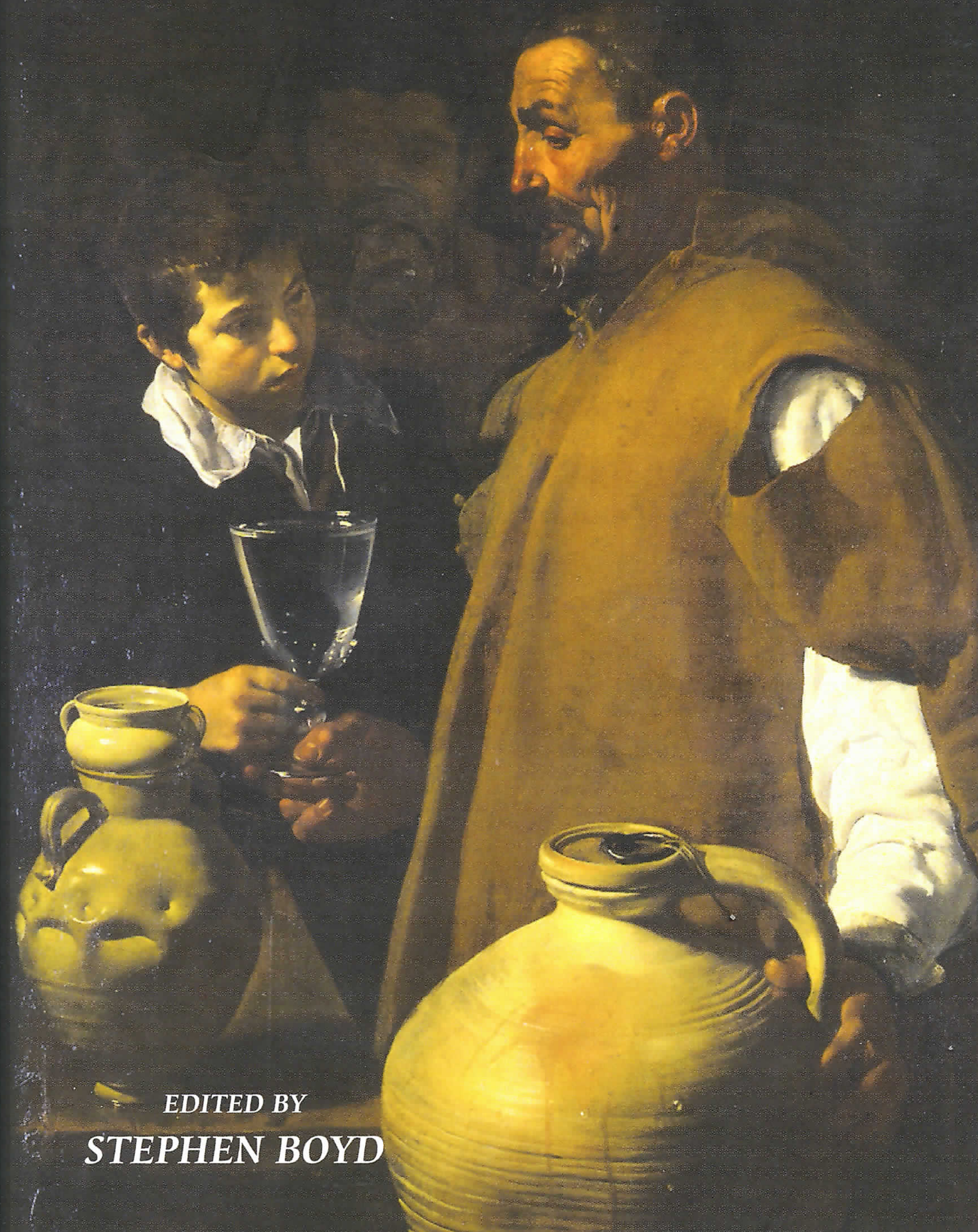
A Companion to CERVANTES'S NOVELAS EJEMPLARES



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STEPHEN BOYD

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A COMPANION TO CERVANTES'S *NOVELAS EJEMPLARES*

This edited volume of fourteen specially commissioned essays written from a variety of critical perspectives by leading Cervantine scholars seeks to provide an overview of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* which will be of interest to a broad academic readership. An extensive general Introduction places the *Novelas* in the context of Cervantes's life and work; provides basic information about their content, composition, internal ordering, publication, and critical reception, gives detailed consideration to the contemporary literary-theoretical issues implicit in the title, and outlines and contributes to the key critical debates on their variety, unity, exemplarity, and supposed 'hidden mystery'. Studies of the individual *novelas* follow and the volume concludes with two survey essays devoted, respectively, to the understanding of *eutrapelia* implicit in the *Novelas*, and to the dynamics of the character pairing that is one of their salient features. Detailed plot summaries of each of the stories, and a Guide to Further Reading are supplied as appendices.

Stephen Boyd is a lecturer in the Department of Hispanic Studies at University College, Cork.

A COMPANION TO CERVANTES'S *NOVELAS EJEMPLARES*

Edited by

Stephen Boyd

TAMESIS

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PREFACE

This *Companion to Cervantes's 'Novelas ejemplares'* has its origins in a colloquium entitled '*Artificio e Invención*: Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*' held at University College, Cork from 6 to 7 April 2001 at which earlier versions of Chapters 3, 4, 8, 9 and 14 were read as papers. These have been adapted for this volume and are accompanied by a further nine specially commissioned essays, so that with the exceptions of *El amante liberal* (The Generous Lover), *Las dos doncellas* (The Two Damsels) and *La señora Cornelia* (Lady Cornelia), each of the twelve stories that comprise the *Novelas ejemplares* has a whole chapter devoted to it. One of them, *La fuerza de la sangre* (The Power of Blood) is considered from different points of view in two separate chapters (7 and 8). The first chapter looks at the *Prólogo al lector* (Prologue to the Reader), Cervantes's preface to the *Novelas*, while each of the two final chapters (13 and 14) examines an important aspect of the collection as a whole. The chapters are arranged to reflect the original ordering of the stories. The intention has been to provide students and non-specialist readers with a general overview of the *Novelas ejemplares* (a function primarily, although not exclusively fulfilled by the Introduction, Chapters 13 and 14, the Synopses, and the Guide to Further Reading), and to complement this by offering detailed analyses of individual stories, or of particular aspects of them, by specialists whose work represents something of the variety of critical approaches to be found in contemporary Cervantine scholarship.

English translations for quotations from the *Novelas ejemplares*, and for other citations in Spanish or other languages, have been provided. Where these translations have been taken from published sources, or are the work of individual contributors, this is acknowledged in footnotes. All other translations are by the editor.

The editor gratefully acknowledges the receipt of generous grants towards the publication of this book from the Research Publication Fund of the Faculty of Arts at University College, Cork, and from the Research Publication Fund of the National University of Ireland.

Special thanks are due to those who have assisted in different ways in the preparation of this book: to Pernilla Vizard who performed the task of editorial assistant with exemplary care and patience; to Jo Mackenzie for valuable editorial help in the early stages of the project; to Professor Edwin Williamson (University of Oxford) for his kind assistance with grant applications; to my colleagues, Professor David Mackenzie and Professor Terence O'Reilly for their advice and encouragement; to Elspeth Ferguson, Managing Editor at Támesis, for her patient forbearance; and to my wife, Marjorie, for her unfailing help and support.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	*Anales Cervantinos*
BHS	*Bulletin of Hispanic Studies (Liverpool)*
BRAE	*Boletín de la Real Academia Española*
FMLS	*Forum for Modern Language Studies*
HR	*Hispanic Review*
KRQ	*Kentucky Romance Quarterly*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
NRFH	*Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica*
RCEH	*Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*

Introduction

Cervantes's most famous work is undoubtedly *Don Quijote*, which was published in two parts in 1605 and 1615. Next to the *Quijote* his *Novelas ejemplares* (Exemplary Tales), which appeared in 1613, have attracted most critical attention, but, except in the case of professional academic scholars and their students, they have always remained relatively little known outside the Spanish-speaking world.[1] It is the aim of this Companion volume to introduce them to a wider English-speaking audience. This Introduction will attempt to give a general overview of the *Novelas ejemplares* – their dating, sources and generic affiliations – as well as of the Spanish and broader European literary-historical environments in which Cervantes wrote them, with special attention being devoted to the related and much-discussed questions of the coherence of the stories as a collection and their exemplary nature.

Cervantes and His Work

Cervantes was born in 1547 in Alcalá de Henares, a small university town close to Madrid. His family seems to have moved around Spain during his childhood, and it is known that his father, a surgeon, was living in Seville in 1564. The praise of the education offered in the Jesuit college in Seville in the last of the *Novelas ejemplares*, *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* (The Deceitful Marriage and The Dialogue of the Dogs) has been used to support speculation that he may have received a Jesuit education there. The family moved to Madrid in 1566, and in 1568 Cervantes published his first work, a poem in praise of the newly-born Princess Catalina, the second daughter of Philip II. In 1569 he contributed four poems to an anthology compiled by Juan López de Hoyos to commemorate the death in October 1568 of the King's third wife, Isabel de Valois. In this volume, López de Hoyos, the rector of an academy called the Estudio de la Villa, refers to him as 'nuestro caro y amado discípulo' (our dear and beloved pupil),[2] showing that although Cervantes never received a university education, he did, even for a short period, pursue the equivalent of third-level studies. It has been suggested that his teacher was an admirer of the work of Erasmus, the

[1] For a list of translations, see Appendix II.

[2] Juan López de Hoyos, *Historia y relación verdadera de la enfermedad, felicísimo tránsito, y sumptuosas exequias fúnebres de la serenísima Reina de España Doña Isabel de Valois nuestra Señora* (Madrid: Pierres Cosin, 1569), fol. 147 (misprinted as 138) v.

