constitutes a false expectation deliberately deployed by Cervantes in order to present a character conceived in individuality who inhabits a “poetic biosphere” (the term is Martínez Bonati’s, 196) psychologically and morally more complex than any world depicted in romance. In the end, Preciosa’s noble lineage is indeed revealed, but her nobility is confirmed not by reason of her parents’ privileged social position, or her noble birth, but by virtue of the “cierto espíritu fantastico” (38) (“a certain fantastic spirit within me” (55)), which shapes her inner moral vision and underwrites the ethics of her actions. She is a character who takes control of her destiny and, while doing so, challenges all preconceived notions of birth and status readers might come to expect from her.

In the end, Preciosa’s presumed noble patrimony is proclaimed just to be undermined and dismantled by the actions of the very ones who are assumed to represent it. The entire episode of the little gypsy’s restoration to her “noble” roots must be viewed ironically and in the light of a
sequence of images and pronouncements concerning justice and nobility set down both by her grandmother and the narrator. Preciosa’s rejection of the hundred crowns offered by Andrés, for example, prompts the grandmother to comment upon the gypsies’ habitual misuse of wealth and treasure to buy and bribe the corrupt officers of justice:

Do you want me, Preciosa, to refuse a hundred crowns?, gold crowns in gold?... Suppose any one of our sons, or grandsons, or relatives should by ill luck fall into the hands of justice, will any eloquence be so sure to touch the ears of the judge as the music of these crowns when they drop in his purse? Three times, for three different offenses, I have seen myself all but mounted on the ass to be whipped, but once a silver pitcher saved me, and another time a string of pearls, and a third time forty reals of eight.... Remember, child, that ours is a very perilous trade and full of risks and emergencies, and there are no defenses that protect us more than the invincible arms of King Philip. Nothing beats the plus ultra. For the two faces of a doubloon the grim face of the crown prosecutor expands into a grin as he looks at us, and likewise those of all the ministers of death. ... [58]

Linked by the ambivalent image of wealth, which stands at once as a metaphor for Preciosa (she is repeatedly described as a precious pearl and a rare piece of jewelry) and the corruptibility and venality of the world that, through the exercise of personal virtue, she transcends, the passage provides a clear prefiguration of the grandmother’s encounter with the chief magistrate (corregidor), who is Preciosa’s biological father. Unmoved by Preciosa’s appeals to mercy or to charity that they might free Andrés of the charges of murdering the mayor’s nephew,
Preciosa's as-yet-undisclosed father becomes disposed to listen to her pleas only when her gypsy grandmother enters with the coffer containing the jewels Preciosa wore when abducted as a child:

Volvió la gitana con un pequeño cofre debajo del brazo y dijo al Corregidor que con su mujer y ella se entrasen en un aposento; que tenía grandes cosas que decirles en secreto. El Corregidor, creyendo que algunos hurtos de los gitanos quería descubrirle, por tenerle propicio en el pleito del preso, al momento se retiró con ella y con su mujer en su recámara. [114-15]

The old Gypsy returned with a small box under her arm and asked the Corregidor and his wife to move to another room, as she had important things to tell them in secret. The Corregidor, supposing that she wished to disclose to him some thefts of the Gypsies in order to gain his favor in the case of the prisoner, at once retired with her and his wife to his inner room. [96]

In the end, then, it is not the gypsy girl’s powers of persuasion, her appeals to mercy and justice, that move the Corregidor and his wife to hear Preciosa out, but the simple prospect of a bribe. The talismans signifying Preciosa’s restoration to her true identity are ironically subverted by Cervantes, as these now suggest her parent’s venality and ignobility while setting into parodic focus one of the venerable motifs of romance—the serendipitous discovery of hidden noble birth. If Preciosa is indeed noble, she is so not by patrimony but by virtue of her moral freedom, her good conscience, and her desire to be noble in spirit. Her parents’ respectability proves an illusion that conceals the ignominious reality of a feeble justice easily corrupted by power and greed. The Corregidor, less than a man who is righteous, as his correct title implies, is, in another sense of the word, the fixer of justice.

Through the interaction of conscience and resolution, Preciosa forges her own identity, affected neither by the demonic realm of the gypsies nor by the venality and superficiality that shape her parents’ world. She is an individual who through her essential moral freedom walks the middle ground and breaks down the literary expectations and stereotypes of romance as she renounces the determinism of both high and low social caste. Preciosa possesses an inner spiritual life that designates and determines the course of her actions, as she perceives the world as a product of her experience. In short, though conceived from the matter of romance, she belongs to the tradition of idiosyncratic, con-
tradictory characters who, neither exalted nor venal, have come to populate the imaginative regions of the novel. Her virtue springs from within, is shaped by personal conviction, and is grounded in experience.

Preciosa's lover is similarly contrived in irony, paradox, and ambiguity. When he is introduced to us, the narrator relies once again on the effects of appearances and first impressions to create false expectations and to lure the careless reader into wrong conclusions. The emphasis here lies clearly on the exterior reality, the surface image projected by the gentleman. The young man's clothes and self-righteous pride offer the only evidence of his worth. He is described simply as "un mancebo gallardo y ricamente aderezado de camino. La espada y daga que traía eran, como decirse suele, una ascua de oro; sombrero con rico cintillo y con plumas de diversas colores adornado" (35) ("a blaze of gold, as the saying goes; his hat had a richly embroidered band and was adorned with colored plumes" (53)).

A cautionary clue to the irony is smuggled into the narrator's self-imposed limits when he recounts the young man's words upon introducing himself to Preciosa: "Soy caballero, como lo puede mostrar este hábito" (35), he says, while revealing the cross of a military order on his breast ("I, ladies . . . am a knight, as this habit may show you"). "Soy hijo de Fulano, que por buenos respetos aquí no se declara su nombre" ("I am son of So and So' (for good reasons the name is not divulged here)) (54), he continues, evoking the same pompous protocol that prevented the Lieutenant General (Teniente) from listening to the entirety of Preciosa's recital of the ballad of St Anne, "por no ir contra su gravedad" (17) ("lest he compromise his dignity" (44)). Parodying the ludicrous sense of self-importance exhibited by the youth, through indirect discourse the narrator has him repeat his name once again to Preciosa, while mischievously withholding it from the reader in order to underscore the sham of a respectability based on name alone:

Mi nombre es éste—y díjose—; el de mi padre ya os le he dicho; la casa donde vive es en tal calle, y tiene tales y tales señas; vecinos tiene de quien podréis informaros, y aún de los que no son vecinos también; que no es tan escura la calidad y el nombre de mi padre y el mío, que no lo sepan en los patios de palacio, y aun en toda la corte.  [37]

"My name is So and So" (and he mentioned it). "My father's I have already told you; the house in which he lives is in such and such a
street and has such and such marks. You can obtain information from the neighbors, and even from those who are not neighbors, for the quality and name of my father is not so obscure, nor is mine, as not to be known in the courts of the palace, and indeed in all the capital.” [54]

Before his name can ever be revealed to the reader, however, Preciosa’s response to his advances compels him to abandon the very identity that confers such great honor and to adopt the manifestly ironical gypsy appellation of Andrés Caballero. The implication of this onomastic paradox is clear: honor and respectability are not the products of birth, name, or social station. They are the result of the interaction of conscience, volition, and a natural disposition toward good, which all humankind must discover within itself, as Preciosa implies when responding to Andrés’s suit:

Yo, señor caballero, aunque soy gitana, pobre y humildemente nacida, tengo un cierto espiritillo fantástico acá dentro, que a grandes cosas me lleva. A mí ni me mueven promesas, ni me desmoronan dávidas, ni me inclinan sumisiones. . . . soy ya vieja en los pensamientos y alcanzo más de aquello que mi edad promete, más por mi buen natural que por la experiencia. [38]

Sir Knight, tough I am but a poor Gypsy humbly born, I have a certain fantastic spirit within me, which urges me onward to great things. Promises do not tempt me, gifts do not shake my resolution, threats do not cause me to yield, nor do a lover’s wiles ensare me. . . . I am already old in thought, and I grasp more than my age would indicate, rather through natural intuition than from experience. [55]

Society’s acceptance of a nobility based solely on genealogy, and its ratification in romance, is subverted by the nobleman who, tutored by a gypsy girl, must discover true nobility by renouncing his birthright and submitting to an apprenticeship of experience.

The notion of a nobility based not on social privileges and caste distinctions but on a free inner moral vision directed by conscience and always aimed toward the good is repeated throughout La gitana. Overhearing Clemente’s and Andrés’s song of praise for her, for example, Preciosa emphatically underscores her freedom to choose as she responds
to their acclaim with a blunt expression of human equality, especially in matters of love:

Si las almas son iguales,  
Podrá la de un labrador  
Igualarse por valor  
Con las que son imperiales  [105]

If in their souls all men be equal, then  
The humblest peasant side by side may stand  
In honest worth and virtue high with men  
Who are rich potentates and rule the land.  [91]

The irony of a noble gentleman's transformation into a gypsy named Andrés Caballero is compounded at the end of the story where it is the youth's outward respectability that leads to the restoration of order and to exoneration of charges of murder brought against him by the Corregidor. To be sure, the killing, which he does in fact commit, is instantly transformed into an exercise of social privilege and a defense of honor once his noble roots are publicly revealed. All of this, of course, leaves in precarious balance La gitanilla's surface idealism while casting a pall of moral ambiguity on the minds of readers not deceived by the tale's outward conformity to the patterns of romance. It is only after Andrés recovers the banal talismans of his nobility, the knightly garb (hábito de caballero) he left at the inn, that he once again may claim the name Don Juan de Cárcamo and cease being in official eyes the "ladron homicida" ("murdering thief") to which the magistrate alludes (118). The recovery of his habit is accompanied by the recovery of the immunity of social privilege. Ironically citing his entitlement as a gentleman, Preciosa cries out to his accuser: "¡Ay ... señor mío, que ni es gitano ni ladron, puesto que es matador! Pero fueso del que le quitó la honra, y no pudo hacer menos de mostrar quién era, y matarlo" (118) ("Ah sir, said Preciosa, he is neither Gypsy nor thief, although he is a murderer: because he killed the man who robbed him of his honor, and he could do no less than show who he was and slay him" (99)). Though he is not a thief or a gypsy, the larger moral offense of homicide goes unpunished as he now cloaks himself in his knightly vestment and is ironically exonerated in the name of social privilege, gentility, and honor. Thus legitimized in the eyes of a society that
only speaks of nobility and justice, Don Juan may now marry Preciosa while those who share his prerogatives are free to overlook his wrongdoing:

Rompío se el secreto, salió la nueva del caso con la salida de los criados que habían estado presentes; el cual sabido por el alcalde tío del muerto, vió tomados los caminos de su venganza, pues no había de tener lugar el rigor de la justicia para ejecutarla en el yerno del Corregidor.  [127]

The secret was made known; news of the event was noised abroad when the servants who had been present left the room. When the mayor, uncle of the dead man, heard it, he saw that his means of vengeance were cut off, for the rigor of the law was unlikely to be exerted upon the son-in-law of the Corregidor.  [103-4]

Indeed, his desire for vengeance satisfied by “la promesa de dos mil ducados” (128) (“the promise of two thousand ducats” (104)), the dead man’s uncle (himself an alderman implicated in the workings of high justice) drops the charges, and the treasures of romance are once again ironized as they are exposed to be what they really are—the instruments for the purchasing of justice and the imposition of an order that at its center is essentially plutocratic and corrupt.

Preciosa herself is basically commodified, turned into a tool of patrician barter, when her father, invoking social custom and class imperatives, usurps her cherished right to choose (“que yo, como tu padre, tomo a cargo el ponerte en estado que no desdiga de quién eres” (120) (“As your father, I assume the duty of arranging a match that will not be unworthy of your status” [99])), and gives her hand in marriage to Don Juan. She is transformed by the Corregidor into an object of exchange whose underlying purpose is to cement kinship bonds and preserve the structures of authority of an empowered caste. Verbally conflating the images of treasure with the emblems of bribery, he seeks now to forge an expedient social alliance for his household by means of his marriageable daughter, as he turns to Don Juan and solemnly pronounces: “os la doy y entrego en esperanza por la más rica joya de mi casa” (127) (“now I give her to you and entrust her in expectation, as the richest jewel of my house” (103)). The vigilant reader not only intuits the ironic connection to the jewels the
Corregidor mistook earlier for a prospective bribe, but also hears an equally ironic echo of Preciosa's own evocation of her greatest personal treasure—her virginity—when she refused Don Juan de Cárcamo's suit at the outset of the novel:

Una sola joya tengo, que la estimo en más que a la vida, que es la de mi entereza y virginidad, y no la tengo de vender a precio de promesas ni dádivas, porque, en fin, será vendida; y si puede ser comprada, será de muy poca estima: ni me la han de llevar trazas ni embelecos: antes pienso irme con ella a la sepultura, y quizá al cielo, que ponerla en peligro que quimeras y fantasias soñadas la embistan y manoseen. [39]

One sole jewel I possess, which I prize more than life itself, and that is my virgin honor, which I shall not sell for promises or gifts, for in that case it will be sold, and if it can be bought, small will be its value. Nor will it be taken from me by plots and frauds, but I intend to carry it with me to the grave, and perhaps to heaven, rather than expose it to dangers in which illusions and fantasies may assail or defile it. [55]

All of this accents what William Clamurro rightly identifies as "the latent suggestion of the devaluing objectification of women and of the 'commerce' with them—i.e., prostitution" (1989, 48), which, since the encounter of the gypsies with the noblewomen in the Lieutenant General's home, has functioned as a discursive undercurrent in the text.

The often real dichotomy of social nobility and private virtue is brought home in a contrast of the songs sung by Preciosa, which collectively provide a microcosm of the work's major ideological concerns. In the Romance de Santa Ana, erroneously labeled by Rodriguez Marin as an "empanada teológico-poética de . . . escaso mérito" (8, n. 19) ("poetical-theological fritter . . . of little value" (8, n. 19)), Cervantes stresses the possibility of the existence of spiritual nobility amid rustic simplicity and low estate. Indeed, St. Anne's humility and simple origins provide "el estudio / donde vuestra Hija / hizo humildes cursos" (9) ("the study / where your Daughter [Mary] / took lessons of humility" (my translation)). She is portrayed as the moral preceptor of the Virgin, who in turn passed on her learning and her inner strength to her son Jesus.
The ballad's major thematic thrust is to state that divinity is humility's reward, for now Anne sits at the side of the Lord amid the celestial court:

Y agora a su lado,  
A Dios el más justo,  
Gozáis de la alteza  
Que apenas barrunto. [9]

And now at the hand of  
all-righteous God,  
you enjoy the sublime highness  
that my thoughts can scarce fathom.  
[My translation]

The virtuous meek simplicity of the kith and kin of Christ, King of Kings and source of all true spiritual nobility, is contrasted sharply with the pomp and fatuousness of the court of Philip III, described in Preciosa's ballad celebrating Margarita de Austria's Thanksgiving Mass (misa de parida) for the birth of the Crown Prince. The allusions to the royal family in the latter are not by chance couched in terms of pagan, specifically Roman, mythology and metaphor as they evoke images of a fallen political order that constitutes the antithesis of the Christian ideal. Although Margarita de Austria and her son hold forth the promise of redemption, as Alban Forcione notes (1983, 126-31), the hope proves ephemeral since we are persistently reminded through references to martyrdom and Christian persecution of the incompatibility of a decadent political order and Christian piety: "En esto se llegó al templo / Del Fénix que en Roma fue abrasado, y quedó vivo / En la fama y en la gloria" (i.e., St. Lawrence) (15) ("Of that Saint, who in pagan Rome / Was burned alive, yet lives today, / A Phoenix in his heavenly home" (43)). By pushing ceremony over into ostentatious absurdity and metaphorically comparing the Court to Rome, Cervantes makes the reader of the ballad perceive ironically the moral emptiness of the trappings of the Hapsburg's worldly authority. The subversion of the scene can be appreciated in the ballad's last verses. Directing her prayers to the Virgin, the Queen, exemplar of virtue amid a profusion of moral corruption, implores divine guidance for the King, and at the end of the mass Preciosa describes her return to the palace in the following fashion:
Acabada esta oración,  
Otra semejante entonan  
Himnos y voces que muestran  
Que está en el suelo la Gloria.  
Acabados los oficios  
Con reales ceremonias,  
Volvió a su punto este cielo  
Y esfera maravillosa.  

When this prayer ceased,  
another was entoned,  
and hymns and voices proved  
that Glory walks the earth.  
The offices ended  
in royal state  
this image of heaven, this marvelous realm,  
returned to her place.  
[My translation]

The tenor of this ballad evokes Cervantes’ earlier sonnet “Al túmulo del rey Felipe II en Sevilla” (On the Tumulus of Philip II in Seville), which as late as 1614 he still considered the “honra principal” of his writings. In the sonnet he ironically summons “¡Roma triunfante en ánimo y riqueza!” (“Triumphant Rome in spirit and in wealth!”) as he goes on to wager that the dead king’s soul has left the glories of heaven in order to return to the greater pleasures of the earthly splendor of his catafalque. In a similar fashion, the vision of a Christian queen returning to a court that has been explicitly compared to the pantheon of the pagan gods casts an incongruous perspective over the figure of Margarita: though a pious woman who embodies virtue, she remains the lone exemplar of a captive Christian ideal in a spiritually barren, faithless domain.

That spiritual sterility, moreover, extends beyond the palace, the king’s ministers of justice, and his administrators, to undermine private as well as public social covenants at court. The Lieutenant Governor’s household, for example, constitutes not just a microcosm of petty greed and pompous posturing but also an erotic underworld whose blatant duplicity is exposed by Preciosa in the fortune-telling ballad she sings to his wife, Doña Clara. Undermining the household’s pretensions to sexual as well as social honor, Preciosa reveals in her wicked double entendres both the Teniente’s and his wife’s mutual infidelities. Though
these go unspoken, it remains for the little gypsy to uncover through innuendo that their marriage, contrary to its outward image of respectability, is governed by a subterfuge of brutality, jealousy, and lust. Equating the Lieutenant Governor's symbol of civic authority—his cane staff of justice—with his phallus, Preciosa turns to Doña Clara and says with unmistakable connotation:

\[
\text{Riñes mucho y comes poco:} \\
\text{Algo celosita andas;} \\
\text{Que es jugetón el teniente,} \\
\text{Y quiere arrimar la vara. \ [30]}
\]

You quarrel much and little eat  
And when you're jealous, you're not sane;  
Your husband's sly with roving eye  
And likes to use his cane. \ [50]

Indeed, as Márquez Villanueva (1985-86) shows, the ballad, as it discloses Doña Clara's youthful liaisons and her husband's propensity to wander, places into question their daughter's legitimacy, as it insinuates the latter's almost professional wantonness. Full of sexual innuendo, Preciosa's song ends by alluding to Doña Clara's family's Jewish origins "llamándola así, en su misma cara," as Márquez Villanueva puts it, "puta judía" (1985-86, 750) ("calling her to her face a Jewish whore").

While the images of the court offered by Cervantes are fraught with moral contradiction, his representation of the country also portrays a world conceived in conflict and governed by opposition and the deception of appearances. Contrary to the expected Arcadian vision of humankind's life in community with nature, gypsy life in La gitanilla projects a picture halfway between the pastoral and the picaresque—halfway between the ideal and infamous imaginative regions of romance. The gypsies' outward bucolic existence is undermined by a subterfuge of jealousy, violence, incest, and carefree delinquency. The reader's initial expectations of amity and perfection are spoiled by the realities of passion, wantonness, and theft that underscore "the ironic displacement Cervantes introduces into his treatment of a central theme of the pastoral tradition" (Hart 1994, 29). Although explicitly contrary to the world of the court where the thirst for honor holds sway over all human polity ("No nos fatiga el temor de perder la honra, ni nos desvela la ambición de acrecentarla, ni sustentamos bandos, ni madru-
gamos a dar memoriales, ni a acompaniar magnates, ni a solicitar favores” [69] (“We are not worried by the fear of losing honor, nor are we kept awake by the longing to increase it; we join no political factions, we do not rise before daybreak to present memorials, or swell the train of grandees, or solicit favors” [71])), the gypsy elder informs Andrés, gypsy society is far from its wholesome antithesis. Indeed, Andrés places the gypsies into ironic perspective, refusing to embrace their thieving ways, while Preciosa quietly rebels against conforming to their statutes by invoking the most imperative law of all, the one of her free will, “la ley de mi voluntad” (71).

Both court and country in La gitanilla represent essentially problematical, conflictive worlds where neither virtue, vice, nor truth are wholly absolute. As Cervantes describes them, virtue, vice, and truth are consequences of moral choices made by characters who, though they may live in either the court or the country, are virtuous or vicious by reason of their individual selves. The world depicted in La gitanilla is shaped not by any preexisting canons of genre or literary tradition but by the “essential, inexplicit traits” of heterogeneous characters who are amazingly like real people (Martínez Bonati 1992, 136). As such, Preciosa’s and Andrés’s restoration to the sphere of the court offers only a superficial confirmation of their future happiness, as it raises doubts regarding their lasting moral integrity. Indeed, as Julio Rodríguez-Luis implies, Preciosa’s liberty, the very source of her spiritual integrity, is denied through the resolution, for as soon as she is publicly recognized as Doña Costanza and becomes a well-dressed lady, the strong, vigorous and pert little gypsy becomes a silent, submissive, and demure member of society who speaks only when spoken to (1980, 1:138). When Preciosa returns to her patriarchal, aristocratic family, her moral liberty is constrained by what Alison Weber terms “the prescriptive virtues of her class” (1994, 72). Under the guise of a celebrative ending typical of romance (complete with the heroine’s restoration to her origins) Cervantes implicitly suggests the existence of enduring perils to his characters’ freedom of conscience—the very source of their moral virtue. Despite a moralizing ending and the narrator’s assurances of a happy resolution, then, there can be no guarantee that Constanza and Don Juan lived happily ever after.

In La gitanilla the plots, characters, landscape, and motifs of romance are ironically interlaced and subverted through contrast with a subtly crafted vision of a cynical world presided over by the type of petty passion, abuse of privilege, and prosaic venality we associate with the
indeterminate universe of the novel. By means of the interplay of idealism and irony, Cervantes continually points to the disparities between literary norms and the realities of experience. The result is a constant defrauding of careless readers as he rewards the careful ones with the deep sense of moral ambiguity his work actually portrays. As Martínez Bonati has said about \textit{Don Quijote} in an observation that is equally applicable to \textit{La gitanilla},

\[\text{Cervantes himself suggested that readers of various levels of intelligence and education will attend to different aspects of a work, and that if the work is sufficiently varied, all of them can be pleased by what they read. . . . Superficial readers will allow themselves to be carried along by the conventional, romantic suggestion, . . . but more attentive readers will see how the ideality of these individuals and destinies [in the work] is problematized. . . . They will also understand the dimensions of Cervantes's irony, the supreme critical and metapoetic game.} \quad [1992, 161-62]\]

Doing just this in \textit{La gitanilla} and relying on his readers' familiarity with the patterns and expectations of romance, Cervantes plays ironically with, and subtly reshapes, our literary preconceptions as he rewrites romance conventions and conveys the persistent presence of moral uncertainty in the world he depicts. For some, \textit{La gitanilla} will remain an inspirational tale of moral idealism; for those who perceive its ironic nuances, reversals, and counterpoints, it is a novel depicting a world fraught with moral traps and ethical apprehensions. It is, in fact, a complex work of "pluriregional" narrative art—to use Martínez Bonati's valuable notion—built upon the interaction of irony and idealism, of reality and fantasy, of novel and romance.
Chapter 3

Rewriting Myth and History

Discourses of Race, Marginality, and Resistance in the Captive’s Tale (Don Quijote I, 37-42)

Alma Redemptoris
mater,
quae pervia caeli
porta manes,
stella maris,
succure cadenti
surgere qui curat populo.

