Cervantes, Premeditated Philosopher: Skepticism and the *Novelas ejemplares*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation brings together two of the most heavily commented cultural entities of Early Modern Spain: skepticism and Miguel de Cervantes. To my knowledge, the sole published work to date that has aimed specifically at tracing and establishing this connection is Maureen Ihrie's study of 1982, *Skepticism in Cervantes*, although a vast amount of criticism has addressed, in one way or another, what I see as a clear and fundamental association. While Ihrie's focus is on exposing Cervantes' engagement with skepticism mainly through *Don Quijote* and the *Persiles*, I have chosen to center my study on five of the *Novelas ejemplares*: "La gitanilla," "La fuerza de la sangre," "La ilustre fregona," and the pair "El casamiento engañoso" and "El coloquio de los perros." I intend to show that their very exemplarity is inextricably tied to the systematic involvement with skepticism displayed in their structure. By providing a juxtaposition of the conclusion of these works against the epistemic anatomy created in their development, I will argue that the *Novelas ejemplares* – with their often disguised immorality, their frequently covert display of unethical, unlawful, and hypocritical behavior, and their transparent and yet ambiguous simulation of harmonious conclusions – actually point to a dialogical experiment in which Christianity meets with and diverges from a variety of skeptical attitudes and arguments prominent in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As a result of this dialogue, which signals a sustained and controlled engagement with skepticism, Cervantes questions knowledge and the various means of acquiring it, challenges the delicate tenets of society's belief systems, and exposes the uncertainties of the individual's position within the larger conformation of things.

What Ihrie pointed out in 1982, that "classical skeptical philosophy has suffered more than its fair share of misinterpretations through the years" (13), may be as applicable to

contemporary criticism as it may have been to those who engaged with these ideas during Cervantes' time, such was the wealth of contributions that several generations of humanists throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, within and outside Spain, have made to further explain, adapt, and amend this philosophy. In fact, to refer to skepticism purely as a philosophy when considering peninsular Early Modernity, as Jeremy Robbins asserts, may in itself constitute a misguided assumption, for what for some was a codified set of logical challenges that aimed, through the stipulation of certain criteria of establishing knowledge, at questioning the viability of all conceived truths, for others represented a more general epistemological mentality and attitude that penetrated all aspects of life. As Robbins affirms, "Scepticism . . . forms a vital part of the intellectual environment in which seventeenth-century Spanish preoccupations with knowledge and perception were formed; it shaped the nature of those preoccupations, the terminology and rhetoric used to express them, and the solutions created to address them" (*Arts of Perception* 21). Robbins later explains the relative lack of interest of seventeenth-century authors in discerning between the Academic and Pyrrhonian varieties of skepticism: "The philosophical specifics of each position are rarely discussed, and when they are addressed, it is somewhat superficially. This fact should not conceal the importance of the challenge of scepticism, for it became a general intellectual stance, rather than a specific and nuanced philosophical position, toward knowledge" (26).

A glance at the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century fictional literature of Spain, regardless of genre and whether or not restricted to the most seminal names – Cervantes, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca – readily validates Robbins' position. Yet, the verifiable presence of a "general intellectual stance" does not necessarily constitute an absence of a direct engagement with specific ideas nor does it point to a reluctance to engage in a

systematic dialogue with particular thinkers and texts. The chapters that follow will strive to illustrate this dialogue as observed between Cervantes in his *Novelas ejemplares* and the philosophy of skepticism, particularly as articulated by its most notable sixteenth-century adept, Michel de Montaigne.

Skeptical views and their codification into the philosophy of skepticism, according to Richard Popkin's painstaking explanation, came about during the Hellenistic period as a response to the dogmatism of philosophers "who asserted that [they] knew *some* truth about the real nature of things" (xvii). Both the Academic and Pyrrhonian varieties of skepticism deny the possibility of this knowledge, the former trying to "show [that] the information we gain by means of our senses may be unreliable . . . and that we possess no guaranteed criterion or standard for determining which of our judgments is true or false," while the latter, perceiving the positivist implication of this proposition and asserting that no proposition can be fully verifiable, concludes that all propositions "would not deserve the name of knowledge but only that of opinion" (xviii).[1] By accepting that true, final knowledge may or may not be available to human kind, the Pyrrhonian skeptic developed an attitude, or rather a skill, in which she refrained from committing to any proposition, and hence fostered a mental behavior that accommodated a total suspension of judgment. This non-committal approach to interpreting reality, or this equipollence, in turn, led to a state of mind known as *ataraxia*: "quietude or unperturbedness, in which the sceptic was no longer concerned or worried about matters beyond appearances" (Popkin xix). In reminding us that skepticism "was a cure for dogmatism" (xix), Popkin inadvertently opens the way for a possible association between this thought system, this mental

[1] Pyrrhonian skepticism, named after Pyrrho of Elis (c.360-275B.C.E.), has survived largely through the writings of its foremost adept, Sextus Empiricus. According to Richard Popkin, "[t]he Pyrrhonian view was little known in the west until its rediscovery in the late fifteenth century, and the Academic view was mainly known and considered in terms of Saint Augustine's treatment of it" (xix).

attitude, and the thoughts and attitudes that may have led socially engaged authors like Cervantes to apply skepticism as a critical cure for the dogmatic evils of his society. Unperturbedness, nonetheless, is hardly a term one easily associates with the tensions revealed in the *Novelas ejemplares*. The contradictions and the questioning of realities begin already in the preliminary joining of text and method. After all, narratives, texts, words, concepts are all meant to communicate, and they do so by dogmatically asserting through the postulating nature of language. What better way could there be to elicit the reevaluation of a reader's hermeneutics and understanding of reality than to question the validity of her very interpretative tools?

Popkin is careful to establish the link between skeptical ideas and methods, and primarily those concerning Pyrrhonian skepticism, as the intellectual basis for the Protestant Reformation. He recognizes that "it may seem strange at first to read that the skeptics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries asserted, almost unanimously, that they were sincere believers of the Christian religion" (xxi). Without going into detail about the specific links between skepticism and the Reformation, it may be useful to reestablish that the main complaint of the reformers was centered, as Popkin puts it, "in the conflict between the criteria of religious knowledge of the Church and of the rebels and reformers" (4). For Luther, religious knowledge and, moreover, religious truth, consisted in "that which conscience is compelled to believe on reading Scripture" (Popkin 5). For the Catholic authorities, on the other hand, the criteria used to establish religious knowledge resided in that "religious propositions [be] judged by their agreement with the church tradition, councils, and papal decrees" (Popkin 4). One observes how imperative the problem of the criterion was to the establishment of both the Catholic and the reformist religions, and moreover, one realizes the inescapable link between skepticism and the religious strife of Renaissance Europe. Yet, as central as the problem of the criterion was to sixteenth-century

theologians, to others it constituted an even more crucial component of the way in which reality was absorbed and interpreted. Roderick Chisholm, who here paraphrases Montaigne, explains:

> To know whether things here are as they seem to be, we must have a *procedure* for distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. But to know whether our procedure is a good procedure, we have to know whether it really *succeeds* in distinguishing appearances that are true from appearances that are false. And we cannot know whether it does really succeed unless we already know which appearances are *true* and which ones are *false*. And so we are caught in a circle. (3)

Montaigne, who through out his life maintained his Catholic affilitation, would find a culturally acceptable, albeit paradoxical, compromise in his adherence to a set criterion of knowledge, a new type of fideism: Catholic Pyrrhonism. Through advocating for an absolute suspension of judgment, one that recognized the near impossibility of verifying true knowledge by virtue of reason or the senses alone, he embraced divine grace and revelation as the only criterion fit to deliver reliable knowledge to the seeker, and concluded that although reason may have had a secondary place in determining the truth of experiences or phenomena, faith must be the leading agent in promoting knowledge. This thought curiously puts him at odds with the criterion used by the Catholic Church, since its theology relies as heavily, if not more so, on human reason and interpretation to establish its dogma. Whether or not Montaigne's ambiguity caused any unsettling reverberations in his readers, his adherence to the Catholic creed, together with his *skeptical* devotion to local laws and customs, served as a strong boost to the overall Catholic campaign. Bruce Silver's comment captures the closeness between Montaigne's philosophy and his religion: "Grasping the message and tactics of the Pyrrhonians is not enough.

Montaigne wishes to serve his own end, the triumph of Counter Reformation Catholicism over the incursions of the Protestant Reformation" (98).

In spite of Montaigne's influence, or perhaps in part due to it, since his philosophical style was very conversational, unassuming, and lacking in technicalities, the repercussion of skeptical thought within the peninsula comprised a more generalized intellectual mood than an exercise focused on logic and reasoning and was assimilated into the literary production of the period as a nearly thematic constant. Robbins asserts: "As such, [skepticism] constituted a threat to existing claims of knowledge, and it was as such that it was refuted, mitigated or embraced" (26).[2]

It is recognized that the main sources of classical skepticism available to Renaissance humanists, from which they would have mounted this philosophy's revival, were Cicero's *Academica* – which, according to Charles Schmitt, "presented the philosophical positions of the important Greek school in Latin garb" (20) – Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, and most importantly, Sextus Empiricus' *Hypotyposis* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*), first published in Latin in 1562.[3] Popkin also mentions the existence of "three Latin translations of Sextus' *Hypotyposis* located in Venice, Paris, and Madrid . . . done in the 1340s by Niccoló da Reggio (fl.1308-45)" (18). This suggests that Sextus' texts had had the attention of peninsular readers

[2] M.A. Screech describes Montaigne's writing style as "[treating] the deepest subjects in the least pompous of manners and in a style often marked by dry humour; his writings are vibrant with challenge; they are free from jargon and unnecessary technicalities" (ix). When describing the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," Richard Popkin comments on "Montaigne's inimitable rambling style as a series of waves of scepticism" (47).

[3] Richard Popkin gives a detailed account of the process through which the thought of Sextus Empiricus came to permeate humanist consciousness, and in doing so, relies heavily on Charles Schmtt's "The Rediscovery of Ancient Skepticism…." Both texts provide an outstanding account of how, by embracing Phyrronian skepticism and arguing against Aristotelian Academics, Sextus' ideas would be ultimately disseminated throughout Europe and beyond. More pertinent to the availability of Sextus' texts, Popkin affirms that, even though the first Latin translation of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* did not appear until 1562, "[g]reek texts of Sextus were known to both Giovanni Pico [della Mirandola] and [Marcilio] Ficino" (21), and hence would have been in circulation already decades earlier.

much before the newly invigorated interest described by Robbins in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The exact path that skepticism, and primarily Pyrrhonian skepticism, took into Spain is a difficult one to trace. Maureen Ihrie has understandably and efficiently focused on citing and reviewing period texts that were either composed by Spaniards, or that were known to have had wide circulation among Spanish readers, without trying to map how or where these authors would have acquired their basic contact with skeptical ideas. Jeremy Robbins, who writes some twenty-odd years later, follows the same path as Ihrie. Both of them come to identify the following four humanists and their treatises as the greatest exponents of skepticism in Spain: Juan Luis Vives' *Adversus pseudodialectios* (1519) and *De disciplinis* (1531), the Portuguese Francisco Sanches' *Quod nihil scitur* (1581), Pedro de Valencia's *Academica; sive, De judicio erga verum ex ipsis primis fontibus* (1596), and Juan Huarte de San Juan's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575).[4] Ihrie, but particularly Robbins, provides an overview of each one of these texts, and highlights how each of them engaged and modified the ideas of their ancient Greek forerunners, and how each took, whether ambiguously or not, a position that tended to favor the Pyrrhonian variety over the Academic one.[5] In fact, with a few exceptions that will be discussed later, most of the criticism that has considered the skeptical vein in interpreting the works of Cervantes has, in one way or another, relied on the works of these thinkers as the basis

[4] Sanches' name is often spelled in its Spanish variant, Sánchez. For the sake of consistency I will adhere to the Portuguese spelling, except when quoting other authors, where I will follow the original spelling.

[5] Popkin clearly thinks that Sanches, given the nature of his approach and concerns – he was doctor who was preoccupied with establishing the nature of scientific knowledge – came short of committing to a Pyrrhonian type of skepticism. Sanches concludes, according to Popkin, that "the only truly meaningful scientific knowledge cannot be known. All that man can achieve is limited, imperfect knowledge of some things that are present in his experience through observation and judgment." Popkin then elaborates that "Sanches totally negative conclusion is not the position of Pyrrhonian scepticism, the suspense of judgment as to whether anything can be known, but rather the more full-fledged negative dogmatism of the Academics" (41).

from which to analyze Cervantes' perceived engagement with skepticism. Throughout the years, that has been the case with Américo Castro, J. B. Avalle-Arce, E. C. Riley, and A. Forcione.

Ihrie's study follows the same path, drawing from both Sanches and Vives (as well as Sextus, Montaigne and others) to establish that "Cervantes presents and explores the nature of truth, appearances and faith on multiple levels, in a manner totally consistent with the classical skepticism as seen by the Renaissance and resolved through fideism" (88). She adds:

> Throughout his writing, appearances are ambiguous, but they are never fully rejected, as in Gracián or Quevedo. Rather, Cervantes maintains an unpredictable balance, where appearances are sometimes true, sometimes partly true, and other times quite false. He abstractly affirms that Truth exists, but never attempts to document its existence or isolate it in specific human terms. On the contrary, the folly of such efforts is the very fabric of the *Quijote*, the *Curious Impertinent One* [sic], parts of the *Persiles* and many other works. (116)

Robbins dedicates a chapter in *The Challenges of Uncertainty* to exploring Cervantes' play with skeptical ideas and attitudes in *Don Quijote*, and while he recognizes that Cervantes was not the only author of the period using the skeptical mode to engage in meta-literary analysis and to challenge the validity of common truths, he detects the particular element in Cervantes' fiction that sets him apart from others:

> The difference lies in the fact that Cervantes does this in such an ingenious and knowing way over an entire novel, making so many diverse strands embody this relationship in such an entertaining manner . . . . He does so not to offer answers to the questions about reality and knowledge which so obsessed the period, but rather to inculcate a sense of

> tolerance upon readers by unsettling their confidence in the absolute truth and certainty of their own opinions, attitudes and beliefs. (60)[6]

Therefore, what Robbins sees as a "sense of tolerance" directly resonates with the suspension of judgment emphasized as the goal of Phyrronian skepticism.

Though their conclusions mirror and corroborate with each other, Ihrie's approach is somewhat more systematic than Robbins' in that she identifies within Cervantes' narrative patterns certain aspects of a more purely philosophical methodology, which allows her to draw direct parallels between Cervantes' and, for example, Sextus' or Sanches' approach to establishing a criterion of knowledge.[7] This aspect of her work is of particular interest to the analysis in the following chapters, for it corroborates with the thesis that, more than simply a thematic choice or a reflection of a contemporary concern, Cervantes' involvement with skepticism reflects a sustained and controlled engagement with skeptical ideas and methods.

While Irie's study relies mostly on peninsular skeptical thinkers, she also refers to Montaigne in her analysis. Although she does not primarily draw from his works, she recognizes the imperative influence that he, much like the above-mentioned Iberian philosophers, received from Sextus Empiricus' ideas, and quotes him in order to illustrate the balance that skeptics tried to achieve in regard to maintaining an attitude of suspended judgment and yet living in

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[6] It is interesting to notice that Robbins posits a great level of adherence by Don Quijote, the character, to Aristotelian scholasticism, while concluding that Cervantes' overall motion in the novel was to show tolerance by avoiding the dogmatism and intolerance of fixed truths. Robbins writes: "[Don Quijote's] rigid adherence to chivalric fiction as the one and only authority via which to interpret the whole world parallels one of the prime targets of contemporary sceptics' attacks, namely those dogmatic philosophers who slavishly followed Aristotle, making his texts the basis for their version of reality in all its aspects: both Aristotelians and Don Quijote place written authority over personal experience. Francisco Sánchez ... was just one contemporary who used scepticism to attack the prevailing Aristotelian philosophy in this way" (53). Ihrie also comments on Don Quijote's Aristotelian tendencies, albeit based on a different criteria than the one used by Robbins, and juxtaposes those to the counter-active thought of Sanches. See Ihrie 31-32

[7] Ihrie's concern with defining Cervantes' association with skepticism is clear. She asks: "Can we perceive, as [*Don Quijote*] unfolds, that the author's mode of analysis adheres to the philosophy of skepticism?" She then reveals her method: "This analysis will begin by focusing on the three basic components of knowledge as cited by Sextus, Vives, Francisco Sánchez, etc.: the subject who knows, the object to be known, and the combination or interaction of the two, as seen in the *Quijote*" (30).

agreement and harmony with the laws and customs of their society.[8] Likewise, Robbins acknowledges Montaigne's importance within the European skeptical milieu of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but in contrast to Ihrie's hierarchy of pertinent sources, states that "Sanches' works did not exercise anything like the influence of Montaigne, whose extended and far more urbane exposition of his version of Pyrrhonism and of the folly of claims to knowledge in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', published the year before Sanches' small treatise, makes a stronger and more persuasive case for scepticism" (*Arts of Perception* 30). Elaine Limbrick corroborates with this assessment and observes that "[t]he fame and influence of the *Essais de Michel de Montaigne* have tended to eclipse the modest success of *Quod nihil scitur* and yet Sanches argues the case for philosophical scepticism far more cogently than did Montaigne in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'" (79). The comparative characterization offered next by Limbrick serves to illustrate a possible reason why Montaigne could have exerted a greater influence on Cervantes than Sanches:

> Sanches wrote his treatise in Latin for the philosophical and medical community with the intention of destroying present-day Aristotelian dogmatists. Montaigne, on the other hand, wrote in the vernacular and addressed a far wider public of *honnêtes homes* who were well educated but not interested in reading a formal philosophical discourse . . . . Montaigne ranged over every field of human endeavour applying ancient sceptical theories to contemporary issues in theology, philosophy, the sciences, ethics, and the judicial and political systems. Above all, Montaigne made his contemporaries aware of

[8] "Thus Montaigne advises: 'we are much better if we let ourselves be led without inquisitiveness in the way of the world . . . neither disbelieving nor setting up any doctrine against the common observances. . . . In your opinions and remarks, as well as in your conduct and everything else, I advise moderation and temperance and avoidance of novelty and strangeness'" (16).

> Phyrronian scepticism with its doctrine of total doubt, which had tremendous repercussions on intellectual debates in the seventeenth century. (79-80)

Robbins further explains that Montaigne was well known in Spain, and counters the claim that there would have been no translations of Montaigne in Spain during Cervantes' time by stating that "Montaigne was in fact an author known to Quevedo and his circle, and was translated both by the Count-Duke of Olivares' uncle, Baltasar de Zúñiga, a key figure in Spanish politics under both Philip II and, briefly, Philip IV, and subsequently by Diego de Cisneros in the 1630s" (*Arts of Perception* 35).[9] While Cisneros' translation would have appeared after Cervantes' death, Zuñiga's most likely did not. Juan Marichal mentions that Cisneros, in his translation of the first volume of *Essais*, alludes to Zuñiga's previous translation, in which he (Zuñiga) "traduxo algunos capítulos deste Auctor [Montaigne] que andan manuscriptos; pero con tantas faltas y corrales, que no se dexan entender bien ni se goza el fructo que se pretende de la lectura" (260). Zuñiga died in 1622, after having served as Spain's ambassador to Brussels and Paris, between 1599 and 1606. According to Marichal

> Don Baltasar de Zúñiga fue embajador ante los Archiduques en Flandes y conoció a Justo Lipsio, gran admirador de los *Essais*, que le dirigió tres cartas (dos en 1600 y la tercera en 1601). El manuscrito de la traducción de don Baltasar de Zúñiga se ha perdido, y han de quedar en conjetura los ensayos de Montaigne que atrajeron la especial atención del diplomático y estadista español, que dejó entre sus contemporáneos un recuerdo de hombre de conocida prudencia. (260-261)

[9] Robbins here is taking issue with Peter Miller, who posits that a translation of Montaigne in Spain would not have been possible because "the age of Phillip II, who had banned foreign travel for study, was not a propitious one for a book like Montaigne´s" (165, n.33). For more details regarding the Cisneros' translation see J. Marichal, "Montaigne en España."

Marichal concludes his tracing of Montaigne's *Essais* into Spain by pointing out how important a place these texts may have had within the intellectual life of seventeenth-century Spain: "[N]o sería arriesgado afirmar que las tertulias que se celebraban en Madrid hacia 1687 en los palacios de nobles como el Duque de Montellano, y en las cuales se discutían las doctrinas de Descartes, tendrían su lejano antecedente en el interés por la obra de Montaigne revelado en la traducción de don Baltasar de Zúñiga" (261). Nevertheless, Quevedo is the first Spaniard to have directly cited Montaigne, in *Nombre, origen, intento, recomendación y decencia de la doctrina estoica*, and *Visita y anatomía de la cabeza del cardinal Armando de Richelieu*, both from 1635 (Marichal 262).

The fact that a direct reference to Montaigne does not appear in any of Cervantes' works should not, however, be taken as a sign of dislike or unfamiliarity on Cervantes' part. Américo Castro observes the undeniable parallels that exist between the two author's intellectual positions, and highlights their commonalities (and divergences) throughout *El pensamiento de Cervantes*. Aubrey Bell strongly argues for a Montaignian influence on Cervantes' views, particularly in regard to reality and the fallibility of the senses, and the relationship between worldly and divine truths.[10] He writes:

> Through all the works of Cervantes runs a continual probing of reality, a search for an irreducible bedrock on which to build a foundation of truth. His resolute inquiry [sic]

[10] "Professor Castro [believes] that Cervantes was profoundly influenced by the thought of Erasmus. But in the first place, although Erasmianism might be in the air of sixteenth-century Europe, it is possible to exaggerate its influence in Spain. Erasmus' moderate spirit of compromise, like that of Sophocles, Horace, and Montaigne, was congenial to the Spanish temperament; and for that very reason his influence must be regarded as complementary rather than initiatory in the history of Spanish culture" (*Cervantes* 176). He recognizes that Castro's linking of Cervantes and Montaigne may be due to an early conviction on Castro's part in the Erasmian vein that permeated both Montaigne's and Cervantes' ideas. Yet, Erasmian thought and Montaignian philosophy are not, by any means, mutually exclusive. Much to the contrary, Montaigne's ideas engage with and answer not only to Erasmus but also to Luther and the Reformation movement in general. Therefore, whatever Bell's opinion of Cervantes' Erasmianism, his observations of Montaigne's presence in Cervantes are still meaningful.

> how far we can rely on our senses or our reason and whether we may believe what we see or must believe without seeing is akin to that of his slightly older French contemporary, the other Michael, Michel de Montaigne, who died when Cervantes was forty-five, thirteen years before the publication of *Don Quixote*. It may be doubted whether Cervantes even knew of his existence, although there was a greater chance of this than he should have been acquainted with Shakespeare. (118)

When considering the dynamics between religion and ethics within Cervantine literature, Bell proposes that "[Cervantes'] standard of virtues and vices often seem to be purely relative" (156). After some consideration, he concludes that Cervantes is a proponent of the view that "kindness, good manners, and consideration for others are an excellent substitute for religion, while even persons of deeply religious mind deride formal religion as so much outworn lumber (157). He then asks: May we not assign to [Cervantes] in Spanish literature the place occupied in that of France by the skeptical philosophy of Montaigne and in that of ancient Greece by the skeptical attitude of 'our Euripides the human'?" (157).

There are a vast number of critics, as the ensuing chapters will review, that use Montaigne's ideas to illustrate tendencies in thought and attitudes during Cervantes' times, and to contextualize some of the author's intellectual preoccupations. However, none of these critics has attempted to trace a more profound engagement by Cervantes with either Montaigne's skeptical philosophy or to his methodology and style. While the following chapters will, hopefully, contribute toward bridging this awkward gap, the fundamental question as to what exactly links these two thinkers needs further exploration.

While Cervantes' Catholicism has been commonly accepted as indisputable, his take on grace and divine intervention in human matters is, as I will argue in chapter two, perhaps more

complex than Montaigne's. Montaigne's belief is that human happiness is unattainable through reason, and only through divine intervention can the individual attain any degree of knowledge, and hence, any degree of happiness. Silver reminds us: "If happiness consists in knowing and is the yield of productive inquiry, one must abandon prospects for happiness and settle for something else, as Sextus does. Even if Montaigne entertains the claim that knowing and being happy are inseparable, finding no reason to think that we can know, he settles for *ataraxia*" (103). While Cervantes appears to depict grace as a catalyst of happiness (or supposedly *happy* endings) in his *Novelas ejemplares*, a closer analysis of several dénouements will review tensions within superficially jolly, ordered, and lawful conclusions that also reveal infringements on personal rights, on justice, and on individual integrities. In these instances, one could argue that grace in Cervantes, unlike in Montaigne, does not merit escaping from the skeptical eye of the reader.

The same potential discordance can be identified in the way Cervantes, again, emphasizes in the conclusions of certain *novelas* the partialities of a decadent urban elite. This well-noted Cervantine theme, this blatant exposure of a time's social disease cannot be easily reconciled to Montaigne's adopted opinion that local laws and public customs should be left unchallenged.[11] John C. Laursen remarks that this mentality of unquestioned civic compliance on Montaigne's part may be associated with a recognition of man's – or more personally, Montaigne's – inconsistent, transient nature:

> His reason, his taste, his passions, his judgment, his values are ever changing and chaotic. He is always trying to create order and regularity in his life. Accordingly, what he needs

[11] I have qualified this idea as "adopted," as in adopted from ancient Pyrrhonists (probably Sextus), given Popkin explanation: "[Pyrrhonists] oppose any assertion whatsoever, and their opposition, if successful, shows the opponent's ignorance; if unsuccessful, their own ignorance. In this state of complete doubt, the Pyrrhonists live according to nature and customs" (51).