Dutch humanist scholar and church reformer whose writings, which had been enormously popular in Spain in the earlier sixteenth century, had been placed on the 1559 Spanish Index of Prohibited Books. It is tempting to imagine that Cervantes's own ironic and sceptical cast of mind may owe something to a possible exposure in these formative years to Erasmus's writings.[3] For reasons that remain unclear, Cervantes moved to Rome in 1569 and spent a period working in the household of one of the great Roman prelates, Monsignor (later Cardinal) Giulio Acquaviva. The following year, still in Italy, he enlisted in the Spanish army (much of Italy was ruled by Spain in this period) and for the next five years fought in various campaigns against the Turks around the Mediterranean, most notably at the Battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571 when a combined Christian fleet (put together by Spain, the Republic of Venice and the Pope) inflicted a severe defeat on a larger Turkish naval force in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cervantes suffered permanent damage to his left hand from an arquebus (an early form of rifle) shot and contemporary accounts attest his bravery in battle. It is clear that he took great pride in his participation in this action, mentioning it a number of times in his work, most notably in the Prologue to *Don Quijote*, Part II and, not without irony, in the Prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares* (see Chapter 1, pp. 65–6). In September 1575, having resigned his commission, he was returning to Spain with his brother, Rodrigo (also a soldier), when their ship, the *Sol*, was attacked by Turkish pirates. Cervantes spent the next five years in captivity in Algiers, leading several daring but unsuccessful escape bids, before being ransomed with money raised by his family and the Trinitarian religious order (founded to ransom Christian captives), and returned to Spain on 24 October 1580. This experience is also briefly mentioned in the Prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares*, while Cervantes's acquaintance with Italy, with Spanish military campaigns in the Mediterranean and with the life of Christian captives in Algiers are clearly reflected in *El licenciado Vidriera* (The Glass Graduate) and (indirectly) in *El amante liberal* (The Generous Lover). Back in Spain, Cervantes attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish himself as a dramatist in Madrid. He had greater success with the publication in 1585 of Book I of *La Galatea*, a pastoral romance of the kind very much in fashion at the time. In the previous year he had married doña Catalina Palacios Salazar from Esquivias in the province of Toledo. For the rest of the 1580s and all of the 1590s he struggled to make a living in minor government posts, firstly as a commissioner of supplies for the Armada that King Philip II of Spain was planning to send against England, and then, from 1597, as a tax collector. In the meantime, his application in 1590 for an administrative post in the New World had been rejected. He was mostly based in Seville during this period, and was imprisoned on two (perhaps three)

[3] Among the best accounts of the possible influence of Erasmus on Cervantes are Marcel Bataillon's 'El erasmismo de Cervantes' in his magisterial *Erasmo y España*, tr. Antonio Altatorre, 2nd edn rev. (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966), pp. 777–801, and Antonio Vilanova, *Erasmo y Cervantes* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1989).

occasions for professional and financial irregularities. His knowledge of Seville, and especially of its infamous *hampa* (criminal underworld) is evidenced in *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (Rinconete and Cortadillo), *El celoso extremeño* (The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura) and *El casamiento engañoso y el coloquio de los perros* (The Deceitful Marriage and The Dialogue of the Dogs). By 1602 he was living in Valladolid (it provides the setting for *El casamiento engañoso*) and must have been completing *Don Quijote*, Part I, which was published in Madrid in 1605. He spent the last eleven years of his life, a period of intense literary activity, in Madrid. He had secured a patron in the person of Pedro Fernández de Castro, Count of Lemos, one of the most powerful men in Spain (he was viceroy of Naples from 1611 to 1616) and also a supporter of other major literary figures such as the dramatist Lope de Vega and the poet Luis de Góngora; he attended literary 'academies' (regular gatherings of writers and intellectuals at which work was read aloud and set topics debated), and he published a whole series of works in all the major genres: the *Novelas ejemplares* in 1613, the *Viaje del Parnaso* (Voyage to Parnassus) (a review of contemporary Spanish poetry in the form of a long poem) in 1614, *Don Quijote*, Part II in 1615, and *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses* (Eight Plays and Eight Interludes) also in 1615. Cervantes died on 22 April 1616 (within a week of Shakespeare) and was buried clothed in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary. His Byzantine romance in imitation of Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* (Ethiopian History; third century AD), *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda), was published posthumously in 1617.

Cervantes's especially broad experience of life within Spain and outside it probably helped him to write about such a variety of places and human personalities, and may also have helped to foster that acute awareness of the diversity of mental worlds that human beings can inhabit which permeates much of his work.

The 'Novelas ejemplares'

Although the title *Novelas ejemplares* is often translated into English as 'Exemplary Novels', they are not 'novels' as that term is generally understood and, indeed, were written before the novel as a literary genre came into existence. A more adequate translation might be 'tales' or 'stories'. If each of the final pair of interconnected *novelas* is counted separately, there are twelve of them. In order of appearance within the collection they are: *La gitanilla* (The Little Gypsy Girl); *El amante liberal* (The Generous Lover); *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (Rinconete and Cortadillo); *La española inglesa* (The English Spanish Girl); *El licenciado Vidriera* (The Glass Graduate); *La fuerza de la sangre* (The Power of Blood); *El celoso extremeño* (The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura); *La ilustre fregona* (The Illustrious Kitchen Maid); *Las dos doncellas* (The Two Damsels); *La señora Cornelia* (Lady Cornelia); and *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* (The Deceitful Marriage and The Dialogue of the

Dogs). They are supposedly *exemplary*, meaning, ostensibly, that they are intended to have a morally beneficial effect on their readers. In his introductory *Prólogo al lector* (Prologue to the Reader), Cervantes claims that 'no hay ninguna de quien no se pueda sacar algún ejemplo provechoso' ('there is not one from which you cannot extract some profitable example'), adding that the 'sabroso y honesto fruto' ('delicious and wholesome fruit') which they offer may be gleaned 'así de todas juntas como de cada una de por sí' ('from the collection as a whole and from each one alone').[4] These and other claims he makes about the *ejemplaridad* (exemplarity) of his stories, an issue which has aroused intense critical debate, will be explored in pages 27–31 of this Introduction.

Publication

The first edition of the *Novelas ejemplares* was published by Juan de la Cuesta in Madrid in 1613. It was followed by another in 1614, and by the end of the seventeenth century twenty-two editions in Spanish had been published, indicating a considerable degree of popular success.

Composition

Although attempts have been made to establish approximate datings, the dates of composition of individual *novelas* are uncertain. In addition, there is no guarantee that the order of the *novelas* as they appear in the first and in most subsequent editions reflects the order in which they were written.[5] However, as Peter Dunn has said, 'lo más que se puede decir sin riesgo de error es que las *Novelas* se escribieron, probablemente, entre 1590 y 1612' (the most that can be said without running the risk of error is that the *Novelas* were probably written between 1590 and 1612).[6] What is certain is that earlier and significantly different versions of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *El celoso extremeño* appeared in a manuscript literary anthology compiled around 1605 by the prebendary Francisco Porras de la Cámara to provide leisure reading for the Archbishop of Seville.[7] It also contained a third *novela*, entitled *La tía fingida* (The False Aunt)

[4] Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Harry Sieber, 2 vols (Madrid: Cátedra, 1986), I, p. 52. The English translation is from Miguel de Cervantes, *Exemplary Novels / Novelas ejemplares*, ed. B. W. Ife, 4 vols (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1992), I, pp. 3, 5. Subsequent references are to these editions.

[5] One of the most serious (and controversial) attempts to establish which *novelas* might be 'late' or 'earlier' works on the grounds of style is Ruth El Saffar's *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's 'Novelas ejemplares'* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

[6] See Peter N. Dunn, 'Las *Novelas ejemplares*', in *Suma cervantina*, ed. J. B. Avalle-Arce and E. C. Riley (London: Támesis, 1973), pp. 81–118 (p. 82).

[7] The Porras versions of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *El celoso extremeño*, as transcribed by Isidoro Bosarte in the eigthteenth century, can be found in Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas*

whose authorship by Cervantes has been much debated, with the majority of scholarly opinion being against its acceptance as authentic.[8] The only other indisputable piece of evidence about dating is a reference to *Rinconete y Cortadillo* in Chapter 47 of *Don Quijote*, Part I. Clearly, then, at least two stories were written before 1605.

Ordering

To add to this uncertainty, it is not even clear to what extent, if any, the sequence in which the *novelas* appear in the first and in most subsequent editions was dictated by Cervantes. Nevertheless, because they appear to form a complementary, contrasting pair, it does seem likely that at least the first and last stories (*La gitanilla* and *El casamiento engañoso* y *El coloquio de los perros*) were intended to occupy those positions. *La gitanilla* shines with the beauty, virtue, and grace of its protagonist, but there are some stains upon this radiant surface (as there are flaws on Preciosa's almost perfect body – the mole under her left breast and her webbed toe): her fiancé, don Juan/Andrés, has deceived his parents to be with the young gypsy girl; he has killed the nephew of the mayor of a small town near Murcia, and only his good social connections and his family's money secure his release from prison, persuade the relatives of the dead man to drop court proceedings, encourage the Archbishop of Murcia to waive the normal rules about banns, and so make his happy-ever-after marriage to Preciosa possible. If the brilliance of *La gitanilla* is mottled with traces of darkness, the almost total moral darkness of *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* is relieved by faint pinpricks of light; these include the remnants of reason and conscience present in the witch, la Cañizares and symbolized by the little lamps illuminating her room and its innermost recess, the lamp carried by Mahudes to guide him and the dogs through the night-time streets of Valladolid as he raises funds for the Hospital of the Resurrection, the incipient physical and moral recovery of the Ensign Campuzano, and the friendship between Campuzano and Peralta. In addition, this last story incorporates direct and indirect references to characters and situations from other *novelas*: for example, to Monipodio (*Rinconete y Cortadillo*) (II, pp. 329–330) (IV, p.119) and (in the form of an allusive echo) to the principal protagonists of *La gitanilla* (II, p. 348) (IV, p. 141). These references, taken in

ejemplares, ed. J. B. Avalle-Arce, 2 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1982), I (pp. 273–317) and II (pp. 223–63) respectively. On the similarities and differences between these versions and the published ones, see E. T. Aylward, *Cervantes: Pioneer and Plagiarist* (London: Támesis, 1982), and Geoffrey Stagg, 'The Refracted Image: Porras and Cervantes', *Cervantes*, 4.1 (1984), 139–53.