Gracious Mother of the Redeemer
thou who remainest the ever-open
gate of Heaven,
and the star of the sea,
succour thy people who fall
but strive to rise again.

—Marian Antiphon

Aunque de godos ínclitos desciendas . . .
si la virtud te falta, nada tienes.

Though you may descend from ilustrious Goths . . .
you possess nothing if you lack virtue.

—Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola

In a book published over a quarter century ago, under the rubric “El Quijote como una forma secularizada de espiritualidad religiosa,” Américo Castro wrote that:

Cervantes llevó a cabo la máxima proeza de reducir a uno los dos planos del Entierro del conde Orgaz; los armonizó secularmente, de
tal forma que la ensoñación ilusoria pareciera incluida en la realidad de este mundo. Don Quijote y Sancho, además de contemplar lo inexistente como visible y tangible, actúan, y convierten en oscuridad de sus vidas el tema de su ensoñación. ‘Sin más estudio ni artificio,’ fue posible componer algo ‘que hace verdadero al que dijo: est in nobis, . . . etcétera.’ . . . En el Quijote se secularizó, se dinamizó y se estructuró artísticamente lo que antes y en torno a él había sido experiencia espiritual y mística, contemplación tensa, anhelante y estática. [1966, 107, 111]

Cervantes accomplished the maximum deed of reducing to one the two planes composing the *Burial of Count Orgaz*; he harmonized them secularly so that dreamlike illusion might seem a part of this world. Don Quijote and Sancho, in addition to contemplating the nonexistent as if it were real and tangible, act and weave the fabric of their illusions into their own lives. “Without artifice or study” it became possible to compose “something that makes real he who said: est in nobis, . . . etcetera.” . . . In the *Quijote* what were before and all around him spiritual and mystical experiences—static, tense yearning and contemplation—were secularized, given life, and artistically structured. [My translation]

The remarkable blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and the secular, the historical and the mystical, and their animation singled out by Castro is one of the distinguishing marks of the Captive’s tale in *Don Quijote* (I, 37-42). More than an instance of Aristotelian *admiration*, the story is, according to Don Fernando, one of the characters in the book who hears the telling of the tale, an “extraño suceso” (“strange event”) full of “novedad y extrañeza” (“novelty and strangeness”), “y raro, y lleno de accidentes” (“unique and full of coincidences”), whose events “maravillan y suspenden a quien los oye” (“produce marvel and suspense in all who hear them”) (433)—in short, an account bordering on the miraculous. In it, paradigmatic cultural and religious myths of fall and redemption are inscribed and rewritten as they are woven into a plot framed by contemporary historical, spiritual, and social realities. Divine truths and actual events come together, combine, and coexist in the Captive’s tale to form a richly embroidered, ironic historicoliterary tapestry mirroring the ethical and ethnic tensions underpinning Spanish life at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Although since mid-twentieth-century scholarship has sought to
identify vestiges of semiautobiographical and historical elements in Cervantes’ tale, it is also possible to find deeper, more eloquent spiritual and social resonances in it than any of these parallels can provide.¹ Far more than an aggregate of bits of autobiography merged with the venerable motifs of medieval legends about Christian captives who fall in love and escape to freedom with the infidel’s daughter (Márquez Villanueva 1975, 92-111), the tale is, when read within the larger frame of Christian history and Spanish national mythology, a story of exile and return, of alienation, trial, and restitution that constitute an eloquent appeal for cultural and religious tolerance at a painfully divisive moment in Spanish life. It is, to be sure, a deconstruction and rewriting of Spain’s foundational fiction of Reconquest—the legend of La Cava Rumía or the destruction of Spain by the Arabs—transformed by Cervantes into both a parable of and a plea for racial, cultural, and ideological tolerance, which holds forth the promise of a new Spain founded upon Christian forbearance fulfilled through the reconquest of prejudice by means of the human spirit.

The tale opens with a conspicuous allusion to Mary’s and Joseph’s return to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus, and thus immediately establishes the link between a symbolic and a historical reality in the text. Arriving at Juan Palomeque’s inn, where Don Quijote and his companions are staying, the as-yet-unnamed Zoraida, dressed in Moorish garb astride a donkey, and her older male companion seek lodgings for the night. Told that there is no room at the inn, it is clear that, though these strangers are who they are—travelers on the roads of La Mancha—they are also, on another level, transparent avatars of Mary and Joseph on the eve of Christian redemption.

The man, clad in a blue habit with a scimitar flung across his breast, and the woman, whose face is masked by a veil, form an exotic image that produces both wonder and suspicion until Dorotea politely breaks the uncomfortable silence and invites Zoraida’s conversation. Dorotea’s request is met only by a gesture of piety from Zoraida, followed by a note of verbal irony from the narrator:

No respondió nada a esto la embozada, ni hizo otra cosa que levantarse de donde sentado se había, y puestas entrambas manos cruzadas sobre el pecho, inclinada la cabeza, dobló el cuerpo en señal de que lo agradecía. Por su silencio imaginaron que, sin duda alguna, debía de ser mora y que no sabía hablar cristiano. [386]
The disguised lady made none answer, nor other thing than arising from the place wherein she sat, and setting both her arms across on her bosom, she inclined her head and bowed her body, in sign that she rendered them thanks; by her silence they doubtlessly conjectured her to be a Moor, and that she could not speak the Christian tongue. [371] [Shelton mistranslates Cristiano as Castilian.]

It is clear that Cervantes undermines the notion of a Spanish monopoly on Christian piety, as he ironically invokes the facile idiom equating speaking Castilian with being Christian. Through the linguistic conceit collapsing the notion of the Spanish language and Christianity upon each other, he calls attention at the level of discourse to his religious theme and to the reigning confusion of national and cultural identities with forms of spirituality. Deliberately highlighting Zoraida's cultural difference in language, dress, and gesture, she is introduced, as Paul Julian Smith succinctly puts it, as “triply marginalized, through ‘race,’ religion, and gender” (1993, 228). By her actions and outward appearance, Zoraida incarnates for all those around her at the inn the menacing, alien presence of the Other.

Her silence and her foreign garb, coupled with the narrator's irony, summon sensitive questions pointing to a subterfuge of distrust, religious zealotry, and racial bias, which could not have been lost upon Cervantes' readers of 1605. Once again taking the initiative, Dorotea turns now to Zoraida's Castilian-speaking companion and begs an explanation: “Decidme, señor—dijo Dorotea—: ¿esta señora es cristiana o mora? Porque el traje y el silencio nos hace pensar que es lo que no querríamos que fuese” (387) (“'Tell me, good sir,' quoth Dorotea, 'whether is this lady a Christian or a Moor? for by her attire and silence she makes us suspect that she is that we would not wish she were' ” (372)). The Captive's answer to the question is a controversial one, especially from a Spaniard in 1589, the year according to Luis Murillo (1975, 94-95) in which Cervantes, recently returned from his captivity in Algiers, initially wrote and placed the Captive's tale: “Mora es en traje y en el cuerpo; pero en el alma es muy grande cristiana, porque tiene grandísimos deseos de serlo” (387) (“'A Moor she is in attire and body,' answered the Captive; 'but in mind she is a very fervent Christian, for she hath very expressly desired to become one' ” (373)). The response puts into immediate focus a powerful contrast with the historical present and endows the narrative with a distinctive historicity whose basic dynamic
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depends on the conjunction of the mythical with the actual. The crucial
link to the historical moment roused by the Captive’s reply points
decisively to the sharp public debate concerning the expulsion of
the Moriscos (Arab Christians)—their right to remain culturally and
linguistically autonomous yet to be recognized as Christians and as
Spaniards—which galvanized Spain in the latter half of the sixteenth
century, and culminated first with the Moriscos’ diaspora within the
peninsula after 1570, and finally with their permanent expulsion from
it in 1609 (see Cardaillac 1977).

Fearing possible sedition, in 1567 Philip II had sought to imple-
ment an injunction against the Moriscos, which, since the mass conver-
sions of Moslems to Christianity after the fall of Granada in 1492, had
not been rigidly enforced. The edict, in addition to prohibiting Islamic
religious practices, forbade the utilization of spoken or written Arabic,
the wearing of Moslem apparel, and the public exercise of traditional
Islamic customs. Its aim was to extirpate all signs of cultural difference,
deorientalize Spanish society, and ensure social and political stability.
Predictably, the king’s action against the Moriscos was perceived as an
assault upon their cultural identity, as well as an offense against their
Christian piety and patriotism. It resulted in violent resistance and
finally produced an event that shook the kingdom to its foundations—
the Second Rebellion of the Alpujarras (1568-70). The uprising culmi-
nated in the brutal suppression and massacre of 2,500 men, women, and
children authorized by Don Juan de Austria at the town of Galera, which
was razed to the ground and sown with salt. In order to stem further
insurrection, after 1570 tens of thousands of Grenadine Moriscos had
their land confiscated—surrendered to Old Christians from the north—
and were uprooted to other parts of the peninsula. Despite these meas-
ures—indeed perhaps because of them—ethnic and religious tensions
between Old Christians and Moriscos endured and reached a fever pitch
again in 1582, when Philip II’s Council of the Realm concluded that the
Moriscos’ expulsion was the only solution to the discord and unrest.2

Francisco Márquez Villanueva (1984) has traced the polemical
literature capturing the vehemence of the debate and shown how it was
one of the abiding issues of Spanish civic life in the closing decades of
the sixteenth century. Fray Damián Fonseca, Fray Marco de Guadala-
jara, and Pedro Aznar Cardona, the chief apologists for expulsion,
repeatedly escalated tensions with their incendiary rhetoric as they
sought to justify banishment with logic-chopping moral and philosophi-
cal arguments, all of which culminated in 1618—nearly a decade after
the final royal order commanding the diaspora—in Fray Jaime de Bleda’s *Corónica de los moros de España*, whose last section is triumphantly titled “De la justa y general expulsión de los moriscos de España, executada por mandado del Católico Rey don Felipe III” (“Concerning the Just Expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain, Executed by Mandate of the Catholic King Philip III”).

More than a religious dispute, the debate was marked by profound cultural and racial overtones that exploited the myth of Christian Spanish society’s essential Gothicism—its present links to ancient Germanic origins symbolized in the foundational fictions of the Reconquest. The mythology of a Neo-Gothic empire, a restoration of the cultural and political splendor of Spain prior to the Arab invasion of 711, drove Spanish ideology from the Middle Ages well into the seventeenth century (Maravall 1954, 336-41; Clavería 1960, 1973). It was, in the concise words of Márquez Villanueva, “consagrado como verdad oficial española desde los tiempos de Lucas de Tuy y del arzobispo Ximénez de Rada” (1981, 362) (“consecrated as official truth since the times of Lucas of Tuy and Archbishop Jiménez de Rada”). In fact, 1589, the year Cervantes was writing the Captive’s tale, signaled one of the high points of the racial and cultural sides of the discussion with the composition of Miguel de Luna’s *Verdadera historia del rey don Rodrigo* (True History of King Rodrigo). Luna’s history constitutes a Morisco’s polemical rewriting of the legend of the last Gothic king provoked by the appearance two years earlier of Ambrosio de Morales’s *Crónica general de España* (General Chronicle of Spain), a work among many denoting the recrudescence of an aggressive historical nationalism and a general resurgence of the myths of the Reconquest, especially the story of King Rodrigo and his violation of the woman known as La Cava Rumía. The story, which recounts La Cava’s sexual dishonor at the hands of the last Gothic king, marks in the legendary history of Spain the Lord’s damnation of the Gothic empire by means of the Apocalyptic Arab invasion. The legend remained at the center of the discourse of Spanish history from the end of the first millennium, when a Toledan priest inscribed its essential elements of sexual sin and national betrayal in the so-called *Historia Pseudo-Isidoriana* (Pseudo-Isidorian History), endowing Spain’s history with a prophetic teleology of apocalyptic doom, exile and yearned-for restoration, until the fall of Granada in 1492.

The events at Granada closed God’s providential plan for a political restoration of the Gothic nation, although Spanish public policy
throughout the sixteenth century persisted in the belief that the Recon-
quest would not cease until Iberian soil was cleansed of the last Arab.
That honor was to fall not to Ferdinand and Isabella, but to their great-
great-grandson in 1609, King Felipe Hermenegildo or Philip III, whose
popular appellation of Hermenegild merges his identity with the patron
saint of the Reconquest. All of which constitutes the political, ideo-
logical, and ethical milieu in which Cervantes wrote the Captive's tale.

With the arrival of Zoraida and the Captive at the inn, then, 
Cervantes evokes a polarity of moral values lying at the center of events
as he transfigures the allusions to the Holy Couple into the historical
present. The distinction between myth and history is effaced as the text
simultaneously denotes the anxious present and points to the master
narrative of Christian redemption—just as it ironically reminds the
mindful reader of Christianity's deep Semitic roots. The occurrences at
the inn are suddenly encoded in a set of culturally provided ethical and
religious categories, that lend broad moral and metaphysical meaning
to the plot about to unfold. The Captive's tale will be inscribed in two
larger symbolic narratives encompassing the entire economy of the
culture in which all the characters in the novel move—the legend of
Mary and Joseph and the foundational national myth of King Rodrigo
and La Cava Rumía—as it appeals to a figural mode which forges links
between the understanding of the individual events of Christian reve-
lation, current history, and Spanish national fictions. Couched in this
way, the Captive's tale is authenticated, translated as it were, into a
paradigmatic narrative code, and transformed into something loftier
than life itself so that its greater moral and cultural significance may be
more easily grasped.

Building upon the banal conceit equating national language with
religious conscience, Zoraida's inability to speak the "Christian" tongue
leads Luscinda to ask with astonishment: "Luego ¿no es baptizada?" (387) (“Then she is not yet baptised?” (372)). The answer is no—yet,
ironically, neither was the Virgin Mary, nor did she need to be. Unbap-
tized like the Virgin, yet immaculate and filled with a grace only faith
can sustain, Zoraida identifies so closely with the Virgin that she calls
herself Mary. Hearing her companion answer Don Fernando's request
for her name, she interrupts and exclaims: "¡No, no Zoraida: María,
María!" (388). Her fervent interjection leaves moot the pending theo-
logical question of her need to pass through ritual sacraments before
being called a Christian, as Luscinda, "con mucho amor," symbolically
embraces her and repeats assuringly: "Sí, sí, María, María" (388), recog-
nizing her by her self-given Christian name. The primacy of faith and conscience in questions of orthodoxy and belief, quite apart from ritual observance, is thus emphatically affirmed as Zoraida returns to her devout silence.6

Through her stillness, Zoraida offers an eloquent, albeit mute, contradiction: a vision of profound Christian faith, piety, and peace against the background of hate and persecution offered up by contemporary history—an image of openly professed and deeply felt moral and religious convictions unimpeded by the constraints of ritual, yet repudiated by the reality of racism. The gifts of faith—the Christian blessings of peace, harmony, and love—enter into stark contrast with an actuality ruled by intolerance and disaffection as the text is transformed into a mode of reference to contemporary history.

Indeed, at this point the reference is perhaps too explicit and its intentions too obviously perilous and painful, so the narrative is detoured as Don Quijote bursts out with an encomium on the chivalric life, followed by a seemingly lunatic digression contrasting the virtues of arms and letters. Yet Don Quijote’s speech is, if not crucial to the plot, thematically germane to the Captive’s tale, since the goal of arms and letters, he tells us, is to achieve both peace and justice:

I speak not now of divinity . . . I mean of human sciences or arts, to maintain distributive justice in his perfection, and give to every one that which is his own; to endeavour and cause good laws to be religiously observed—an end most certainly generous, high, and worthy of great praise, but not so much as that to which the exercise of arms is annexed, which hath for its object and end peace, which is the greatest good men can desire in this life. [374-75]

In fact, rather than constitute a digression, Don Quijote’s discourse—called a “preámbulo” (394) by the narrator—serves as an introduction to the personalities, themes, and ideology of the Captive soldier’s tale. Its connection to a larger Marian subtext is explicit, too, when mediated
by Feliciana de la Voz’s hymn to Mary in the Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda (The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda) (1617), which states that “La justicia y la paz hoy se han juntado / en vos, Virgen santísima” (311) (“Justice and peace have today been joined / in you, Holy Virgin” [my translation]).

At the insistence of Don Fernando, the Captive begins to tell the story of his life, the only uninterrupted interpolated tale—barring Don Fernando’s brief intrusion to say the soldier’s comrade in captivity was his brother—in Don Quijote. From its beginning it is a story that might be called a paradigmatic narrative of an Old Christian (cristiano viejo). Evoking his ancient family roots in the remote, racially pure mountains of the Gothic kingdom of León, as it proceeds it appropriates more than geography, alluding to national myths, racial stereotypes, and a historical vision that underscore Ruy Pérez de Viedma’s unimpeachable pureza de sangre (“blood pedigree”). Ironically echoing Don Quijote’s dubious origins in the plains of La Mancha, he is first compelled to let his audience know that “en un lugar de las montañas de León tuvo principio mi linaje, con quien fue más agradecida y liberal la naturaleza que la fortuna” (395) (“In a certain village in the mountains of Leon my lineage had beginning, wherewithal nature dealt much more liberally than fortune” (382)). Though poor, he is noble in both lineage and spirit, and explicitly free from the socially coercive taint of Moorish and Jewish genealogy. From this point, it becomes inescapable that his deep devotion for the Algerian maid Zoraida is not a cry of the blood but a freely given sentiment.

Old Christian and Spanish to the core, Ruy Pérez—whose name summons a euphonic echo of Ruy Díaz, El Cid—narrates how as one of three brothers who pursue the proverbial careers in the service of the nation (“Iglesia, o mar, o casa real”) (“The Church, the sea, or the royal household”), it was his lot to lead the military life. His patriotic commitment to the Duke of Alba’s redoubtable enterprise in Flanders, his subsequent participation in the Italian campaigns, in short his loyalty to king and country, culminate in the service not just of the latter but also of a higher good—the Christian faith—with the symbol of his deep personal sacrifice, heroic action, and final captivity at the battle of Lepanto:

Y aquel día, que fue para la cristiandad tan dichoso, porque en él se desengañó el mundo y todas las naciones del error en que estaban, creyendo que los turcos eran invencibles por la mar, en aquel día,
And that very day which was so fortunate to all Christendom; for therein the whole world was undeceived, and all the nations thereof freed of all the error they held, and belief they had, that the Turk was invincible at sea: in that very day I say, wherein the swelling stomach and Ottomanical pride was broken among so many happy men as were there (for the Christians that were slain were much more happy than those which they left victorious alive), I alone was unfortunate, seeing that in exchange for some naval crown which I might expect had I lived in the times of the ancient Romans, I found myself the night ensuing that so famous a day with my legs chained and my hands manacled. [385]

Ringing with epic cadences, the narrative validates the righteousness of Spain’s Holy War against the Turks and confirms the Captive’s courageous commitment to Crown and Christ.

 Taken prisoner at Lepanto, Ruy Pérez is first enslaved by Uchalí Fartax, and then by the cruel Azán Agá who takes him to Algiers; each master is an actual historical personage. The first, a red-headed Calabrian renegade, and the second, a homosexual Venetian convert to Islam who was also king of Algiers from 1577 to 1578, illustrate in the narrative not only their actual selves but also the unthinkable historical reality of Christian apostasy and perversion as they mirror Zoraida’s virginity and conversion to Christianity. These characters combine, in the words of Paul Julian Smith, to constitute an image of “the betrayal of nation and religion ... with a rejection of the compulsory heterosexuality enforced in the Christian territories” (1993, 231). The Captive’s slave masters offer eloquent proof that sexual deviation and renunciation of religious beliefs, coupled with theological error, are not things tied to race, nor are they alien to Europeans, as they ironically accent the fact that faith and chastity are first, and always, matters of choice and conscience.

One of the crucial features of the Captive’s tale is its integration of the events of factual history and the experience of that history by its
characters. The great conflicts of the Mediterranean world at the close of the sixteenth century form not just the backdrop but also the precinct of the events the tale portrays. The adventure of Ruy Pérez de Viedma unfolds not in a fabulous land but amid real people in the historically real, familiar geography of Flanders, Italy, Algiers, and Spain, scenes of the racially charged political and religious struggles of the years during which *Don Quijote* was written. This is both by design and of necessity, dictated by a story of conflict and division, which ultimately gives way to a call for tolerance and a demonstration that Christianity remains a question of conscience rather than of race. It is through his direct participation in the great events of history that Ruy Pérez is able to substantiate his personal virtue, unshakable belief, and heartfelt patriotism, thereby passing the conclusive test of loyalty to faith and country.