> in the public realm is something to hold onto, to provide stability. Thus, he is willing to submit to the laws and customs wherever he is, as a sort of anchor. And he is willing to limit his own reason in this interest. (116)

While Cervantes' personal feelings and conduct may have coincided with those of Montaigne, and while in his fiction his characters end up acting according to custom, albeit corrupt and unjust customs, the undeniable level of criticism embedded in Cervantes' irony forces the careful reader to question what level of adherence to the local socio-political structure Cervantes' actually depicts in his *Novelas*.

On the other hand, and apart from any ideological discordance that may have existed between the two, there exists a binding commonality that links Cervantes' and Montaigne's writing, one that tends to evade characterization. Montaigne's "chance" philosophy, not unlike Cervantes' narrative, is elaborated to cause a displacement in the common and comfortable certainty that one *knows*.[12] In Montaigne's "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," one finds a relentless examination of self and other that uproots and destroys any illusion of knowledge or the possibility of knowledge by reason or the senses alone. While cloaked by the all encompassing subjectivity of fiction, Cervantes emulates this same epistemological insurrection by, for example, reminding the readers of *Don Quijote* that the text they read is a compilation of many interpretations of reality and many personal agendas, as put forth by an apocryphal author, a known transcriber, a translator, a narrator, and finally the reader. This same type of epistemic instability is reproduced in the *Novelas*, and particularly so in the "Coloquio de los perros." The result, most readers would agree, is an unfastening of epistemic attachments and an openness to a

[12] The expression "chance philosopher," as translated by M. A. Screech, reflects Montaigne's self-description as a thinker. In his words, "My ways of life are natural to me: in forming them I have never called in the help of any erudite discipline… I was then astonished myself to find that, by sheer chance, they were in conformity with so many philosophical examples and precepts. Only after my life was settled in its activity did I learn which philosophy was governing it! A new character: a chance philosopher, not a premeditated one! (*Apology* 122)

mode of conceiving knowledge that assimilates, integrates, and accepts propositions, even if for argumentative reasons only, without ever totally committing to one; a detachment in which the willing reader is invited, albeit by a compelling and implacable force, to suspend judgment. In that way, both Cervantes and Montaigne become questioners of unfounded truths and debunkers of common assumptions. Yet, there seems to be one more important commonality that deserves mention. They both manage, despite cultivating different genres, to directly implicate the reader, be it through the direct interpellation observed in their prologues or through the fabric of their narratives. While Montaigne presents himself, through his very personal style, as a candid and sympathetic mirror to his readers, Cervantes achieves an analogous result by creating and developing characters with whom any reader can relate, be it through identification, sympathy, or antipathy. Both authors, more importantly, find themselves at an ideological (or generic, in Cervantes' case) crossroads, where universalities, and particularly those employed in the chivalric romance model challenged by Cervantes, no longer accommodate the need to expose and criticize the particulars within the urban environment that so impede the existence of a dignified and reasonably content humanity.[13] In this way, both Montaigne and Cervantes appeal to the private and to the mundane to create a platform of social (and personal) modification and amelioration. They recognize that the moral and spiritual social advance to which they aspire begins, ultimately, with the individual. This way they come to, paradoxically, develop a narrative that uses a nominalist approach centered on particulars to express universal needs; in other words, they create the French *essai* and the Spanish *novela*. What Alison Calhoun affirms in regard to Montaigne, could easily be transferable to Cervantes:

> Montaigne's articulation of his style as *comique* and *privé* must be framed by his understanding of the paradox of writing (and publishing) a new genre based on the

[13] For more on Cervantes' generic hybridity in the *Novelas ejemplares* see Gerli, Weber, Riley, and El Saffar.

> intimate, of making the private public in his *Essays*. For, if the dignified, public writings we find in the lives of great men are, as we might imagine, somewhat altered and transformed from the reality of these men in their everyday, then how is an author of the self and of the intimate supposed to avoid this inevitable transformation? (304)

In regard to Montaigne, Calhoun finds the answer to this question in the term *comique*. In Cervantes' case, I believe the terms *irónico* and *ironía* are appropriate.

This personal, particular, and critical approach to narrative is evidenced both in the *Novelas ejemplares* and in the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," Montaigne's longest essay and his most eloquent and complete defense of the Pyrrhonian skeptical philosophy. It is believed that Montaigne began composing his "Apologie" between 1575 and 1576, while first studying the writings of Sextus Empiricus. Popkin has labeled this period of unsettling intellectual discovery as Montaigne's *crise pyrrhonianne*, and affirms that it was during this period that he adopted the motto *Que sais-je*? (47). The "Apologie" was finally published with the two first volumes of Montaigne's essays in Bordeaux in 1580, and though not crafted as a piece of fiction, comprehends some of the same urgent themes that Cervantes would articulate in his *Novelas* – human nature, reason, knowledge, happiness, God – and subjects them to the relentless pounding that skepticism is so carefully structured to deliver.[14] Bruce Silver's conclusion contributes an eloquent synopsis of what the arguments in the "Apologie" amount to:

> Montaigne, using everything he could from Sextus' skeptical modes, argues that satisfying the universal desire for happiness occurs only if God saves us from the poverty of our nature. This means that reasoning, our characteristic human talent, is unsuited to satisfying our characteristically human desire. One can, accordingly, draw a moral from *An Apology for Raymond Sebond* that makes it darkly philosophical and consistently

[14] More precisely, the "Apologie" constitutes the twelfth essay of the second volume of essays.

> orthodox: *one cannot be happy and human*. This is Montaigne's answer to the question *Que sçay-je*? (110)

The "darkly philosophical" moral that Silver detects in Montaigne's essay can also be uncovered in the *novelas* that I will discuss in the ensuing chapters. As I mentioned earlier, the *Novelas* offer endings that, in many cases, only partially or superficially provide a satisfactory closure. In many cases, the unresolved issues, the overlooked injustices, the painful and debilitating compromises to which protagonists are led, point to precisely the dark *reality* of a world in which *true* happiness is unachievable due to the individual's inability to detach himself from the world's false lures and turn to higher spiritual aspirations. However, within Cervantes' dark narrative outlook, which as will be argued, is heavily structured around the same skeptic precepts embraced by Montaigne, one fails to find an ultimate consensus, an ultimate answer to the questions it raises, as if Cervantes, perhaps more so than Montaigne, were able to avoid the dogmatism of an unfounded proposition. This aspect of Cervantes' craft is responsible for the variety of readings, sometimes complementary, other times contradictory, that have surfaced throughout the years. While Alban Forcione describes "La gitanilla," for example, as an Erasmian romance in which Preciosa embodies the virtues of the perfect spouse with whom Juan de Cárcamo can achieve the ideal marriage and aspire to ideal spiritual development while on Earth (*Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*), E. Michael Gerli declares this *novela* not to have marriage as its central theme but, instead, "moral freedom, spiritual nobility, and honor based on the observance of Christian principles and the exercise of conscience" ("Romance and Novel" 31). Similarly, when considering "La fuerza de la sangre," William Clamurro – while recognizing that the text is "a kind of 'Black Hole' of interpretation" as it "absorbs and obliterates all readings that seek to explain, justify, or find a rational, meaningful message in the

events of the story" (149) – concurs in part with Forcione and Ruth El Saffar in regard to the prominence of the miraculous element as being central to the development not only of the plot but also of Rodolfo's character. Regarding the conclusion of this *novela* Clamurro writes: "The magic of patience and of female fortitude makes this highly unrealistic miracle possible. The ending of *La fuerza de la sangre* thus closes the circle of incomplete events. The texture and logic of magic and miracle help explain certain unrealistic elements of the action, especially toward the conclusion of the tale" (161). This opinion is heavily contrasted by that of Theresa Sears, who sees in "La fuerza" the full expression of a patriarchal system in which women are objectified in order to be forced into their due place within a "dream of symmetry" in which "two opposite sexes complement each other" (158). Sears refers to the miraculous element with a tone of cynicism, as if recognizing that, within her reading, the miracle is embedded with partiality: "By giving birth to a son, Leocadia passes on nothing of herself, and the narrator considers it a miracle that anyone would believe her story; after all, her two pieces of evidence, the earthly son and the symbol for the heavenly [the stolen crucifix], testify (positively) to Rodolfo's part, but not to her own" (157).

When contemplating the *Novelas ejemplares,* while the list of discordances voiced by critics might appear longer than that of agreements, opinions concerning the overall structural frame that allows such variety of commentary to exist are universal among critics. All, or virtually all, agree that these texts are developed within a web of paradoxes, ambiguities, contrasts, subversions, irony, inequity, and instability, which together conspire to create a fictional world that pushes the reader to reconsider and reevaluate truth and reality, self and other, and to consider an alternative epistemology from which to interpret and participate in the world. In that way, Cervantes' contribution differs from that of Sextus Empiricus and Montaigne

only in regard to its medium, and not in what concerns its message. The following chapters will, hopefully, make evident this striking commonality.

CHAPTER ONE

Questions of Knowledge and Identity:

The Problem of the Criterion in "La gitanilla" and "La ilustre fregona"

A commentary about any work of literature could, presumably, benefit from a short introductory synopsis of the plot to be discussed. Already in this regard one finds that "La gitanilla" offers particular problems, for it seems to defy a simple description or characterization. One could summarize this *novela* as a happy tale of an unusually articulate gypsy girl, whose superior morals and extraordinary sense of integrity serve to validate what is ultimately revealed about her: that she is not of gypsy blood but rather the stolen daughter of well-connected aristocrats, which comes to justify her unusually elevated ethics and explain how and why she has awakened and held the love of a young nobleman. By virtue of fate and her noble essence she ascends into the realm of the aristocracy, where she will enjoy all the enviable prestige and respect that she deserves, and where she will joyfully inhabit an environment that corresponds to her superior nature. On the other hand, one could fairly restate this plot as describing the metamorphosis sustained by a talented, intelligent, and autonomous young girl who lives by her own rules of engagement and morality, and who is forced into giving up her liberty and self-governing attitude when, by virtue of having aristocratic blood and being in love, she is corralled into adopting a social stance of silence and submission.

Both summaries are obviously over simplified, and yet their evident contrast points to the way Cervantes elicits the reader's active participation, forcing her to either opt for one version over another, or to suspend all judgment in regard to the primacy or veracity of either interpretation. Cervantes therefore appears to suggest through fiction that which Montaigne, paradoxically, seeks to accomplish through expository argumentation: convince the reader that

"truth and falsehood exist," and that "within us we have means of looking for them, but not of making any lasting judgment: we have no touchstone" (*Apology* 73).[1] In taking this position Montaigne is reiterating his undeterred allegiance to Pyrrhonian skepticism, whose aim he claims to be "to shake all convictions, to hold nothing as certain, to vouch for nothing" (70). In fact, the dense, contradictory nature of Cervantes' prose as put forth in "La gitanilla" and in many, if not all, of the *Novelas ejemplares*, points directly to a paradoxical need to *assert* in order to *disprove*. Montaigne, too, is acutely aware of this paradox and justifies it partly by the very nature of what the Pyrrhonian skeptic sets out to do:

> When they assert that heavy things tend to fall downwards, they would be most upset if you believed them. They want you to contradict them in order to achieve their end: doubt and suspense of judgment. They only put forward propositions of their own in order to oppose the ones they think we believe in. Accept theirs, and they will gladly maintain the opposite. (70)

Moreover, and at a more semantic level, both Montaigne and Cervantes are also bound by the limitations of language as an inherently dogmatic, positivistic tool. Montaigne recognizes that the skeptic, to do justice to his method, would really be better served by a different linguistic system:

> Pyrrhonist philosophers, I see, cannot express their general concepts in any known kind of speech; they would need a new language: ours is made up of affirmative propositions totally inimical to them – so much so that when they say 'I doubt', you can jump down

[1] I call Montaigne's argumentation paradoxical since one of his most urgent claims is that argumentation through reason is a futile exercise, since both human senses and reason are fallible, unreliable tools in gathering knowledge and considering truth. All quotations attributed to Montaigne will come from his *Apology*, unless otherwise specified.

> their throats and make them admit that they at least know one thing for certain, namely that they doubt. (99)

While Montaigne chooses to openly discuss language's nuisances and weaknesses, Cervantes embraces these technical difficulties and works them into the fabric of his narrative, making of these undesirable incongruities the opaque, seemingly impenetrable maze of juxtaposed *truths* that one finds in "La gitanilla." All these apparent certainties aim at jolting the careful reader, making her "faculty of judgment so unbending and upright that it registers everything but bestows its assessment on nothing" (70).

The text of "La gitanilla" is replete with expressions and situations that either allude to a skeptical treatment of the subject matter or incite the reader to engage in skeptical attitudes. The present discussion cannot consider all of them. However, a juxtaposition of the denouement of "La gitanilla" and its development, based on an analysis of how knowledge of self and identity is constructed, will better illustrate the skeptical nature of the text and reveal Cervantes' application of one of the most pressing issues of skepticism, the problem of the criterion.

Among the many narrative features that conspire to create a romance-like conclusion to this *novela*, which culminates in the anagnorisis that transforms Preciosa into Constanza, the daughter of the *corregidor* of Murcia, one finds a conspicuous contrast between the complex, sometimes contradictory subjectivity of Preciosa's characterization throughout the body of the *novela*, and the objectivity of the criterion stipulated for the verification of her *true* identity.[2] To her gypsy grandmother, despite any genuine affection that there may have existed between the two, Preciosa has been throughout the *novela* the embodiment of potential income and riches.

[2] For more on the hybridity of genres encountered in Cervantes in general see Riley, *Cervantes' Theory of the Novel* and "Cervantes: A Question of Genre"; and El Saffar, *Novel to Romance;* for evidence of hybridity in "La gitanilla" see Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*, 147-157; and Gerli, *Refiguring Authority*, 24-39.

The narrator reveals the sagacity of the old gypsy as she describes her realization of the girl's economic potential: "Y, finalmente, la abuela conoció el *tesoro* que en la nieta tenía, y así, determinó el águila vieja sacar a volar su aguilucho y enseñarle a vivir por sus uñas" (my emphasis, 1: 62).[3] Preciosa's talents are further linked to potential wealth in the following observations: "[S]u taimada abuela echó de ver que tales juguetes y gracias, en los pocos años y en la mucha hermosura de su nieta, habían de ser felicísimos atractivos e incentivos para acrecentar su caudal" (1: 62). Alison Weber connects this acknowledgement of Preciosa's monetary potential with the paradoxical way in which she is characterized in the *novela*, "as immodest but chaste" ("Pentimento" 64) and expresses that, through the grandmother's careful management, "Preciosa is an active participant in the public sector of the urban economy, and her physical mobility as well as her mental and verbal acuity are essential to her success as a *mulier economica*" (67). William Clamurro also emphasizes the role that money plays both in the plot and in the language of "La gitanilla." He comments on the paradox embedded in the denouement, in which through re-gaining her nobility, and hence a right and proximity to money, Preciosa loses her autonomy and free spirit: "Preciosa and her story combine the ironically fortunate resolution of her problem . . . with the subtly destabilizing effects of money, wherein money is present both as an object desired in and for itself and also as a symbol of exchange" (18).

One gathers that money, be it through the objectifying eyes of the grandmother or through Preciosa's own exercise of self-assertion, becomes a paradoxical element that aggravates the task of creating a stable, unambiguous characterization of Preciosa. This problematic definition gets compounded by the complex way in which the page-poet Clemente comes to

[3] All quotations from Cervantes' texts come from Miguel de Cervantes. *Novelas ejemplares*. Ed. Harry Sieber. 2 vols. (Madrid: Cátedra) 2004.

relate to Preciosa. Far from being the symbol of financial prospect that she represents to the old gypsy, to the infatuated poet Preciosa seems to embody the Platonic feminine entity who, through the vivid antithetical constructions of courtly love, comes to symbolize "un imperio, que aunque blando/ nos parezca tiranía"(1: 75). Preciosa, though sweet and tender, through her capacity to enthrall her admirers can subjugate them to her loving and yet tyrannical powers. To Clemente she also appears to be a precious jewel but rather than embodying monetary value, she constitutes a "joya de amor" (1: 76), an acknowledgement that creates not only a contrast to the grandmother's perspective but also, by tapping into the courtly love discourse, a further contrast between a romance convention and an urban novelistic code. Yet, and to add one more problematic contrast to the complex epistemology of the text and of Preciosa's identity, money and materiality do play a role in Clemente and Preciosa's relationship. William Clamurro, when commenting on the first time in which Preciosa finds a wrapped coin in one of Clemente's poems, highlights that "Preciosa seems hardly embarrassed by any mercenary overtones that the message might include. Her nonchalant acceptance of the coin, moreover, is surprisingly more in keeping with the perceived values of the gypsy that she is not than with the generous-spirited woman that she dimly senses she is, or the aristocrat that she will turn out to be" (21).

In fact, the mystery surrounding Preciosa's *true* nature and identity is enhanced by contradictory accounts throughout the *novela*. The very opening of the text, in which the narrator volunteers a biased and merciless account of the gypsy moral makeup – "Parece que los gitanos y gitanas solamente nacieron en el mundo para ser ladrones: nacen de padres ladrones, críanse con ladrones, y, finalmente, salen con ser ladrones corrientes y molientes a todo ruedo" (1: 61) – seems to serve a dual function: to set up a background from which Preciosa will be compared and contrasted, and to bring attention to the fact that, not only through the characters' actions and

words, but also through the narrator's opinions, the text is permeated with a tendency to question the *true* nature of things, hence the word "parece." One can observe that a markedly skeptical attitude is then embedded already in the first word of the text. This harsh assessment of gypsy nature is followed by the contrasting but by no means unambiguous, description of Preciosa: "y lo que es más, que 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. Y, con todo esto era algo desenvuelta; pero no de modo que descubriese algún género de deshonestidad" (1: 62).[4] Weber notes this ambivalence in the definition of Preciosa's character, and comments that it is constructed "on the basis of the paradoxical juxtaposition of supposedly incompatible character traits" ("Pentimento" 59). Weber sees in this contradictory exposition evidence of "a conflict of discourses – one irreverent and parodic, the other reverential and exemplary – that reflects Cervantes' ambivalent response to the humanist ideology embodied in female conduct books" (60). Indeed, the fact that Preciosa can embody such contrasting traits appears to challenge not only the definition of the gypsy character offered in the beginning but also the *truthfulness* of any one-sided, dogmatic identity to which she may be associated. While savvy and calculating, she is also tender and honest; while "an active participant in the public sector of the urban economy" (Weber, "Pentimento" 67), she is chaste and values her virginity more than her own life; while a motherless and fatherless gypsy, she also shows every sign of having been born of *higher* bloodlines.

The skeptical treatment given to the conception of Preciosa's nature, that is, this unequivocal difficulty in apprehending her *essence* within one dogmatic definition, and the

[4] Sears echoes this opinion by pointing out how Cervantes contrasts the repugnancy of the gypsy ethics with the morality (albeit ambivalently so) of Preciosa: "[The first paragraph] leads to the presentation of the protagonist by name, thus providing a contrastive setting for the excellence of the named character, as well as surprising the reader, who is prepared to encounter a character consonant with the previous description." Instead the reader is presented "a perfect gypsy girl who is nothing like the gypsies as the narrator describes them at the beginning" (44).

mystery surrounding her heritage will only become more deeply complex as, particularly in the conclusion, the character attributes and societal values ascribed to the nobility and taken for granted as superior seem to dissolve in a pool of unethical and unjust actions taken by those whose function within society is, supposedly, to uphold and ensure justice. What Alban Forcione observes in relation to *Don Quijote* is remarkably pertinent to Cervantes' engagement with skeptical ideas in "La gitanilla":

> Everywhere in the *Quijote* Cervantes depicts human beings acting and conversing in ways which bear no relationship to an informing conceptual pattern. . . . [Q]uite frequently he allows his character's actions to conflict with expectation he raises in his readers concerning them by initially presenting them in terms of a reductive category based on literary, professional, or class type. This pattern . . . suggests a view of human nature that is far closer to that of contemporary scientific thought and skeptical philosophy than to the Christian Humanist doctrines. . . . For the skeptic, nature is a vast, multifarious, confusing, and exhilarating realm of constantly changing particulars. (*Cervantes and the Humanist Vision* 169)

Despite the fact that Montaigne's "Apologie" was published one year before Francisco Sanches' treatise, Forcione credits Sanches with having exerted great influence on Montaigne and his articulations of skeptical ideas.[5] In the following excerpt Forcione presents a passage from Sanches' *Quod Nihil Scitur* that not only reiterates the connection between Preciosa's antithetical characterizations and the skeptical ideas infused in the text but also greatly resonates with Montaigne's skeptical views:

[5] Forcione does not reveal any particular reason as to why the influence would have been from Sanches to Montaigne and not the other way around. One can speculate that Sanches' post at the University of Toulouse would have given him a position of greater exposure and that his text may have circulated even before its publication. All Forcione mentions is that "Sánchez satetement of skeptic philosophy (*Quod Nihil Scitur)*, which is known to have influenced Montaigne, was written in Toulousse in 1576" (170, n.136).

> As for human nature, not only is it folly to speak of an essence of the species, but it is also illusory to believe in the enduring integrity of an individual: 'in the case of a single man, with the passage of one hour, it cannot be said that he is the same person as before… so great is the indivisibility of an identity that, if you add or subtract a single point from any thing, it is no longer entirely the same thing; but the accidents are of the essence of the individual, and, as they are perpetually varying, they impress their variations on it.' Such is the extreme position of the skeptic philosopher regarding human nature, and there can be no doubt that the treatment of character… in the entire great literary tradition which Cervantes' novels inaugurated is informed to a great extent by a similar attitude toward individual experience. (*Humanist Vision* 170)

To the Montaignian parallels previously observed, one could add the fact that both the philosopher and Cervantes tend to point to the simplicity of origins and of spirit as a more direct path toward developing soundness of character, and certainly in Montaigne's mind, a closer proximity to God. While Montaigne focuses his critique on the arrogance brought on by the individual's attachment to false claims to knowledge, Cervantes selects the aristocracy of "La gitanilla" as the target of his irony. Their arrogance and hypocrisy, which stem not only from the delusion of knowledge but, more precisely, from their perceived sovereignty and superiority, makes them comparable to the dogmatists Montaigne so deeply opposes: "Among the necessities of life learning seems to me to rank with fame, noble blood and dignity or, at most, with beauty, riches and such other qualities which do indeed contribute a great deal to life, but from a distance and somewhat more in the mind than in nature." To this he adds: "[O]nly humility and submissiveness can produce a good man" (53). As mirrored in "La gitanilla," these thoughts allow the supposed ignorance and simplicity of the gypsy nature to be positively contrasted with

the unfounded superiority and righteousness of the nobility. As a result, one is coerced into reevaluating common hierarchies that now come to elude certitude and conventions, and that appear hollow and in desperate need of reconsideration. But as always, Cervantes complicates this paradigm, for although she *is* a gypsy, Preciosa lacks the humility and simplicity that would make her a foil for the arrogant dogmatism of the nobility. She not only recognizes, along with everyone else, her own wit and verbal aptitude, but also seems to derive pleasure and pride from them. When asked by a spectator about where she gets all her knowledge, Preciosa replies: "¿Quién me lo ha de enseñar? ¿No tengo yo mi alma en el cuerpo? ¿No tengo ya quince años? Y no soy manca, ni renca, ni estropeada del entendimiento. Los ingenios de las gitanas van por otro norte que los de las demás gentes: siempre se adelantan a sus años" (1: 76). Also of interest, particularly in light of both Montaigne's and Cervantes' Catholicism, is the fact that Preciosa's articulateness is associated several times in the text as the work of the devil.[6] She herself does not hesitate to allude to this awkward partnership: "No hay muchacha de doce [años] que no sepa lo que de veinte y cinco, porque tienen por maestros y preceptores al diablo y al uso, que les enseña en una hora lo que habían de aprender en un año" (1: 76-77). Also her grandmother finds in the devil an explanation for the young gypsy's wit and resolute personality: "Satanás tienes en tu pecho, muchacha . . . ¡miras que dices cosas que no las diría un colegial de Salamanca" (1: 87). And as if to show that this connection is not one present only in the mind of gypsies, the impoverished *teniente* also echoes the same type of remark: "¡El diablo tienen estas gitanas en el cuerpo!" (1: 82). This disposition to associate an attachment to one's opinions and to the verbal acuity that articulates them with devilish affairs is conspicuously found in Montaigne's "Apologie," where he reminds the reader that it was "the Devil [who] first poured his poison into

[6] This highlights a particular contrast within the identity of Preciosa when taking into account Forcione's view of her as the embodiment of "female perfection" (116) as modeled after Erasmus Catholic heroine Maria. See *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*, 113-136.

our ears with promises about knowledge and understanding: '*Eritis sicut dii, scientes bonum et malum'* [Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil] . . . . There is a plague in man, his opinion that he knows something" (53). Preciosa therefore may stand both as a model of the Catholic humanist embodiment of female virtue and as a spiritually plagued but proud pupil of the devil.