[8] On this issue, see E. T. Aylward, 'Significant Disparities in the Text of *La tía fingida* vis-à-vis Cervantes's *El casamiento engañoso*', *Cervantes*, 19.1 (1999), 40–65, and Francisco Márquez Villanueva, '*La tía fingida*: literatura universitaria', in *On Cervantes: Essays for L. A. Murillo*, ed. James A. Parr (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1991), pp. 119–48.

conjuction with of a number of other indications (the final section, for example, is clearly valedictory), make it virtually certain that it was intended to come at the end of the collection. Despite the lack of definite proof, the likelihood is that Cervantes did indeed specify the order of the stories in the first edition, for, as Mary Malcolm Gaylord has observed, 'this author who explores so many other signifying possibilities of form, especially one who insists that the secret fruit of his book belongs to his whole book as well as to its parts, would certainly have taken some care with arrangement'.[9]

Early Reception of the 'Novelas ejemplares'

The first indications we have of how the *Novelas ejemplares* were received come from the four *aprobaciones* (censor's reports) that were issued prior to their publication and included, as the law required, with the other preliminary matter (in particular the Prologue and Dedication) in the printed text. The three censors who read the manuscript personally warmly praise both the artistic merit and moral worth of the *novelas*. Thus, for example, Fray Diego de Hortigosa says:

> [. . .] hallo en él [el libro] cosas de mucho entretenimiento para los curiosos lectores, y avisos y sentencias de mucho provecho, y que preceden de la fecundidad del ingenio de su autor, que no lo muestra en éste menos que en los demás que ha sacado a luz. (I, p.46)
>
> [. . .] I find in it [the book] things that will greatly entertain curious readers, and very beneficial pieces of advice and maxims, all springing from the fertility of the author's wit, which he displays no less in this book than in the others that he has published [. . .].

The four prefatory poems (three of which are sonnets) written by friends of Cervantes are, not surprisingly, also enthusiastic in their praise. In what is probably one of the most suggestive tributes to Cervantes's complex inventiveness in these stories, Fernando Bermúdez y Carvajal, calls them 'doce laberintos' (twelve labyrinths) that display 'mayor ingenio' (greater ingenuity) than that shown by 'aquel Dédalo ingenioso' (that ingenious Daedalus) who created the Cretan labyrinth ('obra peregrina y rara' [I, p. 55] [a rare and extraordinary work]). In his *Viaje del Parnaso* of 1614, Cervantes himself offered this intriguing assessment:

> Yo he abierto en mis *Novelas* un camino,
> por do la lengua castellana puede
> mostrar con propiedad un desatino.[10]

[9] Mary Malcolm Gaylord, 'Cervantes' Other Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes*, ed. Anthony J. Cascardi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 100–130 (p. 112).

[10] Miguel de Cervantes, *Viaje del Parnaso*, ed. Vicente Gaos (Madrid: Castalia, 1973), IV, 25–7 (p. 103).

(In my *Novelas* I have opened up a path
Whereby the Castilian language may
Display a piece of nonsense with propriety.)

The *Novelas* were paid the compliment of imitation by Cervantes's literary rival, Lope de Vega, in his *Filomena* (1621) and *La Circe* (1624). The four *novelas* collected in these works were, Lope claimed, written at the behest of his lover Marta de Nevares. Addressing her as 'Marcia Leonarda' at the start of the *Filomena*, he says:

> En España también se intenta, por no dejar de intentarlo todo, también hay libros de novelas, dellas traducidas de italianos, y dellas propias, en que no faltó gracia y estilo a Miguel de Cervantes. Confieso que son libros de grande entretenimiento, y podrían ser ejemplares, como algunas de las historias trágicas del Bandello [. . .].[11]
>
> (In Spain too, just so as not to fail to attempt everything, attempts have been made [to write *novelas*], so that there are also collections of *novelas*, some of them translated from Italian originals, others native productions, an undertaking in which grace and style were not wanting in Miguel de Cervantes. I must confess that they are very entertaining books, and they could be exemplary, like some of Bandello's tragic tales [. . .])

In his miscellany of three plays and four stories, *Los cigarrales de Toledo* (The Country Houses of Toledo; 1624) Tirso de Molina, famously, although probably not flatteringly, hailed Cervantes as 'nuestro español Bocacio' (our Spanish Boccaccio). Other early seventeenth-century Spanish collections of *novelas* that show a clear debt to Cervantes include Diego de Agredo y Vargas's *Novelas morales: útiles por sus documentos* (Moral Tales: Useful for their Teachings; 1620) and María de Zayas y Sotomayor's *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (Amorous and Exemplary Tales; 1637) and *Desengaños amorosos* (The Disenchantments of Love; 1647).[12] The *Novelas ejemplares* were also well received outside Spain. Translations into French, English and Italian appeared in 1614/15, 1626 and 1640 respectively.[13] In his *aprobación* (censor's report) for

[11] Lope de Vega, *Novelas a Marcia Leonarda*, ed. Francisco Rico (Madrid: Alianza, 1968), p. 28.

[12] Diego de Agredo y Vargas, *Novelas morales: útiles por sus documentos* (Valencia: A Costa de Felipe Pincinali Mercader de Libros, 1620); María de Zayas y Sotomayor, *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, ed. Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo (Madrid: Aldús, 1948); and *Desengaños amorosos*, ed. Alicia Yllera (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983).

[13] *Les nouvelles de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*, tr. François de Rosset and Vital d'Audiguier, Sieur de la Ménor, 2 vols (Paris: J. Richer, 1614–15); *Il Novelliere Castigliano*, tr. Gugliemo Alessandro de Novilieri Clavelli (Venice: Presso il Barezzi, 1626); *Exemplarie Novells in Sixe Books*, tr. James Mabbe alias 'Don Diego Puede-Ser' (London: John Dawson, 1640). For the latter, see also *Exemplary Novels by Cervantes*, tr. James Mabbe, ed. S. W. Orson, 2 vols (London: Gibbings; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1900). For a detailed account

Don Quijote, Part II (1615) the Licentiate Francisco Márquez Torres recounts how in February 1615 he had heard the French ambassador and his retinue praise Cervantes's work:

> [. . .] apenas oyeron el nombre de Miguel de Cervantes, cuando se comenzaron a hacer lenguas, encareciendo la estimación en que, así en Francia como en los reinos sus confinantes, se tenían sus obras: la *Galatea*, que alguno dellos tiene casi de memoria la primera parte désta, y las *Novelas.*[14]
>
> ([. . .] scarely had they heard Miguel de Cervantes's name when they began to sing his praises, stressing the high esteem in which his works – the *Galatea*, the first part of which a certain one of them knows almost by heart, and the *Novelas* – were held both in France and in the neighbouring kingdoms.)

The Title 'Novelas ejemplares'

The title *Novelas ejemplares* would probably have struck the original readers as something of an oxymoron, rather (*pace* some exaggeration) as if one were to talk today of '*Art* Soap Operas'. In order to understand this it is necessary to know something about the meaning and connotations of the words '*novelas*' and '*ejemplares*'.

In the Prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares* Cervantes claims, essentially correctly, that he is 'el primero que [ha] novelado en lengua castellana' ('the first to write novels in Castilian'), adding that, although many such stories are in print in Spain, 'todas son traducidas de lenguas estranjeras, y éstas son mías propias, no imitadas ni hurtadas' (I, p. 52) ('[they] are all translated from foreign tongues, and these are my very own, neither imitated nor stolen' [I, p. 5]). The *novella* as a genre originated in Italy. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348–58) is the first great collection of such stories – one hundred of them divided into ten *decades* of ten. Its framing narrative (a device which became a standard feature of the genre) recounts how ten young people who have fled to the hills surrounding Florence in order to escape the plague ravaging the city pass the time (ten days) by telling each other stories, some of which are supposedly 'true' accounts of events that have happened in their own times. The stories are called *novelle* since the original meaning of the word *novella* was 'something new' or 'a piece of news', 'a novelty'. The *novella* as a genre was 'novel' because it reflected the imagined everyday life of remoter times, but especially that of fourteenth-century Italy, in a new, convincing, approximately realistic way. Boccaccio also set the standard for the style of such stories: they were relatively brief, concentrated narratives in which plot

of the reception of the *Novelas* from the eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries, see Michael Nerlich, 'Juan Andrés to Alban Forcione. On the Critical Reception of the *Novelas ejemplares*', in *Cervantes's 'Exemplary Novels' and the Adventure of Writing*, ed. Michael Nerlich and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: The Prisma Institute, 1989), pp. 9–47.