Enslaved by the pharaonic Azán Agá, Ruy Pérez suffers his Algerian captivity as he plots an escape for himself and his people, until one day, from his prison patio, he sees the first sign of deliverance—a white-flagged cane containing ten gold coins lowered on a string from a window. Later in the day, the window opens again and, as if from heaven, a cross made of cane is dropped to the Captive. As the yet unseen Zoraida lowers the cane cross from her window, it is transformed into the silent mediator of love and redemption, conspicuously compared by the Captive to a bright star in the northern sky (408). Indeed, that star merges metaphorically with Zoraida’s name, which in Arabic means “Star” or “Pleiades,” as it evokes the Virgin Mary—*stella maris*—to form a constellation serving as a guiding beacon in the spiritual voyage of deliverance depicted in the tale. It is this symbol that leads Ruy Pérez to learn of Zoraida’s youthful conversion to Christianity by her captive nursemaid and to hear the story of her spiritual rebirth by means of an accompanying note drafted in Arabic. The latter, undecipherable in its original script, is translated by a bilingual prisoner. The diglossic text of the translation calls God by his Arabic appellation, Allah, and stipulates Zoraida learned of the Virgin, Lela Marién—Lady Mary—in Arabic from her nurse, as it merges Castilian with her native tongue and sets into contradictory focus the narrator’s earlier assertion that Zoraida, because she did not speak Castilian, was not Christian:

Cuando yo era niña, tenía mi padre una esclava, la cual en mi lengua me mostró la zalá cristianesca, y me dijo muchas cosas de Lela Marién. La cristiana murió, y yo sé que no fue al fuego, sino con Alá
porque después la vi dos veces, y me dijo que me fuese a tierra de cristianos a ver a Lela Marién, que me quería mucho. [409-10]

When I was a child, my father had a certain Christian woman captive, that taught me in mine own tongue all the Christian religion, and told me many things of Lela Marien. The Christian died, and I know she went not to the fire, but to Allah; for she appeared to me twice after her death, and bade me go to the Christian country to see Lela Marien, who loved me much. [397]

The theme of the letter's translation and its conspicuous diglossia symbolizes at the level of the text the Christian conjunction of the two cultures and the erasure of the linguistic boundary said to segregate them. Put simply, its unpolished bilingualism eloquently manifests Christianity's inclusiveness, and, resembling the lead tablets of the Sacromonte, provides a common point of reference for Spanish and Arab Christians alike.8

Zoraida, the letter implicitly tells us, is also one of Christianity's elect—a visionary who is visited by the spirit of her nurse and later by the Virgin Mary. That she is a seer is not strange, but is confirmation of her charismatic Christian sanctity. Visionary women were not only common in Cervantes' Spain, but often revered as they, like Teresa de Jesús, propagated new forms of Christian spirituality (Weber 1990; Kagan 1990). Indeed, since the Middle Ages throughout Europe, as Elizabeth Petroff notes, "visions were a socially sanctioned activity that freed a woman from conventional female roles by identifying her as a genuine religious figure. They brought her to the attention of others, giving her a public language she could use to teach and learn" (1986, 6). While Zoraida maintains a Pauline silence among the Spanish Christians at the inn, her mute spirituality and visionary sanctity are subsequently authenticated by her instant recognition of the images of the Virgin when she first enters a church.9 Back on Spanish soil, the Captive says, "Fuimos derechos a la iglesia, a dar gracias a Dios por la merced recibida; y así como en ella entró Zoraida, dijo que allí había rostros que se parecían a los de Lela Marién. Dijimosle que eran imágenes suyas" (432) ("We went directly to the church to give thanks unto Almighty God for the benefit received; and as soon as Zoraida entered into it, she said there were faces in it that resembled very much that of Lela Marien. We told her that they were her images" (422)).
One of the most important features of Zoraida's characterization is her personal modesty, chastity, and silence, that is, her close identification with the Virgin Mary. Yet, her virginity signals not only her spiritual and cultural identification with Mary but also the historical intertext and the inversion of the paradigmatic image of sexual sin lying at the heart of the legend of La Cava Rumia and unredeemed Spain. Though, like the legendary La Cava, Zoraida's physical beauty is beyond compare, her profound spiritual virtue prevails and is manifested when her loveliness fails to elicit in Don Fernando at the inn the desire inflamed by her counterparts, Dorotea and Luscinda. To be sure, when described, Zoraida's beauty is incorporeal, and, when confronted by the French corsairs in sight of the salvific shore, produces nothing but esteem, as the pirate captain repays with increase, and in gold, the debt of Judas:

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\text{ya a vista de tierra de España; con la cual vista todas nuestras pesadumbres y pobrezas se nos olvidaron de todo punto, como si no hubieran pasado por nosotros; tanto es el gusto de alcanzar la libertad perdida. . . . nos echaron en la barcha . . . y el capitán, movido por no sé de qué misericordia, al embarcarse la hermosísima Zoraida, le dio hasta cuarenta escudos de oro, y no consintió que le quisiesen sus soldados estos mismos vestidos que ahora tiene puestos. [429]}
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when we were in view of Spain; with the sight whereof all our griefs and poverties were as quite forgotten as if we never had felt any, so great is the delight a man takes to recover his liberty. . . . they put us into the cock . . . and the captain, moved with some compassion, as the beautiful Zoraida embarked herself, bestowed on her forty crowns in gold; nor would he permit his soldiers to despoil her of these very garments which then and now she doth wear. [419]

Like Mary, the beauty of Zoraida's spirit merges with her flesh, inspiring charity and compassion through piety as she remains truly blessed among the women in the novel. Indeed, returning metaphor to the threshold of the literal, the Captive when he first sees her in the sacred-like precinct of her enclosed garden says "me parecía que tenía delante de mí una deidad del cielo, venida a la tierra para mi gusto y para mi remedio" (417) ("I . . . thought that some deity had presented itself to my view, being come from heaven to the earth for my recreation and relief" (407)).
Though Zoraida and the Captive identify marriage as the final end of their journey of flight, their life together, contrary to the union of Luscinda, Cardenio, Don Fernando, and Dorotea (not to mention the tumultuous obsessions of Anselmo, Camila, and Lotario) is characterized by an absence of passion and erotic craving. Their desire for marriage, closely allied to the image of Mary and Joseph and divorced from the body, exists solely as a projection of the yearnings of the spirit. Cervantes thus singles out the tale to reveal the higher moral and religious truths of restraint and continence—the restorative forces lying at the heart of Christian virtue and the reconquest of the spirit—as he contrasts the vanity and covetousness of the other characters who are driven into matrimony by impulse, wantonness, and lust. In this way, as Juergen Hahn (1979) points out, the Captive’s tale stands out as distinct from the stories of the others. Separating the notion of the body and the soul, it segregates the physical from the invisible, negating the metaphor of carnal compulsion and catastrophic retribution lying at the core of King Rodrigo’s legend.

From the fifteenth century on, the myth of La Cava Rumía, as inscribed in Pedro del Corral’s Crónica Sarracina (Saracen Chronicle) (1425), offered an influential model for the contrivance of plots combining political providentialism, transgressive sexual acts, and demagogic nationalism. While critics have acknowledged the significance of the Captive’s etymological digression on La Cava Rumía and sought to find in it a symbolic presence (notably Spitzer 1968, 177; Murillo 1983, 238; and Weber 1991), they have failed to see how, situated on the voyage of return to Spain accompanied by a virginal, Christian woman of color, it marks both temporally and geographically a larger journey—an eschatological and cultural one—ending in restitution and final closure for the Neo-Gothic legend of the destruction of Spain.

As Jacques Le Goff (1989, 152-87) notes, heaven and earth are conceived as spatial continuities leading to a complementary coherence and uniformity in the relation between sacred and secular temporality in chronotopes configured by Christian ideology in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In this way space and time are thought of as things occupied by significant loci, rather than discrete places or segments of chronology. As such, they acquire their meaning through a paradigmatic relation with ideologically equivalent moments in the larger continuum of the history of salvation to which they ultimately point.

As a result, the meaning of the legend of La Cava Rumía for Zoraida and her exiled companions is explicitly denied in the words of
Quiso nuestra buena suerte que llegamos a una cala que se hace al lado de un pequeño promontorio o cabo que de los moros es llamado el de la Caba Rumía, que en nuestra lengua quiere decir la mala mujer cristiana; y es tradición entre los moros que en aquel lugar está enterrada la Cava, por quien se perdió España, porque cava en su lengua quiere decir mujer mala, y rumía cristiana; y aun tienen por mal agiiero llegar allí a dar fondo cuando la necesidad les fuerza a ello, porque nunca le dan sin ella; puerto que para nosotros no fue abrigo de mala mujer, sino puerto seguro de nuestro remedio, según andaba alterada la mar. [426]

And our good fortune directing us, we arrived to a little creek at the side of a certain cape or promontory, called by the Moors the Cape of the Cava Rumia, which in our language signifies “the ill Christian woman.” And the Moors hold it for a tradition, that in the very same place was the Cava buried, for whom Spain was lost, and conquered by the Moors; for Cava in their language signifies an ill woman, and Rumia a Christian. Yea, and they hold it for a sign of misfortune to arrive or cast anchor there, when mere necessity drives them thither, without which they never approach it: yet did it not prove to us the shelter of an ill woman, but the secure haven of our safety. [416]

Rather than a story of enslavement and banishment, Cervantes redefines the legend into one of deliverance—deliverance from the racial hatred and intolerance that preside over the Spanish discourse of history and the foundational fiction of Reconquest, as he leaves La Cava entombed on an African promontory and, through Zoraida’s public profession of faith, reminds his readers of humanity’s salvation through the agency of a Semitic woman.

Zoraida’s public declaration of her Christian faith, addressed to her father on board the ship taking her to Spain, has generated heated critical response. Scholars have seen in it everything from the actions of an “hija ociosa y mimada de su padre” (“indolent and spoiled child of her father”) (Percas de Ponseti, 1975, 1:244) to an attitude shaped by “una decidida frialdad afectiva” (“a decidedly frigid affectivity”) (Marquez Villanueva 1975, 130) to a gesture of “gran malignidad” (“great...
evil") (Spitzer 1968, 177) to a “martyrdom” (Murillo 1983, 237), and even to a traumatic Oedipal drama filled with Freudian and Jungian overtones (Weber 1991; El Saffar 1984, 75-79, and 1988; Garcés 1989). Yet, it too may be placed analogically in the context of the legend of La Cava to signify a commemoration of one of its central figures, Count Julian, whose ingenuous bestowal of his daughter upon King Rodrigo led to her rape and to the calamities that befell Spain because of the father’s call for vengeance. Zoraida’s father, like La Cava’s, eschews modesty and invites the Spaniard to lay eyes upon his daughter in the garden of their home (“cuando su padre vio que venía, y de espacio, la llamó y mandó que llegase” [417] (“her father perceiving that she came on slowly, did call, and commanded her to draw near” [406])), but unlike King Rodrigo, Ruy Pérez feels no carnal compulsion and perceives only the rich external adornments Zoraida wears. In this way, Zoraida’s abandonment of her father in sight of La Cava’s tomb, more than a cruel act or a personal tragedy, constitutes a remembrance and exaction of a patrimonial debt—an act in the name of faith symbolizing the rejection of a patrimony of carnality, infidelity, vengeance, and enslavement in favor of a matrimony in Christian peace.

As the word’s etymology implies, matrimony is derived from the Latin root mater and the suffix -monio, signifying the state of motherhood. Zoraida’s renunciation may be read, then, as a symbolic one in which she abandons a father in favor of a mother—the Virgin, the Church, and ultimately a Spain presided over by peace and justice. Her painful public profession of her Christian faith enacts the final necessary renunciation of the vengeful father of myth and medieval romance (Langbehn-Rohland 1970), the figure of Count Julian symbolizing retribution at the center of the Gothic legend’s rich semantic field. Far from a “narrative of deterritorialization” signaling a return of phallic order, as Paul Julian Smith (1993) concludes, the tale embodies a disavowal of a central patriarchal myth and replaces it with one of symbolic recovery through maternal love, fellowship, and domesticity.

Indeed, the basic territorial pattern of the legend of La Cava is inverted in the Captive’s tale when the Christian spirit in the person of Zoraida and the Captain is restored from the direction of Africa. Just as the cataclysmic Moorish invasion signaling the damnation of the Gothic people originates with a cry for blood on the dark shores of that continent, so too the promise of their final redemption in the person of an Arab woman. Cast adrift by the corsairs on a moonless night off the coast of Spain, it is the spiritual light of Christianity, whose incarnation
is the Virgin Mary—called *stella maris*—that illuminates the way in this journey of symbolic return. Guided by the inner light of faith, the lost voyagers miraculously make landfall near Málaga, in a place not unlike Gibraltar, and close the perilous passage with an act of thanksgiving that also signifies possession:

we arrived to the foot of a high and monstrous mountain, which was not altogether so near to the sea but that it did grant a little patch of ground whereon we might commodiously disembark; wherefore we ran ourselves on the sands, and came all a-land, and kissed the earth, and, with tears of most joyful content and delight, gave thanks unto our Lord God for the incomparable favours which He had done us in our voyage.

In the new paradigm of Spanish history embedded in this journey's geographical movement back across the straits, Zoraida signals, like the Virgin Mary for all of humankind, the repair of a lost grace to a fallen Spanish nation. Yet, when they arrive, the pilgrim's landfall on Spanish soil at Gibraltar, the great rock whose name commemorates the Moorish general Tarik, who led the Arab host to Spain, also rouses echoes of the calamitous events of 711. It is mistakenly taken for an invasion from Africa by a local shepherd. Seeing their Moorish garb, the boy concludes the travelers are attacking Moors and rings out with a call to arms: "¡Moros, moros! ¡Arma, arma!" (430). As the passage reverberates with the proverbial saying, "Hay moros en la costa," indicating peril or the need to be wary, it also evokes the Erasmian conceit that the habit fails to make the monk, and calls up earlier recollections of the judgment passed by Dorotea on Zoraida's outward heathen image. In this way, Cervantes ironically mimics the catastrophic Arab invasion and signals his inversion of the crucial moment in the myth of an unredeemed Spain.

When he read the legend of La Cava and supplanted it with the story of Mary and Joseph and a pattern of symbolic return, Cervantes
doubtless understood the rich typological images of fall and redemption that structure both these narratives. He understood, too, their significance for the political and ideological economies of Spanish life as he wrote *Don Quijote*, plumbing the depths of their respective senses of decay and renovation. In this way, in his rewriting of the dark national myth of collapse he sought consciously to depose a pattern of Apocalypse with one of Genesis, to write a new historical allegory—a national revelation that holds forth not the images of death and banishment but of a common life.

In fine, by means of analogy and opposition, Cervantes transfigures the story of La Cava, and at a stroke rewrites it from an Apocalyptic narrative of violation, ruin, and exile into a new Revelation centering on faith, hope, and return—of homecoming and of closure. Supplanting the old, he endows the story of the destruction of Spain with a new teleology founded on an ethos of love, charity, and personal sacrifice that repudiates La Cava's fundamental message of violence, vengeance, and devastation—of pollution and banishment for trespass symbolized in sexual defilement—dispensed through usurpation by an oriental race.

The mixed-race marriage of Ruy Pérez de Viedma and Zoraida, civilly sanctioned by a justice of the peace in the person of Ruy's serendipitously encountered brother, the oidor, and to be consecrated later by the church under the patronage of the Virgin Mary, provides a powerful image of union in the text. In the spiritual and legal bonds that bind them the thematic threads of peace and justice from don Quijote's speech on arms and letters come together and finally coalesce, signaling that marriage, the symbolic agent of acculturation, provides the means for their realization. On all accounts their matrimony belies the divisive mythic history of the destruction and Reconquest of Spain as it was understood and circulated in the popular imagination, and flies in the face of ecclesiastical authorities who continued to fulminate against marriages of Christians with Moriscos (Márquez Villanueva 1975, 315 n. 200). Rather than depict the rape and plunder of a nation through the metaphor of sexual abuse and calamitous reprisal, the bloody myth of La Cava Rumía is intertextually denied; it is systematically erased and rewritten by Cervantes, to be supplanted by the Captive's tale, which holds forth the promise of a Christian Spain in interracial marriage—a symbol of unity, continence, family, and faith—new hope, peace, and resolution as its transcends cultural, geographical, and linguistic difference.
The interracial story of love, trust, union, and friendship of Zoraida and the Captive points to the spiritual and ethical energies required to overcome the deep divisions caused by culture, national enmities, and war, and to the ironic possibility of redemption and new life through miscegenation as exemplified in the Gothic Captive’s alliance with a Semitic woman. To be sure, it reminds the reader with a broad familiarity of Cervantine texts of the apostrophe of Mary in the Persiles, in which she is invoked with the words “vos fuisteis el medio conveniente, / que redujo a pacifica concordia / de Dios y el hombre la mortal discordia . . . que sois universal remediodora” (“you were the propitious means, / that reduced to peaceful concord / man and God’s mortal discord . . . you are the universal healer”) (311). In the Captive’s tale Cervantes not only deconstructs the lesson implicit in the legend of La Cava, then, but also forges a new moral vision as he moves his own lesson closer to the real world of his readers. The Captive’s tale, although it is made from the stuff of myths, legends, and romance, is neither. It is, on the contrary, a statement on contemporary political and social history translated into a fictional microcosm of everyday life.

The inscription of the legend of La Cava Rumía and its erasure with the story of Joseph and Mary in Don Quijote refers simultaneously to two ideal versions of the Spanish past. As Edward Said reminds us, “appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps. This problem animates all sorts of discussions—about influence, about blame and judgment, about present actualities and future priorities” (1993, 3).

Although the narrator of Don Quijote shows his bias against Moors, calling Cide Hamete Benengeli a liar (I, 9), and later asserts that the Arabs are a race comprised of “embelecadores, falsarios y quimeristas” (II, 3) (“false, deceitful, and chimerical people” (439)), and although the Coloquio de los perros (1613) and the Persiles embrace well-known invectives against Moriscos, these sentiments need not be identified with Cervantes, as some have tried to do (Colonge 1969-70; Mas 1967, 1:322-23; Osuna 1970; Arco y Garay 1951, 194). To be sure, they are likely strategies of irony deployed to call attention to the plight of the Moriscos and, at the same time, distance and camouflage personal sentiments. As Márquez Villanueva observes, referring to the anti-Morisco diatribe advocating their expulsion in the Persiles,
El tributo elogioso [de la política de la expulsión] era obligado y constituyía, además, el único salvoconducto para cierta actitud de "no es que yo esté en contra", que era la más atrevida que toleraba la discusión pública de aquel asunto. Si Cervantes fuera adverso a la política de exilio o abrigara reservas acerca de ella, sólo podía expresarlo en términos implícitos y, desde luego, tras pregonar su lealtad con ostentosa pompa verbal. Aquellas páginas sobre moriscos nos situán, pues, bajo el compromiso de encarnar esa especial categoría de lectores informados y reflexivos para quienes Cervantes la escribió. [1975, 234]

Paying tribute [to the policy of expulsion] was obligatory and, moreover, constituted a safe-conduct pass for the expression of a certain attitude of "It's not that I am against the policy, but . . . ," which was the most daring form of public discussion of the matter to be tolerated. If Cervantes were averse to the policy of exile or he harbored reservations about it, he could only express this in implicit terms and, of course, only after having first ostentatiously proclaimed his loyalty with pompous rhetoric. Those pages on the Moriscos thus situate us under the obligation of identifying with that special category of readers for whom Cervantes wrote them.” [My translation]

Cervantes’ advocacy of racial tolerance, and his opposition to a policy of exile, is both subtle and by need implicit in his rewriting of the legend of La Cava Rumía. Yet it is also unmistakable as he explicitly effaces the latter’s plot of banishment and usurpation and inscribes his narrative of Christian charity and restoration upon the palimpsest of history.

Along with such works as Miguel de Luna’s Verdadera historia del rey don Rodrigo and Ginés Pérez de Hita’s Guerras civiles de Granada, the Captive’s tale in Don Quijote constitutes at once a statement of resistance and a strategy for resolution, an eloquent rewriting and disavowal, a closure of the myth of fallen Spain brought to its knees by a barbarous oriental race. At the center of these works lies the wish to discredit a belief in a righteous Spanish empire as defined by its conflict with the Other, and a deep nostalgia for a multicultural world governed by a humane ethos of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and assimilation. Like those works, the Captive’s tale exemplifies no small capacity for literary and historical contradiction. In each, mythical and factual materials, past events and contemporary values, merge to confront, dismantle, and
deny the legitimacy of another legendary narrative as well as offer up a vision of an ideal Spain that celebrates in peace and harmony its unity and worth in spiritual and ethnic diversity.

The story, then, more than the events themselves, constitutes an allegorical struggle of national identities that pits the Gothic paradigm against the Christian one, as it ironically disavows the Christianity of the reigning discourse of Spain's history. It remains, however, only a tale of hope and promise lacking in the lasting assurance of a resolution. Whereas Cardenio, Luscinda, Dorotea, and Don Fernando have consummated their unions through the conquest of their passions and themselves, Zoraida and the Captive must still think of the road left to travel, leaving in doubt beyond the magical precinct of the inn (Dudley 1972) the nature of Spain's final solution to the Reconquest.15
Chapter 4

Unde Veritas?

Readings, Writings, Voices, and Revisions in the Text (Don Quijote I, 8-9)

Y para concluir con todo, yo imagino que todo lo que digo es así, sin que sobre ni falte nada, y píntola en mi imaginación como la deseo. [I, 25]

And, for a final conclusion, I imagine that all that which I say is really so, without adding or taking aught away. And I do imagine her, in my fantasy, to be such as I could wish her. [221]

—Cervantes, Don Quijote

Leo Spitzer, employing as his point of departure Américo Castro’s discussion of Cervantes’ problematical representations of reality, which is outlined in his epoch-making study El pensamiento de Cervantes (The Thought of Cervantes), in an equally momentous investigation, explored what he called the “linguistic perspectivism” of Don Quijote. By this Spitzer meant the manner in which Cervantes in his novel formulated a phenomenology of language, illustrated through the representation of things “no por lo que ellas son en sí, sino sólo en cuanto objeto de nuestro lenguaje o de nuestro pensamiento” (163) (“not as they are unto themselves, but as objects of language and thought”). Through detailed examination of what he called “polietimología” (polyetymology) and “polionomasia” (polyonomasia), Spitzer demonstrated how the variety of names assigned to the characters in Cervantes’ work (e.g., Sancho’s wife, variously called Juana Gutiérrez, Mari Gutiérrez, Juana Panza, and Teresa Panza), coupled with the polysemous possibilities even a single word might possess (e.g., trucha, truchuela, abadejo, bacalao in part I, chapter 2) are not authorial lapses that speak to Cervantes’ waning control over his exposition, but, rather, meaningful artistic devices reflecting an essentially perspectivistic world vision.
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attuned to the universal multiplicity of senses in all things. Spitzer demonstrated that Cervantes was acutely conscious of the fact that “el mundo, tal como se ofrece al hombre, es susceptible de varias interpretaciones, exactamente igual que los nombres son susceptibles de varias etimologías” (149) (“the world, as it offers itself up to humankind, is susceptible to various interpretations, just as the names are susceptible to various etymologies”), and concluded that “de consiguiente podemos aceptar que el perspectivismo lingüístico de Cervantes se halla reflejado en su concepción de la trama y de los personajes [de la novela]” (149) (“hence we may conclude that Cervantes’ linguistic perspectivism is found in his conception of the plot and of the characters in the novel”).

In fact, then, what Spitzer discovered was not only the pervasiveness of polionomasia and the polysemousness of words in Don Quijote, but also something more consequential: the linguistic foundation for Cervantes’ contrivance of the multiple points of view he introduces in his novel in order to tell it, and the principal device permitting the construction of distinct stylistic registers that confer a sense of unique perspective upon the numerous narrators who relate the story. It was Cervantes’ comprehension of the essential phenomenology of language that allowed him to experiment with multiple narrative perspectives and multiple representations of the same scene. Thus he was able to play with and illustrate how the depiction of one event or setting could vary in accordance with the words used to mediate it, or the desires of the reader employed to decode it.

As critics have shown, the narrative structure of Don Quijote is exceedingly complex. It is, at the same time, the instrument through which Cervantes introduces the stylistic registers he assigns the many voices who tell his tale. As George Haley characterizes it, Cervantes’ novel constitutes a “virtuoso display of palimpsest” (1986, 96) that is first narrated by a voice who introduces the main character and then continues telling the latter’s story until the end of chapter 8 in part I.1 At that point, in the midst of the battle between Don Quijote and the Biscayan, the manuscript from which the narrator reads comes to an abrupt end, as he conveys in the first person his sense of frustration and lingering curiosity prompted by the unexpected abridgement of the story. At the height of the conflict, with a sudden shift in point of view, the reader / narrator deflates our readerly expectations with the comment
Pero está el daño de todo esto que en este punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito, destas hazañas de don Quijote, de las que deja referidas. Bien es verdad que el segundo autor desta obra no quiso creer que tan curiosa historia estuviese entregada a las leyes del olvido, ni que hubiesen sido tan poco curiosos los ingenios de la Mancha, que no tuviesen en sus archivos o en sus escritorios algunos papeles que deste famoso caballero tratasen; y así, con esta imaginación, no se desesperó de hallar el fin desta apacible historia, el cual, siéndole el cielo favorable, le halló del modo que se contará en la segunda parte. [89]

But it is to be deplored how, in this very point and term, the author of this history leaves his battle depending, excusing himself that he could find no more written of the acts of Don Quijote than those which he hath already recounted. True it is, that the second writer of this work would not believe that so curious a history was drowned in the jaws of oblivion, or that the wits of the Mancha were so little curious as not to reserve among their treasures or records some papers treating of this famous knight; and therefore, encouraged by this presumption, he did not despair to find the end of this pleasant history; which, Heaven being propitious to him, he got at last, after the manner that shall be recounted in the Second Part. [67]

The result of all of this is a highlighting of the gaps, incongruities, and disjunctures of texts and of language, what Foucault has termed a heterotopia. Heterotopias—defined by Foucault in counter distinction to linguistic or textual utopias in which the illusion of reference, precision, and syntagmatic logical progression reigns—are disturbing because they "secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to hold together" (1973, xviii).