The insistence on contrasting perceived realities and identities through skeptical strategies and on cementing the paradoxical nature of Preciosa (and of other characters as well) permeates the text. Preciosa's contradictory personality traits, beyond being purely imposed by outside observers, are also acknowledged by her, among other instances, when she responds to Juan de Cárcamo's marriage proposal: "aunque soy gitana pobre y humildemente nacida, tengo un cierto espiritillo fantástico acá dentro, que a grandes cosas me lleva . . . y aunque de quince años . . . soy ya vieja en los pensamientos y alcanzo más de aquello que mi edad promete, más por mi buen natural que por la experiencia" (1: 85). The narrator, as observed in the opening paragraph of the *novela*, also provides information that invites consideration about what is "natural" in Preciosa, and what is learned through "experiencia." The previous instance, in which her maturity is considered a natural attribute not developed through experience, is contrasted with the description of her speech, in which the opposite is being argued: "Quiérenme dar barato, ceñores? – dijo Preciosa, que, como gitana, hablaba ceceoso, *y esto es artificioso en ellas, que no naturaleza*" (1: 72, emphasis added). Again, the skeptic vein is emphasized one more time through continuous juxtaposition of learned, performative behavior and perceived essential nature, particularly as both conspire to create a distinct version of self, a distinct identity to project onto the world. Montaigne, perhaps borrowing from Sanches as suggested earlier by Forcione, realizes the temporality, the incompleteness, and the deceitfulness of any finalization of identity or selfhood, and cautions against the temptation to create an attachment to such

constructions or propositions: "[T]here is no permanent existence either in our being or in that of objects. We ourselves, our faculty of judgment and all mortal things are flowing and rolling ceaselessly; nothing certain can be established about one from the other, since both judged and judging are ever shifting and changing" (186). Cervantes' construction of identity and its problematic juxtaposition to nature in "La gitanilla" seems to concur with Montaigne's assertion.

Finally, for Juan de Cárcamo, the young nobleman who would pass for a gypsy in order to earn Preciosa's trust, love, and eventually her autonomy through marriage, Preciosa constitutes, not surprisingly, an ambivalent symbol of the idealized courtly lady and of a very sensual type of desire, one that expresses itself through uncontrolled jealousy and finds in marriage an honorable and suitable means of fulfillment. Juan's desire, whether physical, spiritual, or both, goes therefore beyond that of the page-poet Clemente, for Juan seeks not only to contemplate and celebrate Preciosa's beauty and moral attributes, but also to possess her in marriage.[7] This two-fold impulse to secure Preciosa for himself is problematized by the way in which Juan, at the time of their introduction and his proposal, highlights the differences between the two, emphasizing always his tangible, material superiority over her, assuming that what he has is something that she values. The only two words Juan uses in his introduction that describe any of Preciosa's identifying attributes are "discreción" and "belleza" (1: 83).[8] Taking into account Sebastián Covarrubias' definition of "discreción" – "la cosa dicha o hecha con seso" (321) – one assumes that, beside her physicality, the only observable or remarkable feature of Preciosa's personality that Juan would have noticed at this very early stage of their relationship

[7] Forcione sees this all-encompassing desire to marry as a further demonstration of the Erasmian marriage ideal, in which the relationship between husband and wife affords them the possibility of idealized spiritual perfection. In this Erasmian construct, physical desire and sex would not have belonged to the sphere of "contaminating concupiscence" but to the realm of "joyous intimacy and legitimate, healthy pleasure" (*Cervantes and the Humanist Vision* 101).

[8] The gypsy grandmother will reiterate "discreción" when she gives Preciosa permission to answer Juan's proposal: "Responde lo que quisieres, nieta . . . que yo sé que tienes discreción para todo" (85).

would have been her judgment and wit.[9] This is not insignificant, particularly given the behavioral transformation that she undergoes at the conclusion of the *novela*. But for now, his characterization of her, his construction of her identity, seems to be structured mostly in negative terms, in that he chooses to identify her mainly by what she is not and has not, rather than by what she is and does have. Though he calls her and her grandmother "señoras" (1: 83), he immediately finds it necessary to comment on his choice of words, as if acknowledging that, in reality, they are not: "que siempre os he de dar este nombre, si el cielo mi pretensión favorece" (1: 84). He goes on to mention and display all the very tangible signs of his social superiority, all the elements that, in his mind, not only prove impeccable adequacy and eminence, but also define him: "soy caballero, como lo puede mostrar este hábito – y apartando el herreruelo, descubrió en el pecho uno de los más calificados que hay en España" (1: 84). Juan therefore exercises his presumed autonomy in how he fashions his persona, and he does it not only by offering a version of his identity that exudes superiority but also by connoting an inferior version of Preciosa's. Stephen Greenblatt's comment is pertinent to Juan's behavior: "Autonomy is an issue [concerning self-fashioning] but not the sole or even the central issue: the power to impose a shape upon oneself is an aspect of the more general power to control identity – that of others at least as often as one's own" (1).

What Juan does next constitutes a concerted effort to posit an identity of himself that allows for no doubt or hesitation as to the soundness of his character (which he equals to soundness of heritage). His principal goal here is to convey an unshakable knowledge of himself, a knowledge based on a criterion of objective, uncontestable *truths* about the core of who he is: the noble son of a noble father:

[9] Covarrubias states: "tomase seso por el juizio y la cordura" (2: 27).

> [S]oy hijo de Fulano – que por buenos respectos aquí no se declara su nombre –, estoy debajo de su tutela y amparo; soy hijo único, y el que espera un razonable mayorazgo. Mi padre está aquí en la Corte pretendiendo un cargo, y ya está consultado, y tiene casi ciertas esperanzas de salir con él. Y con ser de la calidad y nobleza que os he referido, y de la que casi se os debe ya de ir trasluciendo, con todo eso, quisiera ser un gran señor para levantar a mi grandeza la humildad de Preciosa, haciéndola mi igual y mi esposa. (1: 84) [10]

Preciosa is hereby offered a quick ascension to a "grandeza" that, as Juan seems to believe at this point in the plot, only blood and all its material derivatives can offer. But more importantly, she is asked to accept the truth of the "grandeza" Juan offers her, a truth of identity based on a criterion of nobility of blood and social superiority. What one observes, therefore, is an identity fashioning that fully highlights Preciosa's otherness; an otherness that is ratified not only by her social status but also by the implied assumption that she lacks the purity of blood that he claims to have, and which he *proves* by displaying his "hábito más calificado que hay en España." Preciosa's apparent gypsy origin may prompt Juan to look upon her as a variant of a *conversa* or *morisca*, which would certainly explain his insistence on his own perceived "grandeza" and her implied *bajeza*. Max Torres offers an effective account of the issue of social exclusiveness in the Iberian Peninsula of Early Modernity, and explains how this concept is tied to those of honor and heritage:

> La sociedad estamental diferenciaba sus individuos a través de su pertenencia social, zanjada por los imaginarios del nacimiento y la sangre. Si bien existieron vías de ascenso

[10] Again, the concreteness, the objectivity, and the mundaneness of Juan's offer and of the world he depicts highly contrasts with the ideal, spiritually perfecting Erasmian world proposed by Forcione. Yet, instead of highlighting any possible miss-assessment on Forcione's part, what this example illustrates is Cervantes' depth of understanding of the utter paradoxes encompassed in human nature and all the social constructs that it engineers.

> social, no es atrevido afirmar que dicha sociedad era jerárquica. La fama y el honor eran principios que determinaban la inclusión y la exclusión en el marco del orden estamental. El honor se derivaba del linaje, del oficio y del estamento y operaba como capital simbólico. Con todo, el honor no era innato, inmutable y perpetuo: debía ser custodiado y protegido. La honra no constituía una categoría cerrada y podía ser variable: los criminales, los vagabundos, los magos, los verdugos, los sepultureros y las prostitutas, todo ellos eran percibidos como deshonrados —por supuesto—, sin olvidarnos de los herejes y los judíos. (35-36)

Juan nonetheless complements the objective, material nature of his proposal with a skillful, subjective, and contrasting display of courtly love, proper of a young nobleman like himself, in which he vows to "serve Preciosa in the manner she most likes" for "her will is his will," and to allow her to impress into his soul that which she may wish to (1: 84, my translation). Finally, Juan considers the effectiveness of his own methods by contemplating, even if rhetorically, the possibility that Preciosa and the grandmother may not have bought into his argument: "Si creéis esta *verdad*, no admitirá ningún desmayo mi esperanza; pero si no me creéis, siempre me tendrá temeroso vuestra duda" (1: 84, emphasis added).[11] It is unclear whether, when considering the forcefulness of his exposition, Juan is referring to their belief in his noble identity or in the love he professes to have for her. The fact that he continues his exposition by stating his name, his father's address, describing his father's level of visibility in and familiarity with the court, that is, the fact that Juan drastically interjects his courtly-love discourse and resumes the concrete description of observable social facts, leads one to think that

[11] Since patents of purity of blood could be purchased, Juan may have had a concrete reason to think that Preciosa doubted his claims. For more on the issue of purity of blood in Early Modern Spain see Sicroff.

what he doubts is whether they trust his credentials, and not his love.[12] Also, the way in which he finalizes his proposal, by offering the gypsies a hefty monetary *evidence* of his "grandeza," intensions, and identity, shows that what he most wants to accentuate is, indeed, the veracity of his own characterization.

As articulated by the Pyrrhonian skeptics, *real*, uncontestable *truth* can only prevail if the criterion upon which it is formulated and juxtaposed is as uncontestable as that which it proves. To Juan, the absolute veracity of his "grandeza" cannot be verified, as proof of identity and of character, by any criterion other than one that establishes his privileged family ties. Therefore, one must note an important aspect of the way in which the paradoxical axis of "La gitanilla" is delineated: the way in which Preciosa is described within the text, by contrasting and contradictory impressions, highlights a more subjective, a more intuitive approach to composing identity, one that aims more at describing than at defining; one that is more inclined to accept the contradictory complexities of human nature, and that seeks to avoid the fixation of a dogmatic *truth* in favor of either more flexible, all-encompassing considerations, or a suspension of judgment altogether.[13] On the other hand, Juan's approach to defining identity, in this case his own, is marked by the inflexibility of an adherence to a criterion that, in theory, proves itself unshakable and impenetrable. His noble heritage, his impeccable credentials and those of his father and the concreteness of his assertions derive the criterion by which he proves to be who he claims to be. Juan believes that knowledge and truth are not only possible, but he proposes a criterion through which to prove them.

[12] The underlying feeling being that, if she accepted his nobility, she would automatically accept his love, or at least his marriage proposal, whether his feelings were true or not, for his offer would have become too attractive and impossible to walk away from; unless, of course, he could not convince her that, in spite of all the proofs given, he was indeed of noble origins.

[13] One must recognize that, within the Pyrrhonian skeptic mindset, even a "flexible, all-encompassing" consideration constitutes dogmatism, as it upholds the primacy of one proposition over another; the Pyrrhonians do accept though, that for the sake of advancing an argument, one has to secure a fixed position and consequently succumb to dogmatizing.

Pyrrhonian skeptics would naturally argue against the dogmatism of Juan's assumption and method. Their view is that because of the unreliability of the senses and through the misjudgment of susceptible reason one cannot verify truth. Montaigne voices great discontent at individuals (and in this case at philosophers) who through faulty, deluded reasoning, come to think of themselves and of whatever inherited or acquired attributes they may have as products of their own virtue: "It does seem true that Nature allotted us one thing only to console us for our pitiful, wretched condition: arrogance" (54). The attitude exhibited here by Juan not only illustrates this opinion but also resonates with the arrogant picture Juan paints of himself. Montaigne advises: "We must trample down this stupid vanity, violently and boldly shaking the absurd foundations on which we base such false opinions. So long as Man thinks that he has means and powers deriving from himself he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Master" (55). Therefore, by presenting such a sharp contrast between the way Preciosa's and Juan's identities are conceived and conveyed, Cervantes brings into the skeptical discourse of "La gitanilla" the central, most debated issue of skepticism: the problem of the criterion.

The question of establishing a system in which knowledge, and hence truth, can be ascertained beyond doubt has, as many have shown, consumed the dialogue about skepticism since classical antiquity.[14] Sextus Empiricus provides the first recorded account of the problem of criterion in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (Amico 17), and a vast number of philosophers, from Montaigne to Descartes, from Hume to Kant and Hegel, as far as Wittgenstein and beyond, have subsequently commented on the subject. The reason why this problem is so essential to skepticism and to epistemology as a whole is found in its metatheoretical, metaepistemological nature, that is, the fact that to prove knowledge (and truth) one needs a set criterion that, in its

[14] See Floridi and Amico.

own right, must be proved sound and truthful so that it can serve as a rightful authority of what is being proposed. Luciano Floridi resumes the problem in the following way:

> The necessity of providing its own metatheoretical validation puts a theory of knowledge in an apparently inevitable quandary, since we seem to be forced to admit at least one of the following alternatives: either the fundamental premisses of the theory cannot be further justified, and so they must be merely assumed or hypothesized without any supplementary warrant; or they can be justified because they presuppose an antecedent premiss, but in the latter case also, either we are back to the mere assumption of such an anterior premiss, or its justification is provided by the theory itself in a circular way; or finally it gives rise to an endless chain of reasons in which the justification of each premiss presupposes the justification of the previous premiss and this of still another and so on *ad infinitum*. (205)

Montaigne's statement of the problem of the criterion comes enveloped by his characteristic informality and does not appear until the final pages of his "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," which may reflect not only the practical, paradoxically anti-philosophical nature of his philosophy, but also the fact that, unlike Sextus, Montaigne does find in God and divine revelation an answer to the problem. Yet, by deliberately stating it in his "Apologie," he allows for the strengthening, in precise and concrete ways, of the allegiance that he so obviously wants to establish with Pyrrhonian thought, and provides one more traceable means of illustrating one of his most imperative points, that knowledge and truth are not verifiable through reason and the senses. It is plausible to think that Montaigne may have seen God's omnipotent presence as capable of reducing the problem of the criterion to the category of one more example of human wretchedness. Montaigne's rambling style may be to blame for the late direct mention of this

issue within his "Apologie," but the constancy of subject matter observed in his text points, in one way or another, to the utmost importance of the problem of the criterion to his thinking.

Montaigne's elucidation of the problem seems to have been directly based, according to Robert Amico, on Sextus Empiricus' exposition in his *Outlines*.[15] In it, Sextus indicates that the problem being considered is not "about whether knowledge is possible or not, but rather seems to be about the impossibility of settling a dispute . . . between those who claim the truth of some impression and those who deny its truth" (Amico 20). Amico identifies here a point of possible divergence between Montaigne's and Sextus' thoughts, a divergence that goes beyond the fact that Sextus phrases his exposition in terms of "an *argument* where there is a *dispute* concerning a criterion of truth" (Amico 18). Amico labels this divergence as "Montaigne's trace of dogmatism" (41), and concludes that it derives from Montaigne's assertion that knowledge and truth are not accessible through either the senses or reason, but only through grace. This statement constitutes a dogmatist position, which Sextus avoids by not concluding one way or another, opting instead to claim that one cannot arrive at such a knowledge, which causes one in turn to suspend judgment.[16]

Whether consciously avoiding the philosophical discourse implied in the argumentative dispute offered in Sextus' explanation, or whether simply favoring a more colloquial, reader-friendly approach, Montaigne offers the following illustration:

> We register the appearances of objects; to judge them we need an instrument of judgment; to test the veracity of that instrument we need practical proof; to test that proof

[15] Luciano Floridi, on the other hand, suggests as Montaigne's sources either Sextus' *Outlines* or Diogens Laertius' *Life of Pyrrho*: "[Montaigne] did not read ancient Greek very well but both works had been translated into Latin in a single volume by Henricus Stephanus in 1562 and again in 1569. However, since the second edition also contained the translation of *Against the Dogmatists*, and in the *Essays* there are no explicit quotations from or references to this work, the Latin translation he had read was probably the former" (211-212).

[16] For more on this divergence see Amico, pgs.40-43.

> we need an instrument. We are going round in circles. The senses themselves being full of uncertainty cannot decide the issue of our dispute. It will have to be Reason, then. But no Reason can be established except by another Reason. We retreat into infinity. (185)[17]

Cervantes may or may not have been acquainted with the articulation of the problem of the criterion per se. His insistence on incorporating a fictionalized version of it more than once in his *Novelas,* as will be shown, indicates if not a direct acquaintance with the theme, at least a general awareness of the imperativeness of its tenets within skeptical argumentation and epistemology as a whole, and definitely of its possibilities as a narrative device. A clear, albeit fictionalized, allusion to the problem of the criterion as one observes in "La gitanilla" could hardly be accidental within a text that shows every mark of a sustained engagement with skeptical ideas and perhaps with skeptical philosophy itself. But a further point asks to be made, one that accentuates Cervantes' possible involvement with a particularly Montaignian kind of skepticism. Maureen Ihrie adverts that, in spite of the obvious parallels and inferred dialogisms, her study in no way "[implies] that the *Quijote* was conceived as a treatise on skepticism or a gloss on Francisco Sánchez" (30). Similarly, this commentary does not suggest a strictly philosophical undertaking on Cervantes' part, but it does sustain that the very reason why a philosophy similar to Montaigne's would have been so attractive to Cervantes is precisely because it lacks the technicality of the purely philosophical approach (which is much more

[17] For the sake of establishing a comparison, I include here Sextus' text, quoted from Amico's book: "This dispute, then, they will declare to be either capable or incapable of decision; and if they shall say it is incapable of decision, they will be granting on the spot the propriety of suspension of judgment, while if they say it admits of decision, let them tell us whereby it is to be decided, since we have no accepted criterion, and do not even know, but are still inquiring, whether any criterion exists. Besides, in order to decide the dispute which has arisen about the criterion, we must possess an accepted criterion by which we shall be able to judge the dispute; and in order to possess an accepted criterion, the dispute about the criterion must first be decided. And when the argument thus reduces itself to a form of circular reasoning the discovery of the criterion becomes impracticable, since we do not allow them to adopt a criterion by assumption, while if they offer to judge the criterion by a criterion we force them to a regress *ad infinitum*. And furthermore, since the demonstration requires a demonstrated criterion, while the criterion requires an approved demonstration, they are forced into circular reasoning" (17)

evident, for example, in Sanches' style), without compromising either the subject matter or the intellectual positions offered by Pyrrhonism. Moreover and most importantly, Cervantes would have found in Montaigne's highly critical tone and in his discursive, sometimes incongruous, philosophical articulations, a perfect mirror from which to reflect his criticism of the evils of a decadent society while unmistakably upholding his Catholic faith, even when, as I will later show, the ambiguity of his criticism may implicate, inadvertently or not, the very faith that he seems to uphold.

The way in which Juan de Cárcamo proposes to create a doubt-free identity of himself illustrates Cervantes' play with skepticism and, more precisely, with the problem of the criterion. But this example is by no means the only one or the most pressing one within "La gitanilla." The ending of this *novela* is structured around the tasks of first revealing and then proving, beyond doubt, Preciosa's *true* identity, which will allow her to metamorphose into a *noble* Constanza and take her due place among the nobility to which she belongs. This *proving* will take place, again, by means of appealing to a concrete, uncontestable criterion of truth set by Preciosa's gypsy grandmother, who was responsible for stealing baby Constanza from her rightful parents and raising her as Preciosa, an orphan gypsy. Fate reunites all these seemingly antithetical worlds – of gypsies and aristocrats, criminals and supposedly law-abiding citizens, thieves and seeming victims of theft, dishonorable and allegedly honorable folk – when, unjustly accused of having committed theft and justly sentenced to die for murder, Juan (here under the pretension of being the gypsy Andrés Caballero) is separated from Preciosa. She unknowingly ends up at the house of her legitimate parents, crying her sorrows at her mother's feet and pleading that her father, the *corregidor* of Murcia, spare the life of her beloved future husband. Despite any intuitive feelings that her mother may have had – "que a mí me está diciendo el alma desde el instante que mis

ojos la vieron" (1: 128) – the biological connection between mother and daughter was, up to this point, unknown to all except the putative grandmother who had been responsible for their separation.

Whether prompted by the suffering of Preciosa, by a desire to find a way to counteract the grim fate of the gypsies who were incarcerated, or purely by fear of her own fate in the afterlife, the grandmother states: "Si las buenas nuevas que os quiero dar, señores, no merecieren alcanzar en albricias el perdón de un gran pecado mío, aquí estoy para recibir el castigo que quisiéredes darme" (1: 127). The old gypsy presents the c*orregidor* and his wife not with the simple news of Preciosa's identity but rather with a series of tangible proofs that, to their eyes, would undoubtedly establish knowledge and fulfill the criterion of truth about the girl's identity. The old gypsy produces a small chest that contains the jewels Preciosa wore at the time of her abduction, and a self-incriminating, handwritten note registering the names and social credentials of Preciosa and her parents – "*Llamábase la niña doña Constanza de Azevedo y de Meneses; su madre, doña Guiomar de Meneses, y su padre, don Fernando de Azevedo, caballero del hábito de Calatrava*" (1: 127, original font) – the day, hour, and year the abduction took place, and a description of the jewels Preciosa wore at the time.

Two aspects of the grandmother's action deserve special attention: first, the fact that despite the danger of self-incrimination, she would have felt it necessary or wise to write the note and keep it in her possession; second, the fact that the contents of her note, coupled with the concrete evidence found in the jewels themselves, come to mirror the exact kind of description, the exact kind of identity verification, the very same criterion of truth that Juan, a nobleman, established in his attempt to convey his *true* identity to Preciosa.

In comparing the symmetry between the grandmother's and Juan's criterion of truth, one finds it unconventional that a gypsy would have conceived and *proved* truth of identity by the same means, that is, through the same criterion used by an aristocrat. After all, the way in which the two groups seem to have been characterized, by means of social distance and moral contrast, suggests an inherited, essential chasm between the two, one that underscores their ideological differences and minimizes any commonalities that may exist between them. The subjectivity, the unorthodox nature of the gypsy character and way of life is evidenced, for example, in the way the elder gypsy man describes their family structure and value system to Juan. The emphasis is given to a casual, more modest way of life, one that clearly contrasts with the life of the aristocracy: "la libre y ancha vida nuestra no está sujeta a melindres ni a muchas ceremonias" (1: 101). This gypsy life vibrates with nature and relies on the individual's industry for its success. It also disregards traditional, aristocratic social conventions, as the old man explains, "[vivimos] sin entremeternos con el antiguo refrán: 'Iglesia, o mar, o casa real'" (1: 102). Ultimately, he delivers perhaps what would have sounded to Juan as a blunt criticism of his caste's way of living and interpreting the world: "No nos fatiga el temor de perder la honra, ni nos desvela la ambición de acrecentarla, ni sustentamos bandos, ni madrugamos a dar memoriales, ni a acompañar magnates, ni a solicitar favores" (1: 102).

In the face of this undeniable ideological divide, one is compelled to think that the ever calculating grandmother, anticipating a situation in which she could have profited from revealing the biological identity of Preciosa, chose to risk her safety by harboring the damning evidence of the girl's abduction. She had, after all, dealt with *tenientes* and *alcaldes* and *jueces* and *corregidores* before, and knew how to work herself into their economy of corruption and bribes. As she herself explains to Preciosa: "Cien escudos quieres tú que deseche, Preciosa . . . ? Y si

alguno de nuestros hijos, nietos o parientes cayere, por alguna desgracia, en manos de la justicia, ¿habrá favor tan bueno que llegue a la oreja del juez y del escribano como destos escudos, si llegan a sus bolsas?" (1: 88). Ever the survivor, the shrewd grandmother conquers the ideological divide that separates her and the aristocratic order by assimilating, if not both discourses, at least both modes of operation. This explains why she should have chosen to prove identity by selecting a criterion of truth that would so resemble the one chosen by Juan. Both establish their truths by means of citing parentage, social credentials, and by emphasizing the ostentation of their attire. Juan does it because that is all he knows; the old gypsy does it because that is what she has come to see as an effective strategy within a world order that is not her own, but to which, in a twisted, dark way, she has come to belong.