[14] *Don Quijote*, ed. John Jay Allen, 2 vols (Madrid: Cátedra, 1992), II, p. 20.

predominated over characterization and in which every detail was subordinate to the working out of the 'point'. In addition, as we have said, they were often given unity and coherence as a collection by being circumscribed within an overall framing narrative.[15] The *Decameron* and other collections of *novelle* it inspired within Italy were eagerly translated and imitated in other European countries. In France, for example, Marguerite de Navarre produced the *Heptameron* (1559), a collection of seventy-two (extant) tales, so-called because in terms of the framing narrative they are recounted over seven days. One of the most voluminous and popular collections was Matteo Bandello's volume of two hundred and fourteen *Novelle* (1554, 1573), which were published in Spanish translation in 1589 and again in 1603. Another was Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio's *Gli Ecatommiti* (*Hecatommithi*; 1565), which appeared in Spanish in 1590. The *Decameron* itself had been translated into Spanish in 1496 as *Las cien novelas*, and by 1559 there were four editions, but the first person to introduce versions of the Italian stories to Spain was Juan de Timoneda in his *El patrañuelo* (1567), a collection of twenty-two *patrañas* (tales, fables), thirteen of which are directly based on original Italian *novelle*.[16] One of the characteristics of the *novelle* that may have accounted for their popularity was their relatively direct and unfettered presentation of the love lives and sexual conduct (or, more often, misconduct) of young Italian townspeople of comfortable means. For this reason, and also because of their often unsympathetic portrayal of the clergy (as, for example, in one of the best known of all such stories, Bandello's 'Romeo et Giulietta' [II, 9]) they became the object of church censorship in Italy, France and Spain (for example, only the 1573 Italian expurgated version of the *Decameron* was allowed to circulate in the latter half of the sixteenth century, after the original full text was placed on the 1559 Spanish Index of Prohibited Books). Spanish translators and adapters of these stories attempted to accommodate their more 'trangressive' features to the tastes of their own more conservative society. For example, as Carmen Rabell has shown, in the version of Bandello's 'Romeo et Giulietta' included in his *Novelas morales: útiles por sus documentos*, Diego de Agreda y Vargas removes all hints of criticism of the nature of Friar Lorenzo's involvement with the young couple.[17] In Catholic countries the official attitude of Church and State towards these stories hardened even further after the Council of Trent (1545–63).

[15] For a brief but very useful summary of the characteristics of Boccaccio's stories, see Alban K. Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four 'Exemplary Novels'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 31–41.

[16] On the development of the *novela* in Spain in the Golden Age period, see Jean-Michel Lásperas, *La nouvelle en Espagne au Siècle d'Or* (Montpellier: Editions du Castillet, 1987); Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *The Tradition of the Novela in Spain from Pero Mexía (1540) to Lope de Vega's 'Novelas a Marcia Leonarda'* (1621, 1624) (New York: Garland, 1991); and Carmen R. Rabell, *Rewriting the Italian Novella in Counter-Reformation Spain* (London: Támesis, 2003). Specifically in relation to Cervantes, the fundamental study is Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo's *Cervantes creador de la novela corta española*, 2 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956–58).

[17] See Rabell, pp. 48–68.

The Council had been summoned to define the doctrine and reform the practice of the Catholic Church in response to the Protestant Reformation. The Council had underlined the moral responsibilities of Catholic writers, artists and musicians, whose primary aim should be to promote the truths of the Catholic faith. Thus, it seems, a new, more earnest moral climate had already begun to prevail in the Spain in which Cervantes grew up. In this climate, works of fiction, like the *novelle*, with dubious moral (and sometimes anti-clerical) content, and which seemed intended primarily to entertain rather than 'instruct' their readers, were regarded with growing suspicion, although relatively few of them appeared on the Spanish Indices of prohibited books, which were more concerned with removing from circulation books that appeared to question Catholic doctrine.[18] The demand, frequently voiced by Spanish commentators on literature (most of them clerics, religious, humanist scholars, and academics), that works of secular literature should seek to instruct their readers rather than merely entertain them was conditioned not only (to a probably limited extent) by the Council of Trent, but also by the Renaissance debate – mostly conducted by Italian theorists, some of whom (like Torquato Tasso) were also distinguished poets and writers – about the value and function of literature. Two of the key areas of discussion were the questions of the 'truthfulness' of literature and of whether its primary purpose should be to teach or to entertain. Crucial to the discussion of the first question was the 'rediscovery' of Aristotle's *Poetics* when a revised Latin transcription was made by Alessandro de' Pazzi in 1536. Coming as it did from the mouth of the most respected philosopher of classical antiquity, Aristotle's argument that Poetic Truth was superior to Historical Truth because it was more 'philosophical' (since it dealt with 'universals' rather than 'particulars') provided welcome ammunition – especially in the wake of the Council of Trent – for those who were eager to defend the worth of secular literature.[19] The key text around which debate on the second question revolved was a few lines from Horace's *De arte poetica* (On the Art of Poetry): 'Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae | aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae' (333–34) ('Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words

[18] For a detailed discussion of these issues, see Peter E. Russell, 'El Concilio de Trento y la literatura profana: reconsideración de una teoría', in his *Temas de 'La Celestina' y otros estudios* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1978), pp. 442–78. Here, he warns against exaggerating the effects of the Council, concluding that 'muy complejo es el problema, al discutir sobre todo en la literatura, distinguir lo que pertenece al ideario y el gusto tridentino y postridentino de lo que paraece originarse en el espíritu europeo de la época sin tener alineamiento con particulares dogmas religiosos' (p. 475) (the problem, especially when it comes to discussing literature, of distinguishing what pertains to Tridentine and post-Tridentine ideology and taste from what appears to originate in the European spirit of the age and is without alignment to particuar religious dogmas, is a very complex one). I am grateful to my colleague, Professor Terence O'Reilly, for drawing my attention to this essay.

[19] 'For this reason poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts' (Chapter 9). See *Aristotle, Horace, Longinus: Classical Literary Criticism*, tr. T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965; repr.1974), pp. 29–75 (pp. 43–4).

at once both pleasing and helpful to life').[20] Some theorists, although a minority (including, for example, Ludovico Castelvetro in his *Poetica* of 1570), defended the view that the primary function of literature was to entertain. Others, notably Julius Caesar Scaliger in his *Poetices libri septem* (Poetics in Seven Books; 1561), advocated a compromise position, believing that works of literature should both entertain and instruct. This belief is reflected in the formula that proliferates to the point of cliché in the prologues to Golden-Age Spanish works of poetry and fiction proclaiming that the author has sought to 'deleitar enseñando' (entertain *while* teaching). Although the most distinguished contributions to these discussions came from Italian theorists, the debate was eagerly taken up in other European countries. In Spain, the most extensive and original work of literary theory was Alonso López Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poética* (Ancient Poetic Philosophy), published in 1596. In it, El Pinciano advanced the standard neo-Aristotelian view that literature should aim at *verismilitude*, or 'likeness to truth'. It is highly likely that Cervantes knew this work, and there is certainly abundant evidence in his work (not least in the Prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares*, for example) that he was intensely interested in literary-theoretical questions.[21] The point of this discussion is to underscore the fact that, especially in the climate prevailing in Spain in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, stories of the *novella* kind would have been regarded in some sectors with a certain suspicion, as being, at best, frivolous, and, at worst, a source of serious moral and spiritual damage. This is the primary reason why the title *Novelas ejemplares* would have seemed improbable to the Spanish reading public in 1613.

Let us now look more closely at the second element of the title, the adjective '*ejemplares*'. The fundamental meaning coincides with English 'exemplary', meaning something or someone offering a model or pattern of excellence worthy of imitation. In the moral sense, which, ostensibly, is the primary sense in which Cervantes uses it, it refers to the kind of good conduct that is worthy of imitation. However, it is important to recognize that an *ejemplo* (derived from the Latin *exemplum*) could also be used to refer to the opposite: 'an example of conduct to be avoided'.[22] In Latin and in Spanish the word referred not just to a morally beneficial 'teaching' or 'lesson' but also to the proverb, anecdote or story that conveyed that lesson. Thus, collections of short tales called *exempla* designed to

[20] Horace, *Satires, Epistles, 'Ars Poetica'*, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1929), pp. 478–79.

[21] The seminal work on Cervantes's engagement with Italian literary theory is E. C. Riley's *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). See also Alban K. Forcione, *Cervantes, Aristotle, and the 'Persiles'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970). For a brief but very useful summary of Renaissance views on literature, see *The Continental Renaissance 1500–1600*, ed. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 21–44.

[22] Covarrubias, for example, says: 'Absolutamente exemplo se toma en buena parte, pero dezimos dar mal exemplo' (In the absolute sense an example is taken to be a good one, but we also speak of giving bad example). Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid, 1611; repr. Madrid: Turner, 1970), p. 575.

teach a moral lesson, and often specifically to assist the clergy in the preparation of their homilies, proliferate in Europe throughout the medieval period and beyond. One might cite, as an example, the fourteenth-century Spanish collection of short exemplary tales known as *El conde Lucanor* (The Count Lucanor) compiled by the nobleman, don Juan Manuel between 1330 and 1335, and still very popular in sixteenth-century Spain. The Count Lucanor asks his fictional counsellor Patronio's advice on a whole series of practical problems. On each occasion, to illustrate his recommended solution, Patronio tells a story which concludes with a two-line verse summary of its moral. The term *exemplo* (a medieval spelling of *ejemplo*) is used both of the tales told by Patronio and of the couplets that point up the lesson to be learned.[23] In the Prologue to his *Novelas ejemplares*, Cervantes is using the word in the senses of 'example of good or bad moral conduct' and of 'lesson' when, as we have seen, he says of his stories: 'no hay ninguna de quien no se pueda sacar algún ejemplo provechoso' (I, p. 52) ('there is not one from which you cannot extract some profitable example' [I, pp. 3, 5]). However, many critics have argued that he may have called his *Novelas* '*ejemplares*' to indicate not only their moral worth, but also (and perhaps primarily) their aesthetic excellence as 'examples' of good story-telling.[24] This is a question that we shall consider when we come to examine the critical debate about their *ejemplaridad* (exemplarity).

Variety

Variety is a key characteristic of the *Novelas ejemplares*: they explore and interweave many imaginative and historically specific worlds and are filled with characters of all ages, social classes and temperaments. Thus, for example, the collection opens with the fairy-tale-like *La gitanilla* which tells of how a young girl of the aristocratic class, stolen as a baby by a gypsy woman and brought up by her among the gypsies, is eventually restored to her family and marries the young nobleman who had agreed to live with her community for two years in order to prove his love for her; it includes a story (*El licenciado Vidriera* [The Glass Graduate]) about a brilliant young scholar who goes mad, imagining that he is made of glass, and who, after his restoration to sanity, joins the army and dies fighting in battle in Flanders; several of the stories (in particular, *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *El coloquio de los perros* [The Dialogue of the Dogs]) offer

[23] For example, 'Exemplo VI' concludes with the words: 'Et porque entendió don Iohan que este enxiemplo era muy bueno, fízole poner en este libro et fizo estos viessos que dizen assí: *En [el]comienço deve omne partir | el daño que non le pueda venir*' (And because don Juan realised that this example was a very good one, he had it put into this book and composed the following verses: *A man must remove himself from harm at the start | so that it may not come to him*). See Don Juan Manuel, *El conde Lucanor*, ed. José Manuel Blecua, 2nd edn (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), p. 83.