The invocation of the second part of Don Quijote is, of course, an artifice intended to heighten the sensation of a gap, the existence of an actual interruption of the manuscript. Don Quijote's adventure with the Biscayan will be resumed in the promised second part, but is momentarily eclipsed in the following episode at the beginning of chapter 9,
displaced there by the narrator's relation of his own exploits in finding the missing continuation of the truncated tale. After an unspecified period of time, he tells us, he stumbled across the remainder of the story by deciphering the marginalia in an illuminated Arabic manuscript discovered among some old papers owned by a Toledan street vendor. Though led to the conclusion that the document held the continuation of don Quijote's story because of a mention of Dulcinea in a marginal gloss of the manuscript, the narrator, alas, cannot read Arabic and so before continuing his perusal of the tale—and hence its relation to us—he must arrange to have the entire text translated into Castilian.

Anxious to learn of the interrupted battle's outcome, the narrator engages a passing Morisco to translate the manuscript in exchange for some raisins and wheat. Thus, when Don Quijote's story comes forth once again nearly at the end of chapter 9, we begin to read a reading of a reading, the perusal of a multilayered text mediated by the untrustworthy translation executed by a passerby commissioned by the initial narrator. To make matters worse, at this moment we learn that the story as we have it was composed originally by one Cide Hamete Benengeli, an Arab historian who, like every Arab, is charged with unrestrained mendacity. All of which places us in a precarious position indeed for conferring authority upon, and finding the truth in, a tale about the deeds of a Christian knight told by a Muslim chronicler.

By means of Cide Hamete and the other narrators, readers, and translators now in the text, Cervantes creates an ironical distancing vis-à-vis his main character as he forges a multiplicity of superimposed, yet dissimilar, points of view, each with its distinct opinion, stylistic modulation, and unique sense of individuality. The presence of the many perspectives introduced into the text at this point animates a complicated and subtle exploration of the effects of rhetorical and stylistic variation in the reading and relation of facts by means of texts and, as remains to be discussed, is marked by polyphonic nuances and tones that the author allocates to the voices he improvises to transmit his story.

Cervantes' abiding preoccupation with the role that linguistic selection and personal desire play in constructing mental images not only is found in the numerous voices and multiple perspectives that are introduced to narrate Don Quijote but also is reinforced by the fact that, as E.C. Riley indicates, the book "está lleno de dobles versiones de un mismo acontecimiento" (233) ("is filled with multiple versions of a single event"). Each of the descriptions in these reiterated episodes
Unde Veritas

corresponds to a unique style and point of view assigned to relate it, hence building upon the idea that Don Quijote's story is less a straightforward narration and more a historical, and often flawed, philological reconstruction, including partial translations, of multiple, variant readings encountered in disparate sources. The story of the reconstruction of the narrative lacuna said to exist in the manuscript between chapters 8 and 9 in part I represents the reader's first conspicuous encounter with this narrative strategy, in which the author enlarges upon an event rehearsed by diverse points of view, each illustrated by distinct stylistic registers.² The artifice of the manuscript lacuna thus opens the way for the introduction of Cide Hamete Benengeli, and allows Cervantes a space in which to underscore the pivotal role played by stylistic modulation and point of view in the telling of the tale. The result is a kaleidoscopic representation of the battle between Don Quijote and the Biscayan distributed over two chapters, and is one more confirmation of the degree of narrative control Cervantes exercises in his work and of the protean genius of his imagination.

The importance of the role of stylistic variation in constituting realities at the level of the text is anticipated early in chapter 8, when Don Quijote verbally challenges the Biscayan. His speech there is marked by humorously exaggerated archaism and grandiloquence. Don Quijote's bombast is, as well, parried by the near-unintelligible gibberish of the Biscayan, who hopelessly entangles Castilian with his native tongue. The consequence is a mystifying verbal exchange resulting in noticeable comic discord—a veritable babel of knight-speak and nonsense that in a single stroke calls our attention to the part played by language in mediating, or failing to mediate, thoughts and realities. The linguistic conflict between these two farcical characters at once establishes the significance of verbal style and diction in both constructing and decoding the facts and meanings that words are intended to convey.

The description of the actual battle between Don Quijote and his Basque adversary follows the baffling verbal fusillade and is related in a detailed passage cast in the third person. The same struggle will soon be retold, however, from a different perspective, and in a different tone, four times in less than five printed pages. Each of these versions is, as remains to be seen, meant to insinuate the voice of different narrators who offer their own individual renditions of the events, but who themselves are endowed with singular personalities shaped by their outlooks and desires.
Three-fourths of the way through chapter 8, lulled into security by the narrator's authoritative tone, we come upon the first version of the conflict as it is mediated by the narrator through the collation and perusal of an unspecified number of written sources. Fast upon Don Quijote's challenge to the Biscayan, whom the former mistakes for the abductor of a princess just as the latter incorrectly thinks Don Quijote is impeaching his gentlemanly breeding, the narrator relates the following scene:

Venía . . . don Quijote contra el cauto vizcaíno, con la espada en alto, con determinación de abrirle por medio, y el vizcaíno le aguardaba ansí mismo levantada la espada y aforrado con su almohada, y todos los circunstantes estaban temerosos y colgados de lo que había de suceder de aquellos tamaños golpes con que se amenazaban; y la señora del coche y las demás criadas suyas estaban haciendo mil votos y ofrecimientos a todas las imágenes y casas de devoción de España, porque Dios librase a su escudero y a ellas de aquel tan grande peligro en que se hallaban. [88-89]

Don Quixote . . . came against the wary Biscaine with his sword lifted aloft, with full resolution to part him in two; and all the beholders stood, with great fear suspended, to see the success of those monstrous blows wherewithal they threatened one another. And the lady of the coach, with her gentlewomen, made a thousand vows and offerings to all the devout places of Spain, to the end that God might deliver the squire and themselves out of that great danger wherein they were. [67]

The scene is meant to create an air of suspense and anticipation and to break all illusion through the invocation of the lacuna in the manuscript; it leaves readers in a state of aggravated consternation, and with an intense awareness of the artifice of fiction—the referential fallacy lying at the bottom of its bag of tricks.

Before the heterotopical rupture, however, the description draws us in as it underscores the menacing posture of the combatants through the depiction of physical movement and the evocation of the alarmed reaction of the witnesses to the struggle. As expectation is heightened, the narrative achieves dynamism though related in a direct, unadorned fashion—what Gilbert Highet, speaking of the passage in his Anatomy of Satire, has labeled Cervantes' "plain eggs-and-bacon prose" (1962,
118). The adjectives employed here fail to trespass the bare limits of description. We are told of the “cauto vizcaño” (“cautious Biscayan”), the “gran cuchillada” (“great swipe of the sword”) that the latter aims at Don Quijote, of the spectators “temerosos y colgados” (“fearful and full of suspense”), and “aquellos tamaños golpes con que se amenazaban” (“those great blows with which they threatened each other”), and, finally, about the “grande peligro en que [las damas del coche] se hallaban” (“the great peril in which the ladies in the coach found themselves”). Though full of tension, the description never topples into melodrama, mock-heroics, or grandiloquence. The mode of expression is nothing short of economical: it seeks to be unobtrusive and to create verisimilitude by means of a not unusual, almost spoken idiom. The technique summons the stylistic model invoked in the prologue to the novel by the author’s friend, who exhorts him to “procurar que a la llana, con palabras significantes, honestas y bien colocadas, salga vuestra oración y perfodo sonoro y festivo” (25) (“endeavour to deliver with significant, plain, honest, and well-ordered words, thy jovial and cheerful discourse, expressing as near as thou mayst possibly thy intention, making thy conceits clear, and not intricate or dark” (9)).

At the beginning of Chapter 9, after the story has been interrupted by the break in the manuscript read to us by the narrator, the authorial, temporal, and spatial confines of the narrative are redeployed, as readers find themselves in a new chronotope. At this point, the narrator / editor speaks to the reader as he reconstitutes and recapitu-lates from memory the battle between Don Quijote and the Biscayan. Recollecting the struggle for the reader, the conflict is now recreated from the images in his own imagination, rather than from words on a manuscript page:

Dejamos en la primera parte desta historia al valeroso vizcaño y al famoso don Quijote con las espadas altas y desnudas, en guisa de descargar dos furibundos fendientes, tales, que si en lleno se acertaban, por lo menos se dividirían y fenderían de arriba abajo y abrirían como una granada; y que en aquel punto tan dudoso paró y quedó destrozada tan sabrosa historia, sin que nos diese noticia su autor dónde se podría hallar lo que della faltaba. [91]

We left the valorous Biscaigne and the famous Don Quixote, in the First Part, with their swords lifted up and naked, in terms to
discharge one upon another two furious cleavers, and such, as if they
had lighted rightly, would cut and divide them both from the top
to the toe, and open them like a pomegranate; and in that so
doubtful a taking the delightful history stopped and remained
dismembered, the author thereof leaving us no notice where we
might find the rest of the narration. [68]

When compared with the first rendition of the scene in chapter 8,
ostensibly collated from disparate sources and related to us by the first
narrator, the tone is markedly different. As it is reconstituted in memory,
it is noticeably exaggerated and doubtless conceived for the purposes of
irony: its goal is to mimic the overstated, lofty rhetoric of the novels of
chivalry. A clearer parody of unrestrained epic expression would be
difficult to find. The passage is fraught with synonyms and paired
epithets (valeroso, famoso, altas y desnudas) ("valorous, famous, high-
held and naked"), reduplicated verbs (dividirían y fenderían, paró y quedó)
("would divide and cleave, stopped and stood still"), archaic twists and
idioms (en guisa de), and exuberant alliteration (de descargar dos furibun-
dos fendientes) ("to discharge two furious feints"). It is plain that the
narrator's recollection of the battle here is meant to possess its own
personality—to have a voice whose inclination to tumble verbally into
counterfeit heroics is shaped by prior readings of chivalric fiction and a
thirst for extravagant deeds—a demeanor in open contrast to the
self-effacing temperament who reads and reports the first version of the
battle recorded in the dismembered manuscript.

The description of the battle between Don Quijote and the Bis-
cayan is duplicated yet again in the exotic illuminated Arabic codex the
reader / narrator finds amid the old documents of a Toledan street
vendor. As he leafs through the newfound text to the point where the
struggle was cut off, we realize that the document reproduces the battle
twice. Moreover, each of these renditions, as we shall see, differs visually,
verbally, and qualitatively from the rest. The Arabic text introduces two
new distinctive perspectives with two equally distinctive modes of
narration, including a new form of mediation, a graphic one. The first
account, we are told, is pictured in an illumination portraying the scene
in question (how it fails to comply with Islamic prohibitions regarding
anthropomorphic representations is, of course, teasingly insinuated). In
consonance with its plastic context, the narrator enacts a noticeably
detached verbal description of the tableau. As the image is scanned in
an order deviating from the syntax in all prior verbal accounts, the text conveys a disinterested, tepid tone:

There was painted, in the first quire, very naturally, the battle betwixt Don Quixote and the Biscaine; even in the same manner that the history relateth it, with their swords lifted aloft, the one covered with his buckler, the other with the cushion; and the Biscaine's mule was delivered so naturally as a man might perceive it was hired, although he stood farther off than the shot of a cross-bow. The Biscaine had a title written under his feet that said, “Don Sancho de Azpetia,” for so belike he was called; and at Rozinante his feet there was another, that said “Don Quixote.” Rozinante was marvellous well portrayed; so long and lank, so thin and lean, so like one labouring with an incurable consumption, as he did show very clearly with what consideration and propriety he had given unto him the name Rozinante. By him stood Sancho Panza, holding his ass by the halter; at whose feet was another scroll, saying, “Sancho Zancas,” and I think the reason thereof was, that, as his picture showed, he had a great belly, a short stature, and thick legs; and therefore, I judge, he was called Panza, or Zanca, for both these names were written of him indifferently in the history.

Here the descriptive focus is upon observable facts and tangible realities: the concrete physical profile, spatial distance, relative location, and specificity of the figures in the scene depicted in the illustration are of
primary interest. The narration aspires to a pictorial verbal rendering of an actual picture, itself a mediation of a historical event. In this portrait there is a dearth of affective verbal complements, a lack of effort to exploit the emotive capital of the action it portrays. It constitutes a static landscape occupied by almost passive figures—a panorama that elicits only cautious conjecture from the beholder, who opts for the guarded distance of the conditional as his sovereign tense (“debía de ser su nombre” (“his name probably was”), “debía de ser que tenía... la barriga grande” (“it was probably because he has a great stomach”), etc.). Confronted now with the task of transmitting the elements of a painted picture, the narrative stance of the telling voice labors to convey comprehensiveness and judicious objectivity.

The extravagant epithets, alliteration, and indeed even simple descriptive adjectives of the earlier versions of the battle are wanting. Yet, in contrast to the latter, the illumination abounds in details unrecorded in the written sources. Although it is a lifeless artifact, the illustration constitutes an important source for enlarging upon what we know not just about the battle, but also about Don Quijote, Sancho, and other characters in the novel. Its inspection, for example, reveals a rubric—yet another text—indicating that the Biscayan was in all probability called Don Sancho de Azpetia, and that Sancho, just like his wife and master (Quesada, Quijana, Quejana), bears a vacillating name. Notwithstanding Sancho’s onomastic instability, the narrator reads this and ventures an etymological solution to the contradiction: the two appellations of Panza (according to the abridged manuscript) and Zancas (in the rubric of the picture) may be explained, he tells us, by the fact that the subject has a prominent abdomen and thick legs. The illumination is, thus, an indispensable pictorial complement to the story, yet another perspective that testifies to Don Quijote’s historical existence and to a multifaceted reality not captured by the narrative texts. Since it yields facts excluded from the written record, the picture makes an important, if problematical, contribution to the reconstruction of the life and deeds of Don Quijote. Indeed, as the narrator tells us, the illustration is so laden with details that some are actually trivial to the point “que no hacen al caso a la verdadera relación de la historia” (95) (<“but all of them of no great importance, nor anything necessary for the true relation of the history” (71)). To be sure, the passage provides a finely wrought critique of a medium that relies on minute detail to create the impression of reality, but which in fact has little relation to it.3

The dismissal of the magnitude of visual detail in creating verisi-
militude would doubtless have elicited an immediate, droll response from readers of the passage schooled in Renaissance literary theory. It embodies no less than a spoof of the sacred topos of "ut pictura poesis" from Horace's Ars Poetica—an idea that provoked considerable discussion among sixteenth-century literary theorists in their attempt to connect Horatian and Aristotelian principles of composition. Cervantes suggests in his comparison of words with pictures that painting and poetry, though they share the goal of mimesis, are in fact different arts with different dynamics and different hermeneutics, signaling a breakdown of the effort to reconcile Aristotelian and Horatian literary theory. Narratives and pictures, though reciprocal to a degree, fail to concur fully. Indeed, their evident lack of correspondence problematizes the question of not just verisimilar representation but all representation as it raises the issue of the crucial role played by the medium (textual vs. visual) in the transmission of an image. Reading and writing and painting and seeing are very distinct activities, each requiring different orders of knowledge, perception, and exposition. To "read" or compose a picture implies a dissimilar enterprise from reading and composing a text. As his narrator conjectures upon the meanings and contradictions encountered in the textual illumination, Cervantes recognizes, in the words of the modern literary theorist Stanley Fish, "that the objectivity of a text is an illusion, and moreover, a dangerous illusion because it is so physically convincing. The illusion is one of self-sufficiency and completeness. A line of print or a page of a book is so obviously there . . . that it seems to be the sole repository of whatever value and meaning we associate with it" (1984, 82).

As he interrogates one of the key tenets of Renaissance narrative theory and questions the possibility that poetry and art may lay equal claim to mediating truth, Cervantes introduces the vexing presence of Cide Hamete Benengeli—the culturally different, conceivably compromised, Arab historian whose less than expert translation by an anonymous Toledan Morisco may constitute a less than faithful rendering of the facts. Cide Hamete's dubious characterization is compounded by the point that his profession of historiador might imply in sixteenth-century Spanish as much a maker of fables as a chronicler of truths (see Wardrop-per 1986, 81-83).

As the fidelity of Cide Hamete's word hangs in the balance, and his veracity is placed into question, the narrative resumes in medias res in the Arab historian's translated rendition with the description of the battle of Don Quijote and the Biscayan. As we might expect from a less
than disinterested narrator—especially one possibly guided by differing cultural and religious constraints—the tone and the attitude toward the conflict changes. Cide Hamete undermines all hope of discovering the truth in Don Quijote's story through his conspicuous exaggeration. His flamboyant rendering of the action is hyperbolic and disproportionate, to the point where it acquires a grotesque dubiousness. His overblown, "white-plumed grandiloquence" (the phrase is Hight's 1962, 118), makes any circumspect reader distrust the truth of the feats he relates:

Puestas y levantadas en alto las cortadoras espadas de los dos valerosos y enojados combatientes, no parecía sino que estaban amenazando al cielo, a la tierra y al abismo: tal era el denuedo y continente que tenían. Y el primero que fue a descargar el golpe fue el colérico vizcaíno; el cual fue dado con tanta fuerza y tanta furia, que, a no volvérsele la espada en el camino, aquel solo golpe fuera bastante para dar fin a su rigurosa contienda y a todas las aventuras de nuestro caballero; mas la buena suerte, que para mayores cosas le tenía guardado, torció la espada de su contrario, de modo que, aunque le acertó en el hombro izquierdo, no le hizo otro daño que desarmarle todo aquel lado, llevándole, de camino, gran parte de la celada, con la mitad de la oreja; que todo ello con espantosa ruina vino al suelo, dejándole muy maltrecho.

¡Válame Dios, y quién será aquel que buenamente pueda contar ahora la rabia que entró en el corazón de nuestro manchego ...! [95]

The trenchant swords of the two valorous and enraged combatants being lifted aloft, it seemed that they threatened heaven, the earth, and the depths, such was their hardness and courage. And the first that discharged his blow was the Biscaine, which fell with such force and fury, as if the sword had not turned a little in the way, that only blow had been sufficient to set an end to the rigorous contention, and all other the adventures of our knight. But his good fortune, which reserved him for greater affairs, did wrest his adversary's sword awry in such sort, as though he struck him on the left shoulder, yet did it no more harm than disarm all that side, carrying away with it a great part of his beaver, with the half of his ear; all which fell to the ground with a dreadful ruin, leaving him in very ill case for a good time. Good God! who is he that can well describe, at this present, the fury that entered in the heart of our Manchegan, seeing himself used in that manner. [71-72]
Among all the narrators encountered in the novel, Cide Hamete possesses the most embellished and least detached point of view. The Arab historian's rhetoric is suffused with glaring traces of subjectivity and personal prejudice. Don Quijote is for him "nuestro caballero" and "nuestro manchego," as he extends himself toward his reader and flaunts his sympathies toward his subject. Moreover, he persists in personally intervening in what is told, interpreting the action from a preconceived angle as he introduces a note of Islamic fatalism into the tale. Commenting upon the Biscayan's missed blow at Don Quijote's head, for example, he fatefully concludes that "la buena suerte, que para mayores cosas le tenía guardado, torció la espada de su contrario" (95) ("but his good fortune, which reserved him for greater affairs, did wrest his adversary's sword" (71)). Interjecting exclamations, throwing out superlatives, and offering opinions ("¡Válame Dios," etc.) he amplifies, complicates, and editorializes.

Later, in part II of the novel, written a decade or more after part I, Cide Hamete's Islamic cultural leanings continue to lurk in the narrative, as when the text, building still upon the charade of a translation, records his exclamation:

"¡Bendito sea el poderoso Alá!—dice Hamete Benengeli al comienzo deste octavo capítulo—. ¡Bendito sea Alá!" repite tres veces. [589]

"Blessed be the almighty Ala!" saith Cid Hamet Benengeli, in the beginning of this chapter; and this benediction he repeats three times. [464]

Or when the translator of the tale is invoked to explain and comment upon contradictions in Cide Hamete's cultural identity as expressed through his interjections, setting off a logic-chopping parody of textual glossing and exegesis:

Entra Cide Hamete, coronista desta grande historia, con estas palabras en este capítulo: "Juro como catolico cristiano . . ."; a lo que su traductor dice que el jurar Cide Hamete como catolico cristiano siendo él moro, como sin duda lo era, no quiso decir otra cosa sino que así como el catolico cristiano cuando jura, jura, o debe
Cid Hamet, author of this sublime history, begins the chapter with these words; “I swear, as a catholic christian:” and upon this occasion, the translator observes, that Cid Hamet being a Moor, as he certainly was, in swearing as a catholic christian means no more than that, as a catholic christian, when he makes oath, swears he will speak the truth, and nothing but the truth, in like manner he would adhere to it, as a catholic christian adheres to his oath, in what he intended to write concerning Don Quixote. [579]

Put simply, Cervantes’ rhetorical manipulation of Cide Hamete’s voice from beginning to end points to a subjectively charged narrative persona that must be taken with a great grain of salt. From his introduction in part I, chapter 9 until the final invocation of his pen at the end of the novel, Cide Hamete is clearly far more than simply a presence who “relates nothing,” as James A. Parr would have us believe (1988, 22-23). At every step Cide Hamete conjures uncertainty just as he sows consternation. Although, as Barry Ife says in his study of reading in the Spanish Golden Age, “as we read we are continually looking for coherence, for pattern and order, and turning the small detail of what we read into more generalized schemes,” (1985, 77), Cide Hamete is always there to thwart us and to remind us of the contumacy of the text and the unreliability of what is being related. The Moorish chronicler’s tendency is not consciously to conceal the truth, however, as much as it is to obscure it under the cloak of hyperbolic ornament, personal enthusiasm, and vexing logic. Deliberately mendacious or not, his pompous eloquence alone leads to the suspicion that it is indeed probably true that “[es] muy propio de los de aquella nación ser mentirosos” (95) (“it is a known propriety of that nation to be lying” (71)). Benengeli’s predilection for swollen encomia and the exorbitant appreciation of his subject exposes him as a narrator fully capable of alienating readers avid for the truth. His unbridled epic zeal is, in the end, his most compromising vice.

The principal theme of chapters 8 and 9 in the first part of Don Quijote, then, is the narrative itself, and the changing perceptions produced by language variation as that narrative is generated, read, and understood. It is, in fact, at this point where the novel’s polyphonic nature is first overtly defined, as Cervantes underscores the crucial part
played by language, diction, expression, and desire in constituting the multiple points of view that join to tell his story. Each of the narrators inscribed here possesses an indisputable personality—indeed one even has a name—profiled not only by what he chooses to narrate but also by the words utilized to do so. It is each narrator's idiosyncratic disposition that ultimately determines what is told, and—most important—how the story is told. Thus Cervantes displays how narrative style and linguistic diversity lie at the center of perspective, point of view, and textual representation as he portrays the act of narrating as a form of personal experience.

The four variations on Don Quijote's battle with the Biscayan create the illusion of a shift in point of view in the narrative structure of the novel. Through their polyphony, they lead us to believe in a gathering of multiple, overlapping, palpable narrators who mediate the story. The narrator of the first version is linguistically differentiated from the reader/compiler through whose eyes we read the latter's words; and both of these are equally different from the redoubtable Cide Hamete. Although their written accounts substantially agree, differing only in the words and tone chosen to relate them, they clash head-on with a fourth—the pictorial one—whose contradictions call for rationalization and debate in order to concur. Each perspective, be it oral, textual, or plastic, possesses its unmistakable profile, and the four together lend depth, distance, and veracity to the claim that the story we peruse is no invention, but a chronicle of truths arduously constructed by collating disparate, and sometimes contradictory, documentary sources.