What is most interesting is that in spite of their investment in a doubt-proof criterion, neither Juan nor the grandmother was able to enjoy the feeling that, indeed, they had demonstrated their propositions beyond doubt. Juan is compelled to urge Preciosa to come to Madrid and ascertain the truth of his identity and status for herself – "vecinos tiene [la casa de mi padre] de quien podréis informaros, y aun de los que no son vecinos también, que nos es tan escura la calidad y el nombre de mi padre y el mío que no le sepan en los patios de palacio y aun en toda corte" (1: 84) – while the grandmother is forced to wait for Preciosa's mother to verify whether or not the young gypsy sustained a mole under her left breast and a couple of webbed toes, the two features that come to solidify the truth of who she is.[18] Only after submitting the grandmother's standards to her own criterion did Preciosa's mother feel certain about the young gypsy's identity: "Recebid, señor, a vuestra hija Costanza, que ésta es *sin duda*; no *lo dudéis*,

[18] One cannot avoid recalling the references to how the gypsies could so proficiently alter the appearance of a mule, and wonder whether or not they could have done the same to a person.

señor, en ningún modo, que la señal de los dedos juntos y la del pecho he visto, y más, que a mí me lo está diciendo el alma desde el instante que mis ojos la vieron" (1: 128, emphasis added).[19]

The fact that the problem of the criterion is explicitly invoked, not once but twice within the plot, and at strategically defining moments – when Juan introduces himself to Preciosa and proposes to marry her, and when the abduction of Constanza by the old gypsy is revealed, allowing a *happy* ending to ensue – should be evaluated in light of the pervasively unstable epistemologies that converge in "La gitanilla." Even if analyzed mainly from a single perspective, that of skepticism, it could easily be noted that all the epistemic destabilizing devices employed by Cervantes – contrasts, paradoxes, subverted stereotypes, etc. – conspire to challenge preconceived notions of human nature and behavior, and hence society's structures as a whole. All principal characters in the *novela* seem to be forged out of conflicting personality and moral traits; all seem to evade a dogmatic characterization, which invites the reader to pause and suspend judgment about *true* essences and identities. The inclusion of the problem of the criterion, particularly in regard to establishing identity, reflects the author's concern with the hypocrisy of his society and may confirm his belief in skepticism as a tool to expose and challenge it, particularly due to this philosophy's capacity to argue against and demolish any dogmatist proposition. The way in which Cervantes appropriates the arguments and nullifying power of skepticism throughout the text and particularly at its conclusion, may reflect the *crise pyrrhonienne* of his era or, in a more particular way, his anxieties over the constitution and role of the self within an ever changing world of appearances. This anxiety, if genuine, establishes a commonality with Montaigne's attitude, and may explain the Montaignian echoes found throughout Cervantes' narrative in "La gitanilla." Anthony Cascardi comments on the

[19] The text presents several inconsistencies as to the spelling of Constanza. Here, one notices it spelled without the "n", as Costanza.

relationship between Montaigne's style, his idea of selfhood, and his reaction to the world as he perceived it:

> Montaigne takes the diversity of historical experience and cultural practices as reason to renounce the possibility that transcendental arguments might ever serve to 'ground' the self. He registers the experience of an 'unruly age' ("un siècle desbordé") in the disparity between his desire for a stable form of self-governance and an essentially unmasterable past. . . . [T]he *Essais* present a self immersed in, and sometimes absorbed by, historical change. If the Cartesian subject assumes a stance in which reason asserts its independence even from the rhetoric of its own discourse, the Montaignian self claims to be consubstantial with the discursive modes of its self-presentation, while at the same time questioning the degree to which such modes can ever be fully appropriated or 'owned.' (63)

It can be argued that Cervantes' "La gitanilla" expresses a consubstantiation between the fashioned identity and the discursive modes of self-presentation. One can see that in the parallel way in which Juan de Cárcamo thinks of himself and presents himself to the world, or in the way Preciosa recognizes the very wit and talent that make her commercially viable as a performer. Yet, all of these self-fashioned identities are continuously being challenged and questioned throughout the text. At the conclusion of this *novela*, with the *truth* being revealed and identities being re-covered, one could claim that a family once broken is now reunited, a gypsy is restored to her place among the nobility, a nobleman is freed of his temporary gypsy cloak and of the threat of a rope around his neck; a happy, long-lived, and ideally Christian marriage will ensue in which both spouses will endeavor to achieve mutual happiness and spiritual elevation. In other words, the contrasts, inconsistencies, and instabilities will all cease in order to accommodate the

one dimensional romance-type of characters that a romance-like ending calls for. But the novelistic world of "La gitanilla," if it is to remain *true* to itself, cannot encompass such predisposed simplicity. Instead, through the process of apparent disentanglement that is put into motion by the activation of the problem of the criterion, one arrives at a new set of contradictory identity-defining attributes, and at a new version of reality that further evades a dogmatic qualification. The sagacious, criminal grandmother comes to fully confess (for reasons that remain unclear) her culpability and ends up being addressed as "mujer buena, antes ángel que gitana" (1: 127) by Constanza's mother. Constanza's noble, righteous father, a *corregidor* who, the narrator makes clear, fully expects to be offered and accept a bribe by the gypsy grandmother, allows, in securing Juan's freedom, a murderer to go free.[20] The *corregidor* then goes on to buy the silence and forgiveness of the dead victim's uncle for two thousand *ducados.*[21] Juan, who first presents himself as a flamboyant, impulsively infatuated young nobleman, and who subsequently appears to give up both his impulsivity and ostentation in exchange for the self-sacrifice of devaluing himself as a gypsy in order to become more valuable to Preciosa's eyes, ends up succumbing to the deeply instilled need to uphold and protect his honor and, emulating the allegedly criminality of a gypsy, or rather, that of a dishonored nobleman, kills.

Of all these evidently conflicting and problematic final portraits, Preciosa's is the one that perhaps elicits the most consideration. Gerli has described her as "a character who takes control of her destiny and, while doing so, challenges all preconceived notions the reader might have

[20] "El corregidor, creyendo que algunos hurtos de los gitanos quería [la abuela gitana] descubrirle, por tenerle propicio en el pleito del preso, al momento se retiró con ella y con su mujer en su recámara" (1: 127).
[21] "Rompióse 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, vio tomados los caminos de su venganza, pues no había de tener lugar el rigor de la justicia para ejecutarla en el yerno del Corregidor. . . . Recibió el tío del muerto la promesa de dos mil ducados, que le hicieron que le hicieron por que bajase la querella y perdonase a Don Juan" (1: 133).

about her" ("Romance and Novel" 32). He also acknowledges that "[i]f Preciosa is noble, she is so not by patrimony but by virtue of conscience and her desire to be so" (33). Gerli concludes: "In short, though conceived from the matter of romance, she belongs to the tradition of idiosyncratic characters who populate the novel. Her virtue springs from within, is shaped by personal conviction, and is grounded in reality" (34).

Indeed, Preciosa has taken control of her fate. Unlike other gypsies she does not steal; unlike Juan, she refuses to carelessly commit to marriage, and when given to him by the gypsy elder she refuses to abide by the laws that govern the gypsy clan:

> Puesto que estos señores legisladores han hallado por sus leyes que soy tuya, y que por tuya te me han entregado, yo he hallado por la ley de mi voluntad, que es la más fuerte de todas, que no quiero serlo si no es con las condiciones que antes que aquí viniese entre los dos concertamos. . . . Estos señores bien pueden entregarte mi cuerpo; pero no mi alma, que es libre y nació libre, y ha de ser libre en tanto que yo quisiere. (1: 103)

It is impossible not to retroactively measure the intent and intensity of these words against the very contrasting ones that Preciosa, now embodying a very different Constanza, utters at the conclusion of the *novela*. As if refashioned or re-configured by the absolute weigh of her newly acquired nobility, Preciosa seems to instinctively resign her autonomous behavior in favor of a more subdued and subjugated one. When asked by her newly identified parents whether or not she held any affection for Juan, she answers uncharacteristically: "que no más que de aquella que le obligaba a ser agradecida a quien se había querido humillar a ser gitano por ella; pero que ya no se extendía a más en agradecimiento de aquello que sus señores padres quisiesen" (1: 129). Later on, Constanza reiterates the same submissive attitude: "le dijo [a su madre] que por haberse considerado gitana, y que mejoraba su suerte con casarse con un

caballero de hábito y tan principal como don Juan de Cárcamo, y por haber visto por experiencia su buena condición y honesto trato, alguna vez le había mirado con ojos aficionados; pero que, en resolución, ya había dicho que no tenía otra voluntad que aquella que ellos quisiesen (1: 131).

Theresa Sears comments on Preciosa's sudden reticence upon realizing her new social status, and observes that throughout the *Novelas ejemplares* "the heroines who at first seem most independent, and who often articulate explicitly their freedom to choose, are precisely those who also relinquish it explicitly in the end" (99). Weber interprets the ending as a possible inability or unwillingness on Cervantes' part "to explore the logical impasses that his parody [of 'the codification of feminine virtue; the rhetoric that equates speech with wantonness; and the simplification of women's economic destiny implicit in feminine conduct books'] had laid bare" ("Pentimento" 72). She concludes that Preciosa's submissive behavior at the end amounts to a reconstruction of "the ideological equivalence between isolation, chastity and silence" (73) which, albeit ambivalently, points to Cervantes' conflicting artistic and ideological allegiances. Clamurro partly echoes Weber's opinion by emphasizing that what "we are prompted to consider is the irony of the fact that, within the desired and privileged world that Cervantes overtly celebrates, a certain breadth of individual female autonomy will have to be renounced in exchange for another, deeper level of authenticity in one's identity – at least for the woman" (37).

What Clamurro seems to overlook is the difficulty in pinpointing precisely what Cervantes celebrates. Could one not conclude that by quieting within Preciosa that which made her so precious, her *desenvoltura honesta*, Cervantes was demonizing the nobility instead of celebrating it? Furthermore, Clamurro seems to believe that Cervantes has in mind one idea of a stable, immutable identity that Preciosa (and all the other characters, for that matter) embraces,

while the sheer and overwhelming skeptical composition of the text points to the attempt to question all dogmatic identity constructions. The very fact that, not unlike her gypsy grandmother, Preciosa also seems to be able to instantly penetrate the world of the nobility and immediately embrace (or act as if she embraced) their values, be it for their gains or for her own, reminds the reader again of her mutable or, at least, polychromatic character composition. Within the limits of her newly acquired silence Preciosa is still able to gently advocate for herself. She carefully points out to her mother that, though she may have looked at Juan with loving eyes, he was indeed a good, well-connected, noble catch, a comment that would and did immediately resonate with doña Guiomar: "Ella con vergüenza y con los ojos en el suelo, le dijo que por haberse considerado gitana, y que mejoraba su suerte con casarse con un *caballero de hábito y tan principal como Don Juan de Cárcamo,* y por haber visto por experiencia su buena condición y honesto trato, alguna vez le había mirado con ojos aficionados" (1: 131, emphasis added).[22] Also true to her once apparently liberal and subjective nature, Preciosa furthers her argument by pointing out Juan's honesty and good disposition, which she came to know by experience.

Again, the contrasts, the uncertainties about the essence of a thought, a feeling, or an identity never end. In apparently losing her loquaciousness and her ability to advocate for herself, Preciosa metamorphoses into a Constanza whose due place as a female within the cultural confines of her noble milieu requires that she quietly acquiesce. Yet, not all in her is metamorphosed, for indeed she is still capable of citing Juan both for the attractiveness of his social status and for the good (and honor-hungry, murderous) heart that he has demonstrated to have.

[22] The mother herself, recognizing the social advantages of having Preciosa marry into the nobility, suggests to her husband: "Señor, siendo tan principal don Juan de Cárcamo como lo es, y queriendo tanto a nuestra hija, no nos estaría mal dársela por esposa" (1: 129).

The epistemological difficulties confronting the reader of "La gitanilla" reflect the futility of arguing for the veracity of propositions through a veracious criterion of knowledge, while acknowledging that the truth is either unachievable or indemonstrable. One goes round in circles, unable to capture or fix a *true* essence, either contentedly glancing over the equipollence of all unverifiable propositions and suspending judgment altogether, or arrogantly and desperately finding stabilization in a fictional world that has neither "pies, ni cabeza, ni entraña, ni cosa que les parezca" (1: 51). Cervantes' "La gitanilla" provides a narrative outlet for the philosophical question that plagued Sextus Empiricus and generations of philosophers after him, and most notably Montaigne, whose unorthodox style and epistemological preoccupations may be reflected in the unstable *realities* depicted by Cervantes.[23]

Cervantes' experimentation with questions of identity and criterion of truth by no means ends at the conclusion of "La gitanilla." "La ilustre fregona," a *novela* that exudes skeptical overtones already in the oxymoron found in its title, also incorporates the problem of the criterion at the point at which young Tomás de Avendaño reveals his love and his identity to the *ilustre* kitchen maid with whom he has fallen in love, and at the denouement, when her *true* identity as the aristocratic Costanza is uncovered. The similarities between "La gitanilla" and "La ilustre fregona" have been widely identified.[24] Both present a female child who has been separated from her biological parents, who is oblivious of her native origins, and who will be reconnected to her family at the conclusion. Both involve an infatuated male character who descends, under the veil of an alternative identity, into lower social realms in order to court his beloved girl. Both question the integrity of the justice system and of those to whom it is

[23] Cascardi proposes that "Montaigne has difficulty imagining any stable future context for the self. It may instead be seen that the 'formlessness' of Montaigne's writing, the characteristic waywardness of the *Essais* and the errant nature of the self whose "passing" is portrayed therein, mark a historical transformation, and so constitute an inherited source questions to which the modern subject may be viewed as providing a critical response" (65).
[24] See Lowe, Hart, El Saffar, Sears, and Clamurro.

entrusted, and both highlight the innate desire of the nobility to see itself preserved through a system of exclusivity and financial interchange. This discussion will focus on the remarkably similar way in which Cervantes recycles the motif of the problem of the criterion, and on how, in doing so, he again presents the reader with an unsolvable epistemological challenge.[25]

Not unlike the gypsy Preciosa, the kitchen maid protagonist is set apart from her female counterparts not only due to her exquisite physical beauty but also to her personality, which in spite of the "infernal world" of the inn she inhabits, displays nothing but the most chaste and discrete behavior.[26] The first characterization of Costanza is rendered by two muleteers who pass each other on the way to and from Seville: "Es dura como un mármol, y zahareña como villana de Sayago, y áspera como una ortiga; pero tiene una cara de pascua y un rostro de buen año" (2: 148). This description corroborates with that provided by the Gallega, one of the maids at the inn: "si ella se dejara mirar siquiera, manara en oro; es más áspera que un erizo; es una tragaavemarías; labrando está todo el día y rezando. Para el día que ha de hacer milagros quisiera yo tener un cuento de renta. Mi ama dice que trae un silencio pegado a las carnes" (2: 192). The innkeeper, who is responsible for having raised Costanza, complements these characterizations by offering a wider perspective on her character: "es devotísima de Nuestra Señora; confiesa y comulga cada mes; sabe escribir y leer; no hay mejor randera en Toledo; canta a la almohadilla como unos ángeles; en ser honesta no hay quien la iguale" (2: 189-190).

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[25] My use of the word "recycle" here does not imply in any way a chronological relationship between "La gitanilla" and "La ilustre fregona." El Saffar, while recognizing that neither one of the texts offers concrete assurances as to their dates of composition, has nonetheless presumed that they were written after 1606. She offers no opinion as to which would have been written first. See 86, n. 1.

[26] I refer here to Javier Herrero's denomination of the ideological and social worlds depicted in "La ilustre fregona": one "Edenic" and inhabited by the hero, the other "infernal" (47) or "demonic" and inhabited by the villains (51). Clamurro, borrowing from Sieber, recognizes in the inn a "parenthetical space" that provides the environment to accommodate alternative realities and modes of existence. He sees it as a setting for "disguises, mistakes, and final *anagnorisis*, as well as its more subtle function as a device for the temporary bringing together of diverse social sectors and their discourses" (196, n. 12).

Costanza therefore seems to elicit a somewhat uniform impression from those who know of or live and work with her, yet she seems to evade a more heterogeneous characterization from critics who strive to interpret her behavior and its implication within the structure of the *novela*. In fact, Costanza has been described by A. M. Barrenechea as "un personaje pasivo que no manifiesta sus sentimientos ni influye en la acción" (199), and who stands within the *novela* more as an object than a subject: "Cervantes ha construido con ella un personaje en hueco, que el lector sólo conoce a través de los otros personajes por el influjo que ejerce en ellos" (200). Sears, here in agreement with Berrenechea, notes Costanza's "reserve and inactivity" as "so extreme that they result in her virtual disappearance from the narration" (51). D. Gareth Walters disagrees with these characterizations, pointing to the fact that Costanza not only verbally answers to every attempt at courtship from Avendaño but does so with "discretion" and "verbal finesse": "Such poise and initiative are signs of one who can play the courtly role to perfection, not as a hapless young woman who is at the mercy of circumstances" (211).

Part of this disparity of opinions about Costanza's role as passive or active may stem from the fact that she is, despite all the widely discussed generic diversities between the two *novelas* and the hybridity found within both, inevitably compared to Preciosa who, as the other displaced noble girl of the collection, seems to surpass Costanza's achievements both as a talker and as an autonomous individual.[27] Yet, one must note what they share more than what they do not, that is, a contrasting position within a group. As Preciosa's gypsy counterparts tend to be quieter, less attractive and independent than she is, Costanza's co-workers at the inn, in just as contrasting a manner, are true to their literary antecedents; they are ugly, dirty, loquacious, and

[27] For more on the generic hybridity of "La ilustre fregona" see Weber, "*La ilustre fregona* ," and also Clamurro, Walters, and Williamson.

lewd, when not given to prostitution.[28] Costanza's apparent passivity is necessary to make her a perfect opposite to those who surround her and, just as importantly, to raise the epistemic question in regard to the nature and value of the stereotypes employed in the fashioning of identities. Her composition as a novelistic character will differ from Preciosa's in that she will not, with the exception of one act that may betray this assessment, undergo a sharp metamorphosis. All that seems to separate the behavior and personality of *fregona*-Costanza from those of noble-Costanza are the tears that ambiguously celebrate her fate. So while her feelings at the conclusion are difficult to interpret (albeit easy to imagine), her personality seems to stay stable throughout the text. All the conflicting features observed in Preciosa's character, which so strongly contributed toward a challenge to the epistemic structure of the text, here appear to be refocused in the contrasting nature of the genres juxtaposed – the picaresque, the romance, and the *novela* – in the disparity between Costanza's moral disposition and the environment in which she operates, and in the questioning of the hypocrisy exposed through the aristocratic honor-based system. While Costanza has a more limited active participation in the plot when compared to Preciosa, her identity seems to be similarly emphasized and validated through a series of subjective descriptions that highlight her sound behavior and her moral impeccability. However, her morality, as observed by Stanislav Zimic, will play no role in the criterion used later to establish her origins and identity: "Penosamente irónico es también el hecho de que todos estos nobles se afanen tanto en reconocer la señal verdadera por medio de

[28] The epitome of the seventeenth–century female inn servant character-type would be found in the ineffable Maritornes from *Don Quiojote I*. For a discussion of how this character-type, and particularly Maritornes, serves as a foil to other female characters found in Cervantes' works see Ansó.

fragmentos de cadenas y pergaminos, mientras tan despreocupados están de la señal más genuina de Costanza, que es su virtud" (279).[29]

The *novela* opens with a celebratory remark about the greatness of the city of Burgos and, consequently, of its "principal and wealthy" inhabitants, including the two aristocratic families involved in the plot, the Carriazos and the Avendaños.[30] This implied social superiority, not unlike that evoked through Juan de Cárcamo in "La gitanilla," is partly undermined by the inherited power of the discourse adopted by young Avendaño, now disguised as a stable attendant, in his efforts to court Costanza. When asked by her about whom in the inn he served, he answers: "No soy criado de ninguno, sino vuestro" (2: 150). This reply anticipates the way in which he would come to define himself in terms of his infatuation and Platonic subjugation to her. Avendaño, not unlike Juan de Cárcamo, is defined by his social status and by the way in which he can evoke social convention within the plot, that is, by embracing his role as a courtly-lover.[31]

Clamurro comments on how their first meeting "is marked by both deliberate and unintended confusion of identity" (204), and suggests that the contents of the written message that Avendaño later delivers to her aim, partially, at clearing this confusion. This relieving of

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[29] One must recognize that this criterion was established by Costanza´s mother, who never came to know her as anything but a new-born baby. Yet, given the overall parallels with "La gitanilla" and the blatant repetition of the invocation of the problem of the criterion, one can infer that the discrepancy between criterion and *essence* is intended, as it was in "La gitanilla," as part of the social critique that so markedly permeates both *novelas*. Another unrelated, yet potential inconsistency found in regard to Costanza's mother appears when, through the innkeeper, it is revealed that Costanza's mother was "viuda, y que no tenía hijos que la heredasen" (2: 187), while a few lines later she herself reveals that "[p]artera no la he menester ni la quiero: que otros partos más honrados que he tenido me aseguran que con sola la ayuda destas mis criadas facilitaré sus dificultades y ahorraré de un testigo más de mis sucesos" (2: 188). This could, of course, be due to a mistake on Cervantes' part, or a very credible but indirect allusion to the high child mortality rate of the period.

[30] W. Clamurro sees the invocation of Burgos as a further way to create contrasts among the many social levels and sectors depicted in the *novela*: "one could . . . argue that, against the permanent and real society of their past and future lives in Burgos, Cervantes set the temporary and complex 'fictional' society of Toledo and the inn. Such juxtapositions underscore a particular vision of the right ordering of relationships not only between two or more individuals (love), but between an individual and the larger defining group (one's social role)" (192).

[31] For more on Tomás de Avendaño's role within the convention of courtly love, see Gareth Walters, 209-212.

confusion through the written word may be put into question, for the discrepancy between his claims to a higher social class and his behavior and appearance may have confused Costanza even more. Avendaño, having now adopted the identity of a worker at the inn where Costanza works and lives, expresses his love in writing and eventually proposes to marry her: "Señora de mi alma: Yo soy un caballero natural de Burgos; si alcanzo de días a mi padre, heredo un mayorazgo de seis mil ducados de renta" (2: 178). Again, one finds the epistemic instability of a noble youth passing for a common stable boy, and who invokes the discourse of courtly love in his amorous pursuit (of a kitchen maid who will be proved to have noble blood) to be a further evidence of an underlying skeptic motif that runs through the *novelas*. More problematic however, is the way in which he chooses to highlight his material and social superiority while also underscoring her power over him. When fashioning himself to the eyes of his beloved, unlike Juan de Cárcamo, Avendaño manages to keep his self aggrandizement to a minimum, as if recognizing that within the tradition that he is tapping into, that of courtly love, it is the virtues and attributes of the lady that should command attention, and not his own material self-importance: "A la fama de vuestra hermosura, que por muchas leguas se extiende, dejé mi patria, mudé vestido, y en el traje que me veis vine a servir a vuestro dueño; si vos lo quisiéredes ser mío, por los medios que más a vuestra honestidad convengan, mirad que pruebas queréis que haga para enteraros desta verdad" (2: 178). He subjects himself to her will by offering to undergo whatever trials she finds fit for him and, far from displaying an over-confident attitude, he articulates his fear of being asked to leave the premises if found out by the innkeeper: "Sólo, por ahora, os pido que no echéis tan enamorados y limpios pensamientos como los míos en la calle; que si vuestro dueño los sabe y no los cree, me condenará a destierro de vuestra presencia, que sería lo mismo que condenarme a muerte" (2: 178). Clamurro recognizes the ambivalence with

which Avendaño presents himself and his message, and affirms that "[while] this information can be seen as another way to gain the woman's interest, one cannot overlook the sense in which it also represents a natural part of Avendaño's definition of his identity. It is yet another necessary aspect of his most fundamental self" (205).

Avendaño's invocation of his social status and privileged heritage seems, nonetheless, to take a back seat if not to the sincerity of his feelings, at least to a necessity to engage the discourse that unequivocally symbolizes his class. However, it must be inferred that class, whether invoked explicitly or implicitly, seems to be an integral part of Avendaño's identity, for it finds a way to manifest itself whether through a description of his wealth, or less obviously through the discourse he resorts to when communicating with Costanza. The sense of social hierarchy is, therefore, ever present. Paradoxically, he may affirm his superiority by invoking a courtly language that is common to his social milieu and not hers, and yet, through this very language he celebrates her sovereignty over him. She, after all, is his only master.[32] As he constructs a criterion through which to prove to Costanza the veracity of his love and intent, he appears to lean toward a more holistic approach to identity fashioning. He is an aristocrat, but his caste should not serve as the only firm demonstration of his character and purity of ambition. Rather, he opts to fashion himself an identity that embraces all aspects of the discursive mode with which he crafts his message, and which exposes not only his material strength but also his eminent fear of losing Costanza before having ever had her.

When compared to Juan de Cárcamo, even though Avendaño provides a more well-balanced and, to modern eyes, more attractive version of himself, he fails to achieve the immediate results he seeks, but is left with enough hope so as to not succumb to courtly despair:

[32] Walters does point out, nevertheless, that "what confirms Avendaño's role as a courtly lover is the matching conception of Costanza as a courtly lady. When he blurts out that he serves her and no one else he is doing no more than pay her the appropriate homage" (211).

"Tomás quedó suspenso, pero algo consolado, viendo que en solo el pecho de Costanza quedaba el secreto de su deseo. . . . Parecióle que en el primero paso que había dado en su pretensión había atropellado por mil montes de inconvenientes, y que en las cosas grandes y dudosas la mayor dificultad está en los principios" (2: 179). His chosen criterion of truth neither convinces nor does it destroy any hopes for further, more effective persuasion. He would later get a chance to reiterate his propositions, again basing them in the identity and social ties of his father, when he, the father, arrives at the inn in pursuit of the elder Carriazo's daughter. Tomás proposes: "infórmate de sus criados si tiene un hijo que se llama don Tomás de Avendaño, que soy yo, y de aquí podrás ir coligiendo y averiguando que te he dicho la verdad en cuanto a la calidad de mi persona" (2: 191). Again, his criterion is neither effective nor impressive to Costanza.

Avendaño's criterion of truth is therefore a complementary, consubstantial blend of courtly discourse and objective social validation. It highlights the paradoxes encompassed within the idiom of courtly love as well as his desire to conquer and be conquered at the same time; to impose himself even as he is subjected by his lady master. The reader again is exposed to an epistemological conflict that highlights the impracticality, if not impossibility, of establishing a criterion that successfully proves truth, and particularly truth of identity. Both Costanza's and Avendaño's characterization defy one-sided dogmatism and ask for a suspension of judgment on any stereotypical identity construction.