[24] Avalle-Arce, for example, puts forward this argument in his edition of the *Novelas* (I, pp. 16–18). See also Ife (ed.), I, pp. xii–xiv.

glimpses of Spain's criminal underworld, while others (*El amante liberal* [The Generous Lover], *La española inglesa* [The English Spanish Girl], *Las dos doncellas* [The Two Damsels], *La señora Cornelia* [Lady Cornelia]) are concerned with the love-entanglements of young people of the upper class. The collection concludes with *El coloquio de los perros*, supposedly the transcript of a midnight conversation between two dogs overheard by the protagonist of the framing story, *El casamiento engañoso* (The Deceitful Marriage), while recovering in hospital from syphilis. Although the majority of the stories are set in the Spain of Cervantes's time, or of the not-too-distant past, they also feature other European and non-European places. Thus, for example, *El amante liberal* is largely set in Nicosia and partially in Sicily; the action of much of *La española inglesa* transpires in Elizabethan London; the protagonist of *El licenciado Vidriera* undertakes a long trip around Italy, which is described in some detail, and returns to Spain after passing through Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels. Those stories set in Spain also employ a great variety of locations: the gypsies in *La gitanilla* move down from Madrid to Murcia; the protagonists of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* meet each other at the (historically real) *Molinillo* inn halfway between Toledo and Córdoba and journey down to Seville where most of the story is set; the two young gentlemen disguised as *pícaros* (delinquents) in *La ilustre fregona* leave their families in Burgos and make their way to Toledo via Valladolid and Madrid. Not surprisingly, since Cervantes spent so much time there, Seville, in particular, features strongly as a location (in *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, *El celoso extremeño* [The Jealous Old Man from Extremadura], and *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*).

However, it is with respect to genre, narrative structure and technique that the *Novelas*'s diversity is most original and striking. Cervantes has drawn not just on the Italian *novella* for inspiration (its influence is perhaps most directly seen in *La fuerza de la sangre* and *El celoso extremeño*) but also on wide variety of other literary and non-literary genres. Among the most significant are: the folktale and popular anecdote (as, for example, the story of Domingo ('Sunday'), an Old Christian, being urged to give precedence in entering a church to 'Sábado' ('Saturday'/'Sabbath'), a New Christian of Jewish descent, in *El licenciado Vidriera* [II, p. 56] [II, p.75]); classical mythology, which is especially important in *El celoso extremeño*; classical prose literature, particularly Lucianic dialogue, the Milesian fable and Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, all of which subtend *El coloquio de los perros*;[25] classical Latin poetry (for example, the passages from Ovid cited in *El licenciado Vidriera* [II, pp. 58–9][II, p.79]); Byzantine romance

[25] Specifically, Lucian of Samosata's (born *c.*120 AD) imaginary dialogue (called *The Dream, or The Cock*) between a shoemaker called Micyllus and Pythagoras in the form of a cock. Milesian fables are stories of roguery often with erotic content written by, or in the style of, the second-century (BC) Greek author, Aristides of Miletus. They provided the inspiration for *The Golden Ass*, a satire by the Roman writer, Apuleius (*c.*124–*c.*170 AD) whose protagonist, Lucius, is transformed into an ass. See Frank Pierce, 'Cervantes' Animal Fable', *Atlante*, 3.3 (1955), pp. 103–15.

(*El amante liberal*; *La española inglesa*; *Las dos doncellas*; *La señora Cornelia*); pastoral romance (*La gitanilla*; *La ilustre fregona*); the picaresque novel (*Rinconete y Cortadillo; La ilustre fregona; El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*);[26] the Bible (throughout, but especially in *El celoso extremeño*, in which the parable of the Prodigal Son functions as an important sub-text); and popular secular and devotional verse (*La gitanilla*). *El licenciado Vidriera* and *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* show his experimentation with narration at its most radical. It is not, however, the variety of sources *per se* that makes the *Novelas ejemplares* so original, but rather the innovative way in which Cervantes blends elements of their content, structure and language, blurring and breaking down traditionally well-defined generic boundaries. Thus, for example, among other genres, *La gitanilla* draws simultaneously on the folktale motif of the 'Lost Child Found',[27] pastoral and chivalresque romance, the picaresque novel, the Bible, and popular secular and religious verse. While some stories (such as *La gitanilla*, *El amante liberal*, *La española inglesa, La fuerza de la sangre, Las dos doncellas* and *La señora Cornelia*) appear to offer themselves as examples of well-rounded stories that succeed in integrating their sub-plots and flashbacks in the smooth, harmonious manner that is especially typical of Byzantine romance, two stories in particular, *El licenciado Vidriera* and, above all, *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*, seem to experiment with a very different kind of aesthetic, one that makes

[26] Byzantine romances are stories of love and adventure modelled on the *Ethiopian History* (also known as the *History of Theogenes and Chariclea*) by Heliodorus (3rd century AD) and *Leucippe and Cleitophon* by Achilles Tatius (2nd century AD), both late-Greek writers. These works were popular in translation in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. Both the prototypes and the works inspired by them are characterized by their elaborate interweaving of (often improbable) adventures. See Alban K. Forcione, 'Heliodorus and Literary Theory', in *Cervantes, Aristotle and the 'Persiles'*, pp 49–87. Pastoral romances (or Pastoral novels) are a Renaissance invention. They are intricate stories of unrequited love set in an idealized, Arcadian landscape, protagonized by aristocratic pseudo-shepherds and shepherdesses (sometimes identifiable under their Latinate pseudonyms as members of the author's social circle) and interspersed with neo-Platonic love poems. Essentially, they provided a vehicle for the exploration of the psychology of love. The most famous Spanish example is Jorge de Montemayor's *La Diana* (1559). Cervantes's first published work of prose fiction *La Galatea* (1585) was a 'novela pastoril'. For a general survey, see Amadeu Solé-Leris, *The Spanish Pastoral Novel* (Boston: Twayne, 1980). The picaresque novel (*La novela picaresca*) originated in Spain with the publication in 1554 of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the short fictional autobiography of the eponymous *pícaro* (rogue, or delinquent) who recounts his experiences with a series of cruel masters, and his rise through 'fuerza y maña' (force and guile) to the 'pinnacle of all good fortune' as a towncrier and complaisant husband of an archpriest's mistress. The picaresque novel *par excellence* for Cervantes's contemporaries was Mateo Alemán's two-volume *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599, 1604). See Peter N. Dunn, *Spanish Picaresque Fiction: A New Literary History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[27] See R. M. Price, 'Cervantes and the Topic of the "Lost Child Found" in the *Novelas ejemplares*', *AC*, 27 (1989), 203–14.

a virtue out of what looks like fragmentation and even shapelessness.[28] The first of these is notable for its markedly disproportionate correlation between 'real' and narrated time: the reader is told almost nothing about the background of the protagonist, Tomás Rodaja, who is about eleven years old at the start of the story, very little about his eight years of study at Salamanca, a lot (relatively) about his short tour of Italy and his two-year period of mental illness back in Spain, and almost nothing about the final period of his life as a soldier in the Netherlands where he dies in battle. But perhaps the most unusual feature of the story, especially in light of the lack of information about the protagonist himself, is its incorporation of lengthy lists of Spanish and Italian wines, of the sights of Italy and, above all, of Tomás's acidly critical comments on almost every sector of society in Spain. The comparatively angular and seemingly disjointed rhythms and texture of this *novela* led many critics before Casalduero to consider it an artistic failure.[29] It is possible, however, to see this fragmentation of structure in a very different way: as a carefully calculated and singularly appropriate correlative of the mental imbalance, and subsequent madness, of the protagonist.[30] The final story in the collection, *El Casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* is even more unconventional. As its title indicates, it falls into two seemingly independent parts: in the first, the Ensign Campuzano tells his friend, the Licentiate Peralta, the story of his 'deceitful marriage' for money to a woman whom he thought to be wealthy but who turned out to be as poor as himself and, in fact, to have married him for what she thought was his wealth. He contracted syphilis as a result and had to spend a period being treated in hospital. He hands his friend what he claims to be the transcript of a nocturnal conversation he overheard between the two hospital guard dogs. This 'Dialogue of the Dogs', which at first sight appears to be only circumstantially related to the story of Campuzano's marriage, is in fact closely linked to it in theme: one dog tells the other of his life with a series of masters from all walks of life, unfolding as he does so a depressing picture of human greed and egotism that forms the second and materially most substantial part of the story. In a brief coda, the two friends

[28] This is the view advanced by Alban K. Forcione in his *Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness: A Study of 'El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros'* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 36–58.

[29] For example, William C. Atkinson believed that 'its artistic value as a short story is nil', 'Cervantes, El Pinciano and the *Novelas ejemplares*', *HR*, 16 (1948), 189–208 (p. 203). See Joaquín Casalduero, *Sentido y forma de las 'Novelas ejemplares'* (Madrid: Gredos, 1962) pp. 137–49.