Don Quijote's discontinued battle with the Biscayan signals the locus not only where the organizing narrative principle for the entire novel is laid down but also where the reader's awareness of the problematic of the truth as it is mediated through words is conspicuously heightened. At this point, we, as well as the readers and narrators who relate the tale from within the book, become aware of the difficulties posed by the phenomenology of language, and aware that we are just as susceptible to its vagaries as the "lunatic" Don Quijote—the reader-protagonist who hopelessly confuses reality with words. We suddenly feel vulnerable vis-à-vis the truth, as Cervantes distinguishes objects and events as they appear in individual experience from objects and events as they are in themselves. He dramatizes the mediatory role of language and the cognitive faculties in reading and writing, ultimately defining textualized facts as whatever is said to be the case. Facts for the readers and writers in and of his novel become, as they do for Don Quijote, not
only what is observed to be real but also whatever is before the mind of
the observer—desired perceptions of the real, imaginary impressions,
visions, and later, even dreams.

In chapters 8 and 9 Cervantes enacts the phenomenology of the
sense of what it is “to be” as it is expressed in language and explores
through verbal style and variation the almost boundless possible mean-
ings of the term. In the end, he concludes that being cannot transcend
language. Reality and truth are, in effect, verbal and epistemological
problems reduced to words on the page. In Don Quijote what is judged
from one point of view as truth is from another point of view mere
impression. It is as if, as Riley says, Cervantes “estuviera jugando con
espejos o con prismas. Mediante una especie de proceso de refracción,
añade a la novela—o crea la ilusión de añadir una dimensión más”
(1966, 72-73) (“were playing with mirrors or with prisms. By means of
a process of refraction, he adds to the novel—or appears to add—another
dimension”). Through this exercise his narrators are personified as
characters, and with their nuanced voices they display their, and our,
and Don Quijote’s, essential subjectivity.5

It is clear that Cervantes was not content with a mere mechanical
distinction of the narrative layers he contrived to transmit Don Quijote’s
story; he labored to forge the illusion of contradicting and contradictory
personalities behind the voices who read and tell the tale. He understood
that the improvisation of a point of view implied, more than just a name,
the presence of a character—an individual who holds opinions, desires,
and speaks to the world in his own unique fashion—and that perspective
and narrative style are, in fact, artistically and existentially inseparable.
The irony abides, too, that if given a choice, our preference would
invariably lie with the first narrator, whose voice is now erased by the
vicissitudes of reading and writing. The point at which Cervantes
introduces Cide Hamete is the point of no return. We become aware
that we must either endure with a less than reliable source or stop
reading. Nostalgically, the effaced, anonymous voice seems responsible
and discrete when compared with Cide Hamete’s “white-plumed” ex-
travagance, yet we proceed with trepidation, our disbelief eclipsed by
our desire to read and know.

Although Ruth El Saffar maintains that “only in Don Quijote Part
II does one find a stabilized narrator and a clearly organized plot
structure” and that it is “there, for the first time, Cervantes uses literature
to suit his own aims... controlling the material carefully from beginning
to end” (1984, 8), it is clear that the foundation for this edifice is first
laid down in chapters 8 and 9 of part I. It is also clear that in this narrative game speaking, telling, reading, seeing, and writing are far more problematical enterprises than they seem at first. To be sure, they are coextensive with the prepossessing minds Cervantes portrays performing them, and reflect, as such, the subjectivities that enact them. While James Parr's lucid labors to find and reveal a logical design in the novel's framing narrative structure are well reasoned (1988, 3-19), and his conclusion regarding the work's subversion of authority is ultimately correct (21-39), his analytical exertions to identify a "beautifully modulated" syntagmatic structure "owing above all to the virtually total control of the editorial voice" (24) are reductive and run counter to the spirit of the text as it is defined in the rupture dramatized in part I, chapters 8 and 9. The purpose of the narrative lacuna is not to portray a narrative hierarchy and establish the stable sovereign voice of a "supernarrator," but to confirm the hopeless task of ever replicating phenomenal reality. The lacuna serves to emphasize disjuncture, aporia, discrepancy, and contradiction as central to all acts of interpretation, particularly reading, writing, seeing, and telling—to constitute these activities as forms of contingent subjective experience that fail to transcend the time, place, and personality that produces them, and to confirm that understanding is always understanding differently. As the fictional world is created by language, there is a continuous redefinition and repositioning of the narrative frames, which frustrates their authority and serves to remind the reader that the representation of reality can only be reductionist and selective.

The narrative fracture invented by Cervantes in chapters 8 and 9 of part I provides the opportunity to rehearse qualitative comparisons of style and perspective and to inaugurate the narrative technique that culminates in part II, chapter 5, where the anonymous translator, who up to this point silently mediates the text, is brought forward to record his own grave misgivings concerning the veracity of what he has translated and what is about to be recounted. Based upon his own readerly sensitivity to diction, style, and language, we are told that:

Llegando a escribir el traductor desta historia este quinto capítulo, dice que le tiene por apócrifo, porque en él habla Sancho Panza con otro estilo del que se podía prometer de su corto ingenio, y dice cosas tan sutiles, que no tiene por posible que él las supiese; pero que no quiso dejar de traducirlo, por cumplir con lo que a su oficio debía, y así prosiguió diciendo. [570]
The translator says, he looks upon this chapter as apocryphal, because it represents Sancho Panza speaking in a stile quite different from that which might be expected from his shallow understanding, and making such ingenious observations, as he thinks it impossible he should know; but, he would not leave it out, that he might punctually perform the duty of a faithful translator, and therefore proceeds in these words. [449]

Later, in chapter 27, even Cide Hamete questions and interprets as the text relates his holographically inscribed rewritings and misgivings in the margins of his original manuscript. Impressed by the implausibility of the very events in the Cave of Montesinos he has just recounted, Cide Hamete turns back upon his own text, reads it, glosses it in the margin, and articulates his own suspicions as he unabashedly invokes immunity from responsibility to the truth:

No me puedo dar a entender, ni me puedo persuadir, que al valeroso don Quijote le pasase puntualmente todo lo que en el antecedente capítilo queda escrito ... y si esta aventura parece apocrifa, yo no tengo la culpa; y así, sin afirmarla por falsa o verdadera, la escribo. Tú, lector, pues eres prudente, juzga lo que te pareciere, que yo no debo ni puedo más. [713]

I cannot conceive or persuade myself that the valiant Don Quixote literally saw and heard all that is recounted in the foregoing chapter ... but after all, should the adventure seem apocryphal, the blame cannot be laid to my door, and therefore I give it to the public, without affirming it either to be true or false. Reader, if thou hast discernment, thou mayest judge for thyself; for it is neither my duty, nor is it in my power, to do more. [560]

Cervantes, then, inscribes narrative response and interpretation in his novel and shows that they are all part and parcel of the same linguistic and literary experience as the text continues to change and contradict itself according to its readers and relators, none of whom can be relied upon, despite their best intentions, to be wholly consistent or wholly credible.

In his depiction of the shifting world through the eyes and voices who construct it in the text, Cervantes anticipates modern literary
theory's rejection of the existence of a normative descriptive rhetoric, replacing it at all levels of the narrative with the notion of a fundamentally intentional one. He shows, as Paul de Man says in his commentary on Gadamer's Wahrheit und Methode, that always "the subjectivity of experience is preserved when it is translated into language" (1983, 188). Or as Angel Rosenblat puts it in direct reference to Cervantes, "La actitud de Cervantes ante la lengua [se manifiesta] no como un cuerpo de doctrina sistemática, sino como actitud vital de sus personajes" (1971, 71) ("Cervantes' attitude toward language is manifested not as a systematic doctrine, but as a vital posture of his characters"), of which his narrators form an integral part.

Cervantes' sensitivity to the phenomenology of reading and writing is further overtly dramatized later in Don Quijote, in the scene at the inn where he explores the variety of reader responses to particular texts or traditions of texts (I, 32). Hence, Juan Palomeque, when he and his friends sit down to hear a reading of the romances of chivalry, seeks and finds both distraction and adventure. He notes that hearing them read aloud "nos quita mil canas; a lo menos de mí sé decir que cuando oyo decir aquellos furibundos y terribles golpes que los caballeros pegan, que me toma gana de hacer otro tanto, y que quería estar oyéndolos noches y días" (321) ("it hinders a thousand hoary hairs; for I dare say, at least of myself, that when I hear tell of those furious and terrible blows that knights-errant give, it inflames me with a desire to become such a one myself, and could find in my heart to be hearing of them day and night" (301)). Yet Maritornes and Juan's daughter aspire to uncover, and mnemonically reconstruct, other resonances and meanings in the same texts. Juan reads or listens for the rush of adventure, while his daughter and Maritornes seek and find a frisson of forbidden passion and lacrimose sentimentality. Maritornes discloses that "yo también gusto mucho de oir aquellas cosas que son muy lindas, y más cuando cuentan que se está la otra señora debajo de unos naranjos abrazada con su caballero, y que les está una duena haciéndoles la guarda, muerta de envidia con mucho sobresalto" (322) ("I in good sooth do take great delight to hear those things, for they are very fine, and especially when they tell how such a lady lies embraced by her knight under an orange tree, and that a certain damsel keepeth watch all the while, ready to burst for envy that she hath not likewise her sweetheart, and very much afraid" (301-2)). Juan's daughter confesses to the priest that, although she fails to understand
chivalric narrative ("no lo entiendo"), "recibo gusto en oíllo; pero no gusto yo de los golpes de que mi padre gusta, sino de las lamentaciones que los caballeros hacen cuando están ausentes de sus señorías; que en verdad que algunas veces me hacen llorar, de compasión que les tengo" (322) ("yet do I take some pleasure to hear them; but I mislike greatly those blows which please my father so much, and only delight in the lamentations that knights make being absent from their ladies; which in sooth do now and then make me weep through the compassion I take of them" (302)). Hermeneutics in these characterizations depend as much, or more, Cervantes says, on gender and even on an erotics of interpretation—that is to say, upon subjective identity and temperament—as they do upon the rhetorical formulation and constitution of the text. Reception and narration—in as much as reading and telling are indistinguishable activities in Don Quijote—hinges ultimately upon who you are. Masculine and feminine listening and speaking, just as much as Moslem and Christian reading, showing and acting, are determined by culture and other subjectively constituted forces.

Although the problems of the phenomenology of language are currently at the center of the debate on the theories of reading and writing (Iser 1984, 107-59; Tompkins 1984), it remains clear that Cervantes from the outset of Don Quijote was profoundly aware that the production and understanding of words cannot be understood apart from the voices who speak them and the hearers who hear them—and that every word on the page raises the fundamental question of its authority. He was acutely aware of the role played by mediation in constructing our notions of the truth, and in Don Quijote’s battle with the Biscayan he initially laid bare the fact that neither words nor pictures may make a univocal, monolithic, or privileged claim to the truth—all things, in the end, are transformed in the effort to represent them discursively. Any verbal representation of reality is ultimately destined to be discriminating and reductive, and therefore subjective. Subjectivity per se, the “essential, inexplicit, hidden traits” of character, to borrow Martínez Bonati’s felicitous phrase (1992, 136), then, shapes diegesis through readerly and authorial desire as much as it helps to fashion mimesis and determine the actions of the characters who parade across the page. Cervantes established in chapters 8 and 9 of part I the mechanical polyphony of voices that orchestrates the complete telling of his tale (pace Parr), and also established once and for all that reality remains universally problematical as it is mediated by language. Indeed, it cannot ever be adequately reflected or recollected, only invented. Through the
exercise of his protean genius, he makes us aware that the phenomenology of language is at the center not just of Don Quijote's hallucinatory world but also of the human condition—that it resides both inside and outside the kaleidoscopic text of his novel.
Chapter 5

Aristotle in Africa

Interrogating Verisimilitude and Rewriting Theory in El gallardo español

_El gallardo español_ is one of Cervantes' least known, least read, and most misunderstood plays. The few extant critical statements dealing with it address only its supposed "nationalist" spirit (Casalduero 1966, 54-55), its putative autobiographical resonance of Cervantes' North African experiences,¹ its inscription of myth (De Armas 1981), its historical verisimilitude (Canavaggio 1977, 53-56) and novelistic elements (Zimic 1974), or the contrasting of myth, honor, and reality (Stapp 1978; Friedman 1981, 29-30; Hughes 1993). While critics remain at odds as to the play's sense, however, the text itself offers its own explicit instructions regarding its purpose and meaning. In the closing statement to the audience, Guzmán, an actual historical personage inscribed in the text, observes in a metafictional gloss that it is time to end the play:

cuyo principal intento
ha sido mezclar verdades
con fabulosos inventos.  [149]

whose principal intent
has been to merge truths
with fabulous inventions.

The problematic of truth and fiction is, thus, according to one of the characters in the play, essential to its understanding. This specific intentional statement, of course, leads us to one of the abiding concerns in all of Cervantes' works—the nature of fiction itself and its ability to depict and replicate the truth.

Using this specific declaration of intention as a point of departure, it is in fact possible to read _El gallardo_ backward—that is, to examine the
text closely in light of its concluding statement and pursue those instances in it where Cervantes has sought to juxtapose fiction and truth. This reading strategy reveals that the play is primarily concerned with its own status as a fictional construct, and that Cervantes in writing it was responding to issues raised by late-sixteenth-century critical theory. *El gallardo español*, it becomes clear, was conceived with the intention not just of forging a naive merger of fact and fiction but also of probing the limits, possibilities, and difficulties of integrating historical and strictly imaginative (essentially mendacious) discourses. In this way, it emerges as an early and profound Cervantine inquiry into the legitimacy of Aristotelian doctrine within a specifically dramatic context and a bold rewriting of Neo-Aristotelian poetics.

To begin to understand the significance of the closing lines of *El gallardo* it is necessary to turn to chapter 48 of the first part of *Don Quijote* where, using the same terms, the Neo-Aristotelian *canónigo de Toledo* holds forth on the notion of the ideal *comedia*, from which

*saldría el oyente alegre con las burlas, enseñado en las veras, admirado de los sucesos, discreto con las razones, advertido con los embustes, sagaz con los ejemplos, airado contra el vicio y enamorado de la virtud; que todos estos afectos ha de despertar la buena comedia en el ánimo del que la escuchare, por rústico y torpe que sea, y de toda imposibilidad es imposible dejar de alegrar y entretenér, satisfacer y contentar, la comedia que todas estas partes tuviere.* [487]

the auditor ... would come away delighted with the jests and instructed by the truths thereof, wondering at the successes, grow discreeter by the reasons, warned by the deceits, become wise by other's example, incensed against vice, and enamoured of all virtue: all which affects a good comedy should stir up in the hearer's mind, were he never so gross or clownish. And it is of all impossibilities the most impossible, that a comedy consisting of all these parts should not entertain, delight, satisfy, and content. [480]

Staged in a recent historical setting, the siege of the Spanish North African fortress of Oran in 1563, and doubtless based upon oral testimony as well as the events recorded in Luis de Márrom’s *Descripción general de Africa* (1573; Canavaggio 1977, 54-55), *El gallardo*, mimicking Neo-Aristotelian doctrine, purports to claim verisimilar legitimation
through the invocation of historical referents. Indeed, Canavaggio has traced the play's fidelity to history and how it reflects incidents leading up to the assault on Mers-el-Kébir and the fortress of San Salvador, as well as the central role of D. Martín de Córdoba in the encounter, the heroics of D. Fernando de Cárcamo in the siege, the intervention of the Spanish military engineers in reinforcing the fortifications, and the final, unexpected arrival of the flotilla of D. Alvaro de Bazán. There are also references in the play to the details of *razzia* warfare along the African frontier as reported by Braudel and other historians of Christian-Moslem conflicts in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean.

The play's historical foundations and its explicit closing references to the constraints of Neo-Aristotelian theory seem to suggest that it is a programmatic implementation of the latter. Quite to the contrary, Cervantes appears to inscribe the Neo-Aristotelian model in order to test and subvert it. For example, the most noteworthy consideration in Cervantes' manipulation of history in *El gallardo* is not its fidelity to actual circumstances, or its adherence to particulars, but the very recent vintage of the events he portrays and their permutations in their textualization. Although Tasso in *Del poema eroico* had counseled the invocation of history to persuade that the things treated by poets are worthy of belief and authority ("siano degne di fede e d'autorità" [1964, 85]), he went on to recommend that poets confine their choices to historical occurrences in the distant past. Tasso advised this because the poets' audience may know, or even may have lived, the inscribed events and be enticed to point out inaccuracies in their representation.² What, then, are we to make of Cervantes' use of the siege of Oran in *El gallardo*, and his evident departure from Neo-Aristotelian orthodoxy? Is the siege of Oran there to lend verisimilitude to the play, or is it, perhaps, there to provoke a subversion of the very authority of history itself and fly in the face of his Aristotelian contemporaries? These are some of the questions I wish to explore here.

In his exploitation of the recent historical past Cervantes doubtless knew he ran the risk of confronting contradiction from his audience and that he should, in Cascales's words, "haver quien con vista de ojos se lo contradiga" (1975, 104) ("avoid those who, having seen things, may contradict them"). To be sure, he elaborates upon just this point in a self-consciously theatrical episode of the *Persiles* (342-50), in which two student dramatists professing to have been captives in North Africa are tempted to capitalize on the recent historical past and run headlong into living, contradictory witnesses of the events they seek to enact. *Historia /
history in the Persiles episode is judiciously transformed into historia/story, until a magistrate in the audience, himself a former captive in Africa, demands topographical details of Algiers, which the performers fail to provide, thus exposing their play as a barefaced lie. They are, of course, denounced as prevaricators, but, invoking the virtue of justice tempered by mercy, they are finally forgiven by the magistrate for their dishonesty. More than mere entertainment, the episode of the bogus captives in the Persiles, with its deliberate representation of recent, easily contradictable historical events, serves a significant literary purpose in that it offers to a critical audience an opportunity to perceive the artificial uses of history in the construction of verisimilar texts, as it exposes the essential fictionality of the “true” events the captives allege to represent (see Forcione 1970, 170-76); such is the case in El gallardo. El gallardo deconstructs its own claim to historical verisimilitude. The unmasking of its claim to historicity is registered repeatedly in the intrusive, overly emphatic, and parodic first-person-narrative interjections scattered in the play’s stage directions. For example, prior to the introduction of Buitrago, a figure cut from the cloth of the miles gloriosus and the comic gracioso who offers his mediation on behalf of the souls in Purgatory, the stage notations indicate that he carries “una tablilla con demandas de las ánimas de purgatorio, y pide para ellas” (1965a 87) (“a clapper with petitions for the souls in Purgatory, and he begs alms for them”). They then go on to stress that “esto de pedir para las ánimas es cuento verdadero, que yo lo vi, y la razón por que pedía se dice adelante” (87) (“this business of begging for the souls in Purgatory is a true story; I saw this, and the reason why he begged will be subsequently explained”). Such a unique and vigorous narrative intervention punctuating the veracity of what is portrayed (and at the same time calling it a “cuento verdadero”) in a discursive space customarily reserved in theatrical texts for the agentless passive voice, points more to the self-conscious awareness of the possibility of questioning the truth, and hence its instability, in what is represented. We confront here, as in Don Quijote’s battle with the Biscayan, a heterotopical intrusion designed to expose the mimetic sorcery of texts and language.

These parenthetical narrative comments suggest an uneasiness—indeed, by their very presence, an invitation to contradict the text’s assertion of historical actuality—and, through their extravagance, deliberately draw our attention to the essential artificiality of the events being portrayed, that is, to their radical textuality and detachment from the reality which the play purports to duplicate. The very gesture
of questioning textual credibility and seeking to ratify the truth of Buitrago’s portrait calls our attention to the fact that it, and everything else in El gallardo, is shaped by language and is in effect fictive. By its impertinent insistence that it contains some kind of specific verifiable link to an extratextual world, the play disrupts its own mechanism for constructing a viable, willing suspension of disbelief. Indeed, it is at such moments that we are led to question whether Cervantes ever meant El gallardo to be staged at all and to consider the possibility that it was a drama destined solely to be read as an elaborate experiment in dramatic craft, inviting a meditation upon the abiding Aristotelian question of the legitimacy of texts that profess to stage empirical historical truths.

Instead of seriously emphasizing the verisimilitude of the events, the anomalous parenthetical ex abruptos of El gallardo strike a discontinuous, humorous note. In fact, the commentary in these stage directions seems purposefully transgressive, since it amusingly establishes the proximity of an authorial voice in the play and undermines its objectivity, as well as its theatricality and power of illusion. It is an unmistakable reminder of the play’s artificiality, its fundamentally fictive constitution, and the creative imagination that has crafted it. At the same time, it proves a flagrant trespass of the Aristotelian precept that the poet, in López Pinciano’s words, “deve hablar lo menos que él pueda” (1953, III, 208) (“should speak as little as possible”). It serves as a reminder that even eyewitness accounts professing to be historical are mediated authorial constructs incapable of adequately recuperating the past. While the Aristotelians presumptuously sought to affirm the mimetic autonomy of texts, in El gallardo Cervantes boldly questions their independence from within and asserts the author’s persistent power over them.

As El gallardo parodies the Aristotelian claims to historical verisimilitude, it appropriates intentionally obtrusive imaginative elements and motifs from medieval romance, romancero balladry, and Renaissance epic, rewriting them and further complicating through speech and action the problematic of the representation of the truth in language, text, and artifice. The transparent fictive antecedents of the noble Moor, the single combats, the amorous triangles, the love quests, the chance encounters, the exotic disguises, and the stylized, ambiguous language of the play would not have been lost upon its late-sixteenth-century reader. They would, in fact, doubtless have led to a sense of teasing déjà vu and to a heightened awareness of the play’s artifice. For example, Don Fernando de Saavedra, the gallant hero of the piece, while supposedly to be modeled on the historical Don Fernando de Cárcamo,
is conspicuously reminiscent in both name and deed of the intrepid captive Sayavedra of the well-known "Río verde" ballads, which close part I of Pérez de Hita's Guerras civiles de Granada (1982, 308-10), not to mention the Sayavedra in other Cervantine works (for example, Los tratos de Argel (The Customs of Algiers); Don Quijote, I, 40). Similarly, the character Guzmán invokes resonances of other ballads and other legendary sieges (cf. the "Romance de don Henrique de Guzmán," Solalinde 1958, 109-10; as well as the legendary accounts of the deeds of Guzmán el Bueno, progeniture of Cervantes' old friend, also known popularly as El Bueno—the aristocratic Duque de Medina Sidonia), while the name of the Moorish heroine, Arlaxa, summons echoes of Lindaraxa (Pérez de Hita 1982, 292-93), as well as one of the female protagonists from the popular sixteenth-century song, "Tres morillas me enamoran en Jaén" (see Alonso and Blecua 1969, 17). More important, however, the play's very title also flaunts its literary genealogy through an explicit reference to Ercilla's well-known epic, La Araucana; this reference invokes the prowess of an anonymous "gallardo español" (1979, 1:169) during the siege of the fortress of Tucapel, a celebrated episode played out in Ercilla's text amid his narrator's insistence upon the historical veracity of the incredible deeds he narrates:

Es cosa que en mil gentes han parado
y están en duda muchos hoy en día,
pareciéndoles que esto que he contado
es alguna ficción y poesía.  [1:164]

'Tis a thing that's given pause to thousands,
and many are in doubt today,
deeming what I've told
as some fiction or poetic fabrication.

The resonances of La Araucana thus go deeper than superficial allusions to the feats of "el gallardo español" described in canto 2. In the latter, Ercilla introduces his own abiding concern with the Neo-Aristotelian tension of history and poetry in his text, emphatically championing the historical veracity of what is told there, and in this way foreshadows El gallardo's engagement with the same themes. Cervantes' admiration for Ercilla is, of course, well documented and unambiguously registered in chapter 6 of the first part of Don Quijote, where he includes La Araucana among three of "los mejores [poemas] que en verso heroico,
en lengua castellana están escritos, y pueden competir con los más famosos de Italia” (75) (“the best that are written in heroical verse in the Castilian tongue, and may compare with the most famous of Italy” (54)). The origins of El gallardo español are hence steadfastly rooted in Cervantes’ reading of Ercilla’s poem, and reflect both his and humanism’s wide-ranging preoccupation with the Neo-Aristotelian problematic of history and fiction in epic texts.4

Quite aside from its conspicuous references to romance, balladry, and vernacular epic, Cervantes’ play is also richly allusive to classical textual antecedents and to the troublesome questions of history and poetry in them raised by their humanist readers and critics. Through a complex interplay of intertextual references, Cervantes places El gallardo squarely within the sixteenth-century Aristotelian debate on verisimilitude in ancient epic poetry. Not only is the siege of Oran meant to reflect contemporary history, it is expected to evoke and rewrite another disputed historical siege portrayed in classical texts—the paradigmatic siege of Troy.