Following the model established in "La gitanilla," the problem of the criterion reappears at a critical point in the conclusion, where Costanza's noble identity is revealed. One finds that the criterion established by Costanza's biological mother is constructed based on a different set of premisses than those employed by Avendaño to fashion himself to Costanza. Anticipating that her daughter would have to be reinstated into her original social rank, Costanza's mother devises

a criterion that would prove the veracity of her daughter's origins (yet without fully disclosing the mother's identity) and hence assure her father and those who surround him of Costanza's identity and aristocratic blood. This criterion is two-fold and involves division and fragmentation: a sumptuous gold chain is broken in two parts; one piece is left with the innkeepers who are entrusted with the proper concealment and eventual upbringing of baby Costanza, and the other piece is kept by the mother. Also, a message is written in a piece of parchment that is then torn in such a way as to have alternating letters left in each piece, so that the message could only be read through the union of the separate fragments. Again, one piece is left with the innkeepers and the other is taken by Costanza's mother. The nature of this evidence is analogous to the one selected by the gypsy grandmother in "La gitanilla," in that it involves a jewel that symbolizes the social rank of its owner, and a written message that validates its authenticity. However, the "gran señora" (2: 186) mother of Costanza could not have afforded to reveal the identities of the child's parents in the note. The father, an aristocratic rapist who happened upon the mother's estate during a hunt and who would eventually be revealed as the elder don Diego de Carriazo, was unknown to her, and to reveal her own identity in the message would be, as Carriazo himself put to her during the rape, to publicize her own dishonor ("las voces que diere serán pregoneras de su deshonra", 2: 194). All that the message is able to confirm is, poignantly, the *veracity* proven by the chosen criterion: "Esta es la señal verdadera" (2: 193). Although not a proof of the child's identity, the mother also left the sizable sum of thirty thousand golden *ducados* as an eventual dowry for her daughter, one that would not only ensure her marriage into the high social strata but that could persuade even the most doubtful of her privileged origin. The child's identity is therefore established and verified based on criteria

of financial imposition and social ostentation, as though these benchmarks could suffice as tools of identification.

Costanza's mother, not unlike Preciosa's grandmother, fully understands and participates in the discourse of appearances generated by wealth and caste, and recognizes money's ability within this language to gain favors and soften hearts. She reiterates hers and her daughter's social and economic status not only by producing such an ostentatious gold chain as part of the criterion for establishing identity, but she also attempts to reiterate her intentions and appeal to the heart of the innkeepers by handing them generous quantities of money in exchange for their help and silence.[33] Both she and the reader are reminded by the innkeeper of the apparent ethical codes that separate them. When offered money for the second time in exchange for favors, the innkeeper replies: "le dije que no era menester nada de aquello; que no éramos personas que por interés, más que por caridad, nos movíamos a hacer bien cuando se ofrecía" (2: 187-188). Whether sincere or not, by reminding the lady of the Christian nature of their good actions toward her, the innkeeper was underscoring their cultural differences and hence the presumed motives behind their actions. Money will, in fact, play a decisive, unifying role in the conclusion of this *novela*. It was money that kept Costanza's mother's servant from fulfilling her dying wishes immediately at the time of her death, and when he finally did contact the elder Carriazo to give him the proofs of Costanza's identity, it may have been the size of her dowry, rather than any wish on Carriazo's part to provide "seemingly adequate restitution" (208), as Clamurro observes, that prompted him to look for and claim his newly discovered daughter.[34] As Javier Herrero has pointed out, "the 'caballero de Alcántara' hurries up to accept Constanza into the

[33] One is reminded of how, in "La gitanilla," money is also used to buy the dead officer's uncle's silence (and "forgiveness") by the *corregidor* of Murcia.

[34] El Saffar seems to agree with Clamurro as to the repentance of Carriazo. She states: "Only when the steward and Don Diego admit their fault and confront the one whom they have wronged can the other half of the parchment be found and the 'true sign' revealed" (105).

family and the no less noble Avendaño is delighted to have her as a daughter-in-law. In fact, the 'ilustre' has overcome the 'fregona' beyond the wildest expectations and the character of the mine hidden under the low 'figura' gloriously revealed itself (56).

Once the criterion of identity has been applied and *successfully* met, the text advances to the same type of superficially happy ending that was presented in "La gitanilla." Costanza's effective but minimal amount of verbal participation lingers. As a matter of fact, she is largely sidelined throughout the denouement and only reappears to be repossessed by her newly discovered father. The *corregidor*, who had invited himself into the matter due to an interest in his son's affairs and ended up taking an unjustifiably strong interest in the situation, takes charge of the event and is responsible, as a false symbol of the order and justice that he is supposed to represent, for handing Costanza over to her father: "Recebid, señor don Diego, esta prenda, y estimadla por la más rica que acertárades a desear" (2: 197). The word "rica" could have been meant to describe both Costanza's physical and moral attributes, and the monetary riches of her dowry, but the ambiguity of his remark does not end there. When mentioning "desear," or desire, the *corregidor* alludes to the source energy that, in the form of the rape perpetuated by the elder Carriazo, initiated this entire affair. Moreover, the narrator creates a parallel between the emotions that drove Carriazo to rape and to claim his daughter, that is, the will to possess the feminine element be it by physical force or family ties. As Sears explains, Cervantes proposes a solution for the crisis of desire presented in his *novelas* by centering cause and problem in the same place: "with the family, in the father's house" (55). In this way, Costanza is passed on to her next keeper: "Y vos, hermosa doncella, besa la mano de vuestro padre y dad gracias a Dios, que con tan honrado suceso ha enmendado, subido, y mejorado la bajeza de vuestro estado" (2: 197). The blatant and yet covert irony infused into the *corregidor*'s words as he delivers this

human jewel to her next guardian can only be inversely associated with all that she already is but will likely no longer be – an honest, morally impeccable human being.

Her reaction to this sudden revelation resembles her relative silence throughout the plot, and is analogous to her mother's silence during her rape. As Edwin Williamson affirms, this reticence is driven by the patriarchal and economic power of honor, which can "silence even the most privileged women, reducing them to the condition of pure victims, with no effective rights and no viable recourse to justice" (670). Having suddenly become an aristocrat, Costanza's quietness no longer constitutes solely a sign of chastity and moral reserve but rather one of submission and disempowerment. The narrator describes her response: "toda turbada y temblando, no supo hacer otra cosa que hincarse de rodillas ante su padre, y tomándole las manos, se las comenzó a besar tiernamente, bañándoselas con infinitas lágrimas" (2: 197). Yet, Costanza's permanence as a paternal object of desire would be short lived. After the three male aristocrats meet and design a satisfactory outcome for themselves, it is determined that Costanza be immediately handed over in marriage, along with her rich dowry, to her suitor the young Avendaño. Sears interprets this development as "[t]he possible lawless or chaotic aspect of desire [being] therefore explicitly submitted to social law" (53). Herrero corroborates that view, affirming that "[t]he final weddings and celebrations, so characteristic of the endings of comedy and the celebration of the return of the heroes, mark the triumphal, ritual confirmation of social desire, of social values, enriched by the acquisition of new blood" (56). This voracious pursuit of a socially prescribed order and of the endorsement of the status quo will, inevitably, fail to acknowledge personal preference or sensitivity. Unlike Preciosa in regard to Juan de Cárcamo, Costanza is never asked about her feelings toward Avendaño or otherwise. All the reader knows is that her initial tears are prolonged and magnified by her separation from the wife of the

innkeeper who had, after all, been the only mother figure Costanza ever knew. Less than welcomed into the aristocracy, Costanza is sucked into it by virtue of an identity established through rape, bloodline, and money, her true thoughts and emotions being neither a concern of those who should have cared for her, nor ever fully disclosed by the narrator.

Despite all her paradoxical victimization, Cervantes will infuse into this already complex characterization of Costanza one last destabilizing element, one that will question Williamson's opinion that "Cervantes wished to embody in Costanza an enduring belief in the existence of moral and spiritual values that transcended the social order" (673). This view will seem less obvious in the face of Costanza's last described act. In a move that is as sad as it is shocking, Costanza tries, before leaving Toledo for Burgos, to placate her innkeeper-mother's pain by, not unlike her biological mother before herself, granting her rich jewels, a sign that Costanza too could easily assimilate the discourse that had been imposed on her. She may have, after all, undergone an important and unfortunate metamorphosis, no matter how subtle and how well intended her actions were meant to be.

The narrator thus sums the events by ironically claiming that "desta manera quedaron todos contentos, alegres y satisfechos" (2: 198), an opinion that evidently fails to take into consideration a victim of rape and the victim of a terrible beating perpetuated by the young Carriazo.

The *corregidor* in "La ilustre fregona," much as his counterpart in "La gitanilla," chooses to overlook his obligations as either the keeper of law or guardian of his own caste's morality. More preoccupied with assuring himself the special perquisites that good social ties can bring, he dismisses the crimes, new and old, of his relatives, and carries on feeling perfectly content, joyful, and satisfied. As shown before, while the elders Carriazo and Avendaño were tied only

through friendship and social rank, Avendaño and the *corregidor* were cousins, which meant that, to some extent, they may have shared common financial interests. By marrying Costanza to young Avendaño, the two elder friends become tied as relatives, and her dowry is hence kept within the family. By contriving to see young Carriazo married to the daughter of the *corregidor*, and the corregidor's son to an up-until-now unmentioned sister of young Avendaño, the families were all extended, further entangled, and more deeply tied financially thanks to the wealth of an unlucky victim of rape. This unexpected extra wealth sustains, much like the desire that victimized its original holder, the interests and preservation of a caste that both preys on and delights in itself.

Just as the criterion used to verify and establish Costanza's identity fails to take into account the full nature of her character (a character that the reader was allowed to infer mostly through scarce dialogue, descriptions of chastity, religious piety, and tears), the treatment that she receives for being who she *truly* is apparently fails to secure her happiness. It is never revealed to the reader how she felt about Avendaño, much less how she felt about being an aristocrat married to him. Her tears, one imagines, may not all have been of joy. Having been fashioned by her own blood as an instrument of proliferation of the social status quo, through a criterion that accentuated nothing but her material value, she becomes an instrument of social order and hierarchy. Williamson sees the ending as a calculated way through which Cervantes is able to avoid the openly critical stance of the picaresque but without giving up on social criticism altogether: "[H]e drew back from an explicit critique but none the less devised a narrative strategy that would allow him to pursue his critical interrogation of the honour-based hierarchy under cover of a happy ending" (668). Clamurro also detects an intentional level of destabilization of the social order presented in the text, and finds its culmination in the "freedom

with which the aristocratic families can make amends and reconstitute social harmony through their wealth and power and through fortunate, if hastily arranged, multiple marriages" (208).

Both Cervantes' manipulation of genre and destabilization of the honor-based social stereotype corroborate to produce the epistemic imbalances observed and discussed in "La gitanilla" and "La ilustre fregona." The difficulties found in securing a definitive view of the protagonists' characters and motives – given the proven insubstantiality of the criterion used to establish these essences – lead again to the presence of a constant and concerted engagement with skeptical ideas throughout these *novelas*. The obvious unproductiveness of any attempt by the reader to affix a stereotypical character disposition or behavior based on occupation, lineage, or social status emphasizes Cervantes' skeptic view of human nature, of social standing and blood identity and, paradoxically, of one's ability to establish an epistemic criterion that validates these very concepts. As skepticism urges one to consider all propositions without assuming the unquestioned authenticity of any, and as Montaigne underscores the instability and mutability of being and hence of any sense of fixed identity, so does the reader find herself undergoing a process of detached equipollence as she tries to measure all the many claims to veracity that are present in these *novelas*, ultimately being lead to embrace none. In the world of Cervantes' urban *novela*, in which skepticism is used as a tool to highlight the difficulty of apprehending and accepting one *reality* over another through conscious and unconscious biases, the act of reading becomes as much a socio-political deed as an exercise in "accidental" philosophy.

CHAPTER TWO

Ungodly Miracle or Holy Rape: Irony and the Rule of Faith in "La fuerza de la sangre"

Cervantes' engagement with skepticism, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, illustrates a bilateral movement toward philosophizing fiction and fictionalizing philosophy, the result of which constitutes a rational narrative frame that weaves the flaws of society and human nature into critical story telling. In "La fuerza de la sangre," as critics have exhaustively shown, one continues to observe the juxtaposition of a skeptical attitude and a construction of reality that discloses socio-political injustice within a patriarchal context. Whether one sees Cervantes as a voice on behalf of the oppressed or as a conservative, perhaps misogynist presence that argues for the perpetuation of the status quo, the interest surrounding "La fuerza" speaks to the efficacy of both his methods and subject matter to instigate passion and inquiry.[1] From this perspective, it may seem that little needs or can be added to the critical discussion. Nevertheless, to fully reveal the scope of Cervantes' preoccupation with the social and intellectual concerns that consumed his generation, one needs to consider one more fundamental element evident in "La fuerza de la sangre," the theological commentary.[2] This analysis revisits the work done by Alban Forcione in the 1980s and, through the lenses of skepticism, explores the way in which Cervantes unites two very contentious subjects – rape and divine intervention in human affairs – to create a fictional environment that mimics the theological debate taking place between Catholics and Protestants in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe.[3]

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[1] The vast amount of criticism directed at "La fuerza de la sangre" approaches the text from a generic, social, and gender-based angle. These include the studies of Calcraft, Friedman, Slaniceanu, Sears, Aylward, Clamurro, and others. The direct allusion to Cervantes' alleged misogyny comes from Sears, 88.

[2] The most predominant voice in this regard is that of Forcione, whose extensive study deepens and extends the symbolical approach taken by Casalduero and El Saffar. More recently, Lewis-Smith, Robbins, and Lappin have also contributed toward the theological approach.

[3] All references to Forcione's work pertain to *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision,* unless otherwise specified.

The fact that rape occurs twice within the *Novelas ejemplares* exemplifies not only Cervantes's familiarity with the narrative possibilities offered by an ancient and common, albeit distressing, theme but also his acute aptitude for identifying which familiar motifs are best suited to an unfamiliar and highly provocative treatment. In "La fuerza de la sangre" rape not only is the sole responsible agent for the unleashing of all subsequent plot developments but it is presented within an uncomfortable proximity and in ambiguous relationship to divine intervention through perceived miracles. Through this questionable contrast of evil and the divine, rape becomes the principal facilitator of a denouement that is, at least to modern readers, as implausible as it is shocking. Leocadia not only marries Rodolfo, her rapist, but she is also described as having fallen in love with him.[4] This discussion will explore the possible roots of such disquieting outcomes by superimposing the skeptical treatment given by Church reformers to Catholic dogma concerning miracles and the relationship between the secular and the divine within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

Religious knowledge, like all knowledge, was questioned by the discerning eyes of skeptical humanists who were obsessed with the philosophical argument that knowledge and truth were *possibly* unattainable to the individual.[5] Within the realm of theology this controversy constituted the "rule of faith," as explained by Richard Popkin, a concept that describes the need to define the "proper standard of religious knowledge" (3). Though not the first to challenge the

[4] To Forcione, who reads "La fuerza de la sangre" as a secularized version of a miracle narrative, the improbability of the ending of the *novela* is connected to the conventions encompassed in the miracle narrative, "a form in which verisimilitude is a meaningful category only through its violation" (362). El Saffar, on the other hand, denies that the ending is connected to divinity, and therefore to any miraculous strategy on the part of the author: "Cervantes' aversion to the use of magic or miracles to solve novelistic problems would prohibit a solution issuing simply out of God's grace. Thus, the resolution to Leocadia's problem comes out of the material world and her strength of character" (*Novel to Romance* 134). Clamurro dismisses the idea of the miraculous in the play by finding in Leocadia's sudden love for Rodolfo an allusion to the "theme of a social harmony that is broken as the result of the initial crime and that is then restored at the end, or more precisely, that achieves a putatively more ideal state" (154).

[5] "*Possibly"* here seeks to recall the previously mentioned disparity between the Academic and Pyrrhonian views, the former which asserts the impossibility of all knowledge (and hence contradicts the impossibility of all knowledge), and the latter which claims that no knowledge is attainable and all assertions are hence unfounded.

epistemological system employed by the Catholic Church, Martin Luther's attack on accepted dogma would constitute by far the greatest threat to Catholicism all over Europe.[6] Through his indignation with papal abuses committed both in the political and religious realms, Luther challenged the authority of the Church to establish a rule of faith based on the alignment of religious propositions with Church tradition, councils, and papal decrees (Popkin 4). As Popkin outlines, Luther's argument was that "all of Christendom has but one Gospel, one Sacrament, all Christians have 'the power of discerning and judging what is right or wrong in the matters of faith,' and Scripture outranks even the pope in determining proper religious views and actions" (4). In other words, Luther advocated for a conscience-based hermeneutics, which prompted Catholic Counter-Reformers to argue that Luther's revised rule of faith would plunge the Christian world into anarchy: "Everybody could appeal to *his own* conscience and claim that what appeared true to him was true. No effective standard of [religious] truth would be left" (Popkin 7). This line of criticism, which is completely founded on the problem of the criterion discussed in the previous chapter, gains fundamental importance in light of the events that take place in "La fuerza de la sangre" for, as it will be argued, more than the socio-economic injustices that are unmistakably revealed in this *novela*, the focus of Cervantes' critique is in reviving, through fictionalization, this reformist challenge and forcing the reader to reassess yet once more the much contested tenets of the Catholic faith and dogma, and the means through which these and other truths can be established.

Henry Kamen traces the presence and repercussions of the Reformation in Spain and offers insight into the reasons why it survived the Protestant attack relatively unscathed. He affirms that, in part, the thought of the Catholic reformer Erasmus of Rotterdam may have

[6] Popkin points to Savonarola as the first real challenge to papal authority and to Catholic epistemology. See 19-27. For a concise explanation of the possible reasons for the practical failure of the Reformation within Spain see Kamen.

averted a stronger influence of Protestant ideas in Spain: "Ironically, [since, like Luther, Erasmus too was a skeptical humanist who challenged papal authority and the Catholic rule of faith], the commitment to Erasmus, at a time when the Reformation was advancing rapidly in central Europe, may well have been one of the major forces that saved Spanish intellectuals from sympathizing with Lutheranism" (203).[7] This is due in part to Erasmus' anti-intellectual, anti-philosophical stance about religion, which caused him to utilize a skeptical attitude to refute Luther's claims to a more veracious rule of faith. As Popkin points out, "[Erasmus'] contempt for intellectual endeavor was coupled with his advocacy of a simple, non-theological Christian piety" (8). Erasmus engages Luther in his *Discourse Concerning Free Will* (1524), in which he maintains that "[t]heological controversies were not [his] meat, and . . . that he would prefer to follow the attitude of the sceptics and suspend judgment, especially where the inviolable authority of Scripture and the decrees of the Church permit" (Popkin 8). Erasmus points to the complexity and obscurity of Scripture, through skeptical argumentation, to question Luther's reformist but dogmatic interpretation. This dialogue, more than delivering a definitive answer to the problem of the rule of faith, highlights the divergent opinions that stem both from the application of skeptic arguments (Luther) and by a paradoxical combination of the refutation of the philosophical enterprise and the acceptance of a skeptical attitude (Erasmus). The repercussion of such tendencies, as Popkin surmises with the benefit of hindsight, constituted an "intellectual revolution that was to shake the very foundation of Western civilization" (4).

Discourse Concerning Free Will is of particular importance as far as the dialogue pertaining to the veracity of miracles, for it was the starting point of a written debate between

[7] Interestingly, Kamen also detects an "obsession" among critics with finding traces of Erasmus in the thought and intellectual production of Spain. As he explains, "Non-Erasmians were no less capable of appreciating the virtues of reform, peace and tolerance, since all Spaniards were part of a multi-cultural society which many, certainly, were eager to reshape but which some were content to accept" (204).

Luther and Erasmus that perfectly exemplifies the doubts, concerns, and argumentations employed in both the delineation of a new rule of faith and in the preservation of the current one.[8] The clarity of Erasmus' words and the skeptical attitude that these words illustrate justify a disproportionately long quotation. Erasmus replies to Luther:

> For I am not disturbed by such insults as these: "You are nothing but a voice" and "but if I were to ask you what a manifestation of the Spirit is, what miracles are, what holiness is, to these three questions, so far as I know you from your writing and books, you would seem too inexperienced and ignorant to be able to make them clear by so much as a single syllable." If you, O most learned of all, would only teach us what we want to know! But you remind me, Luther, of some school masters who are fond of flogging: though they have undertaken to instruct their tender-aged students, they spend a good part of their time beating, scolding, and insulting their charges. You are so omniscient (it seems) that you are not permitted to use the most ordinary words, to call a spade a spade and tell it like it is. And I think you would define Spirit, holiness, and miracles so cleverly that you would make it clear there is no Spirit, is no holiness, are no miracles in the church. How the apostles manifested their spirit, I know only from the Acts of the Apostles and the gospel, except that their writings seem to me to breathe a certain fragrance of the Holy Spirit which I do not find in the writing of very many persons. From the same writings I know of the miracles performed by the apostles and I read how their speech was confirmed by God through subsequent signs. By similar tracks I detect the Spirit, holiness, and miracles in other reputable men. There breathes a certain something in their books – though far less than with the apostles – which manifests the

[8] For an enlightening introduction by J. Tracy and the complete texts of Erasmus' *Discourse*, Luther's critical reply, and Erasmus' two subsequent responses, see Miller.

> Spirit and their holiness. And then I have learned of their lives and miracles in histories, the authority of which is confirmed for me by the consensus of the church, which reveres their memory so devoutly. (Miller 129)[9]

The theological dispute illustrated above and subsequently reflected in "La fuerza de la sangre" also inspired Montaigne to express, not unlike Erasmus, the need to leave matters of theology in the hands of theologians. Montaigne is unequivocal about his position in regard to men's inability to reason through matters of theology. In fact, the very opening of his "Apologie" not only offers a reflection on the perils of the Reformation, but directly offers his views about Luther's ideas and their dangerous influence:

> [T]he novelties of Luther were beginning to be esteemed, in many places shaking our old religion. [My father] was well advised clearly deducing that this new disease would soon degenerate into loathsome atheism. The mass of ordinary people lack the faculty of judging things as they are letting themselves be carried away by chance appearances. Once you have put into their hands the foolishness of despising and criticizing opinions which they used to hold in the highest awe (such as those which concern their salvation), and once you have thrown into the balance of doubt and uncertainty any articles of their religion, they soon cast all the rest of their beliefs into similar uncertainty. They had no more authority for them, no more foundation, than for those you have just undermined; and so, as though it were the yoke of a tyrant, they shake off all those other concepts which had been impressed upon them by the authority of Law and the awesomeness of ancient wisdom. (2)

[9] This excerpt comes from *The Shield-Bearer Defending: A Discussion, Part I*, which Erasmus prepared in 1526, as a response to Luther's *The Enslaved Will* of 1525, which itself was a critique of Erasmus' original *Discourse Concerning Free Will.*

These lines are of crucial importance because they illustrate, at the very introduction of his essay, the unequivocalness of Montaigne's opinion and the dramatic role skepticism has to play in shaping his intellectual attitude.[10] At the same time, they reveal the contradictions embedded in his argument: with the conviction of theological knowledge (or any knowledge) being unattainable by humans, no religious dogma, be it Catholic or Reformist can be established. As the following pages of the "Apologie" will disclose, Montaigne, not unlike Luther, also believed that grace had a major role to play in man's aptitude to interpret Scripture. In fact, Montaigne's "Apologie de Raymond Sebond" is structured, as Catherine Demure points out, around the very contradiction that it intends to address: "the model of this paradox, which makes up the very heart of the ["Apologie"], is constructed by the status of theology, a knowledge which is both necessary, and [according to skeptical precepts] impossible" (189).[11] In that sense, one could conjecture that both Montaigne's and Cervantes' texts revolve around the same contradiction, in that both juxtapose religious knowledge with a means of achieving knowledge that cannot be justified through reason, that is, grace. But beyond its philosophical implications, Montaigne's arguments, and in particular his involvement with Raymond de Sebond's text at this particular time in history, carry a message that extends beyond the Phyrronian push for intellectual neutrality; it speaks of Montaigne's social engagement with the atrocities being committed for religious reasons all over Europe:

[10] James Coleman remarks that "Montaigne's scepticism has led him to a faith that can be neither buttressed nor questioned by reason. He cannot accept the Protestant view that each individual – even a woman or a child – has reason enough to comprehend God's word . . . ; still less the offensive Protestant assumption that for a Catholic to be both sincere and intelligent is a contradiction" (108).

[11] It is worth recalling that Raymond de Sebond's original text, *Theologia Naturalis*, deals directly with the subject of knowledge and theology. In Screech's words, "[i]t offered a method applicable to both clergy and laity. It promised certain results, 'in less than a month, without toil and without learning anything off by heart. And once learned it is never forgotten.' The *Natural Theology* was said to lead not only to knowledge but to morality, making whoever studied it 'happy, humble, kind, obedient, loathing all vice and sin, loving all virtues, yet without puffing up the pride'" (xii-xiv). More importantly, Sebond's method is based on "illumination." Like Montaigne, "[h]e does not claim that human reason by itself can discover Christian truths. Quite the reverse. Without 'illumination' reason can understand nothing fundamental about the universe. But, duly 'illuminated' Man can come to know himself and his Creator as well as his religious and moral duties, which he will then love to fulfill" (Screech xv).