[30] Compare, for example, the way in which the greatest painter of the Spanish Golden Age, Velázquez (1599–1660), breaks the rules of decorum governing portraiture by using deliberately ill-defined spacial settings, angular drawing and 'distressed' brushwork in his portraits of the *bufones* (court jesters), Pablo de Valladolid (*c*.1635–40, Madrid, Museo del Prado) and Calabazas (*c*.1639, Madrid, Museo del Prado). As Jonathan Brown observes, 'Velázquez's official portraits provided no opportunity to examine the inner life of the sitters; what mattered was their status, not their state of mind. But when he painted portraits of jesters and dwarfs, who were on the margins of court society, he was free to experiment'. See his *The Golden Age of Painting in Spain* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 152.

discuss the truthfulness of the dialogue, agree to disagree, and then set off for a walk. Not only has Cervantes combined different literary genres, the tale and the dialogue – and the dialogue in turn with some of the conventions of picaresque fiction and of classical satire – in a most original way, but he has also created an elaborate 'Russian doll'-like structure of narrators and narratees and told his tale so that it moves backwards from the fictional present of the opening conversation between Campuzano and Peralta to the story of the deceitful marriage, and then forward again to the start of the *Coloquio*. In the *Coloquio* itself, one of the dogs, Berganza, tells the other (Cipión) the story of his life, going back in the middle of his account to the moment of their birth and then forward again to their present. At the end of the *Coloquio* (as a text within a text) this present coincides not only with that of the fictional author (Campuzano) and reader (Peralta) of the dogs' conversation, but also with that of the real reader. Thus, the narrative pattern of the two stories taken together has a double, overlapping, chiastic structure: in each part (the *Casamiento* and the *Coloquio*) the narrator takes the narratee back in time, and then forward again to their shared present, but the point furthest back in fictional time – the birth of the dogs – lies in the middle of the *Coloquio* so that, although as a narrative the *Coloquio* is enveloped in and subordinate to the *Casamiento*, in terms of temporal evolution, material size and theme (the human capacity for deceit) it precedes and takes precedence over the *Casamiento*.[31] It is, perhaps, not surprising, then, that at one point the nature of narrative itself should become the subject of the dogs' discussion. Indeed, Cipión's image of the octopus for the amorphousness (as he sees it) of Berganza's story (' – Quiero decir que la sigas [tu historia] de golpe, sin que la hagas que parezca pulpo, según la vas añadiendo colas' [II, p. 319]) ('I mean that you should carry on [your story] straightaway, without adding tails to it which makes itseem like an octopus' [IV, p. 107]) might be seen as being applicable to the whole *novela* which radiates outwards, temporally and thematically, from the central point of the witch, la Cañizares's account of the birth of the dogs. It would not be surprising if Cervantes had *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* – the seond part is, after all, a conversation between two dogs – specifically in mind when he made the remark [see pp. 6–7 above] about finding a way to 'display a piece of nonsense with propriety'. Evidently, in the *Novelas ejemplares* as, *par excellence*, in *Don Quijote*, he was interested in conducting experiments in narration, with the aim of offering the widest possible sample of ways in which a story might be told, and so compiling a kind of exemplary *ars narrandi*. As Antonio Rey Hazas puts it:

> Tan portentoso esfuerzo de reflexión, meditación, asimilación y, sobre todo, de innovación novelesca no puede deberse, obvio es decirlo, a la casualidad. Se trata, sin duda, del resultado, magistral por otra parte, de un plan total de renovación de la novela quinientista. De un proyecto consciente, bien concebido

[31] See Edward Aylward's detailed discussion of the narrative structure of the *Casamiento/Coloquio* in Chapter 12 of the present volume.

> y mejor acabado, de remozamiento de todas las formas narrativas existentes, cuyo fruto general y, desde luego, en los mejores casos, es, simplemente, la novela, sin más adjetivos, o la novela moderna, si se quiere.[32]
>
> (It hardly needs pointing out that such an extraordinary effort of reflection, meditation, assimilation, and, above all, of narrative innovation, cannot be put down to chance. There can be no doubt that what we are actually looking at are, on the contrary, the magisterial results of a coherent plan to renew sixteenth-century fiction, a conscious, well-conceived and even better executed project to rejuvenate all existing narrative forms, the overall result of which – in the best cases, of course – is simply, and without further qualification, the novel, or, if you will, the modern novel.)

Unifying Patterns

In the Prologue to the *Cigarrales de Toledo*, Tirso de Molina spoke of his stories as '*Doce Novelas* ni hurtadas de las toscanas, ni ensartadas unas tras otras como procesión de disciplinantes, sino con su argumento que lo comprehende todo' (*Twelve Novels* neither filched from the Tuscan [Italian] examples, nor strung together one after another like a procession of penitents, but with an argument that embraces all of them). As Anthony Close has observed, this is almost certainly a slighting reference to what Tirso saw as a lack of coherence (principally due to the lack of a narrative frame) in Cervantes's *Novelas.*[33] Indeed, the sheer variety of Cervantes's collection does raise the question of unity: are these simply quite different stories, written independently of each other, at different times from the 1590s onwards, and finally put together for publication by Cervantes in 1612 under a convenient and eye-catching title, but with no particular coherence as a collection other than the fact that they are written by the same author and therefore bound, almost inevitably, to betray the common imprint of his style and his preoccupations? Cervantes's claim in the *Prologue* that the reader may extract their 'sabroso y honesto fruto [. . .] así de todas juntas, como de cada una de por sí' (I, p. 52) ('delicious and wholesome fruit [. . .] from the collection as a whole and from each one alone' [I, pp. 3, 5]) certainly seems to imply that his stories are intended to form a single body of work. Many attempts have been made to discern a unifying principle or pattern (thematic, structural, autobiographical, and so on) underlying the seemingly random variety of subject matter, generic codes and narrative techniques to be found in the *Novelas*. Leaving aside, for the moment, attempts to categorize them in terms of genre typology

[32] Antonio Rey Hazas, '*Novelas ejemplares*', in *Cervantes*, ed. Anthony Close and others (Alcalá de Henares: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 1995), pp. 173–209 (p. 182).

[33] *Obras Completas de Tirso de Molina*, ed. Pilar Palomo and Isabel Prieto, 3 vols (Madrid: Turner, 1994), I (Prosa y verso), p. 11; and see Anthony Close, *Cervantes and the Comic Mind of his Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 244.

(these will be considered at pp. 19–20 below), one can cite, for example, Werner Krauss's belief that the stories are unified by their autobiographical background, a belief that led him to suggest an alternative ordering;[34] Joaquín Casalduero's thesis, outlined in his extremely influential *Sentido y forma de las 'Novelas ejemplares'* (1962), that the central theme of love gave the collection its coherence and precise shape;[35] and Walter Pabst's argument that the collection has a maze-like structure, that the final stories (the *Casamiento* and the *Coloquio*) constitute a 'retroactive', but removable frame, and that unity consists in the kind of synthesizing effort of interpretation Cervantes requires of the reader.[36] More recently, William H. Clamurro, while stating his conviction that the *Novelas* 'cannot be reduced into a unifying framework' has argued that 'each of [them] embodies a vision of the interlocking problems of individual identity and social order';[37] and Edward Aylward has tried to demonstrate that what he terms the 'crucible concept' (the representation of 'life as a sentimental crucible in which the protagonists' inflated egos undergo a process of psychological dissolution and coagulation in a series of harrowing and sometimes near miraculous occurences') is 'the overriding thematic element that manages to hold together an otherwise curious and incongruous collection'.[38] An important trend in criticism of the *Novelas*, which emerges even in the work of those who (like Clamurro) seek to discover in them the maximum possible unity, is the maintenance of a sceptical attitude towards the possibility, or indeed the value, of uncovering any kind of interpretative 'master key' that would unlock the 'misterio escondido' (hidden mystery) of these texts.[39] Without making any claims to comprehensiveness or to having discovered any such 'master key', one can nonetheless identify some recurring motifs, patterns and themes that do give a sense of unity to the *Novelas* as a whole. We shall now identity and selectively discuss some of them.

[34] See Werner Krauss, 'Cervantes und der Spanische Weg der Novelle', in *Studien und Aufsätze* (Berlin: PUB, 1959), pp. 93–138.

[35] 'Cada una de las once novelas nos cuenta una historia de amor, la cual ocupa un plano distinto en cada obra y, por lo tanto, da lugar a una perspectiva diferente en cada novela, con la consiguiente ordenación de valores' (p. 12) (Each of the eleven [he counts the last two stories as one story] *novelas* tells us a story of love, which occupies a different plane in each work and, therefore, gives rise to a different perspective in each *novela*, along with a corresponding ordering of values).

[36] See Walter Pabst, *La novela corta en la teoría y en la creación literaria*, tr. Rafael de la Vega (Madrid: Gredos, 1972).

[37] See William H. Clamurro, *Beneath the Fiction: The Contrary Worlds of Cervantes's 'Novelas ejemplares'* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. xi.

[38] See E. T. Aylward, *The Crucible Concept: Thematic and Narrative Patterns in Cervantes's 'Novelas ejemplares'* (Madison, NJ: Associated University Press, 1999), p. 11.

[39] See, for example, Peter Dunn's remarks in Chapter 3 (pp. 86–9). In the Prologue, Cervantes claims that, since he has dedicated his novelas to the Count of Lemos, they contain 'algún misterio escondido [. . .] que las levanta' (I, p. 53) ('some hidden mystery which elevates them to that level' [I, p. 5]). For a general overview of *Novelas ejemplares* interpretation, see Nerlich, 'Juan Andrés', and Aylward, *The Crucible Concept*, pp. 19–29.