Cervantes explicitly signals his Trojan subtext when Alimuzel, at the walls of Oran, goads Don Fernando to single combat:

Y para darte ocasión
de que salgas mano a mano
de verte conmigo agora,
de estas cosas te hago cargo:
que peelas desde lejos,
que el arquebuz es tu amparo
que en comunidad aguijas
y a solas te vas despacio;
que eres Ulises nocturno,
no Telamón al sol claro [78]

And so to give you justification
to come out and fight me-hand to hand,
to confront me now,
I apprise you of the following things:
you fight only from afar,
the arquebus your sole defense,
you gallop only in a group,
and advance alone with caution;
you are the nocturnal Ulysses,
ne’er the sun-bathed Telamon.
There are, in fact, numerous references to Troy throughout the play; for example, at other junctures, Oropesa, Arlaxa’s Christian captive, compares his mistress to Medea (89), and Don Fernando to both Hercules and Hector (102).5

Perhaps the most provocative allusion to Troy, however, and most significantly to Homer’s critical reception by Aristotelian humanists, is found in Alimuzel’s double death and double resurrection. In two instances by both word and deed, he is slain—first by Buitrago and then by Don Fernando. In the first encounter Alimuzel exclaims, “¡Muerto soy; Alá me ayude!” (“I am slain; may Alah help me”), while Arlaxa cries out, “acude Lozano, acude, / que han muerto a tu grande amigo” (“Hurry, Lozano, hurry, / they have slain your great friend”) as the stage direction says, “Cae Alí dentro, y entra Arlaxa tras él” (116) (“Ali falls inward, and Arlaxa follows him”). In the second, Alimuzel reappears anew without explanation, and Don Fernando strikes him down with his sword. Again, the Moor falls “dentro del vestuario” (“into the dressing room”) as he pronounces the words “¡Muerto me has, moro fingido / y cristiano mal cristiano” (141) (“You’ve slain me, false Moor /and Christian, bad Christian”), just to rematerialize in the last scene of the play where Arlaxa gives him her hand, and where both he and his three lives pass in silence.

These episodes doubtless recall Priam’s two deaths in the Homeric poems, which proved one of the polemical centerpieces of Renaissance literary theory. It is, in fact, Priam’s double death (he is inexplicably killed twice by different antagonists in two different situations), as well as several other logical inconsistencies in Homer’s poems, which led literary theorists to invoke repeatedly the Horatian topos of “aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus” (1989, 359), or the instances of “when good old Homer slept,” to rationalize the Greek poet’s infractions against historical verisimilitude.6

The glaring puzzling events at the close of El gallardo lead the careful observer to marvel at them, though they are never satisfactorily explained. In fact, the Count of Alcaudete, properly astonished by all the discontinuities and transformations of the things he has witnessed in the last scene, points to them and exclaims with mock Aristotelian amazement, “estoy tan suspenso, / porque de ellas veo el fin, / y no imagino el comienzo” (148) (“I am held in suspense /because I see the denouement, / and can’t imagine the beginning”), underscoring the very artifice of the dramatic conventions employed in the comedia of which he is a character. The count’s remarks emphasize the indeter-
The dialectics of truth and fiction are inscribed in the play at a deeper level—the level of language itself. The mediating nature of language is constantly highlighted, and the complications of envisioning it as transparent are sharpened through the play’s ongoing inscription of lies. The self-conscious repetition of permutations on the word *mentir* ("to lie") saturates the text to the point of being obtrusive, as the characters rightly question the truth of all they see. Don Fernando, despite his gallantry, is in fact an inveterate liar, and his mendacity is ironically highlighted by Cervantes through one of the Count of Alcaudete’s credulous remarks. In the closing scene, the count turns to the hero and says innocently: "siempre vuestras palabras / responden a vuestros hechos", "your words always / correspond to your deeds"). To which Don Fernando replies: "entiende que ya no miento" (147) ("understand, I do not lie now").

Indeed, all of the characters in the play, in one form or another, embrace some type of duplicity. But perhaps none is more interesting than Doña Margarita, who appears suddenly in Oran dressed not only as a man but then as a Moor, considerably complicating the instability of the representation of the truth in the ostensibly easy questions of gender and cultural identity. Her cross-cultural cross-dressing incarnates ambivalence, indeterminacy, and conjecture—the ongoing transfiguration of all that is seen and heard. A protean figure, Doña Margarita is something different to everyone she encounters.

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Both the characters in the drama and the observer outside of it are intentionally compelled to act as interpreters of the words as well as the deeds constituting the *comedia* and to enter into the elaborate interplay of fiction and truth. Dialogues are constructed polysemously and produce a wealth of different resonances and echoes, cognizant of the power of speech to transfigure imaginatively surface appearances. Don Juan believes he recognizes his sister, the disguised Doña Margarita, yet he is told repeatedly she is the Moorish maiden Fátima. Cervantes ironically marks Don Juan's self-doubt and alarm at what he hears and sees through the equivocal use of the noun and the verb *mora*:

Por ser grande la distancia
que hay de mi hermana a ser mora,
imagino que en mí mora
gran cantidad de ignorancia.
Extraño es el devaneo
con quien vengo a contender,
pues no me deja creer
lo que con los ojos veo.  [139]

Since it is farfetched
that my sister is a Moor
I imagine that my mind is moored
to some great anchor of ignorance.
Rare is this madness
of whom I come to dispute;
it fails to make me believe
what I see with my own eyes.

Finally, driven beyond Neo-Aristotelian *admiratio*, Don Juan is farcically propelled to the edge of insanity by the contradictions of all he perceives, exclaiming:

Que me admiro,
y en juicio me apoco.
Por dicha, ¿hace Mahoma
milagros?

¿Y hace transformaciones?  [138]
I am astonished at the wonder, 
and in my judgment fail. 
By chance does Muhammad 
perform miracles? 

---

Does he perform transformations?

Facts themselves are destabilized and made relative and contingent in *El gallardo* as they are related through language. The ambivalence of truth and lies resides at the level of words themselves and is demonstrated by alternating their transparency and opacity to produce calculated misreadings and misinterpretations. From our privileged ironic perspective, what is verbally fabricated is then visually denied; and what is physically embodied as real is subsequently verbally deconstructed. The persistence of speech and appearances that deceive the observer is insistently brought to our attention. The force of the subjectivity underpinning all notions of the truth is suggested by the fact that words and things are represented only in relation to the angle from which we and the characters in the play grasp them.

Through the ironic interplay of hearing, seeing, and believing, followed by radical disabuse, we are led to realize that the distinction between the factual and the fictive is really only one of hierarchy, never one of substance, and that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the two. By means of the extensive use of dramatic irony, and the construction of lies that define the links between all his characters, Cervantes toys with the notion that there is more than one way to compose truths.

Cervantes in *El gallardo* thus takes us beyond a facile Neo-Aristotelian convergence of history and poetry to the very threshold of the *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), and to the calculated contemplation at all levels of the uncertainty of the actual and the fantastic. Through the overt utilization of stylized language and easily recognizable motifs from imaginative literature, particularly romance, balladry, and classical and vernacular epic, he sought to heighten the awareness of the ambivalence of both *burlas* and *veras*—to create moments of critical detachment from the play in order to remind us that it was indeed just that—a play—not life, but its textual representation. As he stated later in the “Adjunta al Parnaso,” the intention behind publishing his plays in book form was “para que se vea de espacio lo que pasa apriesa, y se disimula, o no se entiende, cuando las representan” (1973, 183) ("so
as to be able to see slowly what happens in quick time, what is dissimulat-
ed, or not understood, when they are represented on the stage"). His
goal was thus not to make burlas indistinguishable from veras but to
signal their kinship in dramatic texts and render an evaluation of theater
itself by exposing and manipulating the very devices through which it
creates illusions and purports to represent reality. In this way, El gallardo
offers a kind of ontological critique of theater that discloses at every step
the semiotic strategies it exploits to represent the truth.

The play organizes a confrontation between self-consciously fic-
tive and historical discourses in order to highlight the effacement of the
boundaries between the two and place into question linguistic and
textual referentiality, leading us ultimately to a mise en abyme, defined
by Lucien Dällenbach as any reflexive feature of a text that “brings out
the meaning and the form of the work” (1989, 8). The troublesome
cohabitation of veras with undisguised burlas unmasks the way dramatic
texts seek to create real-seeming illusions; from beginning to end,
through artifice, ambiguous language, the intrusion of extradi-getic
commentary and even a point of view in the stage directions, the names
and allusive identities of the characters and what occurs to them, there
is a consistent attempt to convey the sense of a fictional world, a
construct, set up against a background of well-known historical facts.
Even the truth on stage is disguised, distorted, and transformed as we,
along with the characters, are led to ponder the nature of what we hear
and behold and to formulate conclusions, only to be denied, contra-
dicted, and confounded in the end. As in his best-known dramatic pieces
exploring the nature of theater (Pedro de Urdemalas and El retablo de las
maravillas), in El gallardo español Cervantes gathers all the artifices of the
stage and integrates them into a structure that constantly calls attention
to them and to their persistent counterfeit of truth. Although the play’s
concluding statement parallels the Neo-Aristotelian canon’s agenda for
the ideal theater in Don Quijote (I, 48), a retrospective reading of El
gallardo underscores Cervantes’ awareness of verisimilitude’s abiding
fictionality—his questioning of it, his rewriting of its tenets, and his final
refusal to yield simplistically to the Neo-Aristotelian program.8

If El gallardo was in fact written as early as 1594, as Cotarelo y
Valledor claims (1915, 261-66), it is perhaps Cervantes’ earliest critical
response to the paradoxes posed by Neo-Aristotelian aesthetics and thus
deserves further careful scrutiny.9 Whatever its date of composition,
however, it is clear that the play is far more than a clever excursion into
the comedia nueva (Marrast 1957, 61) or a slavish imitation of Neo-
Aristotelian fashion. In its quest to merge *burlas* with *veras* it ultimately undermines the very possibility of ever reconciling the two, calling into question the capacity of texts to represent empirical truths. As it does this, it interrogates and rewrites both its literary sources and the very critical abstractions that provoked its composition. As in all of Cervantes' works, *El galardo* is at once a creative and self-scrutinizing gesture that confronts the very theoretical underpinnings upon which it rests and, ultimately, the foundations of writing itself. *El galardo* does, in fact, partially accomplish the artistic goals set out by the canon of Toledo for the theater—to instruct and to entertain. In its interrogation of verisimilitude, however, and in its awareness of itself as a text, it constitutes a departure from them and designates a profound Cervantine statement on the ability of language to fabricate illusions.
Chapter 6

Rewriting Lope de Vega

*El retablo de las maravillas*, Cervantes’ *Arte nuevo de deshacer comedias*

“Los casos de la honra son mejores.”

Cases of honor are always best.

—Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*

*El retablo de las maravillas* is one of the most compelling works of Cervantes’ theatrical repertoire. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century it has played a prominent role both in the editorial enterprises and in the criticism aimed at understanding the nature of Cervantine theater. As a result, it has provoked numerous interpretations. Some scholars have viewed the piece as an exercise in testing the power of language and the limits of illusion, as an exploration into the blurred boundaries between art and life via the metaphor of the theater within the theater (Marrast 1957, 91-93; Canavaggio 1977, 376-77, 1986; Kenworthy 1981). Others see only the work’s comicality, while still others perceive it solely as a satire of seventeenth-century Spanish racial prejudices, *pureza de sangre*, whose essence is historically determined and circumstantially bound (Wardropper, 1984; Salomon 1985, 114-15). *El retablo* is all of these things, however, and something more. As Eugenio Asensio has remarked concerning the possibility of achieving a wholly satisfactory exegesis of the text, “No hay pieza cervantina más intencionalmente ambigua y cambiante, con más interpretaciones que no se excluyan” (Cervantes 1980, 190) (“there is no other Cervantine piece more intentionally ambiguous or changing, with a host of interpretations that cannot be excluded”). For Asensio alone, the interlude produces three valid interpretations: it is, he says, at once a parable of human credulity; a biting satire on the social illness of *limpieza de sangre*,...
and an unmitigated attack on the aristocratic pretensions of peasants (villanos) in which Cervantes betrays the true measure of his social aggression (Cervantes 1980, 190-91).

Despite the validity of the host of interpretations critics have drawn from *El retablo de las maravillas*, the very theatrical significance of the work remains to be more fully investigated and understood. In addition to the multitude of explanations offered by students of Cervantes, there endures a sense that has not yet been fully explored, namely, *El retablo* as an elaborate theatrical mirror that reflects not only insights into the ontology of the theater, but more specifically, Cervantes' resolute opposition to some of the prevailing theatrical theories and practices of his day. Especially noteworthy are his rejection of Lope de Vega's poetics as set down in the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609), and his disagreement with a contemporary dramatic repertoire dominated almost exclusively by honor plays in the guise of the so-called comedias de labradores (rural peasant plays).

The theatrical interlude, or entremés, often functions as a self-reflexive device that comments on the very norms and conventions of the theater in which it is found. Although such use of the interlude is not uncommon in seventeenth-century Spanish works—indeed, one may note just such use in a few of the interludes by Quiñones de Benavente and Quevedo—1—the degree to which Cervantes systematically exploits it in *El retablo* to confront and subvert current dramatic practice is unusual for its coherence, critical acumen, and unmistakable ideological posture. To be sure, *El retablo* is, as I shall argue, an exceptionally well-focused intertextual commentary on the state of the contemporary drama, an idiom Cervantes knew extraordinarily well and one that he perceived as an artistic sham sustained by collusion with social and political myths compensating for a dearth of dramatic craftsmanship and staging skills. By intertextuality, then, I mean to suggest the way in which *El retablo* interacts with and is shaped by a preexisting form of theatrical discourse, and the manner in which Cervantes reconstructs a new sense from this antecedent, in short, the ingenious way in which he subversively rewrites the *comedia de labradores* and Lope's *Arte nuevo* in order to expose their bogus themes and the limitations and paradoxes of their aesthetics.

In addition to a critical evaluation of the poetics of the *comedia*, *El retablo* provides an attack on the purely commercial, not to say larcenous, motivation of theatrical producers, while mocking the values, the tastes, and the audiences who helped shape the Spanish stage during
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the first decade of the seventeenth century. In fact, *El retablo* (reportedly composed between 1603 and 1614, but most likely between 1609 and 1614) may be viewed as an extension of Cervantes' own dramatic theory, that is, as a work that answers, in good measure, the question posed by Bruce Wardropper regarding the influence of Lope de Vega upon his experimental theater (1973, 156). Viewing *El retablo* as a dissident statement aimed at subverting the prevailing dramatic norms helps to sharpen the insights offered by Jean Canavaggio concerning the existence of an implicit debate between Cervantine theater and the *comedia nueva*, whose invention and perfection are credited to Lope.2

In his analysis of Cervantes' drama *La Entretienda* (The Entertained One), for example, Canavaggio has demonstrated how the interlude performed by the servants in front of their masters (act 3) plays off the clichés of the *comedia de enredo* (drawing room farce) that frames it. Thus the entire work establishes a dialogue between the interpolated interlude and the conventions of the encompassing *comedia*. The resulting dialectic serves to focus critically as well as parodically the thematic complicities and technical insufficiencies of the latter's Lopean aesthetics (Canavaggio 1977, 117-21). Similarly, Canavaggio notes how Cervantes' *Los baños de Argel* (The Dungeons of Algiers) and the pastoral colloquy it encloses function in a reciprocal fashion, despite the fact that they "are not written by the same person" (1986, 148). In short, Canavaggio has allowed us to see how the texts of Cervantine *entremeses* may serve as reflexive aesthetic devices vis-à-vis their contexts and thus constitute a complement to rather than a disruption of the fictions that usually frame them. He has shown that the Cervantine *entremés* should not be read as an autonomous entity, but as a part of a larger intertextual discourse on dramatic theory and the ontology of the stage. *El retablo* was doubtless originally destined to function in this way and to reflect critically, and probably to subvert, any *comedia*, but especially a *comedia de villanos*, which might circumscribe it. It is, thus, not a self-begotten work, but one that, in typical Cervantine fashion, at once emulates, revises, speaks to, rewrites, and transforms a model.

With this in mind, we can begin to recover a crucial, yet until now lost, sense of *El retablo de las maravillas* and to appreciate further still its richness through its analogical relationship to the greater theatrical context from which it sprang. By momentarly placing *El retablo*’s central image of the puppet show in the context of *Don Quijote*, its critique of the Lopean theatre and of the *comedia de villanos*, in particular, becomes quite clear. In *Don Quijote* (II, 25-26), as George Haley (1986) has
demonstrated, Maese Pedro’s puppet show serves as a critical medium—an artifice that, through a redoubling effect, exposes the narrative structure of the framing book and hence the mechanics of its own fiction. Yet, while the puppet show affirms the mastery of Cide Hamete and his creator, it also serves to undermine the authority of its owner, a professional thief turned impresario.

If it is up to the reader of Don Quijote to conclude that Maese Pedro is a thief because he is really Ginés de Pasamonte, and hence that there is little distinction between brigands and bad artists, the notion that the puppeteers of El retablo are swindlers could not be more explicit. As the work opens, Chanfalla and Chirinos boldly celebrate a recent deception as they plan the coming fraud.3 Ironically couched in the Scholastic terminology of the powers of the soul, which usually are reserved for discussing questions of truth, doctrine, faith, and belief, Chanfalla’s lines shamelessly remind Chirinos of the principles of their fraudulent profession: “No se te pasen de la memoria, Chirinos, mis advertimientos, principalmente los que te he dado para este nuestro embuste, que ha de salir tan a luz como el pasado del llovista” (169) (“Don’t let my admonishments, Chirinos, escape your memory, especially the ones I gave for this our trick, which should be as successful as the last one of the rain maker”). While Chirinos retorts: “lo que en mí fuere tenlo como de molde: que tanta memoria tengo como entendimiento, a quien se junta una voluntad de acertar a satisfazerte, que excede las demás potencias” (169) (“as far as I am concerned, you can rely on me; I possess as much memory as I do understanding, to which is joined a will that wishes to please you, a will which excels all the other powers”).

From the outset, however, these theatrical producers are clearly portrayed as tricksters in more than the ontological and artistic sense. Not only are they weavers of fraudulent fictions, but also they are purveyors of lies to an eager, paying clientele. They are the masters of a mercenary art whose essence is lying for financial gain. The connection to the Canon’s observations on drama in Don Quijote (I, 48) cannot escape the attention of readers with a wider familiarity of Cervantes’ work: “Las comedias se han hecho mercadera vendible” (487) (“Plays have become saleable merchandise” (477)), says the Canon, “y los autores que las componen y los actores que las representan dicen que así las quiere el vulgo” (484) (“and both the authors that compose them, and actors that represent them, say that they must be such as they be for to please the people’s humours” (477-78)).

Having succumbed to the commercial possibilities of art, Chan-
falla and Chirinos thus traffic in the worst type of mendacity. Their wholly insubstantial craft radically denies the Neo-Aristotelian cleric's insistence that lies resembling truths are preferable to outright lies, and that the best art necessarily approximates the truth because "la mentira es mejor quanto más parece verdadera" (482) ("an untruth is so much more pleasing by how much the nearer it resembles a truth" (475)). As we are reminded in the Governor's aside midway through Chanfalla's and Chirinos's production (177), despite his goodwill and despite meeting all the preconditions for properly viewing the show, he fails to fall under the spell of their nonmimetic craft: "Basta; que todos ven lo que yo no veo; pero al fin avré de dezir que lo veo, por la negra honrilla" (177) ("Enough, I say, that others see what I do not; but in the end I'll have to say I see it, on account of that old black honor"). Aware of the lie, yet coerced by social myths, he consciously collaborates with the defrauders, deceiving himself and ultimately giving the lie to a counterfeit art. The message is quite plain: he is witness to a failed, indeed bogus, commercial fabrication, an art form that, if it succeeds, does so not because of its aesthetic perfection or its ability to imply a relation to reality but because of its compromise with social delusions.

The irony is compounded when Chanfalla tells the Governor that he and Chirinos are on their way to Madrid, where they expect to triumph as well as breathe new fiscal life into the indigent hospitals in whose benefit they shall produce their plays: "Hanme enviado a llamar de la corte los señores cofrades de los hospitales, porque no hay autor de comedias en ella, y perecen los hospitales, y con mi ida se remediara todo" (171) ("The masters of the brotherhoods of hospitals have called me from the court and capital, since there is no producer of comedies there, and the hospitals are suffering; but with my arrival all will get well"). Later, when the Governor identifies himself as the poet-dramatist Licenciado Gomecillos (perhaps echoing el licenciado Tomé Burguillos, one of Lope's many pseudonyms listed by Morley 1951), he, too, confesses to Chirinos that as an author of comedias, "estoy guardando coyuntura para ir a la corte y enriquecer con ellas media docena de autores" (174) ("I am waiting for the moment to go to the capital and make rich a half dozen producers with my plays"). The drama, then, as it is portrayed in El retablo and commonly conceived by both its creators and producers, is inspired primarily by financial speculation and the promise of fame rather than by art.

Echoing ideas articulated in the Canon's speech in Don Quijote, El retablo recalls also the "Prólogo al lector" of the Ocho comedias y ocho
entremeses, with its fulsome praise for the simplicity of Lope de Rueda's theater, a time when "todos los aparatos de un autor de comedias se encerraban en un costal, y se cifraban en cuatro pellicos blancos guarnecidos de guadameci dorado, y en cuatro barbas y cabelleras, y cuatro cayados, poco más o menos" (1962, lxxxiii) ("all a comedy producer's scenery and props could be carried in sack and were limited to four white sheepskins adorned with gold-tooled leather, four beards and wigs, four shepherds' staffs, more or less"). The opening lines of the piece insinuate that the Spanish stage has succumbed to devices that, though spectacular and entertaining, are essentially undramatic and artistically superfluous. Questioning the necessity of the musician Rabelín, for example, Chirinos alludes to the increasing technical complexity of staging in the Spanish theater. Chanfalla responds by noting that Rabelín's music shall be used to fill the pregnant pauses, asserting that "Avíamosle menester como el pan de la boca, para tocar en los espacios que tardaren en salir las figuras del Retablo de las Maravillas" (169) ("We'll need him like our mouths need bread, to play during the intervals between the figures of the Marvelous Retable coming on stage"). While music may be necessary to engage the audience's attention, it does little to suspend disbelief. This reference to the added amenities of theatrical spectacle becomes doubly ironic in the context of the play about to be performed, since, as one prolonged dramatic vacuum—literally a non-play—the action of El retablo de las maravillas shall require Rabelín to be very busy indeed.4

At this point, Rabelín's artistic necessity is clearly at issue, since the repartee between Chanfalla, Chirinos, and him centers on the size of the artistic as well as the financial part the musician will play in the scam. In a metafictional as well as economic pun Rabelín notes that "que me han escrito para entrar en una compañía de partes, por chico que soy" (170) ("they've written me so as to partake in a piece of a company with parts"). Since he is slight of stature, Chanfalla responds, "Si os han de dar la parte a medida del cuerpo, casi será invisible" (170) ("if they give you a part that's a measure of your stature, it will be all but invisible"). Chanfalla's remark summarizes the financial and artistic monopoly sustained by the theatrical producers at the time Cervantes wrote El retablo, and it speaks to their control in determining not only the nature of the roles portrayed in the plays they sponsored but also the actors and musicians who performed in them.