> In this era of conflicts and religious wars (and we know how overwhelmed Montaigne was to learn of their atrocity, and that this atrocity appealed on both sides to evangelical truth), and even though in other respects Montaigne believes theology to be impossible and dangerous, he still thinks that after the . . . innovations of Luther, Sebond's text could reasonably appear capable of combating . . . an execrable atheism which the . . . malady of free examination . . . risked bringing about. (Demure 191)

In agreeing with this reflection one is lead to appreciate the ambivalence with which Montaigne articulates his message in the "Apologie" and to admire the dilemma in which some Catholic thinkers found themselves, for to agree with Luther as to the importance of grace and individual autonomy in establishing a rule of faith could have and did unleash the unimaginable monsters of religious anarchy, of social chaos and destruction. From this angle it is easier to understand both Montaigne's fideism and his adhesion to Church authority.

It is only natural that the concerns raised by these theological disputes and articulated so eloquently in the writings of thinkers like Luther, Erasmus, and Montaigne would resonate, even decades later, with a mind like Cervantes', for as I will show, the epistemological questions raised by the Reformation, particularly in regard to the authority of the individual to establish a rule of faith and hence legislate over the interpretation of God's perceived actions and will, would continue to play a major role in the religious life of seventeenth-century Spain. Cervantes' conspicuous manipulation of the themes of miracles and grace in "La fuerza de la sangre" illustrates his skill in adapting current controversies into fiction and in employing philosophical tools of discourse to awaken readers to the pressing issues of his times.[12] Yet, considering the

[12] Paul Lewis-Smith affirms that, through evoking the miracle theme in a problematic context as that of "La fuerza de la sangre" Cervantes is juxtaposing the concepts of divine intention and divine permission. He writes: "Cervantes does not coin the concept of divine permission but inherits it from the scholastic distinction between good things that happen because God intends them *(providentia approbationis)* and bad things that happen because God permits

prominent role of skepticism and its related theological debate in "La fuerza," Cervantes other central theme, rape, deserves to be considered here, as it has a deciding role in establishing the narrative structure upon which this *novela* is delineated.

By itself rape, the controversial and shocking antithesis to divine grace within "La fuerza de la sangre," permeates Classical Greek mythology and is responsible for forging stable relationships among gods, the birth of other gods, and the underscoring of differences among divine and mortal beings.[13] Mary Lefkowitz, who challenges the idea that Greek mythology "effectively validates the practice of rape and approves of the violent mistreatment of women," differentiates between abduction or seduction and rape, and maintains that "the gods see to it that the experience, however transient, is pleasant for the mortals" (54). More importantly in light of "La fuerza de la sangre," Lefkowitz asserts that "the consequences of the unions usually bring glory to the families of the mortals involved, despite and even because of the suffering that individual members of the family may undergo" (54). While this "glory" – which in the context of seventeenth-century literature may be equated to socio-economic restitution or the reinstatement of lost honor – plays a crucial part in both symbolic and literal interpretations of "La ilustre fregona" and "La fuerza de la sangre," Cervantes' depiction of rape in the *Novelas ejemplares* can hardly be associated with any pleasurable experience on the part of the victims. They can, nonetheless, through superficially conciliatory endings that appear to lead the victim (or the offspring) to a higher, more prestigious social status, claim to minimize the suffering

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them *(providentia concessionis)* with the intention of turning them to good. . . . In its salient aspect, the theme of *providentia concessionis* is that of a God who hides. He allows the good *hidalgo* and his family to suffer extreme adversity, whilst allowing moral evil (Rodolfo) to go unpunished. The theme is structured to highlight the problem of suffering" (888-889).

[13]As Panagiota Koulianou-Manolopoulou affirms, "En esta mitología la violación se representa como heroica, necesaria o con resultados positivos para la historia. . . . La legitimación de tales actos se expresa en los relatos, los logos, y en las imágenes. Los relatos y las imágenes minimizan el daño que supone una violación, a la que suelen llamar 'rapto', su representación se embellece, se sexualiza y se mistifica con ello su verdadera naturaleza de acto agresivo. Por ello, queda de algún modo, legitimada" (2-3).

endured by them. Whether or not one agrees with Lefkowitz's opinion, Cervantes' possible escape from tradition points to a much noted inclination to embrace literary heritage, be it at the generic or thematic level, in order to reshape an established model and make it suit his own artistic and socio-critical needs.

The Judeo-Christian Bible, with its abundance of episodes involving sexual violation, also provides a crucial precedent for the incorporation of rape into early modern peninsular literature. Scripture, as Susanne Scholtz puts it, "[has] much to contribute to the historical, sociological, political, and religious understanding of rape" (1), a fact that would have been all the more pertinent in seventeenth-century Spain given the interconnectedness of Church, society, and state.[14] Koulianou-Manolopoulou observes that narratives of rape in the Bible tend to have a rhetorical value, in that the rape itself seems to serve as an expression of more central issues, such as tribal differences, xenophobia, power, and honor of a group (7-8). She adds: "[La violación] se trata como un grave pecado, al que corresponde un castigo muy severo, pero por otro [lado], un hecho cuyo castigo se olvida o se realiza encubriéndolo en otros motivos políticos o personales que en realidad cambian de sentido las consecuencias de la violación para los violadores, así como las consecuencias políticas para quien ejerce de castigador (4).

An assessment of the treatment given by Cervantes to rape in "La ilustre fregona" and "La fuerza de la sangre" would seem to reflect, in part, the mythological and biblical models that were available to him.[15] Not only do his rapists go unpunished but sometimes they end up

[14] Scholtz also mentions the existence of Biblical texts that point to what she describes as "divinely authorized" rape, an idea that intersects with some of the arguments that will be presented in this discussion. See 181.

[15] While not a model per se, the legend of the *Cava Rumía*, with its distinct mix of rape, religious and racial alterity, and historic aftereffects, would also have carried weight on the popular and literary minds of Spain, from the Middle Ages on. See Welles, *Persephone's Girdle* 6-7. Gerli, more pertinently, makes the crucial association between the legend of the Cava and the city of Toledo, explaining that "[t]he 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* . . . endowing Spain's history with a prophetic

handsomely compensated with a sense of happiness and forgiveness, while the victim's pain is, albeit superficially, obscured by her economic and social ascent. Yet, Cervantes' most striking contribution in "La fuerza de la sangre" goes beyond using rape as a means to expose the violence and indignity of a crime against women and the hypocrisy of the social constructs that sanction this crime. More importantly, he engages skeptical attitudes and arguments to construct a fictionalized narrative version of the religious debates taking place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries concerning the interpretation of divine grace and, hence, the rule of faith itself. This jarring juxtaposition of the explicit objectivity of rape and the implicit subjectivity of the divine underscores the common but nonetheless disconcerting proximity of two seemingly antithetical forces, and illustrates Cervantes' sustained effort to dispute common assumptions through the employment of skeptical narrative strategies.

As suggested by Marcia Welles, whether they function as a prelude to revolution, a corollary to war, or a privilege of class, early modern peninsular narratives of rape all point to a "dangerous crisis of authority" and to a "fetishism of honor." According to Welles, "by a process of domestication that enables the reigning aristocratic values to coincide with moral values, the narrations are uniformly deprived of their original force and ambiguity. Symptomatically, however, they provide insight into implicit, tacit assumptions in the social construct of seventeenth-century Spain and lend a voice to the silent obsession of the period" (*Persephone's Girdle* 37). If indeed consent to a hierarchy of socio-economic structures and gender roles is to be found in "La ilustre fregona" and "La fuerza de la sangre," and if that amounts to a deprivation of ambiguity in the text, it is fair to deduce that Cervantes amends this deprivation by coupling rape in these texts, and particularly in "La fuerza," with the absolving and redemptive

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teleology of apocalyptic doom, exile and yearned-for restoration, until the fall of Granada in 1492" (*Refiguring Authority* 45).

presence of divine intervention, which appears to imply that grace sanctions the violence and indignity of rape by allowing it to metamorphose into the sacrament of marriage.[16]

In mentioning Tirso de Molina's *La dama del olivar*, in which the aftermath of rape is mitigated by a miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary, Welles identifies a mere displacement of attention "from the terrestrial to the celestial" (36-37). I intend to argue that, in the case of "La fuerza de la sangre," the blatant union of sexual violence with the possible presence of the miraculous, beyond displacing attention from one epistemic construction to another, actually operates toward focusing the reader's attention, by means of shock and contrast, on the questionable tenets of two of the most traditional and unquestioned Spanish institutions: the Church and the aristocracy. In "La fuerza de la sangre" grace, when contrasted with rape, becomes a skeptical tool of inquiry rather than an acknowledged sign of faith, devotion, or divine intervention.[17]

While sharing an emphasis on the issues of social difference, patriarchal subjugation, and problematic identity fashioning, "La fuerza de la sangre" separates itself from "La ilustre fregona" in that it invites the element of grace and divine intervention as a possibly active participant in the *novela*'s outcome. Ironically, it is in "La ilustre fregona" where the reader can witness, albeit in an indirect way, the fervent faith that Costanza has in the Virgin Mary. She is described as a being ceremoniously reverent to an image of the Virgin (2: 156) and as a "tragaavemarías" who works and prays all day (2: 192). Leocadia, on the other hand, upon concealing Rodolfo's crucifix within her sleeve, does not perpetrate an act of devotion or assert a

[16] Lewis-Smith recognizes the implications of combining these two seemingly antithetical elements, providence and rape, and expresses that the "structural principle [of 'La fuerza de la sangre' is] irony of a kind that reveals life's deceptiveness in a world which is imperfect (a fallen world) yet governed by absolute goodness. Its climax is the potentially repellent idea that Providence works through Leocadia's rape" (886).

[17] Contrary to my opinion, Ruth El Saffar supports the idea that faith is a transformational force within the *novela*: "Rodolfo is the author of Leocadia's misfortune and the one whom Leocadia, through her faith, will eventually overcome, transposing his initially evil act into one out of which a transcendent goodness can be achieved" (*Novel to Romance* 129).

deep faith in the divine; instead, she harvests a concrete, tangible proof that may lead her rapist to be identified. Even a superficial comparison of the two texts reveals that while the role of religion and faith in the lives of the female protagonists appears to be one of contrast, with one being represented as a devout believer and the other as a practical, "calculating" Christian, the role that religion and divinity have to play in the plots is proportionally inverse to the personal religious affiliation of the principal female characters.[18] It is, after all, on the seemingly less devout Leocadia that God appears to shower His grace.

Critics seem to be divided in their opinions as to whether the conspicuous insistence on the divine elements in "La fuerza de la sangre" constitutes an invitation to consider the outcome of the *novela* as a *miraculous* act to which the plot progresses through a series of mini *miraculous* events, or whether this persistence on divine intervention simply exists as part of an allegorical treatment of the themes of moral and spiritual fall and rise through redemption. Moreover, in making their assessments critics have had to decide whether to take Cervantes at face value or whether to rely on the presence of his characteristic ironic voice. Cervantes does not make the task of reading "La fuerza de la sangre" an easy one, and the sheer number of agreements and disagreements generated by readers is a testimony to his ability to blend generic tradition with innovation, and to employ traditional themes (rape) in challenging and unsettling contexts (rape combined with divine grace). It is through the lenses of skepticism and its reverberation through Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe that the contrasts and antagonisms of "La fuerza" become harmonized. It is through this prism that one best exposes the problematic behavioral patterns of a morally and spiritually troubled society and the role that divine grace, or the perception of divine grace, has within this economy.

[18] I borrow the term "calculating" here from Adriana Slaniceanu, who argues for the feminine agency of both Leocadia and Doña Estefania in concocting a socially satisfying conclusion to Leocadia's rape and eventual pregnancy.

Critical opinion has been keen to dismiss the view that grace is responsible for the sequence of seemingly miraculous events that culminate in the alleged happy conclusion of "La fuerza de la sangre." This reflects, in part, the fact that proponents of such view have opted not to accentuate the skeptical vein hidden under the seemingly naïve, plot-solving religious devices employed, ironically or not, by Cervantes. Joaquin Casalduero precedes Alban Forcione in making a case for a heavily Christianized interpretation of "La fuerza," seeing in the marriage between Rodolfo and Leocadia a redemptive act that nullifies the sins of the Fall from Paradise, and which is made possible by the grace of Christ through the silver crucifix taken by Leocadia (150-166). Ruth El Saffar also leans her interpretation heavily toward the transcendental, pointing to the fact that "neither the plot nor the characters are to be evaluated by realistic or naturalistic standards" (*Novel to Romance* 128), and stresses throughout her study the role that faith has in the outcome, the importance of religious symbolism, and the dynamics between sin and salvation.[19]

Alban Forcione conveys in his analysis an underlying and justified ambivalence as to the way Cervantes approaches the question of dogma involving the Catholic Church. He recognizes Cervantes' awareness of and engagement with the skeptical current that permeated the religious dialogue of Europe through the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, but also emphasizes how Cervantes may have been influenced by the piety generated through the sensorially manipulative spectacles produced by the Church – a manipulation that contradicts the very tenets of skepticism. When referring to the festivities that took place in 1587 to celebrate the return of St. Leocadia's remains to the Basilica of Toledo, Forcione speculates that Cervantes may have

[19] El Saffar's reading is puzzling in an important way. While she underscores the value and prominence of faith in regard to the outcome of events in the *novela*, she denies categorically that the miraculous is a possible explanation for the unlikely ending of the tale. For her, faith, or Cervantine faith, appears to operate as a character-strengthening device restricted to the earthly plane, and not an agent capable of triggering miraculous solutions to very terrestrial problems (134).

witnessed those events, and reflects that "[w]hatever Cervantes's interest in such spectacles might have been, his writing was profoundly affected by the religious sentiment that they expressed so powerfully" (327). These religious sentiments are the same ones that artists from the period tried to awaken through paintings and sculptures of religious themes and characters, and are reflected in the ekphrastic effects that Cervantes creates during the much commented entrance of Leocadia into the room where she is about to face Rodolfo for the first time after the rape. As Jeremy Robbins explains, the goal of these images was to "lead men from their vices, in order to lead them to the . . . true worship of our Lord" (*Challenges* 83). Robbins adds: "[A]esthetic theory posited that a visual representation worked on the senses, but after the senses have been engaged, the will and the intellect were supposed to lead the viewer to a . . . desire for virtue and an . . . abhorrence of vice" (93).

Virtue here is inextricably linked to religious virtue as defined by Catholicism; but Catholicism is in this instance subjected to a doubly critical force. Both reason and the senses, as Pyrrhonian skepticism argues so persuasively, cannot be fully trusted. Moreover, Catholic dogma in itself, as Church reformers would claim through questioning the validity of the Catholic rule of faith, cannot be unquestionably accepted either.[20] The religious sentiments that may have so strongly affected Cervantes' writing, to allude to Forcione, more than having simply given way to fictional recreations of acts of faith may have served as an avenue to question, in a very reformist mode, the very tenets of the beliefs that sustain such faith. It is within this doubly unstable prism that "La fuerza de la sangre" deserves to be approached.

Forcione recognizes, as most critics do, that "La fuerza" presents a variety of interpretative challenges: "Its 'bad taste,' indeed its unintelligibility, are [sic] immediately evident to all who approach it as if it were written according to canons that appear to govern

[20] Montaigne's answer to this dilemma is, to the extent that he ever solved this problem, Catholic fideism.

Cervantes's great representational fiction" (328).[21] What governs this fiction, Forcione asserts, is a "very different literary logic from that of the novel, and it demands of its readers a catholicity of literary taste which has seldom been manifested by its numerous critics. The literary system controlling its form is that of the miracle narrative" (328). Forcione is careful to recognize that the alledged miracles that he proposes take place in "La fuerza de la sangre" are of a secularized nature, even if he fails to define exactly what the term "secularized" means in the context of this *novela*. While most critics are not prepared to see the events that take place within "La fuerza" as driven by miracles, Forcione's reading is a very fruitful one, for it highlights the conspicuous presence of that which neither reason nor the senses can explain. At the same time, it stresses the way in which Cervantes, once again, manipulates an established literary genre – in this case by subverting its most central message of forgiveness and redemption through divine intervention – to question the very principles maintained in these narrative traditions and in the structures that sustain society's pillars. So while the author may indeed be resorting to a "very different literary logic from that of the novel," his ultimate product abounds with contrasting novelistic tensions and the unequivocal Cervantine taste for questioning the epistemic status quo. Curiously, Forcione seems not to totally disagree with this assessment. He recognizes that Cervantes' novelistic or "secularized" miracle narrative diverges from other such narratives. He expresses that "Cervantes is anything but a doctrinaire religious writer, and his engagement with this important type of Counter-Reformation romance reveals the complexity that marks his treatment of all the traditional idealizing literary forms that nourish his fiction" (340). Nonetheless, he also affirms that "La fuerza de la sangre" fails to become a subversion of a miracle. . . . The tale in fact confirms the presence of the divine within the secular world, stresses the possibility of man's

[21] In fact, "La fuerza de la sangre" has awakened a variety of similarly intense labels and descriptions, as in "a tale difficult to stomach and understand" (Lappin 148); "un audaz experimento novelístico y un fracaso, al mismo tiempo" (Avalle-Arce 25), "no tiene relevancia" and "no merece ser discutida" (Durán 71).

harmonious working with God's Providence, and celebrates the value of human capacities and efforts" (394-395).

In making this assertion Forcione may be speculating about Cervantes' personal faith in God and miracles, and may be proposing a reality in which miracles – whose authenticity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is challenged by Luther, Erasmus, and Montaigne, as I will demonstrate – is sanctioned by Cervantes. I will argue instead that beyond taking a dogmatic position in favor or against miracles, Cervantes is trying to recreate this fundamental dialogue about faith and its criterion of truth. He is recreating in his text the very skeptical environment that asserts the futility and impossibility of trying to determine, through reason, the veracity of religious phenomena, and through this critique, he is highlighting the unending dilemmas raised by the Reformation.

Critical opinion in regard to the role of miracles in "La fuerza de la sangre" seems to both dissent and partially concur with Forcione's assessment. Adriana Slaniceanu refrains altogether from referring to the unlikely developments of the plot as miracles, but she comments on the authors "highly original application of the concept of verisimilitude." She adds: "the 'weakness' of romance is its reliance on the inverisimilar occurrence, and Cervantes explores this very weakness to create subtle interplay between the unlikely event and the critical check of self-parody" (106). Marcia Welles recognizes that "[b]y classifying the tale as a miracle narrative, albeit a secularized and unconventional one, Forcione . . . dispels as generically irrelevant some old doubts about the story's lack of psychological verisimilitude." On the other hand, she admits that "his analysis also fosters new hesitations," particularly when the "problematic" "La fuerza de la sangre" is compared with other "unproblematic" seventeenth-century miracle/ rape narratives (244). William Clamurro finds Forcione's reading "disappointing," in that "[it] gives

us little more than the widely accepted – and convenient – notion that we are dealing with a 'secularized miracle'" (149, n. 2), and Anthony Lappin rejects the idea of the miraculous nature of the events by stating, first, that "Leocadia's appearance, and the wholly intended and ravishing effects it has on Rodolfo, is not 'miraculous'" (160). To that he adds that "*La fuerza de la sangre* . . . is a *tour de force*; yet it is anything but a miracle story" (163). Paul Lewis-Smith maintains that "an important element in [Cervantes'] narrative technique is his multiple use of the dramatic device of *engañar con la verdad* to the effect of encouraging trust in God whilst underlining His mysteriousness and the impossibility of sharing His foreknowledge" (887). Finally, B. W. Ife and Trudi Darby recognize the persuasiveness of Forcione's reading, but find it inconclusive at the same time: "Many readers may find that figural or symbolic interpretations, or recourse to miracles, whether secularized or not, do not allow them to keep faith with the outrage they experience when they read the story, or to see where their outrage leads them as critics or interpreters of the text" (176).

Arriving at a dogmatic conclusion as to whether there are true miracles leading the plot to its satisfactory (or not) conclusion is beside the point. Lappin himself recognizes that "as in life, the action of grace must be guessed at behind the scenes; it is not made visible" (163).[22] In other words, grace too, or the recognition of grace, becomes subject to the discernment of reason and the senses in order to be fully affirmed by the receiver, and hence becomes vulnerable to the scrutiny of skeptical eyes. Grace is, according to the opinion of reformers like Luther, determined by the rule of faith. Yet, from a different perspective, and as Montaigne has so strongly argued, "Christians do themselves wrong by wishing to support their belief with human reason; belief is grasped only by faith and by private inspiration from God's grace" (*Apology* 3).

[22] Lappin concludes this thought by clarifying that "[i]n any case, the basic structure of a miracle tale is violated at the very outset: 'In hagiography no rape is ever completed. [. . .] The wicked seducers are always thwarted and punished, the faithful protected and rewarded" (163).

One is, therefore, facing the already discussed conundrum of the problem of the criterion: in order to embrace the idea of a miracle one needs to stipulate criteria that would prove beyond doubt that the miracle is so, but that criteria, particularly if based solely on faith, cannot be itself proved by a set criteria of its own.[23]

Early Modernity, which witnessed a decline of Aristotelian thought and methodology in favor of a more empirical, "mechanical philosophy," came to see nature as "governed by a uniform set of divine volitions, variations in the regularities of which were attributed to deficiencies in human knowledge" (Harrison 499). In synthesis, "all the doctrines of revealed theology were evident in the natural world, rendering superfluous arguments that relied on miracles to establish the veracity of special revelation" (Harrison 500). A pertinent example of this thought is implied in the very *Theologia naturalis*, written by Raymond Sebond and translated by Montaigne, in which Sebond expresses the view that what God has infused in both nature and Scripture was enough for salvation.[24] Within this mentality, miracles become obsolete events, and point to men's inability to comprehend God's pre-set plans and natural laws. D. P. Walker reminds us that the Protestant Reformation not only embraced the view that

[23] Peter Harrison provides a detailed exposition of the epistemology concerning miracles through the history of the Christian Church. He mentions particularly how Saint Augustine is recognized as having been the first Christian thinker to attempt to define miracle. Harrison explains: "For Augustine, the whole of nature was a miraculous work of God. Accordingly, miracles (*miraculum*) were to be understood primarily in terms of their impact on the observer. A miracle, he wrote, is an event 'that is difficult or unusual above the hope or power of them who wonder.' Given God's control of nature, miracles could not be 'contrary to nature' but rather were 'contrary to our knowledge of nature'" (496). Harrison adds that in his later years Augustine "came to view miracles in a more positive light, laying the foundations for the strong medieval association of miracles with sainthood" (496). This medieval association found its progenitor in the neo-Aristotelian voice of Thomas Aquinas who, not unlike Augustine, underscored the subjectivity of the miraculous by highlighting its wondrous aspects. As Harrison reminds us, "Aquinas also [agrees] with Augustine that miracles are not contrary to nature. But rather than arguing – as had his illustrious predecessor – that miracles are contrary to our knowledge of nature, he [notes] that in a miraculous event God acts 'beside the order planted in nature'" (497). Harrison also stresses how Aquinas stipulates that miracles should be used as confirmation in "matters of divine revelation that are above human reason" (498), but concludes that "while the Middle Ages witnessed some tendencies toward the formalization and rationalization of the criteria for miracles, to a large degree miracles still acted as *signs* rather than as indisputable *evidences*" (499). Although faith and grace were still seen as tools in the discernment of miracles, the Church retained the authority to judge whether a contemporary event constituted or not a miracle.