One of the ways in which scholars have tried to find a pattern in the *Novelas ejemplares* is through typological classification. This has usually meant dividing them dualistically into 'romance' versus 'satirical', 'open' versus 'closed', 'idealistic' versus 'realistic, 'romance' versus 'novelistic', and so on.[40] Probably one of the most useful and influential attempts to classify them in terms of genre is by the distinguished Cervantine scholar, E.C. Riley.[41] He considered that they might be divided into three basic types: 1. 'Predominantly Romance' 2. 'Predominantly Novelistic' and 3. 'Mixed' (or 'Hybrid') (pp. 77–8). According to Riley, those in the first group are characterized by some or all of the features traditionally associated with 'romance-style' narratives. That is, they are stories of 'adventure or love, usually both' (p. 76) involving idealized, stereotypical characters (often outstandingly good-looking young people of the higher social classes); 'exotic', remote, or unfamiliar settings; complex plot patterns characterised by coincidence, recognition scenes and reversals of fortune; and happy endings, often featuring the marriage of young lovers whose fidelity to each other has been tested by their overcoming of such obstacles as disapproving parents, jealous rivals, or their own (usually the male partner's) moral shortcomings. As Riley sees it, the *novelas* in this group are: *El amante liberal*, *La fuerza de la sangre*, *La española inglesa*, *Las dos doncellas,* and *La señora Cornelia*. The 'predominantly novelistic' stories are fundamentally more realistic (in a strictly relative sense) – so that the characters are of all ages and social classes and may well be old and physically and/or morally unattractive (like the protagonist of *El celoso extremeño*); the plots unfold in a less 'artificial' way, often in real places in Spain, and in clearly identified historical periods (as, for example, in *El licenciado Vidriera*), and there is a greater variety of theme.[42] The stories he includes in this group are: *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, *El licenciado Vidriera*, *El celoso extremeño*, *El casamiento engañoso*, and *El coloquio de los perros*. His third group comprises two stories, *La gitanilla* and *La ilustre fregona*, in which he sees 'romance' and 'novelistic' elements blended in a highly original and experimental way. As Riley points out, it is the 'novelistic' stories that proved most popular with twentieth-century readers and critics, whereas seventeenth-century readers seem to have shown a marked preference for the 'romance' kind. He cites in evidence (pp. 78–9) James Mabbe's selection of *Las dos doncellas*, *La señora Cornelia*, *El amante liberal*, *La fuerza de la sangre*, *La española inglesa*, and *El celoso extremeño* for his 1640 English version, which one might

[40] For good summaries of these attempts, see again Nerlich, 'Juan Andrés', especially pp. 21–4 and 34–8; and Aylward, *The Crucible Concept*, pp. 19–29.

[41] E. C. Riley, 'Cervantes: A Question of Genre', in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies on Spain and Portugal in Honour of P. E. Russell*, ed. F. W. Hodcroft and others (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1981), pp. 69–85.

[42] Riley explains that he uses the term 'novelistic' 'to refer to prose narrative of the kind generally associated with modern realistic fiction, without distinguishing types of realism' (p. 71). On the issue of 'realism' in the *Novelas*, see Frank Pierce, 'Reality and Realism in the *Exemplary Novels*', *BHS*, 30 (1953), 134–42.

compare with C.A. Jones's choice of *La gitanilla*, *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, *El licenciado Vidriera*, *El celoso extremeño*, and *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* for the Penguin *Exemplary Stories* (1972).[43] Since Riley wrote his article, and especially in recent years, this trend has become less dominant and there has been renewed critical interest in and appreciation of all of Cervantes's romance-type fictions, including the 'idealistic' *novelas* and, above all, the *Persiles*.[44]

Another possible patterning, that could suggest that the *Novelas* do form some kind of whole, has to do with their titles. These almost always refer to their protagonists and often involve a combination of generic noun and qualifying adjective, as, for example, *El amante liberal*, or *El celoso extremeño*. In many cases the combination of noun and adjective is intriguing and sometimes oxymoronic (like the title of the collection itself): *La gitanilla* (The Little Gypsy Girl) (because of the softness of attitude it implies, the use of the diminutive ending is unusual, since gypsies were a then much despised social group); *La española inglesa* (The English Spanish Girl); *El licenciado Vidriera* (The Glass Graduate); *La ilustre fregona* (The Illustrious Kitchenmaid). In three cases the titles refer to the protagonists in a more neutral way: *Rinconete y Cortadillo* (these nicknames are nonetheless intriguing), *Las dos doncellas* (The Two Damsels), and *La señora Cornelia* (Lady Cornelia). Only in two cases do the titles not refer to the protagonists but to the content of the story, and these titles are also clearly calculated to arouse curiosity: *La fuerza de la sangre* (The Power of Blood) and *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros* (The Deceitful Marriage and The Dialogue of the Dogs). The latter is particularly intriguing because of its two inbuilt contradictions: a marriage that involves deceit, and dogs that can talk. These unusual, paradoxical, sometimes oxymoronic, titles – although perhaps designed, on one level, to encourage people to read (and buy) the collection – also provide pointers towards one of Cervantes's most serious and central concerns: the contradictory patterns of life itself (see pp. 27–31 and 31–40 below).

Yet another pattern which seems to point towards the unity of the collection is that formed by what look like internal echoes between some of the stories. In a number of them, for example, the names of characters are markedly similar: thus, we have a series of male protagonists whose names begin with 'R': Ricardo (*El amante liberal*); Ricaredo (*La española inglesa*); Rodolfo (*La fuerza de la sangre*); and another series of female protagonists whose names begin with 'Leo . . .': Leonisa (*El amante liberal*), Leocadia (*La fuerza de la sangre*), Leonora (*El celoso extremeño*), and Leocadia (again) in *Las dos doncellas*. In *La*

[43] Miguel de Cervantes, *Exemplary Stories*, tr. C. A. Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972). Harriet de Onís's selection for translation is almost exactly the same as Jones's, except that she also includes *El amante liberal*; see *Cervantes: Six Exemplary Tales* (Woodbury, NY: Barron's, 1961).

[44] As Mary Malcolm Gaylord observes, 'the grid-resistant diversity of the motley "hybrids" has pointed the way beyond preconceptions and pigeonholing towards more probing readings of all of the *Exemplary Novels*' ('Cervantes' other fiction', p. 112).

gitanilla and *La ilustre fregona*, the two *novelas* which feature young aristocratic women who have been brought up in humble circumstances before being restored to their rightful place in society, the protagonists, names are the same: Costanza (although Preciosa [*La gitanilla*] is also referred to as Constanza). Many of the principal male characters have surnames beginning in 'Ca . . .': don Juan de Cárcamo (*La gitanilla*); Felipo de Carrizales (*El celoso extremeño*); don Diego de Carriazo (Junior and Senior) (*La ilustre fregona*); and Ensign Campuzano (*El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*). We have already mentioned (p. 5) a number of ways in which the final story alludes to some of the other, preceding ones, but there is at least one other example of such internal cross-referencing. In *La ilustre fregona*, the two young aristocratic protagonists, Diego de Carriazo and Tomás de Avendaño, are making their way to Seville dressed as *pícaros*. At Illescas they encounter two other young men, both muleteers (a profession often associated with criminality), one of whom is coming up from Seville and the other going down to it. As Carriazo and Avendaño continue on their way they mimic the accents and gestures of the muleteers (II, p. 149) (III, p.71). Apart from the irony of the fact that they are already playing at being *pícaros* in a much more thoroughgoing way, one may also discern here a double inverted echo of the other pair of *pícaros* who feature in the *Novelas ejemplares*: the eponymous protagonists of *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, who also make their way down from the centre of Spain to Seville, and who are shown in their first conversation to imitate the language of young gentlemen (I, pp. 193–98) (I, pp. 175, 177, 179). However, it is probably wise not to take such patterns too seriously. Indeed, the case of the deranged mathematician in the *Coloquio* who has spent twenty-two years trying to find the fixed point and to square the circle (II, p. 356) (IV, p. 153) seems to send out a strong warning signal to those tempted to mistake neat pattern-making for truth.

The most alluring key to the possible unity of the *Novelas ejemplares*, however, seems to lie in the area of theme. Love, marriage, friendship, freedom, identity, desire, sin, the problems of knowing the truth (about anything), and the workings of Divine Providence are certainly identifiable as recurrent themes. With respect to the first two of these, virtually all of the stories, with the exception of *Rinconete y Cortadillo* and *El licenciado Vidiera* (in which, however, ideas about friendship are important), centrally concern a relationship between a man and a woman which ends in marriage. In many cases (*La gitanilla*, *El amante liberal*, *La española inglesa*, *La fuerza de la sangre*, *La ilustre fregona*, *Las dos doncellas*, *La señora Cornelia*) it is a happy and fruitful one, but in others (*El celoso extremeño* and *El casamiento engañoso*), it is inappropriate or abusive. In the first group (with the exception of *La ilustre fregona*), the male characters must overcome their sensuality or irresponsibility, or begin to control their jealousy and possessiveness. However, young Diego de Carriazo in *La ilustre fregona* is never shown to acknowledge his misdemeanours (some of which – causing considerable injury to a water-seller and almost beating a young boy to death – are serious) or to receive any proportionate punishment for them; on the contrary, he appears to to be rewarded with a happy marriage and, we are told,

is only occasionally troubled by the apprehension that some day someone who remembers his wild exploits in Toledo may turn up and momentarily ruffle the respectability he has acquired in middle life.

In many of the stories an exceptionally beautiful and virtuous female character is the victim of an injustice (often a displacement from the world or social class into which she was born) that is eventually put right: for example, Preciosa (*La gitanilla*); Leonisa (*El amante liberal*); Isabel (*La española inglesa*); Leocadia (*La fuerza de la sangre*); Costanza (*La ilustre fregona*); Teodosia (*Las dos doncellas*); and Cornelia Bentibolli (*La señora Cornelia*). In contrast, however, a few important female characters are 'demonic' figures, driven by lust and greed: Juana Carducha (*La gitanilla*); doña Estefanía (*El casamiento engañoso*); and the witch, la Cañizares (*El casamiento engañoso*).