This discussion on the nature of dramatic roles and parts is appropriately interrupted by the entry of the chief protagonists and victims of
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the swindle of *El retablo*. It is here that the intertextual quality of the interlude is most openly betrayed. The characters who march on stage constitute a veritable catalog of characters, the dramatis personae, lifted from a *comedia de labradores*—a grotesque *Fuenteovejuna* or an odd *Peribán*.

"Estos que aquí vienen de ven de ser, como lo son sin duda, el gobernador y los alcaldes" (170) ("these who approach are probably, as indeed they are, the governor and the aldermen"), says Chanfalla, while counseling his co-conspirators to exploit carefully their vanity, which he knows is hopelessly confused with honor in the rustics' churlish minds: "Salgámosles al encuentro, y date un filo a la lengua en la piedra de la adulación; pero no despunte de aguda" (170) ("Let's go out to meet them, and sharpen your tongues on the whetstone of adulation; but don't blunt it for being too sharp").

With the introduction of these characters, Cervantes begins his onomastic mischief, laying to rest eternally our hopes of ever seriously appreciating again the characters of a *comedia de labradores*. Where we would expect a Frondoso, Laurencia, Esteban, or, more pointedly, a Belardo—all names employed by Lope de Vega—we get a Benito Repollo (Little Ben Cabbage), whose proximity to Mother Earth is undeniable, the regidor (alderman) Juan Castrado, whose improbable role as rustic patriarch could not be more explicit, Castrado's nondaughter, Juana Castrada, whose wedding day it is, and the generic figure of el dignísimo y honrado gobernador ("most dignified and honorable Governor"), whose presence Chanfalla characterizes as "anchurosa y peripatética" (170) ("broad-beamed and peripatetic").

The savage parody of honorific epithets and the sycophant language contained in the swindlers' greetings could not be clearer, and it would doubtless have been heightened if *El retablo* were performed between the acts of a peasant honor play. It is a systematic undermining of the overdone courtesy of the idiom of such honor plays as Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*, even in encounters of intense emotion, as when in act 2 the Comendador arrives at the town meeting in the village and greets and is greeted by the peasants in a style that observes the etiquette compelled by social, if not circumstantial, differences:

| Comendador | Dios guarde la buena gente. |
| Regidor    | ¡Oh, señor! |
| Comendador | Por vida mía, que se estén. |
Refiguring Authority

Esteban

Vusiñoría,
adonde suele se siente,
que en pie estaremos muy bien.

Comendador

Digo que se han de sentar.

Esteban

De los buenos es honrar,
que no es posible que den
honra los que no la tienen 

[23]

Comendador

God save thee, good people.

Alderman

Oh, your mercy!

Comendador

By my honor,

stay seated.

Esteban

Your honor,

prithee sit where usually you do,

we'll do well to remain standing.

Comendador

I say to thee that thou should sit.

Esteban

'Tis the duty of the good to honor,

since those who have it not
cannot.

"En vida de la señora y de los señoritos, si es que el señor los tiene" (171) ("By the life of your lady and lordlings, if it is that the gentleman has these"), says Chirinos to the fatuous Governor in El retablo, while miming the language of respect. He continues, "honrados días viva vuessa merced, que así nos honra. En fin, la enzina da bellotas, el pero peras, la parra uvas, y el honrado honra, sin poder hacer otra cosa" (171) ("may your honor live many an honorable day: you honor us so greatly. After all, the oak gives acorns, the pear tree, pears, the vine, grapes, and the honorable man, honor, and each can do no more"), exposing the folly and platitudes of honra as they are revealed through the language of the rustic comedia.

The country wedding is a venerable and picturesque motif of the comedia de labradores that also enters into El retablo. Its significance, thanks to Noel Salomon, need not be documented (1985, 576-606). Indeed, in the rural dramas of the early seventeenth century the wedding usually provides a springboard for the honor conflict, since the festivities call attention to the bride or bride-to-be, who is then coveted by the local potentate (Peribañez, Fuenteovejuna, El alcalde de Zalamea). It is,
ironically, also the very occasion that furnishes the pretext for staging the marvels of Chanfalla’s puppet show. Curious about the wonders of the Witless Wizard (El Sabio Tontonelo) who originally constructed it, the Governor, suspiciously overcome with largesse, is all too ready to open wide his purse and underwrite the costs of the production at the nuptials of Juana Castrada, his “goddaughter” and the “daughter” of Juan Castrado. The transparent innuendo of Teresa’s more than casual relationship to the rich patron and the Juan’s double dishonor by both wife and daughter is thus introduced through the wedding theme and places into monstrous parodic focus not only the notion of rustic honor and the ceremony with all its colorful trappings, but also a hamlet quite unlike those of the comedias villanescas intended to frame El retablo; the venue of Cervantes’ inverted peasant play is a village where governors do indeed enjoy all their ancient governing privileges as well as the enthusiastic complicity of the folk in their philandering. Hearing the Governor’s offer to underwrite the cost of the production, Juan Castrado, the compliant victim of his sexual shenanigans, quite openly confesses, in a line redounding with reminiscences of the Lazarillo, his collusion and his desire to please and continue in the nobleman’s service: “Eso tengo yo por servir al señor Gobernador, con cuyo parecer me convengo, entablo y arrimo, aunque haya otra cosa en contrario” (172) (“That’s what I call serving the Governor, whose opinions I agree with, ratify and draw close to me, though there be room for contradiction”).

Juan, the regidor of the town, though more than politically allied with the governor, is, contrary to the aldermen of the Lopean stage, less than a man of the people. Violating the expected expressions of solidarity with his fellow villagers, he relents to Chanfalla and gives orders to exclude them from the wedding feast that night (“Y más, que se tendrá cuidado que no entre gente del pueblo esta noche en mi casa” [173] (“Moreover, ensure that town’s people don’t come into my house”)).

The incorporation of conventions from the rural comedia continues beyond the encounter between the swindlers, the Governor, and his lackeys: the dialogue between Teresa Repolla and Juana Castrada is a burlesque of the de rigueur female declarations of happiness, honor, modesty, and chastity, which saturate the comedias villanescas. Indeed, their exchange recalls similar feminine dialogues in such works as Fuenteovejuna (act 1, Laurencia and Pascualia) and Peribáñez (act 1, Casilda and Inés), though here, rather than make affirmative protestations of womanly virtue in the context of the rustic life, Teresa and Juana admonish each other about commonly shared sexual and genealogical
secrets, hence highlighting the need to guard against carelessness during the production:

Castrada  Aquí te puedes sentar, Teresa Repolla amiga, que tendremos el Retablo enfrente; y pues sabes las condiciones que han de tener los miradores del Retablo, no te descuides, que sería una gran desgracia.

Teresa  Ya sabes, Juana Castrada, que soy tu prima, y no digo más. ¡Tan cierto tuviera yo el cielo, como tengo cierto ver todo aquello que el Retablo mostrare! ¡Por el siglo de mi madre, que me sacasse los mismos ojos de mi cara, si alguna desgracia me aconteciese! ¡Bonita soy yo para eso! [175]

Castrada  You may sit here, friend Teresa Repolla, we'll have the stage before us; and since you know about the qualifications the audience must have to see it, don't slip—it would be a shame.

Teresa  You know well, Juana Castrada, that I am your cousin and will say no more. I am as sure of seeing heaven as I am of seeing what the show will show! On my mother's life, I would tear out my own eyes if some disgrace befalls me! I am a pretty one for that!

The humor of the oath on Teresa's mother's life could hardly have been lost on an audience schooled in the themes of the *comedia de villanos* and aware of the joke in the Governor's overly generous patronage of the puppet show. More than cousins, in their admonitions the ladies of *El retablo* conspire to conceal the family secret of their own bastardy and their mothers' infidelities.

Through a constant yet subtle incorporation and inversion of the paradigmatic themes and images of the *comedia de labradores*, Cervantes in *El retablo* seeks to challenge not only the *comedia's* aesthetics but also its pernicious ideology. Aware that, as Américo Castro remarked years ago, "en el teatro de Lope de Vega la conciencia honrosa del villano sale a luz al enfrentarse con el señor depravado" (1961, 226) ("in Lope de Vega's plays the peasant's awareness of his honor shows forth in his encounters with depraved nobles"), in the seemingly innocuous scene in which the Governor declares his patronage of the wedding, the author of *Don Quijote* sought consciously to frustrate several of the shopworn
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motifs and ideological centerpieces of honor plays with agricultural settings. The countryside, as it appears in this Cervantine interlude, mimes grotesquely the idealized and compromised version of it portrayed in the Lopean theater. Populated with corrupt nobles and venal, ignorant, as well as illegitimate bumpkins, Cervantes' landscape stands as an emphatic denial of the Arcadian vision of the Old Christians (cristianos viejos) who preside over Lope's honorable countryside and the thematically and ideologically exhausted court/country dichotomy of the Spanish Golden Age.

In El retablo the final conflict arises not out of the revelation that someone is menaced with a nobleman's sexual betrayal and dishonor, but out of the threat to unveil the hypocrisy underwriting the ludicrous pursuit of appearances. Teresa and Juana, as well as Juan and the Governor, compelled by honra, have forged a covenant that ironically forces them to live their lives as theater; they each must knowingly play out a role alien to their true identities. This covenant, which transforms experience into fiction satisfies each of their interests, neutralizes shame, and becomes the foundation of the town's social alliances and political stability, so long as it is not publicly exposed. The dramatic climax of El retablo comes when an outsider, the quartermaster (furrier) who seeks to billet troops in the town, openly challenges these accommodations and threatens to unmask them as willful self-deception. Rather than leading to a restitution of harmony and a celebrative denouement, this threat gives rise to chaos, to the breakdown of public order, and eventually to the ultimate Cervantine expression of the wages of honor—strife. Thus the final portrait of honra is something less than the stable pillar of society the official theater paints.

When we arrive at this juncture in the entremés, the other complement of the country wedding, the public revel, is thwarted and, by its very absence, intertextually denied by Cervantes. As Asensio observes, contrary to the expected pattern of Cervantine interludes, and indeed many large-scale comedias, El retablo fails to end with songs and dancing, and hence "ofrece una curiosa singularidad dentro de los entremeses cervantinos" (Cervantes 1980, 31) ("offers a curious singularity among Cervantine interludes"). That is, it does not close with a celebrative ending and a symbolic representation of restored harmony. Indeed, the only dance included in it is the lascivious zarabanda, inspired by the imaginary Herodias and performed by Benito Repollo's nephew. Here the mischief is multiplied, for Cervantes not only literally realizes Lope's recommendation in the Arte nuevo to include a dance ("aunque
el baile lo es tanto en la comedia que le aprueba Aristóteles... puesto que reprehende el deshonesto” [1967a, 15-16] (“dance is so appropriate in drama that Aristotle approves... though he censures lascivious ones”) but also has the nephew seduced by the imagined terpsichorean antics of a Jewish seductress as she moves through a salacious dance that, as Sebastián de Covarrubias tells us, got its name “del verbo Hebreo Zara, que significa esparcir, cerner, o andar a la redonda” (Diccionario de autoridades, 1726-39, 3:561) (“from the Hebrew verb Zara, which means to scatter, to sift, or to skirt”). The absurdity of the theatrical portrayal of honra is thus further profiled as the nephew insouciantly casts racial scruples to the wind and demonstrates his willingness to violate taboos of miscegenation.

The disturbing lack of a harmonic resolution to this inverted honor play doubtless provided an ironic overture to the resumption of the straightforward play that Cervantes intended to circumscribe it. Honra’s existence and constant affirmation in the theater veils a moral compromise sanctioned by official culture while it provides the pretext for both moral and political corruption. Surely the audience of El retablo, with the themes and images of a framing comedia fresh in mind (and who doubtless had witnessed countless examples of the form), would have been hard put not to catch the mocking allusions and the author’s critical, indeed subversive, mirroring of its conventions. Their appreciation of the remaining acts of the comedia would doubtless have been transformed by a heightened awareness of the themes and formal canons parodied in the preceding interlude, producing a new and very different “reading” of it. The expectations of the audience would thus be redefined by Cervantes’ parody, which would implicitly deny that the encompassing comedia could, after the performance of El retablo, be taken seriously.

Cervantes is not satisfied, however, to mock the themes and motifs of the comedia de labradores in El retablo. He goes on to attack the basic principles of composition constituting the aesthetic canons of the Lopean theater, particularly its flagrant disregard for the unities. Composed and published at a time when Lope de Vega “alzóse con la monarquía cómica” (“elevated himself to the monarchy of the theater”) and had, by Cervantes’ admission, artistically subjugated the entire Spanish stage, El retablo negatively echoes in its explicit imagery and dramatic action many of the artistic precepts set down in the Arte nuevo. While the characters of the interlude are ludicrous versions of the ones we see in the rustic comedias, the action of Chanfalla’s puppet show becomes the metaphor for the larger problem of the canons of compo-
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sition governing the contemporary theater. In this fashion, the disjointed, deliriously confused and confusing biblical scenes said to appear in Chanfalla’s retable are not just images of treachery speaking to the cruelty of *pureza de sangre*, as Bruce Wardropper has correctly indicated (1984), but also a bold dramatization of Lope’s anti-Aristotelian posturing as revealed in his disrespect for the unities and his counsel of the need to present in the two-hour span of a *comedia* “hasta el final juicio desde Génesis” (“from Genesis to the Last Judgment”) because “la cólera / de un espanol sentado no se templa” (15) (“the ire / of a seated Spaniard is not easily tempered”).

The skewed logic and factual errors of Chanfalla’s program, starting with Samson’s destruction of the temple followed in quick succession by the onslaught of the bull that killed the Salamanca errand boy, then returning to the invasion of the mice descended from the ones in Noah’s Ark, along with the subsequent zigzag gallop through the rest of the Old and New Testaments in which biblical characters are deliberately confused (e.g., Herodias with Salomé), represent a travesty of the Lopean precept of variety. Yet the performance is wildly applauded by Chanfalla’s boorish audience. Indeed, though scared witless by the imaginary inundation of rodents and caught up in the extravaganza, Juana Castrada pleads for ever-increasing thrills in the form of lions and bears while she reproaches Benito Repollo’s call to Chanfalla to lower the intensity of the action and conjure a less threatening menagerie. This mockery of the Neo-Aristotelian unities recalls Lope’s swaggering apology in the *Arte nuevo* for abandoning them, and it is justified by Juana, the groundling critic of *El retablo*, with the simple observation that “Todo lo nuevo aplaze” (179) (“Everything novel pleases”).

In its subtle way, then, Chanfalla’s show portrays the Spanish theater’s cynical capitulation to the groundlings (vulgo) and to the latter’s naive desire for novel, entertaining performances. In Lope’s own words, “que si alii se ha de dar gusto, / con lo que se consigue es lo mas justo” (15) (“If the purpose is to please, / then the end justifies the means”). Indeed, the almost infinite variety of Chanfalla’s theatrical cornucopia invokes the multifaceted, not to say muddled, aesthetics of comedias taken to task by the Canon in *Don Quijote* (I, 48), for whom they represent a denial of the Ciceronian *speculum vitae* and have become

espejos de disparates, ejemplos de necedades e imágenes de lascivia. Porque, ... ¡Qué de milagros falsos fingen en ellas, qué de cosas apócrifas y mal entendidas, atribuyendo a un santo los milagros de
In short, the awesome marvels of El Sabio Tontonelo do nothing more than repeat in their own caricaturesque misrepresentation those wrought and perfected by the Monstruo de Naturaleza, the appellation given Lope by Cervantes, in the popular theater. They are, moreover, portrayed as authorized by a paying public's naive and insatiable appetite for novelty and spectacle over all notions of unity and sense—a public who, in the Canon's words, is composed of "ignorantes, que solo atienden el gusto de oir disparates" (484) ("ignoramuses, who only attend to the pleasure of hearing foolish things").

In El retablo it is clear that Cervantes' most emphatic assault upon the condition of the Spanish stage is directed neither at Lope or his poetics nor at the comedia de villanos, but at the vulgo, who had become the true arbiter of theatrical tastes and values. Through the sudden transformation of the characters of a comedia villanesca into a dramatized audience cheering Tontonelo's marvels, Cervantes creates an allegory of the very seventeenth-century public that underwrites the social and commercial success of the popular theater. The audience portrayed on stage thus becomes a mirror aimed at the real audience intended to view both the framing comedia and the circumscribed Cervantine entremés. The flesh and blood audience of El retablo is momentarily displaced and allowed to contemplate itself through the interlude's characters turned into an image of themselves on stage. The latter, then, rather than just a cast of characters of a comedia de villanos, become the dramatized spectators of a spectacle posited essentially upon the same, though caricaturized, thematic presumptions of the very piece that the actual
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audience came to see. The result is an allegory of *comedia* audiences in which Cervantes fleshes out their identity and the way in which their demands frustrate the possibility of high art as their expectations dictate and constitute the nature of the theater they patronize. He shows his audience what it means to be an audience in seventeenth-century Spain and reveals to us, his modern public, his profound and dissident understanding of the dynamics of dramatic craft.

*El retablo* was conceived not only out of moral indignation but also out of a sense of artistic disagreement, and it can be read as a crucial extension of Cervantes' poetics; it serves as yet another key with which to unlock the reasons for his resistance to adapting to the prevailing dramaturgical conditions and practices of his day. Written presumably after the appearance of Lope's *Arte nuevo* in 1609, it is an example of Cervantes' unwillingness to conform to the *comedia* as it is defined there. It is a dramatic provocation intended to produce a questioning meditation on the popular theater in the very audience who was shaping it at the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century: it provides an exposé on the reciprocal manipulation of dramatists, producers, and spectators, while it reveals a profound understanding of the synergism that created the *comedia nueva* and guaranteed Lope's rule over the Spanish stage. It is, in short, a subversive act of drama that undermines the authority of the theater as it was commonly known and desired by the *vulgo* that sustains it. Through its interplay with the canonical subtexts of the *comedia* it ironically parodies the audiences, the staging, the producers, the themes, the motifs, the language, indeed the complete overarching poetics of the form, and through its daring genius becomes nothing less than Cervantes' authoritative *Arte nuevo de deshacer comedias*. 
Conclusion

Efficere tibi illas familiares.

Make [your readings] your own. —Petrarch, Secretum

The reader became the book; and summer night
Was the conscious being of the book. —Wallace Stevens

Reading gives us the chance to formulate the unformulated.
—Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader

Although books are mere physical objects, gatherings of paper made from fiber and ink and thread, they are more than their material selves: they are the extracorporeal residence of language and of the human imagination; they are repositories of memory, knowledge, illusion, and meaning whose materiality is effaced at the moment a reader peruses them. Books possess the authority to enlighten, confuse, convince, dissuade, tell the truth, enchant, and lie. When books are read they are, indeed, capable of eliciting strong responses and of profoundly transforming people. Augustine of Hippo and Don Quijote de la Mancha, two paradigmatic readers, are perhaps the best illustrations of this fact and of the effect books may have upon the imagination. The first is a historical figure, the second a character of fiction. The one, having read a book, transformed his life into one; and the other, having read books, sought to live them. For both, writing and the act of reading proved central to their formation, transformation, and existence.

The genius of books and of writing lies precisely in this power to transmute objects into subjects, and subjects into objects. As Barry Ife has remarked in his study of reading and fiction in Golden Age Spain, when we a read a book "the thoughts we read are those of another person:
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reading entails thinking those thoughts, not as the thoughts of another, but as one's own. As with all language use, writing and reading is a type of thought transference: the fictional realities implicit in the book become predicates of the reader's self (1985, 82). As books are read, then, they become like us; they acquire their own life within us, stir us, transform us, and prompt us to change ourselves and the world around us. They are at once the medium for the reception of knowledge and ideas and the catalyst for their creation and realization. And just as reading and writing were capable of leaving an indelible imprint on Augustine and Don Quijote, in effect remaking them, they altered the Cervantine imagination and helped shape the nature of its fictions.

The chapters in this book have aspired to show not only how the reading, writing, and interpretation of books reside at the center of Cervantes' masterwork, Don Quijote, and extend well beyond the superficial representation of their effects upon its protagonist, but also how these activities persistently subtend the act of creation in this and in Cervantes' other works; in short, how reading, interpretation, and writing constitute a synergy and form a crux for understanding the act of textual composition in Cervantes. To be sure, Cervantes' works, as this book has sought to show, may be conceived as palimpsests, or writing surfaces, which when carefully scrutinized reveal partially erased and altered traces of other texts deeply embedded in them. More than inanimate presences or vestiges of lifeless erudition, however, the texts embedded in Cervantes' works serve as energizing agents that, as they are incorporated into the pages he writes, are debated, interpreted, transformed, and redeployed, just as they are given new life, substance, and identity. By approaching Cervantes' writings as if they were palimpsests, I have labored to refocus the question of authority in them, looking afresh at the their sources, voices, and derivations. I have attempted to go beyond a process of the mere identification, description, and taxonomy of their antecedents, striving toward an understanding of how they, and the acts of reading and writing themselves, function in consonance to stimulate an imagination and produce new dazzling forms of fiction. The result has led me to the disclosure of the dynamic nature of Cervantes' poetics, which simultaneously set into motion a process of textual memory, interpretation, and the practice of composition—a transaction involving the critical reading of writing, leading to the assimilation, transformation, and rewriting of other texts. In this way, Cervantine poetics are profoundly implicated in a theory of sustained, discriminating reading and interpretation, and Cervantes' production
of literature may be seen as dependent on the particular modes of that process. Writing in Cervantes becomes, then, a kind of synchronous medium involving textual reception, memory, heuristics, and creation—a practice that ultimately encompasses a metaliterary space in which discussion may often center on the very questions of reading, writing, and authority themselves, as outlined in chapter 4.

Whether we look at Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, the *Novelas ejemplares*, or his theater, it is clear that other texts play a fundamental role in motivating their composition, and that writing them implied a process of analytical reading and commentary as well as one of construction and invention. Put simply, composition for Cervantes always begins in reading. Reading is the route to writing and to his creativity. Each text produced by him signifies a perception and a creative understanding of another text capable even of elucidating and altering our own comprehension of the latter at four centuries' remove.

Cervantes' reading and rewriting of the picaresque in *El licenciado Vidriera*, is, as I have tried to show in chapter 1, not only a redefinition of that tradition as he understood it but also a novella that guides us to a deeper cognizance of the picaresque's formal and artistic constraints. *La Tartufo*, too, as explained in chapter 2, yields up its author's intimate familiarity as a reader with the thematic and discursive conventions of romance, an awareness of their exhaustion under the very guise of their representation, and an intuition of their novel possibilities. *El gallardo español*, one of Cervantes' least-studied dramas, seems at first an inchoate, fanciful fluff. Yet, when situated within the context of Renaissance ideas on verisimilitude and language (chapter 5), it engages and seeks to expose some of the more untenable premises of the latter, ultimately stressing the indisputable fictionality of fiction and the primacy of the imagination in its creation.

Yet more than just aesthetic activities and explorations of the potentialities of the imagination, reading, writing, and commentary were for Cervantes, as they were for all humanists, exercises in ethics and moral judgment. This is made especially clear in his thoughtful reading and rewriting of the legend of La Cava Rumía in the Captive's tale (*Don Quijote I*, 37-42), a subversion of Spanish history as I have explained in chapter 3; it is brought home with striking effectiveness in his high-spirited, and highly principled, burlesque of the artistic protocols and ideological postulates of Lope de Vega's *comedia de labradores* in *El retablo de las maravillas* (chapter 6). Indeed, in all his works, motivated by more than artistic dissent and nonconformity, Cervantes always
inscribes a clash of ethical convictions, which leads his readers to meditate upon and make moral judgments about what they are reading.