[24] Sebond's original text dates from 1434-36; Montaigne's translation into French dates from 1569.

miracles ceased to take place once Christianity was fully established, "perhaps in the time of Constantine or at the latest by about A.D. 600" (111), but went through great lengths to turn this view into a stable doctrine. More importantly, the Protestant doctrine of cessation of miracles had the aim of articulating that "all medieval and especially all contemporary Catholic miracles were either fakes or diabolic wonders, and [of accounting] for the lack of Protestant miracles" (Walker 111).[25] Walker also elaborates on the fact that the doctrine of cessation was particularly prominent in the two decades around 1600 given the Catholic use of contemporary miracles as a tool in responding to the Protestant threat: "[T]his made it urgent [for Protestants] to have a simple, compendious, and effective means of exploding all modern miracles" (112). In fact, the criticism aimed at exposing the raw materialism of medieval Catholic propaganda – which to a great extent extended into and beyond the fifteenth century, being revived at the time of the Reformation – was not isolated to Protestant critics. Alexandra Walsham contends:

> In the context of Luther's damaging attacks on the cult of saints and its 'superstitious' adhesions humanist criticism of religious credulity exercised considerable influence. Erasmus's acid satire of popular belief and practice in the *Colloquies* found much sympathetic support and Juan Luis Vives's merciless assault on the miracle-laden Golden legend as a book written by men 'with mouths of iron and hearts of lead' was likewise widely endorsed. (784)

This questioning of Catholic methods that originated both from Protestant and Catholic reformers illustrates the depth of the impasse and the difficulty that the Catholic authorities faced

[25] Walker mentions that "Luther had sometimes preached the cessation of miracles. In a sermon of 1533 on Matthew 8:1-14 . . . he distinguished two kinds of miracles: first, miracles of the soul that is transformed by faith; and second, miracles of the body, such as these cures. The first kind is by far the greatest, for Christ 'marveled' at the centurion's faith; they are done daily and will continue until the Last Day. The second was always rare, and such miracles were done by God only to establish the new Church, its baptism and teaching. Now that Christianity rests securely on the Scriptures, these miracles of the body have ceased" (111-112). Walker remarks on how, in this excerpt, Luther never mentions modern Catholic miracles, and concludes that he "may [have been] thinking only of the lack of Protestant ones" (112). Calvin's opinion, also quoted by Walker, echoes that of Luther. See 112.

in reconciling their time-tested strategies for recruiting and keeping the faithful while trying to respond to the perils brought about by Protestant skepticism. Walsham describes the outcome of such quandary:

> [I]t needs to be stressed that the summoning of the Council of Trent coincided with a lively reassertion of the Church of Rome as a repository of numinous power. In its decree of 1563, the Council ordered the eradication of all 'superstition' associated with pilgrimages, images, and relics but vigorously reaffirmed the value of venerating and invocating the saints and their remains and representations. . . . Tridentine Catholicism did not reject the principle that words, symbols, and objects could be receptacles of the divine: it simply sought to bring these resources under closer clerical control and ensure that the priesthood maintained exclusive rights to their application and use. (786)

Miracles, therefore, and particularly those connected with pilgrimages to holy sites and relics belonging to recognized Church saints or 'holy persons,' continued to be officially interpreted as taking place within the Catholic Iberian Peninsula and all over Catholic Western Europe.[26]

Despite his fervent Catholicism, Montaigne's opinion of miracles was, not surprisingly, a skeptical and at times ambivalent one. He tended to see them as products of a mismanaged relationship between body and mind. In his essay "On the power of the imagination," Montaigne states: "It is probable that the principal credit of miracles, visions, enchantments, and such

[26] Walsham describes: "In the 1620s, for instance, the ecclesiastical authorities sanctioned the resort of pilgrims to the shrine of the recently deceased Bishop Francis de Sales, permitting them to touch rosaries and linen cloths to his coffin and carry away fragments of stone scraped from his tomb. Carefully authenticated accounts of the wonders worked by these holy persons circulated alongside revised versions of the lives of the medieval saints like those prepared by Laurentius Surius and Luigi Lippoman. Many pious falsehoods were excised from these new editions, but as Protestant polemicists like George Abbot were quick to point out, they still contained a vast mass of miracles. And in his mighty defense of Catholic theology against the onslaughts of the reformers, the *Disputationes . . . de Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (1586-93), Cardinal Robert Bellarmine declared that visible signs were necessary to confirm Christ's Church and endorse any 'extraordinary mission' it launched" (786).

extraordinary occurrences comes from the power of imagination, acting principally upon the minds of the common people, which are softer. Their belief has been so strongly seized that they think they see what they do not see" (*Complete Essays* 70). Recognizing that Montaigne often uses the word "miracle" to describe a variety of awe-inspiring natural phenomena, Max Gauna remarks on how the words "*des miracles*" were struck out of a particular essay in the 1595 edition of the *Essais*, an act which, according to him, "confirms their religious significance" (17).[27] One can hence infer that Montaigne was aware of how his position on miracles could easily be construed as contradictory of his professed Catholicism. This awareness does not stop him from making the very same kind of inference elsewhere in the *Essais*. As he comments on how "children, common people, women, and sick people are most subject to be led by the ears," he concludes:

> [N]ow I think that I was as much to be pitied myself. Not that experience has since shown me anything surpassing my first beliefs, and that through no fault of my curiosity; but reason has taught me that to condemn a thing thus, dogmatically, as false and impossible, is to assume the advantage of knowing the bounds and limits of God's will and of power of our Nature; and that there is no more notable folly in the world than to reduce these things to the measure of our capacity and competence. If we call prodigies or miracles whatever our reason cannot reach, how many of these appear continually to our eyes! (*Complete Essays* 132)[28]

[27] Montaigne died in 1592. Donald Frame explains that the 1595 edition of the *Essais* was based on a manuscript version prepared by the author in 1588, "in his own hand, marked '6th edition' and covered, in the mergins, with additions. . . . A copy of the additions was sent to Montaigne's literary executrix, Marie de Gournay, and served as a basis for the 1595 edition. This 1595 text, though not always wholly trustworthy, is useful in two ways: it gives readings that were later cut from the margins of the Bordeaux copy by a heedless binder in trimming the pages, and also readings that Montaigne may have relegated to separate slips of paper which have since been lost" (*Complete Essays* xv).

[28] From essay 1: 27, "It is folly to measure the true and false by our own capacity." This position is deeply embedded in the skeptical attitude that Montaigne articulates in the "Apologie." There he states: "I make men feel

Montaigne hence wants to safeguard God's autonomy, which he does by asserting his fideism; at the same time he wants to challenge the veracity of miraculous events, which he does by attacking through skepticism man's ability to read God. More than a mere ambivalence on his part, his position illustrates the struggle experienced by many intellectuals of the time, Cervantes perhaps among them who, caught by the alluring challenge of skepticism, had to balance their religious convictions and fidelities against the iron jaws of the rule of faith and the perpetual threat posed by the problem of the criterion. Interestingly, Montaigne does not refer directly to miracles in his "Apologie." Yet, he does state that "[t]o come across something unbelievable is, for Christians, an opportunity to exercise belief; it is all the more reasonable precisely because it runs counter to human reason" (65). In his view, the absence of reason, fallible and deceitful a tool as it is, gives way to a fideistic attitude that allows for God's acts to penetrate the mind without the interference of the intellect. This thought, which can be perceived as utterly unsatisfactory within the context of skepticism, is Montaigne's way of negotiating the absolutely monumental epistemic challenges of his generation.

The disquietud that Montaigne expresses in his *Essais* in regard to God's power and will to intervene and man's capacity to interpret this possible intervention is not at all unlike the contrasting views and suggestions put forth in "La fuerza de la sangre," where the skeptical and religious crisis that culminated in the Reformation becomes unmistakably evident.

If indeed Cervantes was aware of the tenets of skepticism and the challenges they posed to the rationalization of a society in civil and religious distress, it would be reasonable to see these challenges transferred into the fabric of his fiction. Not unlike the religious art that was sanctioned and employed by the Catholic authorities to "appeal to the faithful and keep them

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the emptiness, the vanity, the nothingness of Man, wrenching from their grasp the sickly arms of human reason, making them bow their heads and bite the dust before the authority and awe of the Divine Majesty, to whom alone belong knowledge and wisdom" (*Apology* 12).

within the Catholic fold" (Robbins, *Challenges* 82), Cervantes too utilizes the power of the written word, with its ability to conjure up images and contrive realities, to engage the reader's senses and reason. Yet, his ultimate ambition is not to soften religious hearts into Catholic deference but to awaken the reader's skeptical eyes and mind to the question of truth and validity in the structures that uphold their society and their religious beliefs. His calculated act of contrasting the redemptive nature of the miracle narrative with the despondent reality of rape within the critical environment of the urban *novela* clearly points to critical inquiry more than to religious fervor. While religious beliefs and divine intervention are employed as tools of reflection in "La fuerza de la sangre," it is to the essence of skepticism that Cervantes appeals here, and not to the reiteration of a challenged religious faith. As the influential painter and Cervantes' contemporary Francisco Pacheco explains in regard to the suggestive power of painting, "the viewer's senses are 'violated' by strikingly painted images" (Robbins, *Challenges* 85).[29] In the same manner, Cervantes' readers feel, much like his raped protagonist, violated by the juxtaposition of conflicting signifiers and signifieds and their reluctance to conjure up a conclusive message.[30]

Critics have dedicated many pages to identifying, mostly by their alleged symbolic associations, the striking contrasts that Cervantes employs throughout "La fuerza de la sangre" to awaken the reader's skeptical inquisitiveness. Darkness and light, silence and speech, honor and dishonor, wealth and poverty, chasteness and lasciviousness, morality and immorality, the sacred

[29] Robbins affirms that "[a] religious painting operates on the spectator by activating what were called the three powers of the soul (the intellect, the will, and the memory) each connected to a distinct temporal plane . . . . In this way, religious art is supposed to engage the mind and to link past, present, and future into a coherent response to the image contemplated" (*Challenges* 84-85).

[30] Edward Friedman comments on how the accepted faith in words and their ability to signify becomes a source of anxiety in early modern peninsular literature: "An ever greater skepticism toward verbal signs, and toward signs in general, manifests itself in fiction. The ironies of discourse – including multiple and opposing signifieds, narrative unreliability, ambivalent exemplarity, discrepancies between stated intension and finished product – are explored (and often exploited) in literary texts, which begin to place their artistry, as well as their lessons in the foreground" (129).

and the profane, are only some of the dualities presented by Cervantes in a movement toward eliciting the reader's skeptical consideration.[31] I will focus here on discussing only the contrasting elements that work toward magnifying the juxtaposition of the divine against the ironic and mundane, in order to uncover Cervantes' skeptical treatment of grace in a *novela* that uses parodies of not only the Christian themes identified by critics but also of the theological dialogue taking place in Reformation/ Counter-Reformation Europe.

It is not by chance that Cervantes chooses to stage "La fuerza de la sangre" in the Castilian town of Toledo. In fact, Toledo was not only "the single most important crossroads of Jewish, Moslem, and Christian cultures in Europe" during the Middle Ages, but also a cultural center of paramount importance for the translation and dissemination of scientific, philosophical, and literary works. Yet, it is Toledo's other reputation, as a "center of magic and the black arts throughout the Middle Ages" (Gerli, *Medieval Iberia* 788-789) that may, in the context of "La fuerza," with its conspicuous juxtapositions of demonic behavior and divine wonder, have raised the skeptical consciousness of Cervantes' sixteenth-century readers.[32] Slaniceanu comments on Cervantes' choice of location, describing it as "an aspect of primary interest," but relating it to the fact that it "permits strong overtones of social criticism to intermingle with the protagonist's peripeties" (102). In fact, the ironic observation offered by the narrator pertains to the people of Toledo and the type of security its justice system provides to its community: "Con la seguridad que promete la mucha justicia y bien inclinada gente de aquella ciudad, venía el buen hidalgo

[31] Forcione associates Cervantes' highlighting of contrasts with the symmetrical structure of the plot: "The first half of the tale is marked by the loneness of the heroine and her alienation from a society that deprives her of her very being." He also points out that in the second half, "[s]ociety appears as a friendly community united in its respect for virtue and eagerly offering its applause to the marvelous child" (357). Aylward notes that Rodolfo's bedroom appears to symbolize both negative evil and positive regeneration, as it "serves not only as the demonic place where Leocadia loses consciousness twice in the course of being raped, but also as the blessed locale in which little Luisico is twice given life" (109).

[32] For more on Toledo's heterodoxy, both scientific and literary, see Heusch and Menéndez y Pelayo. For Toledo as a medieval center of translation see Deyermond (146-149), and for its relationship to magic and black arts see Ferreiro Alemparte.

con su honrada familia, lejos de pensar en desastre que sucederles pudiese" (2: 77). Evidently, just as the "seguridad" was immediately put to the test and proven nonexistent, so would the "justicia," whether one reads the term as indicating a police force or a justice system. After Leocadia's abduction, her parents consider and abandon the idea of bringing the case to the authorities: "confusos, sin saber si sería bien dar noticia de su desgracia a la justicia, temerosos no fuesen ellos el principal instrumento de publicar su deshonra" (2: 78).

Nonetheless, it is a more subtly ironic association created by the narrator already in the first few lines of the text that, when noticed, allows the reader to anticipate the kind of skeptical challenge the text will present. The intended contrast between *claro* and *oscuro* and the cadence of the narrator's description of the night of the crime recall the mystical discourse employed to illustrate the union of soul and God. Even though Saint John of the Cross' poetry was not yet published during Cervantes' lifetime, its overall symbolism, which was shared by numerous other mystic poets, illustrates the contrast implied by Cervantes: "Era una noche oscura/ con ansias de amor inflamada, ¡oh, dichosa ventura!" (Rivers 138).[33] The narrators' deliberate and utter corruption of a well-known and contrasting symbolic association to set up the environment for the horrific events that will ensue points, just as the contrast of rape and the sacred in this *novela*, to an engaged effort to destabilize all epistemic balances in order to more effectively question the crisis that is about to unfold. Cervantes' text states: "La noche era clara; la hora, las once; el camino, solo; el paso, tardo" (2: 77). While Saint John's "noche *oscura* con ansias de amor inflamada" (emphasis added) leads to a spiritual, mystical experience that literally embodies the affirming and nourishing love of God for humanity, the events narrated in "La

[33] Howe reminds us that "darkness invokes a mental impression based on the reader's sense perception of this state we call darkness. If he reads 'en una noche oscura,' he forms a mental conception of a dark night as perceived through sense impressions. The mystic, however, also uses darkness as a symbol for the union he experiences with a transcendent God. It becomes a divine darkness in which, paradoxically, the mystic is illuminated" (48). For more on 'night' as a symbol within the mystical tradition, see Swietlicki (175-183) and Mancho Duque.

fuerza" describe the exact opposite: a total and complete absence of love and affirming spiritual nourishment. Cervantes' *noche clara* also questions whether or not God intervenes, and if he does, exactly what is the nature and depth of the benefit harvested by the person on whose behalf He intervenes. By inverting in "La fuerza" the common mystic metaphor from *noche oscura* to *clara*, Cervantes ironically hints at the inversion of a traditional literary symbol. Darkness leads to spiritual light in "La noche oscura" and in many mystical poems, while light leads to abhorrent spiritual darkness in *la noche clara* of "La fuerza de la sangre." While in Saint John's poem the "dark night inflamed by the yearning for love" facilitates a spiritually constructive experience, in "La fuerza" the yearning for love that takes hold of Rodolfo during his *noche clara* is of a very distinct nature, as it looks to satisfy not any spiritual need but a voracious and impetuous sexual appetite. The contrast of rape and divine grace becomes then reflected in and enhanced by the early allusion to a very different type of desire for union, the one ironically and inversely invoked through the mystical tradition. To the reader who is aware of these associations, future references to God, grace, and divine intervention will ring through with a tone charged with irony and skepticism.

The very physical image of the church, the geographical center of the town as well as the sacred house of Christianity, is also conspicuously associated in "La fuerza de la sangre" with the darkness of evil and criminality. It stands as the dumping ground in which *dishonored* Leocadia is placed under the cover of darkness, and from which she promptly flees to avoid being seen and recognized. Nonetheless, the play of light and darkness, with its up-to-now inverted symbolism, returns to its original symbolic value when Rodolfo is described as being blind in the absence of judgment: "Ciego de la luz del entendimiento, a oscuras robó la mejor

prenda de Leocadia" (2: 79). Light and clarity, usually associated with wisdom, enlightenment, and moral rectitude, are absent here, both from the environment and from Rodolfo's reasoning.[34]

"La fuerza de la sangre," as it mirrors the epistemological crisis that brought about the theological disputes of sixteenth-century Europe, questions not only God's interference but also man's interpretation of events perceived as willed by God. Again, the narrator's choice of words in describing the moral disposition of Rodolfo's caste – "siempre los ricos que dan en liberales hallan quien canonice sus desafueros y califique por buenos sus malos gustos" (2: 78) – raises the question as to the relationship between theology and the morality within the plot (and beyond). "Canonizar," and in particular "canonizar desafueros," is an unusual, ambiguous way of implying sanctioning, for it denotes not only acceptance but also the sanctification, by means of ecclesiastical authoritative determination, of an individual for his or her actions.[35] More importantly, Cervantes' readers would have been aware, given the period's proliferation of miracle narratives and *comedias de santo*, that realizing miracles was one of the chief requisites for canonization. What that illustrates, particularly in light of the inter-textual relationships outlined above, is that the narrator is keen on establishing an ambiguous identification between the sacred and the profane, the miraculous and the mundane. Here, the narrator's allusion to the

[34] Forcione sees the darkness here as part of the "downward movement of this cyclical narrative," in which "darkness pervades nearly the whole first half of the tale." He also attributes the darkness to Rodolfo's "violent acts" and associates it with the subsequent theme of loss of vision that is repeated several times throughout the text (356). Curiously, Rodolfo's behavior challenges Montaigne's position that men are best served by the absence than the betraying presence of their intellect, which tends to over-think and hence fall prey to the perils of philosophy. Montaigne writes: "Is it not somewhat bold of Philosophy to think that men perform their greatest deeds, those nearest to the divine, when they are beside themselves, frenzied and out of their senses? Our amendment comes when reason slumbers, or when we are deprived of it. . . . Here is a thought: when the passions bring dislocation to our reason, we become virtuous; when reason is driven out by frenzy or by sleep, that image of death, we become prophets and seers" (*Apology* 147). From a different perspective, however, Rodolfo's actions remind one of Montaigne's ambivalence over passions of the soul and their double agency as facilitators of good and evil. See *Apology* 146-147.

[35] Sebastián Covarrubias defines the word as follows: "vale tanto como recebir en el número de los santos al hombre que ha tenido santa vida, y en ella y en su muerte ha Nuestro Señor sinificado nos su Santo con su exemplo y milagors . . . : y dixose canonizar del verbo Griego κανονίζειν . . . por la regularidad con que se haze el examen para la canonización del santo, o por ventura porque el día de la canonización, el Papa le pone en la Letanía diziendo Sancte N. ora pro nobis" (1: 188-189).

canonization of rich people's bad actions – that is, actions not only permitted and overlooked but figuratively elevated to the status of sacred or miraculous – by those who are willing to see good in their evil deeds, points again to an effort to either question or subvert the sacred in order to expose the moral decadence of the aristocratic elite and, why not, the questionable epistemology of the Church.

The crucifix is another powerful Christian symbol employed in "La fuerza" in ambiguous ways in order to foster the destabilization of the sacred element. Critics have exhaustively analyzed its function and metaphorical value. El Saffar sees the crucifix (as well as the church) as a symbol of an eventual reconciliation: "Religion promises the joining, rather than the separation, of Leocadia and Rodolfo, offering hope for a happy ending which is totally at variance with the apparent destinies of the two characters after the rape" (*Novel to Romance* 132). Aylward corroborates this idea in that he believes that the crucifix "is intended to be seen as God's instrument for restoring order in the universe by bringing together in matrimony the victim and her violator" (113). Welles, contrastingly, embraces the view that the rape and the crucifix are inextricably linked, but refrains from seeing in it a sign of redemption: "Rodolfo sins and is saved, but there is no indication that he experiences a sense of guilt. . . . [His] culpability is minimized, and his consciousness of sin is, in fact, conspicuously absent, a textual silence especially noteworthy amidst the luxuriant blooming in post-Tridentine Spain of stories of great and passionate saints and sinners" (244). Sears partially corroborates Welles, in that she sees in the crucifix a mute symbol of the rape itself (78-79), one that is associated with the patriarchal structure it ultimately stands for. She elaborates that, as the only evidence Leocadia keeps from the crime scene, it is a "symbol of a son redeemed by the father's law, as Rodolfo will, in the end, be redeemed by it" (156-157). Forcione, on the other hand, recognizes the depth of the

Christian redemptive message associated with the crucifix, but opts to inscribe in it a lay interpretation:

> In Cervantes's treatment of the crucifix we discern . . . a tendency toward desacralization, visible in his concern to render ambiguous its mysterious workings within the narrative, to mute its powerful symbolic resonances, and to transform it from the talismanic 'last resort' of a helpless protagonist and a bearer of divine power upon which she is totally reliant into a mere object, bereft of divine emanations and manipulated by a resourceful heroine in her efforts to triumph over her antagonist. (380)

Forcione is correct in noting the ambiguity with which Cervantes treats the crucifix. After all, if it were not for the obvious effort to question, by complication and ambiguity, the very symbols, dogmas, and practices of the Church, Cervantes could have allowed Leocadia to walk out of that dark room with a number of less symbolically charged objects, all of which, given the practical and irreligious function of the crucifix here, could have served as a witness to the crime. By claiming a desacralization of the symbol, nevertheless, Forcione makes it possible to refer to the events that lead to the conclusion as desacralized miracles, a category that lacks definition and that would have appeared highly unconventional if not plain unreasonable to contemporary readers of "La fuerza," particularly in light of the Church's need to identify, qualify, and sanction miracles in order to continue to canonize their saints. In early seventeenth-century Counter-Reformation Spain, a miracle that is not sacred is not a miracle. It is only through the acknowledgement of the crucifix as a fully sacred symbol that Leocadia's practical act of stealing becomes, as purported by the narrator, a sign of her own religious skepticism and of her reluctance to rely on divine intervention. Of paramount importance to "La fuerza de la sangre," this skepticism reflects the doubts of an entire group of European religious reformers, extends

itself through all the allegedly miraculous twists of the conclusion, and makes the affair of reading through the narrator's irony a treacherously difficult one. The crucifix is a symbol of an unstable knowledge, of an unsettled belief in how deeply, if at all, God participates in untangling human affairs, and when and if He does, whether His intervention amounts to justice or to a perpetuation of the status quo alluded to by the narrator in the introductory lines. Even considering the Catholic fideism of thinkers like Montaigne (and possibly like Cervantes), the crucifix here stands for skepticism itself, for the instability of the rule of faith, and for the view that no propositions are absolute beyond proof and no proofs are absolute beyond doubt.

Forcione's understanding of Cervantes' times and works allows him to recognize that "[w]hile there is very little in Cervantes's writing that can be construed in a strict sense as atheistic or heterodox, it is certainly wrong to describe his religious mentality as perfectly orthodox. But it is just as wrong to describe him as a totally secular writer because a strong vein of skepticism is visible in much of his writing" (353). He extends this thought by adding that

> [Cervantes'] religious writings are most provocative when they fall between [the irreverent burlesque of the mental habits of the devout and hymns informed by the lofty spirituality of the most religious of his contemporaries] . . . when they are alive with tension, and when their restlessness and their resistance to all efforts to render them easily intelligible are a register of profundity of concern. (354)

It is precisely due to these reasons that the events that take place in "La fuerza," as described by the narrator in a deliberate way that joins the implausibility both of certain human emotions and certain alleged divine outcomes, is best seen as an irresolvable confrontation of epistemic challenges. These challenges reflect not only the major preoccupations addressed by skepticism but also the apprehension experienced by the Christian community, Protestant and

Catholic alike, during the period following the Reformation. While the tendency from critics has been to secure a one-sided determination in regard to the veracity or falsehood of the miracles proposed by the narrator, the skepticism here ingrained asks, or rather, begs, for a reading that suspends judgment and embraces the possibility of an unanswerable question. Just as God, according to Montaigne, cannot be proved or experienced by the force of reason, nor can the veracity of God's works be judged by similar tools.[36] What one can do, nonetheless, is to scrutinize the narrator's irony to find out how exactly the "tension," the "restlessness," and the "resistance to intelligibility," to quote Forcione, are so subtly and yet so powerfully conveyed.

Leocadia's presence of mind in taking the crucifix from Rodolfo's room, as critics have widely recognized with the flagrant help of the narrator – "vio un crucifijo pequeño, todo de plata, el cual tomó y se le puso en la manga de la ropa, *no por devoción ni por hurto, sino llevada de un discreto designio suyo*" (2: 82, emphasis added) – points to a less-than-pious attitude on her part. Forcione recognizes Leocadia's secularizing attitude toward the crucifix and comments that "Cervantes continues to present the crucifix in a double perspective, . . . [as] the wonder-working image of the miracles and the 'neutral' instrument in Leocadia's resourceful plan" (380). Interestingly, the narrator does not afford the reader the space or time to come to this conclusion by herself. Instead, he volunteers both information and interpretation ("no por devoción ni por hurto") as if to make sure that Leocadia's destabilization of a principal sacred symbol does not go unnoticed. The focal point of this passage, as noted by Friedman, though articulated through Leocadia's actions, becomes the intensity of the effort mounted by the narrator to establish Leocadia as a practical, calculating, and most of all non-sanctimonious

[36] "We wish to make God subordinate to our human understanding with its vain and feeble probabilities; yet it is he who has made both us and all we know. . . . Has God placed in our hands the keys to the ultimate principles of his power? Did he bind himself not to venture beyond the limits of human knowledge? . . . You only see- if you see that much - the order and government of this little cave in which you dwell; beyond, his Godhead has an infinity jurisdiction" (*Apology* 94-95).

Christian. Friedman comments on how "Cervantes's narrator does not have an individualized identity, but he does possess what may be termed a rhetorical identity, that is, a specific discursive style which affects message production in the text" (140).[37] This means of affecting message production is what helps to guide the reader through the seemingly disjointed tensions of "La fuerza de la sangre" – novelistic verisimilitude and romance implausibility, sacred symbols and secularized practicalities – and is what makes it possible for the reader to see the underlying theological question that is being posed here. Leocadia does not seem to be able to readily rely on or anticipate divine intervention. In "La fuerza," it is conspicuously but understandably her father who encourages her to trust in that other, more symbolic power of the crucifix; a power she readily dismisses as less empirical and hence less provable than the material function she designates to the image. The father, here both a member and a symbol of the patriarchal structure contained in the Catholic religion and in society itself is, not surprisingly, the one who subscribes to the power of the crucifix to reestablish her lost sense of justice: "Lo que has de hacer, hija, es [guardar la imagen del crucifijo] y encomendarte a ella, que pues ella fue testigo de tu desgracia, permitirá que haya juez que vuelva por tu justicia" (2: 84). At the end the reader finds that, in fact, the only justice that returns to *redeem* Leocadia is the very patriarchal one that brought about her torment.[38]

Leocadia's attitude toward the crucifix is by no means the only indication offered by the narrator of her inability or unwillingness to see God or his symbols as eventual bringers of

[37] Aylward also notes that "Cervantes presents us here with a descriptive passage worthy of any nineteenth-century third-person omniscient narrator" (117), and adds that "Cervantes's narrative technique here is totally novelistic; . . . in these early pages of *Fuerza* we find no evidence whatsoever of the narrative devices generally associated with the chivalric, pastoral, or Byzantine romance" (118).