Freedom, especially inner freedom, is a central theme, which will be explored in greater detail in pp. 32–3 below. It emerges especially strongly in *La gitanilla*, *El amante liberal*, *El celoso extremeño*, and *El coloquio de los perros*. In the person of its protagonist (Preciosa), the first story, *La gitanilla*, offers a vision of what perfect inner freedom looks like. She is someone who combines goodness with spontaneity and wit, neither lapsing into the licence typical of the gypsy community in which she has been brought up, nor becoming a prisoner of the hypocritical concern with respectability that is seen to characterize the upper-class milieu into which she was born, and to which she is eventually restored. In contrast, both parts of the final story, *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*, are replete with characters whose freedom is constrained by their attachment to their selfish desires. The Ensign Campuzano confesses to his friend Peralta that at the time of his marriage he paid no attention to '[otros] discursos de aquellos a que daba lugar el gusto, que me tenía echados grillos al entendimiento' (II, p. 285) ('arguments other than those dictated by my pleasure, which had my powers of reasoning in its grip' [IV, p. 71]). In the *Coloquio*, the beauty, singing and dancing of Preciosa – external expressions of her freedom – find their complementary opposite in the physical degradation of the old witch, la Cañizares, withdrawn into 'su aposento, que era escuro, estrecho y bajo' (II, p. 336) ('her room, which was dark, narrow and with a low ceiling' [IV, p. 127]) – the perfect image of her servitude – and acknowledging, like Campuzano, that 'como el deleite me tiene echados grillos a la voluntad, siempre he sido y seré mala' (II, p. 342) ('as pleasure has gripped my will, I am and will always be evil' [IV, p. 135]).

The theme of identity, linked with that of transformation, is also fundamental. As we have already observed, many of the *Novelas ejemplares* feature characters who undergo some kind of transformation, whether outward or inward, or both. These changes may be very marked, or, more often, partial, incipient or merely aspirational. Cervantes uses them as vehicles for exploring some of the determinants of individual identity and some of the coordinates between which it may move or fluctuate: nature and nurture; male and female; higher and lower social rank; Christian and Muslim; Catholic and Protestant; Spanish and English; vice and virtue; the human and the demonic; the human and the animal; and the

human and the divine. In *La gitanilla*, Preciosa the gypsy eventually becomes who (in a social sense) she has been all along, the aristocratic doña Constanza de Azevedo y de Meneses. In *El amante liberal*, as a captive of the Turks in Cyprus, Ricardo learns, like don Juan/Andrés (*La qitanilla*), to be less possessive of the woman he loves, while his friend and compatriot, Mahamut, and Halima, the wife of the cadi, who had both become renegades, are finally reconciled to the Church. In *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, on the other hand, apart from their adoption of various linguistic disguises for the purposes of deception, the two picaresque protagonists appear not to change at all. In *La española inglesa*, Isabel, a Spanish Catholic, is captured by an English Catholic and brought up in England as an outward Protestant. For a period, as a result of poisoning, she finds her beauty transformed into hideous ugliness, before she is able to return to her country and the open practice of her faith. Her suitor, Ricaredo, the son of her captor, is another young man who must learn to control his presumptuous possessiveness. In *El licenciado Vidriera*, the humbly born Tomás Rodaja becomes a distinguished graduate of the University of Salamanca; then, during a two-year period, the deranged Licenciado Vidriera; then, having recovered his sanity, the failed lawyer, Rueda; and, finally, a soldier who dies in battle in Flanders. In *La fuerza de la sangre*, Leocadia, the dishonoured daughter of impoverished but noble parents, a girl who has had to lead a life of concealment after bearing a child as the result of a rape, ends by marrying her rapist, Rodolfo, the son of one of the wealthiest and most illustrious families in Toledo. Although he is not said to express any regret for his assault, it may be that his eventual, more spiritual appreciation of Leocadia's beauty (se le iba entrando por los ojos a tomar posesión de *su alma* la hermosura de Leocadia' [II, pp. 92–3]) ('the beautiful image of Leocadia entered, by his eyes, into *his soul* and took possession of it' [II, p. 123]; emphases added), and his concern for her when she faints, may indicate that he has just begun to move away from his habitual, selfish sensuality towards love. In *El celoso extremeño*, Felipo de Carrizales, the son of a noble family from Extremadura, spends his inheritance recklessly and ends up destitute in Seville. He takes a ship to Peru (at the other extreme of the known world) and after a twenty-year absence returns to Seville, having amassed a fortune. Once a young spendthrift, he has become a miserly old man of sixty-eight who proceeds to marry a girl of thirteen going on fourteen in order to beget an heir. As he lies dying, believing his wife to have committed adultery, he admits that he should never have married someone so much younger. However, even in the midst of his repentance, it is clear that his habits of self-deception and manipulation remain largely intact. In *La ilustre fregona*, two young aristocrats adopt false names and take a moral holiday as *pícaros*, while a young serving girl in a Toledo inn is revealed to be the illegitimate daughter of noble parents. The two female protagonists of *Las dos doncellas* disguise themselves as men in order to pursue the man who has promised marriage to both of them. The most dramatic transformations of all, however, take place in the final *novela*, *El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros*: at the start of the *Casamiento* the once dashing Ensign Campuzano who had been so confident that he could 'matarlas en el aire'

(II, p. 284) ('have any woman [he] wanted' [IV, p. 69]) has been reduced by the effects of syphilis to a pathetically enfeebled figure, only able to walk with the support of his sword; at the start of the *Coloquio*, the dogs Berganza and Cipión are amazed to find that they have been suddenly and inexplicably endowed with the human gift of speech, and, later, Cipión is even more surprised to learn from Berganza that they had both been born as human babies to a witch and immediately transformed into dogs by their mother's jealous colleague, but with the possibility of becoming human once again. Although the witch, la Cañizares, who reveals this to Berganza, is a self-confessed and self-despairing devotee of the Devil, she believes that there may ultimately be some hope for her: 'con todo esto sé que Dios es bueno y misericordioso y que Él sabe lo que ha de ser de mí, y basta' (II, p. 343) ('Despite all this, I am aware that God is good and merciful and He knows what is to become of me, and that is enough for me' [IV, p. 135]). It is not surprising, then, that the issue of transformation should arise explicitly in the *Novelas*, and that it should do so both in this story and in *La ilustre fregona*. When, in the *Coloquio*, la Cañizares describes the supposed powers of her colleague, la Camacha, to Berganza she distinguishes between imaginary, or mythical, outward changes of form and the real changes that can take place in the inner self:

> Tuvo fama que convertía los hombres en animales, y que se había servido de un sacristán seis años, en forma de asno, real y verdaderamente, lo que yo nunca he podido alcanzar cómo se haga, porque lo que se dice de aquellas antiguas magas, que convertían los hombres en bestias, dicen los que más saben que no era otra cosa sino que ellas, con su mucha hermosura y con sus halagos, atraían los hombres de manera a que las quisiesen bien, y los sujetaban de suerte, sirviéndose dellos en todo cuanto querían, que parecían bestias. (II, p. 337)
>
> (She had the reputation of being able to change men into animals, and that she had used a sacristan as an ass, really and truly, for six years, and I have never found out how it was done, for it is said of those old magicians who turn men into beasts by those who know about these things that they simply attract men by their great beauty and charm and make them fall in love with them and keep them so subjugated, doing whatever is asked of them, that they appear to be animals. [IV, p. 127])

In *La ilustre fregona* the narrator makes a humorously ironic, but pointed, comparison between the new low-life social identities adopted by Carriazo and Avendaño, the two well-born protagonists, and the myths of transformation recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

> He aquí tenemos ya – en buena hora se cuente – a Avendaño hecho mozo del mesón, con nombre de Tomás Pedro, que así dijo que se llamaba, y a Carriazo, con el de Lope Asturiano, hecho aguador: transformaciones dignas de anteponerse a las del narigudo poeta. (II, p.159)

(So at this point we have Avendaño, who has become an ostler, by the name of Tomás Pedro, for that was the name he gave, and Carriazo, alias Lope Asturiano, transformed into a water-carrier: metamorphoses which compare favourably with those related by the long-nosed poet. [III, p. 83])

Although, of course, the humour here stems from the sense that there is really no comparison at all, in the midst of its festive panache *La ilustre fregona* explores the question of social and personal identity with considerable depth. A remarkable example of this is the story's interrogation of a pair of coordinates (of outer and inward identity), *caballerosidad* (gentlemanliness) and virtue, whose relationship in practice was particularly problematic in the Spain of Cervantes's time, a Spain which saw itself as supremely Christian but which also espoused an aristocratic cult of honour. Even in the midst of his 'picaresque' life, Diego de Carriazo is said to retain all the marks of his good breeding: 'En fin en Carriazo vio el mundo un pícaro virtuoso, limpio, bien criado y más que medianamente discreto' (II, p. 140) ('In short, to the world Carriazo was a virtuous *pícaro*, unsullied by that life, well bred and with more than his fair share of wisdom' [III, p. 63]). When he loses his temper playing cards with the water-sellers of Toledo, the narrator leaves it deliberately unclear as to whether the others (as mere 'riff-raff' are bound to do) unconsciously recognize and respect the noble indignation of a gentleman, or whether, judging him by their own standards, they can tell that he is someone even more dangerously thuggish than they are, or whether they are duped by what is purely theatrical posturing on his part:

[. . .] les pareció no ser bien llevar aquel negocio por fuerza, porque juzgaron ser de tal brío el Asturiano [Carriazo] que no consentiría que se la hiciesen; el cual, como estaba hecho al trato de las almadrabas, donde se ejercita todo género de rumbo y jácara y de extraordinarios juramentos y boatos, voleó allí el capelo y empuñó un puñal que debajo del capotillo traía, y púsose en tal postura, que infundió temor y respeto en toda aquella aguadora compañía. (II, p. 182)

([. . .] [they] did not think it wise to settle the matter by force, for they reckoned Asturiano's [Carriazo's] determination was such that he would not allow them to so. Lope, since he was used to making deals in the tunny fisheries where every kind of danger is met and threatening behaviour, as well as outrageous swearing and bragging is practised, threw his hat well away from him and took a dagger which he carried under his cloak. He took up such a stance that he instilled fear and respect into the whole company of water-carriers. [III, p.113])

The passage is typical of this *novela* as a whole (indeed of the *Novelas* as a whole in their treatment of questions of identity) because of the way in which its ironic shifts of perspective are orchestrated to suggest that 'gentlemanly' violence may be indistinguishable from thuggish violence, or that any difference is purely cosmetic, merely a matter of culturally conditioned perception. More importantly, of course, it suggests that gentlemanliness itself, and by extension aristocratic