In fine, the forces at work in the dynamics of textual composition in Cervantes are clearly varied and complex. Yet they are not so intricate as to be puzzling. The notion of writing as reading—authoring as a form of critical reconfiguration—plays a central role in that creative process. To be sure, the indelible inscription of other texts, readings, and traditions in Cervantes leads to several conclusions: that his work is a far more subtle and clever enterprise than a strictly positivist approach stressing sources and imitation permits; that his poetics embrace the centrality of other texts in their notion of production and composition; that the prevailing inspirations and models for his work came primarily from his own reading, always critically and analytically harking back to their textual roots; and, finally, that any measure of the Cervantine imagination and the texts it constructed must be couched in terms of critical evaluations of those readings as recreations and interpretations rather than as catalogues of sources, traces, and citations.
Notes

Introduction

1. The critical literature on both the theoretical and practical dimensions of intertextuality is vast. In writing this, and the other chapters in this book, I have relied principally on statements by Bloom (1973), Culler (1975, 1981), Jenny (1976), Kristeva (1968, 1969), and Riffaterre (1980). The dynamics of intertextuality in a Renaissance context, particularly poetry, are dealt with by Cave (1979), Greene (1982), and Pigman (1980).

2. The term is H.R. Jauss’s, which he defines as “the objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the forms and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language” (1982, 22).

Chapter 1. The Dialectics of Writing


3. For example, the humorous clash between Don Quijote and the first innkeeper (I, 3), in which Cervantes provides a veritable Baedeker of picaresque geography as he discloses the rhetorical and ideological links between the chivalric and the picaresque. Also Maritornes (I, 16) and, of course, the episode of the galley slaves (I, 22), which Dunn sees as a touchstone in Cervantes’ transformation of the picaresque (1993, 213-18).

4. Bataillon also notes that “en la picaresca, en su edad de oro, el tema de la familia del héroe es un tema casi obligado, siendo una constante el de la
infamia de los padres del pícaro, admitida o insinuada por el propio héroes desde el comienzo de su autobiografía” (1969, 221) (“in the picaresque, during its Golden Age, the theme of the hero’s family is practically obligatory, since the infamy of the pícaro’s parents is a constant that is either insinuated or openly admitted by the protagonist from the beginning of his autobiography”).

5. Indeed, it is not entirely impossible that Cervantes might be alluding directly to El Buscón. There are many parallels between Quevedo’s work and El licenciado Vidriera, especially in the episodes in which both set out to criticize contemporary poetry. Although El Buscón was first published in Zaragoza in 1626, it is more than possible that it circulated in manuscript as early as 1603. See Rodríguez Moñino (1953, 657-72) and Quevedo (1965, 47-49). It is also significant that Quevedo had been living in Valladolid since 1600, when an obscure episode forced him to abandon the University of Alcalá de Henares and take refuge there.

6. Contrary to prevailing critical wisdom, Edmund L. King believes that Cervantes alludes here to the woman’s Judaism, and not to adultery (1954, 99-100).

7. Avalle-Arce, in the introduction to the edition from which I cite, offers a perceptive discussion of the marked contrasts of narrative tempo in the work (Cervantes 1964, 20-23).


9. The religious connotations of enlightenment in the metaphor of the glass window (vidriera) reflect a long tradition of medieval spiritual symbolism and are discussed by Rodríguez-Puértolas (1968, 533-36) and Dagens (1949).

10. Ameza y Mayo sees this connection and, in his discussion of Cervantes’ Rinconete y Cortadillo, observes with a touch of grandiloquent naïveté: “en Alemán, como en [El licenciado Vidriera de] Cervantes, hay un sentido acre y pesimista de la vida, substancial, entrañado con su espíritu en Mateo Alemán, pero accidental y pasajero por fortuna en el glorioso autor de Rinconete” (1958, 2:196) (“in Alemán as in El licenciado Vidriera by Cervantes, there is a bitter and pessimistic sense of life, consubstantial and deeply seated in Mateo Alemán, but, fortunately, passing and accidental in the glorious author of Rinconete”). Green finds a figura, or allegory, in Tomás Rodaja’s pessimism (1970, 185-92). On the picaresque’s links to a religious view of the nature of man and a way of representing the moral problems of freedom, see Parker (1967).

11. For an incisive commentary on the Galeotes episode and its literary and ideological significance, see Guillén (1973, 146-58).

12. Some critics insist on focusing upon Vidriera from a clinical perspective. See, for example, Ameza y Mayo (1958, 2:165-72), and Singer (1949, 35-44).

13. The narrator explicitly invokes “la roca de la voluntad de Tomás” (“Tomás’s iron will”) and scoffs at those who believe in “yerbas, encantos ni
Chapter 2. A Novel Rewriting

1. It is, of course, clear that Cervantes was not familiar with the terminology of novel and romance as we use it today. He was aware, however, of two distinct types, or kinds, of narrative fiction: the type he censures in Don Quijote for its lack of unity, restraint, and verisimilitude, which we now call romance; and the kind he offers in the latter's place in Don Quijote, which we now call the novel. See Riley (1973) and Allen (1976b).

2. For further observations on the construction of character in romance see, for example, Frye (1968, 304; 1976, 171-77), and Beer (1977, 10).

3. América Castro (1966, 97-100) studies the incongruous representation of the Hapsburg monarchy in Cervantes' poetry, calls attention to its persistent ironic equation with the worst qualities of pagan Rome, and with sardonic understatement concludes that always in Cervantes' verse "muy diferentes son los señores de la tierra del Señor del cielo" (100) ("the kings of earth are always very different from the King of Heaven").

4. These two dimensions of honor in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain are discussed by Correa (1968).

Chapter 3. Rewriting Myth and History

1. The most complete survey of the tale's external historical and autobiographical parallels can be found in Oliver Asín (1947), Zamora Vicente (1950), Mas (1967), Murillo (1975, 92-98), Percas De Ponseti (1975, 1:225-304), Hegyi (1992), and Allen (1976a).

2. Cervantes, who was absent from Spain from 1569 to 1580, returned from his captivity in Algiers just to find that the debate on the Moriscos had intensified and seemed farther than ever from peaceful resolution. In Don Quijote Part II, published in 1615, six years after their expulsion, his conscientious objection to their treatment is explicit in the exploits of Ricote and his tragically dispersed family (chapters 54, 63, 65). As Salazar Rincón puts it, "la elección de Ricote sirve a Cervantes para demostrar que no todos los moriscos eran apóstatas o descreídos, y para socavar así uno de los principales argumentos con que se justificó la expulsión. . . . Cervantes derriba en este breve episodio otro de los mitos que una historia apologética ha tejido en torno a la expulsión: el de su pretendida popularidad. El decreto fue obra de unos pocos y nunca contó con las simpatías y el apoyo del resto de la población (1986, 206-7) ("the choice of Ricote helps Cervantes to demonstrate that not all the Moriscos were
apostates or unbelievers, and to undermine one of the principal arguments justifying the expulsion. ... In this brief episode Cervantes destroys yet another myth which apologetic history had woven into the question of the expulsion: its supposed popularity. The decree was the work of a few and never relied on the sympathy and support of the rest of the population”). It is clear, too, that Cervantes fully understood the disastrous social and economic consequences of the expulsion for Spain and dramatized them in the case of Ricote (see Johnson 1988).

3. Ironically, the essential Gothicism of this apocryphal legend persists, even prompting modern scholarship to search for its early Germanic roots (Krappe 1923).

4. Márquez Villanueva (1981, 364) notes that Saint Hermenegild was Philip II's favorite saint, whose liturgical feast he helped convert into a national holiday, and that his son, Philip III, was extolled as Felipe Hermenegildo in, among other places, the dedication to Lope de Vega's *La hermosura de Angélica* (The Beauty of Angelica) from 1602 (1981, 387).

5. Cervantes envisioned the Virgin Mary to have been immaculately conceived in the mind of God before Genesis and humankind's fall from grace, and hence exempt from original sin and the need for baptism. He makes this clear in the *Persiles*, wherein Feliciana de la Voz sings in her hymn to Mary: “Antes que de toda la mente eterna fuera / saliesen los espíritus alados, / y antes / que la veloz o tardo esfera / tuviese movimientos señalados ... fabricó para sí Dios una casa / de santísima, limpia y pura masa” (309). (“Before the winged spirits / left the eternal mind, / and before the fleet or sluggish spheres / possessed their given motion ... God built Himself a mansion / of most holy, chaste, and pure substance.”) To be sure, Feliciana's song is central to understanding the depiction of Mary in Cervantine texts and for disclosing his wide-ranging knowledge of the Marian liturgy, theology, and popular beliefs associated with the cult of the Virgin.

6. Given the clear analogy between Zoraida and the Virgin, it is unlikely that her want of baptism and the signs of her interior spirituality reflect the disdain for the sacraments and ritual professed by the heretical *alumbrados*, an illuminist sect that prospered in the region of Toledo during the early part of the sixteenth century. On the sect see Bataillon (1966), Márquez (1980), and Ortega-Costa’s fascinating edition (1978) of the Inquisitorial proceedings against María de Cazalla. Zoraida’s situation may, however, be a sign of Cervantes’ putative converso origins, and the conversos’ well-known sympathies for non-ceremonial forms of Christianity (Selke 1980).

7. That Cervantes knew the Marian antiphon cited at the beginning of this chapter, or texts very much like it, is made clear in Feliciana de la Voz's song of praise to Mary in the *Persiles*, in which she is called “la clarísima estrella de María” (310) (“Mary, the clearest star”).

8. In 1595 some ancient lead tablets bearing Arabic-like script were
suddenly “found” in the Sacromonte of Granada. The texts were “translated” into diglossic Castilian by a group of moriscos, Miguel de Luna among them, who claimed that the author of the texts was a follower of Santiago, the patron saint of Spain. Notably, the tablets stipulated a belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary and narrated, among other things, Santiago’s preaching in Granada and the crucial role played by the Arab nation in safeguarding God’s religion at the end of time. The tablets set off a long debate, ending with their condemnation as forgeries by the Church in 1682 (Cabanelas 1981). Spitzer asks rhetorically, “por qué esta babélica confusión de lenguas en nuestra novela?” (“why this confusing babel of languages in the novel?”), and provides the answer: “Cervantes quiso recalcar que las diferencias de lenguaje no deben, teoricamente, estorbar la operacion de la Gracia divina” (1968, 171-72) (“Cervantes wished to underscore that, theoretically, linguistic difference should not impede the working of Divine Grace”).

9. The association of feminine silence and pious spirituality finds its origins in Paul’s counsel for a woman to remain silent: “Mulier in silentio discat cum omni subiectione. Docere autem mulieri non permitto neque dominari in virum, sed esse in silentio” (“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. I do not allow a woman to teach, or to exercise authority over men; she is to keep quiet”). Epistula ad Timotheum Prima, 2:11-12, Bibliorum Sacrorum (Buenos Aires: De Brouwer, 1943).

10. Her silence in particular invites negative comparison with the first chapter of the Persiles, in which loud speech and shouting are identified with carnality and human suffering, as the masculine inhabitants of the Isla Bárbara await their messiah, the anti-Christ.

11. Johnson notes that Cervantes explicitly identifies the corsairs as “some unexpectedly good-hearted French Protestants” from La Rochelle (1982, 141) and that they are doubtless in the text as vivid reminders of the Edict of Nantes (given 13 April 1598), which proclaimed religious tolerance throughout France and turned that kingdom into a pluralistic society.

12. Significantly, Corral’s work first appeared in print in 1587 under the title Cronica sarracina: Cronica del rey don Rodrigo con la destruycion de España y como los moros la ganaron (Saracen Chronicle: Chronicle of His Lordship King Rodrigo, with the Destruction of Spain and How the Moors Won Her), published at Alcalá de Henares by Juan Gutiérrez Ursino, where just two years earlier Cervantes had published La Galatea. The myth of the “destruction of Spain” was, moreover, pervasive throughout the sixteenth century, profoundly affecting the cultural discourses of the public policy and the “Conquest” of the New World (Milhou 1978). At one point even, in 1546, it led to archaeological excavations in Toledo seeking to test its veracity (Menéndez Pidal 1906, 36 n).

13. The term chronotope is Mikhail Bakhtin’s, and it is used to designate imaginative temporal spaces created and represented in texts usually through
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the manipulation and organization of narrative voice. On Bakhtin's formulation of this useful critical concept, see Todorov (1984, 82-85).

14. The text in the *Persiles* goes on to reveal its understanding of a common genealogy between the Old and New Testaments as it calls Mary "el brazo de Dios, que detuvistes de Abraham la cuchilla rigurosa, / y para el sacrificio verdadero / nos distes el mansísimo Cordero" (311) ("the hand of God who restrained Abraham's harsh blade, / and who, for the true sacrifice, / offered us the gentlest Lamb"). This symbolic appeal to the mercy shown Abraham, the progenitor of all the People of the Book, portrays Mary as God's agent of mercy and links her to the notion of the divine forbearance of Hebrews and Muslims alike.

15. Mary M. Gaylord (1992-93) links the tropes of the conquest of the flesh with political ideology, questions of race, and the historical model of Reconquest in her trenchant study of the formation of personal and national identities in Renaissance Spain. See also Herrero (1986).

Chapter 4. *Unde veritas?*

1. Of the many studies of the narrative structure of *Don Quijote*, see especially Durán (1961); El Saffar (1975); Percas De Ponseti (1975, 1:87-104); Allen (1976b); and Parr (1988).

2. The opening chapter, with its references to the uncertainty of Don Quijote's name among the various "authors" who composed the story, constitutes, of course, the reader's initial encounter with the problem of multiple perspectives. In chapters 8-9, however, Cervantes dramatizes the artifice as he brings it to the fore.

3. Concerning the inadequacy of minute description for achieving verisimilitude in Cervantes' narrative theory, see Riley (1966, 204-8).

4. See Weinberg (1961, 1:61, 264-65, 281-82, 334-35), especially his discussion of Giovanni Mario Verdizzotti's *Della narrazione poetica*, published in 1588, in which Verdizzotti distinguishes among the direct, semidirect, oblique, and semioblique narrative and the imitative modes employed by each art (1961, 330-32)—an exposition that makes many of the same points Cervantes makes as he shapes the narrative perspectives introduced in chapters 8-9.

5. Foucault comments that in the novel "writing has ceased to be the prose of the world; resemblances and signs have dissolved their former alliance; similitudes have become deceptive and verge upon the visionary or madness. . . . words wander off on their own, without content, without resemblance to fill their emptiness" (1973, 47-48).

6. Parr's interpretation (1988) of the narrative structure of the novel is, in the end, taxonomically overly determined for a text that seeks to portray through the many nuanced voices that compose it the presence and significance
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of subjectivity in its relation. His desire to define a clear-cut narrative taxonomy in his “anatomy” of Don Quijote leads him to discover and construct in the work characteristics from which that taxonomy can be derived. Parr’s contention that Cide Hamete should not be seen as a narrator, as he privileges a “supernarrator” and argues that “it is virtually certain that the editor persona reflects throughout the values of the author with respect to the central character” (79) is, ultimately, a denial of his own earlier assertion of the presence of a subversive discourse that cancels all authority in the text.

Chapter 5. Aristotle in Africa

1. Cotarelo y Valledor (1915, 261-63), Hegyi (1992, 54, 82, 92, 170), and others claim that it reflects Cervantes’ participation in a “secret mission” to Oran in 1581.

2. “Non possono soffrire gli uomini d’esser ingannati in quelle cose ch’o per se medesmi sanno, o per certa relazione de’ padri e de gli avi ne sono informati” (Discorsi dell’arte poetica e del poema eroico, 1964, 10). (“People cannot stand being deceived in those things they know well to be true, or related to them as true by their parents or grandparents.”)

3. Zimic (1974) examines the readerly aspects of El gallardo. Exploring the reception of Cervantes’ entremeses, Spadaccini (1986) has proposed that they were intended to be perused rather than performed. Although we know that Cervantes in 1592 promised to write six plays for Rodrigo Osorio’s acting company for a payment of 300 ducats (Canavaggio 1987, 143), and hence did intend to write some drama for performance, we do not know if he ever fulfilled the pledge or if El gallardo might have been one of the six plays he promised to write for Osorio. It is conceivable, however, that if El gallardo was among those six plays, Cervantes, frustrated by his failure to see it performed, might later have rewritten it and given it a more theoretical, readerly orientation for publication in his 1615 Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos nunca representados (Eight Comedies and Eight Interludes Never Performed).

4. The three parts of La Araucana were first published in a single volume by Pedro de Madrigal in Madrid in 1590—just four years prior to Cotarelo y Valedor’s dating of Cervantes’ play (1915, 261-66)—in an intellectual milieu in which Neo-Aristotelian precepts were just beginning to circulate and be hotly debated. It is thus not inconceivable that Cervantes first read the Madrid 1590 edition of Ercilla’s epic, recognized its links to Neo-Aristotelian issues, and was in part moved to write his play in response to it, signaling his play’s connection to La Araucana and to the problem of historical verisimilitude in epic through his allusive title. Mary M. Gaylord has also suggested to me privately another possible literary echo recalling the same issues, that of Fernando de Herrera’s “El osado español,” which exhibits a self-awareness of
the alternation of history and poetry in epic discourse. One of Herrera's sonnets, "Esconde tardo Bárbara en tu seno," is, as well, dedicated to the North African exploits of Don Alvaro de Bazán.

5. The assault on the fortress of Tucapel in La Araucana is also shot through with echoes of the siege of Troy, including a Trojan horse–like ruse used by the Indians to penetrate the stronghold. Cervantes' preoccupation with the tension between historical and poetic discourses in epic texts may thus have been conflated imaginatively in terms of both Homer and Ercilla—that is, in terms of its manifestation in ancients and moderns.

6. Cervantes knew the argument well, since he cites the passage from Horace's Poetics in Don Quijote II, 3 when addressing the perceived narrative lapses of part I (564). On the Horatian topoi and their accommodation with Aristotle's Poetics in relation to ancient and Renaissance literature, see Weinberg (1961, 1:71-714, but especially 1:106-10). In part two of his study, Weinberg goes on to survey the texts whose reception provoked the most heated debate among humanists (2:810-40). The incongruities posed by all the Homeric poems, from Proclus's Chrestomatheia through the scholiasts and Renaissance glossators up to modern times, continue to be one of the enduring themes of classical philology. The best introduction remains John Adams Scott's Sather Classical Lectures (1921). See especially chapter 5, titled "The Contradictions" (137-71).

7. On cross-cultural cross-dressing in Cervantes' plays, see Anderson (1993), who assigns an ethical, psychological, and ideological significance to the phenomenon.

8. Wardropper sees the canónigo de Toledo as a parodic figure, and points to his faulty rhetoric and fallacious logic as proof of Cervantes' desire to distance himself from Neo-Aristotelian precepts (1973, 155-56). In his classic study "Don Quijote: Story or History?" Wardropper also insists that Cervantes' art continuously reflects upon the "dilemma posed by the uncertain frontier separating story and history"; how "the truth, far from being simple, is complex and ultimately unascertainable in all its complexity" (1986, 87, 89). Although Riley perceives a steady Cervantine allegiance to Neo-Aristotelian precepts, he concedes that Cervantes "was often capable of exploiting their often mutually exclusive character" (1966, 10).

9. Although López Pinciano's Philosophía antigua poética, the major Spanish treatise on Neo-Aristotelian aesthetics, was not published until 1596, El gallardo doubtless reflects the theoretical discussions taking place in Spain just prior to the publication of el Pinciano's work. Cervantes also need not have read el Pinciano to be familiar with the issues besetting Neo-Aristotelian theorists, as Riley has suggested (1966, 6-12). On the question of the chronology of Cervantes' familiarity with Neo-Aristotelian precepts, and with Tasso in particular, see Eisenberg (1991).
Chapter 6. Rewriting Lope de Vega

1. With regard to Quiñones de Benavente, Eugenio Asensio (1965, 144) remarks that “el entremesista toledano se complace en saltar el cerco mágico del escenario, convirtiendo el patio en tablado, los espectadores en confidantes o cómplices de la ficción. No conoce la cárcel de tres paredes impuesta por un realismo sin imaginación, sino que obliga al público a participar en el juego, le enseña las cartas, ya confiándole el nombre de los actores, ya discutiendo si tal o cual pasaje encaja en un entremés” (“the Toledan interludist [Quiñones de Benavente] takes pleasure in breaching the magic circle of the stage, converting the auditorium into proscenium, the spectators into confidantes or accomplices of the fiction. He fails to recognize the confinement imposed by a three-sided, imprisoning, unimaginative realism, but, rather, obliges his audience to participate in the game, showing his cards, now confiding the names of the actors, now discussing the appropriateness of this or that textual passage to an interlude”). From another perspective, interludes like Quevedo’s El marión, are theatrical parodies that incorporate and satirically undermine stock dramatic characters, plots, and situations.

2. Canavaggio comes quite close to recognizing the subversive quality of El retablo vis-à-vis the Lopean comedia de labradores when he remarks that “les paysans ... de El retablo de las maravillas, que leurs noms, leurs fonctions, leur préjugé de sang, leur opinionnenté e leur gravité formaliste, leurs prévarications idiomatiques et leur emphase rendent tres proches de ceux qu’a la meme époque, un Lope ou un Tirso mettent régulièrement en scène” (1977, 163) (“the peasants ... in The Marvelous Puppet Show, in their names, functions, blood prejudices, opinions, grave formality, idiomatic emphasis, and abuse approach closely others of the same period, like the ones Lope or Tirso regularly put on stage”).

3. Asensio perceptively remarks on the larger implications of the character Chanfalla, noting that in the work he becomes “la encarnación del hombre de teatro, del actor cuya labia y metamorfosis de Proteo le ganan prestigios de brujo” (Cervantes 1980, 30) (“the incarnation of the man of the theater, of the actor whose fluency and ability to perform protean metamorphoses give him the prestige of an enchanter”).

4. Cervantes did, of course, himself yield, at least on one occasion, to the spectacular and delve into theatrical extravaganza with his own full-length machine play, La casa de los celos, an ostentatious dramatization of themes from Italian Renaissance epic, which calls for musical accompaniment, stage equipment, emblematic props, chariots, and the appearance of allegorical figures. Yet here, too, in an exercise not unlike the one carried out in El gallardo español, he appears to challenge the theoretical underpinnings of Renaissance notions of verisimilitude by forcing them to their breaking point and calling attention to their evident artifice.

5. Juan’s cuckoldry is further confirmed during Chanfalla’s performance.
When the puppeteer conjures up the bull that killed the boy in Salamanca, Cervantes follows it with Juana Castrada's breathless remark to her "father" ("ya me vi en sus cuernos, que los tiene águdos como una lesna" ("I suddenly saw myself on his horns, which are as sharp as an awl")). The latter ingenuously replies, "No fueras tú mi hija, y no lo vieras" (176) ("You would not be my daughter if you did not see him").

6. For the erotic connotations of *cener* (to sift) and *esparcir* (to spread) see *Poesía erótica* (1975, 80, 99).

7. Speaking of parody, Jonathan Culler observes that it "invites one to a more literal reading, establishing a contrast between the naturalization required for appreciation of the original and the more literal interpretive process appropriate to the parody. Part of this effect is no doubt due to the fact that parody is an imitation and that by making its model explicit it implicitly denies that it is to be read as a serious statement about real problems or situations . . ." (1975, 153).


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