[38] Sears comments that "Leocadia's father's word enforces the effacement she takes upon herself," and adds that "Cervantes' insistence, at the moment of his protagonists' weddings, on the offspring that they will produce emphasizes the woman's role as object in the masculine plot" (157).

justice. Even before being left alone in Rodolfo's room, freshly awakened from her first fainting spell, she addresses Rodolfo and pleads that he kill her:

> [S]i es que tu alma admite género de ruego alguno, te ruego que ya que has triunfado de mi fama que triunfes también de mi vida! ¡Quítamela al momento, que no es bien que la tenga la que no tiene honra! ¡Mira que el rigor de la crueldad que has usado conmigo en ofenderme se templará con la piedad que usarás en matarme, y así, en un mismo punto, vendrás a ser cruel y piadoso! (2: 79)

Through her words the reader observes the concretization of all the patriarchal threats that configure the religious and social structures exposed in the text. A woman who has lost her socially perceived, fatherly induced *honor* has lost, within the patriarchal order, her right to live. But more pertinently, what calls attention to Leocadia's words here is the fact that, for a Christian who will be directly and yet ambiguously associated with miraculous occurrences, she fails completely to rely on God's power for her restitution. It is in men she trusts, and more precisely, it is on her assailant that she relies to remediate her misery. Her subsequent attitude toward the crucifix seems less out of place in light of her total disregard for the possibility of divine intervention. She expects Rodolfo, and not God, to be both "piadoso" and "cruel" by delivering her from her suffering through death. Her desperate situation causes her to vacillate and compromise. As she continues to reason with a totally silent Rodolfo, she no longer asks for death, but rather for his silence and discretion: "Atrevido mancebo . . . yo te perdono la ofensa que me has hecho con sólo que me prometas y jures que, como la has cubierto con esta escuridad, la cubrirás con perpetuo silencio sin decirla a nadie. . . . Entre mí y el cielo pasarán mis quejas, sin querer que las oiga el mundo, el cual no juzga por los sucesos las cosas, sino conforme a él se le asienta en la estimación" (2: 80). When she expresses the hope of having her

secret kept between her and heaven, she does not seem to imply, as her father does later in regard to the crucifix, that heaven will be an absolving, exculpating witness. Rather, she seems to believe that heaven, like she, will preserve and conceal the pain, shame, and dishonor that Rodolfo, with the consent of the patriarchal structure shared by Church and society, has inflicted upon her. Heaven and its symbols, as Leocadia informs us, lead to a blind alley of helplessness and impotence.

The first reference found in the text to the word miracle appears as Leocadia first reveals the crucifix to her parents, having just found her way back to her father's house. The narrator this time conceals, by way of the impersonal *se* construction, who exactly articulates the word and whether or not the word is a mere paraphrase articulated by the narrator: "[A]nte [la imagen del crucifijo] se renovaron las lágrimas, se hicieron deprecaciones, se pidieron venganzas y desearon milagrosos castigos" (2: 83). This first allusion to the possibility of a miraculous intervention is meaningful, but even more significant is the fact that the narrator disguises the authenticity of the utterance. This way a general seed of hope for or doubt in regard to a miraculous conclusion is planted, without the reader being able to directly associate it with the victim herself or with her grieving parents. The subsequent exchange that takes place between Leocadia and her father may shed some light on this issue, but the effort of raising the miracle question is enough to establish the core of the epistemic issues being raised here.

The narrator therefore establishes, through Leocadia's practical and seemingly non-religious attitude, the base from which to juxtapose the possibility of a miracle with the reluctance to accept or believe that divine intervention in human affairs is viable. He has introduced the concept of miracle into the text through the words and thoughts of Leocadia's parents, and having this way activated the seed of skepticism in the readers' minds, the narrator

will, paradoxically, begin to mount a concerted effort to suggest the possibility of a conclusion influenced by divine interference.

Luisico, Leocadia's son, is revered by all who come in contact with him: "Cuando iba por la calle llovían sobre él millares de bendiciones" (2: 85). Sebastián Covarrubias makes it clear that the term "bendezir" has both secular and religious connotations, and the fact that the narrator connects the boy's congeniality with his aristocratic blood makes the task of interpreting the essence of Luisico's personality all the more difficult.[39] Having been the product of a violent act of rape, the boy displays nonetheless the disposition of a little angel. He is blessed and revered by all who see him and, as explained by the narrator, Luisico "daba señales de ser de algún noble padre engendrado" (2: 85), in spite of the fact that his demeanor and sincerity resemble in no way that of his noble and depraved father.[40] More importantly, the boy is able to bring some sense of restitution to his family, for as the narrator states, "sus abuelos . . . vinieron a tener por dicha la desdicha de su hija por haverles dado tal nieto" (2: 85). Such "dicha," no matter how sincere, does not help to restitute Leocadia's lost honor, for if it did, there would be no need for the story to proceed to an ending that suggested a miraculous union through marriage and that re-emphasized so bluntly the perpetuation of the patriarchal structures that gave rise to the initial rape. Blessed Luisico both illustrates the blessings in disguise and highlights the damnations that will forever lack restitution.

The accident suffered by Luisico would help to problematize the suggested divine intervention leading up to the conclusion of the tale, as it rekindles the question raised through

[39] "[B]endicere, vale algunas veces, loar, engrandecer, hacer gracias, reverenciar, adorar. Bendecir Dios las criaturas, es prosperallas, aumentallas, hacerlas fecundas, snctificarlas algunas veces en la Escritura Sagrada" (Covarrubias 1: 130).

[40] Lewis-Smith notices this problematic characterization of the boy and comments that "[a]t this point in Cervantes's narrative the child is a mysterious figure, for it is not clear if his qualities come from God through inheritance (Rodolfo) or through fortune (contingency). If they come from God via fortune, Luisico is a pre-ordained freak, what might be called a miracle of Nature. If they come from God via inheritance, he illustrates *la fuerza de la sangre*" (889).

Leocadia's rape: God wills bad things for seemingly good ends (assuming, of course, that the tale ends well). The image of the spilt blood, already invoked through its absence at the time of Leocadia's rape and Luisico's birth, and interpreted heavily as both a symbol of redemptive Christian blood and patriarchal violence by critics, bears a heavy role in adding to the contradictory interpretative possibilities offered by the narrator.[41] Forcione comments on these conflicting tensions that alternate, time and again, between raising the possibility of the divine at work and emphasizing the secular vein that runs through the text.[42] He recognizes that "as if to curtail such [religious] evocations, Cervantes, at the moment of the central miraculous event, deflects our attention from the miraculous to the scientific, and the blood that bathes the head of the trampled child becomes the cause of a purely physiological process" (381). Indeed, Cervantes' ingenious invitation to a flip-flopping hermeneutics could remind one of the contradictory and destabilizing arguments that Phyrronian skeptics would elaborate to prove the impossibility of arguing for any dogmatic proposition. Cervantes is relentless however. Immediately after having contradicted the miraculous in regard to Luisico's fate, he leads the reader to observe how the boy's grandparents express an apparent willingness to still believe in providence as being in charge of his cure: "entre los dos y su hija acordaron de esperar lo que Dios hacía del herido" (2: 87). The intentional destabilization of the reader's epistemic base is

[41] For example, Welles writes: "All reference to the shedding of Leocadia's blood in the sexual act is suppressed. When we are alter informed that an accident has left Luis 'with blood pouring from his head,' the element of innocently spilled blood does indeed link mother and son . . . but hers must be assumed in absentia by the reader; only his appears in presentia. It is not the blood of Leocadia's ruptured hymen, but that of the male heir's cracked skull that gives the story its title" (42). Friedman agrees that the symbolic image of blood is centered in the figure of the boy, but finds in this a tone of reconciliation: "[Rodolfo] had taken her by force, and now the force of blood, reified in their son Luis, draws him back to her. A force which may be chance or divine will brings [sic] Leocadia to the scene of the crime and leads [sic] to the happy ending" (141).

[42] Interestingly, El Saffar asserts that "[w]hat the characters in the story see as the will of God in their lives will be recognized by the reader as the combined will of the author and the characters: the first presenting the situation out of which the other seeks his destiny" (136). I challenge the idea that any character ever interprets the occurrences that take place as the will of God. Instead, they use religion and divine intervention as an instrument with which to further their individual agendas. Ultimately, the reader perceives the narrator as a hermeneutic infiltrator whose manipulations bring attention to the issue of the rule of faith and religious skepticism in general.

blatant and unsettling, and most likely points to an effort to encourage the suspension of judgment through skeptical means.

Within this chaotic epistemic scenario, one finds Leocadia still short of having rectified her lost honor. She is about to demonstrate her resourcefulness, as persuasively argued by Slaniceanu, but her means, more than simply calculating, are ones that would have resonated with the Catholic authoritative thought that Cervantes possibly wished to expose. Not unlike Preciosa's grandmother in "La gitanilla," Leocadia too knows how to navigate through two distinct social and belief systems. Having been characterized by the narrator up to now as reluctant to engage in the purely pious behavior of her parents, she appears to switch modes in order to strengthen her argument in front of Rodolfo's parents and bring about a resolution, albeit an unsatisfactory and unjust one, to her crisis.[43] After a calculated effort by the narrator to invite the reader to see Rodolfo's parents as charitable, and hence Christian, people, the reader is also led to witness a shift in discourse on Leocadia's part. She too, despite being until this point portrayed as a practical, less-than-ardent Catholic, is suddenly able to embrace a language that speaks of the divine and its interventional capabilities. Not unlike the Church, which asserts the power of miracles and visual suggestion to nudge the skeptical into believing and embracing Catholic dogma, so does Leocadia find in the persuasive power of religious discourse a tool to bring her potential in-laws to her side. In praising the charitable actions of Rodolfo's parents she resorts to a common but undeniably sanctimonious adage: "cuando Dios da la llaga da la medicina" (2: 88). Besides a passing interjection invoking Jesus' name while in bed attempting to argue with Rodolfo, this is the first time that Leocadia utters the name of God.[44] As she

[43] Sears comments that "[n]o matter how much Cervantes' other heroines may protest their freedom, is this not what he wishes for them in the end, that in marriage they should transfer their obedience from parents to husband, and satisfy his desire without being aroused themselves?" (153).

[44] "¿Estoy en el limbo de mi inocencia o en el infierno de mis culpas? ¡Jesús! ¿quién me toca?" (2: 79)

concludes her narration of the events that took place on the night of the rape, she reveals the crucifix to Doña Estefanía, but now, more than treating it as the center piece of a premeditated strategy, Leocadia surrenders to it in deliberate, theatrical piousness, fully apprehending its alleged powers of intervention and appealing to its redeeming justice: "Tú, Señor, que fuiste testigo de la fuerza que se me hizo, sé juez de la enmienda que se me debe hacer. De encima de aquel escritorio te llevé con propósito de acordarte siempre mi agravio, no para pedirte venganza dél, que no la pretendo, sino para rogarte me dieses algún consuelo con que llevar en paciencia mi desgracia" (2: 88).

Leocadia's words are an echo of those uttered by her father when she first disclosed having taken the crucifix from the crime scene. They did not represent her feelings then, and should not be seen as unequivocally representing them now. After all, the very fact that she is orchestrating this performance indicates that, if she expected God alone to remediate her loss, she would not have to invest so much into winning over the sympathy and trust of Rodolfo's mother. Just as she expected before to find a solution through her own efforts – by using the crucifix as a decoy to attract its owner – she bets now that justice will be done through the hands of not only another mortal but another woman. Leocadia's performance continues. As she acknowledges to Doña Estefania the extent of her charitable deed toward Luisico – "[e]ste niño, señora, con quien habéis mostrado el extremo de vuestra caridad, es vuestro verdadero nieto" (2: 88) – she also blatantly affirms that it was due to God's intervention that Luisico was run over by the horse and brought to the care of Rodolfo's parents. But more poignantly, Leocadia states that this divine intervention was executed on her behalf, so that she could find the justice and restitution she seeks: "Permisión fue del cielo el haberle atropellado, para que, trayéndole a vuestra casa, hallase yo en ella, como espero que he de hallar, sí no el remedio que mejor

convenga, y cuando no con mi desventura, a lo menos el medio con que pueda sobrellevarla" (2: 88). From Doña Estefania's perspective, as intended by Leocadia, to deny her justice would have been to act against the will of God.

Leocadia's subsequent second fainting episode, while described by critics as an encoded sign of silence and submissiveness, can be interpreted instead as a continuation of the persuasive performance through which she hopes to recruit Doña Estefania to her side.[45] Compared to her first and third fainting spells – the first of which was so deep and long-lasting as to allow Rodolfo to transport her to his house and rape her without her being aware, and the third which, for being so severe, caused the entire audience to believe that Leocadia was dead – Leocadia's second blackout is conspicuously short and conveniently interrupted by the tears of compassion and mercy shed by Doña Estefania. Her initial goal of enlisting a powerful and tangible ally upon whom to entrust her fate, one not only from this world but who enjoyed great knowledge of the individual whose beastly crime had to be amended, is apparently met. Leocadia, like many miracles before her and many devotional images and religious performances, manages to engage Doña Estefania's affectively heightened senses, and hence activates the kind of reasoning that creates sympathy for her and a willingness to act on her behalf. The savvy narrator, aware too that the reader most likely shares Doña Estefania's state of heightened sensibility in regard to Leocadia's pious, heartfelt plead, ceases the opportunity to indulge in a moment that, whether through irony or not, reveals how the religious questions raised by the text easily and clearly intersect with the social critique also embedded within the narrative: "Estafania . . . *como mujer y*

[45] The fainting episodes too have awakened divergent opinions from critics. For example, El Saffar posits that "Leocadia's [initial] fainting and the darkness and strangeness of her surroundings represent her social death" (131), and adds later that the last fainting points exactly to the inversion of this initial meaning, or to a "life giving force" and a "death-forgiving force" (137). Sears, on the other hand, sees the fainting spells as moments of speechlessness that represent "a turning point in [the female protagonist's] role, and at each point she literally *has no say*, but rather must accept it as inevitable" (96). Slaniceanu corroborates with Sears and affirms that "[t]he second fainting spell, a timely reaction to grief, fear, and helplessness, represents Leocadia's genuine state of submissiveness, as it had at the time of her violation" (106).

noble, en quien la compasión y misericordia suele ser tan natural como la crueldad en el hombre, apenas vio el desmayo de Leocadia cuando juntó su rostro con el suyo derramando sobre él tantas lágrimas que no fue menester esparcirle otra agua encima para que Leocadia en sí volviese" (2: 88, emphasis added). By sharing the same patriarchal frame, both society and the Catholic rule of faith become the target of the commentary sustained in the text. Through his undesirably stereotypical treatment of women, of whom compassion and mercy are treated as inherent attributes, the narrator calls attention to the abuses of a patriarchal structure, represented in this excerpt by the cruelty of men ("la crueldad en el hombre"). More importantly, albeit very subtly, the text also evidences an effort to highlight the willingness of both social and religious entities to engage in sanctioning gender violence and injustice, in this case rape and its by-products, through the sacrament of marriage. Nobility, compassion, mercy and all, Doña Estefanía is allured by Leocadia's affective display of religiosity, but she too, will rely on her own wit to see that the situation finds the most appropriate, albeit highly unsatisfying, outcome.[46]

Given the evident effort mounted toward the denouement to make the reader accept the possibility and conciliatory power of divine interference, Rodolfo's father, not unlike his wife, not only readily believes the story told by Leocadia but, the narrator volunteers, "lo creyó, por divina permisión del cielo" (2: 89). Leocadia's parents in the mean time "daban sin cesar infinitas gracias a Dios por ello" (2: 89). One cannot avoid noticing the irony implied by the narrator, as if he too were trying, through providing conflicting clues and exaggerated innuendo

[46] Welles, albeit by mislabeling the ending of "La fuerza de la sangre" as "satisfactory," remarks that "[i]t is not the action of divine grace, but the enterprising resourcefulness of human (female, in this case) agents, that effects a satisfactory ending" (244). While Slaniceanu's reading does not suggested the type of cunning calculation that I propose, she maintains that Leocadia's "choice to play a role, to calculate all its phases scrupulously, is crucial to the possibility of transcending [this very role]" (103). Sears sees in the efforts of both Leocadia and Doña Estefania a movement that evidences female participation in the patriarchal construct. When commenting on Rodolfo´s speech about the perils of marrying an ugly wife, Sears comments that the "affirmation of a less than profound personal philosophy in her son pleases Estefania because it accords well with her plans to marry Rodolfo to Leocadia, his erstwhile victim, [which] indicates the extent to which women as well as men are implicated in the social system, even when it operates to their express disadvantage" (80).

and through juxtaposing the horrors of the situation with God's grace, to construct a Pyrrhonian argument before the reader. But in one aspect of this *novela* the narrator is impeccably consistent: Rodolfo's character. Although he has been described as changed and matured after returning from Italy, Rodolfo gives the reader every demonstration of remaining the shallow character he already was seven years earlier.[47] He returns with only one purpose in mind: "gozar tan hermosa mujer como su padre le significaba" (2: 89). In fact, Rodolfo's behavior could only be described as distinct from that of the past given his loquaciousness, which he exercises in order to argue against his parent's perceived wish to see him married to an ugly woman:

> [P]ensar que un rostro feo, que se ha de tener a todas horas delante de los ojos, en la sala, en la mesa y en la cama, pueda deleitar, otra vez digo que lo tengo por casi imposible. . . . Por vida de vuesa merced, madre mía, que me dé compañera que me entretenga y no enfade, por que, sin torcer a una o a otra parte, igualmente y por camino derecho llevemos ambos a dos el yugo donde el cielo nos pusiere. . . . Porque la nobleza, gracias al cielo y a mis pasados y a mis padres, que me la dejaron por herencia; discreción, como una mujer no sea necia, tonta o boba, bástale que ni por aguda despunte ni por boba no aproveche. (2: 91)

To Rodolfo, evidently, the ideal wife needs to provide the kind of entertainment he sought the night he abducted Leocadia. She needs to delight him with her beauty, entertain with her neither stupid nor acute intelligence, and not be a source of irritation to him. After all, as he puts it, "[El] matrimonio es nudo que no le desata sino la muerte" (2: 91), the burden of which

[47] While Friedman, Welles, and Sears, all point to the fact that Rodolfo's character does not undergo an essential transformation from the beginning to the conclusion of the story, El Saffar, Calcraft, Forcione, Slaniceanu, Clamurro, and Lewis-Smith point to a shift in his attitude and outlook. Thompson provides the most forceful defense of Rodolfo's maturation, asserting that "although Rodolfo does not openly repent, he has acquired a more morally appropriate attitude toward his sexual needs, because he has come to see how the physical and spiritual aspects of love must work together, in contrast to the sheer brutality of the rape scene" (269).

should be carried by both spouses; a remark that rings particularly painfully through the memory of what Leocadia has already endured on her own. Rodolfo therefore is unchanged.

Doña Estefania's gamble on her son's unaltered hollowness proves worthwhile, which allows her to prepare a theatrical production capable of challenging the one staged by Leocadia earlier. Appealing directly to the tradition of visual, pictorial stimulation already discussed, she composes and presents a version of Leocadia that reiterates the ambiguity and contrast observed in the constant juxtaposition of sacred and profane elements. At the time of her deeply premeditated appearance, Leocadia, despite the much noted aspects of sanctity that help to portray her as "alguna cosa del cielo que allí milagrosamente se había aparecido" (2: 92), embodies the epitome of artifice designed to impress not only the faithful but also the oversexed.[48] The detailed description of her attire points to a carefully planned attempt at tapping into the one, most abundant human emotion Rodolfo was capable of feeling: desire. The "ángel humano" that he believes to have in front of his eyes fails, nonetheless, to connect to him in a spiritual way. As the narrator makes clear, once all fainted parties are properly returned to life, and once Rodolfo has been told that he indeed will have Leocadia as a wife, his initial feelings are allowed to reveal themselves as fully realized lust: "[L]levado de su amoroso y encendido deseo, y quitándole el nombre de esposo todos los estorbos que la honestidad y decencia del lugar le podían poner, se abalanzó al rostro de Leocadia, y juntando su boca con la suya, estaba como esperando que se le saliese el alma para darle acogida la suya" (2: 94). The narrator continues, even or particularly as the tale approaches its conclusion, to intentionally confuse the reader, whose attempts to affix these conflicting epistemic systems to one or another interpretation remain frustrated. How, after all, could such a saintly image who looks as if just descended from heaven fail to awaken Rodolfo spiritually? And, what is even more shocking,

[48] Welles (245) and Slaniceanu (104) remark on the platonic associations of Leocadia's entrance.

how could this *miraculous* being provoke such an audaciously naughty physical response on his part?

In fact, the narrator will more than confuse the reader; he will push the reader into having to decide between believing the veracity of his words and rejecting them as a premeditated impossibility. The narrator bluntly suggests that Leocadia falls in love with Rodolfo: "en tanto que la cena venía, viendo también tan cerca de sí al que ya quería más que a la luz de sus ojos, con que alguna vez a hurto le miraba, comenzó a revolver en su imaginación lo que con Rodolfo había pasado" (2: 93).

Critical opinions about this sudden and unlikely show of sentimentality on Leocadia's part have been mixed.[49] After all, she had clearly stated to Rodolfo during the rape that her feelings for him were not of the kind that time could erase: "mira, no aguardes ni confíes que el discurso del tiempo temple la justa saña que contra ti tengo, ni quieras amontonar los agravios" (2: 80). Her concern, more than to find love, and as the narrator has made clear throughout the text, has always been to restore her honor. Through marriage she can be reintegrated into the society from which she had extricated herself, and yet, her only chance at marriage lies with Rodolfo, her rapist and noble father of her son.[50] More importantly, Leocadia's sudden and mysterious, perhaps miraculous love for Rodolfo is unnecessary. The only mutual bond that

[49] Forcione maintains that the inconsistency of feelings and behaviors stems from the miracle narrative upon which "La fuerza" is constructed: "If we recognize that in *La fuerza de la sangre* Cervantes is working with the conventions of the miracle, a form in which verisimilitude is a meaningful category only through its violation, we can understand simple and seemingly inconsistent characterization much more adequately" (362). He later adds: "That Leocadia could love such an archetypal villain is quite implausible; it is in fact miraculous" (363). Clamurro seems to evade the question, commenting first on how "[t]he magic of patience and of female fortitude makes this highly unrealistic miracle [of love and marriage between Rodolfo and Leocadia] possible" (161), only to add later that "the creation of this new family – through Leocadia's marriage to Rodolfo, which (with or without love on the part of the woman) restores her honor . . . is marked by a retreat into a kind of magical silence" (162). Welles does not read the narrator's words as ironic, and concludes that "Leocadia does not enter the marriage union as a martyr, but as a desiring subject who gazes upon Rodolfo with love" (249).

[50] Based on Aquina's definition of rape found in *Summa Theologiae*, Lappin argues that "[for] readers with a theological education, it was certain that Leocadia, despite her rape and subsequent child birth, had remained a virgin" (154-155), a point which, even if valid, serves only to magnify the indignity of her situation.

exists between the two is desire, his for her body, and hers to see her honor restituted. The fact that she has to submit again to his selfish character and to his spiritual hollowness to see her goal realized constitutes no obstacle to her. Her reality, as she expressed before, is one in which "es mejor la deshonra que se ignora que la honra que está puesta en opinión de las gentes" (2: 79). In marrying her rapist, given the utmost lack of choice her society affords her, Leocadia opts to suffer her pain and indignation privately, rather than having this suffering be transformed into public dishonor. Therefore, she needs not love Rodolfo. The conventional reestablishing of social order and the traditional reiteration of the patriarchal structure, reaffirmed in the sacrament of marriage through the law of the Church, does not depend on or wait for love to occur.

This seemingly passive and nihilistic behavior displayed by Leocadia and other female protagonists has led Sears to associate Cervantes with "a long-standing misogynist tradition in the West" (87), and to claim that "[b]y denying his heroines the possibility of desire, and tying them to the will of family and those who desire them, Cervantes renders his young heroines ultimately passive in the unfolding of their fate" (88). My belief is precisely the opposite. It is in conforming to the status quo of a patriarchal social structure at the same time as he highlights the absurdity of its injustice and decadence and the fragility of its belief systems that Cervantes makes his case on behalf of the oppressed, whether they are men or women.

One can fairly conclude that, through irony, the narrator's idealistic and yet contemptible suggestion that Leocadia fell in love was aimed at further destabilizing the epistemic nexus of the text. How far is the reader willing to be taken by the suggestive power of symbol, narrative, and artifice? How important is it, in the context of fiction, to believe in and to accept narrative unlikelihood, or to resist the comforting lure of the miraculous in favor of a skeptical attitude devoid of dogmatic attachment? And most importantly, is the narrator asking that the reader

subscribe to a fixed point of view, or is he bluntly challenging her epistemic stability by making her confront the implausible?

Taking into consideration the place of utmost importance that grace and the miraculous occupy within the ideologies and epistemologies of the Reformation and Counter Reformation, one is challenged to question Cervantes' suggestion of divine intervention as a skeptical tool of epistemic destabilization, through which he conjectures and proposes, for critical purposes, a world in which the standards of measuring and interpreting God's manifestations are put through a skeptical test. By focusing on the nature of God's role in human affairs, Cervantes emulates the theological debate that exposes the Church's campaign for captivating the senses and reason of a sometimes confused flock in order to maintain its supremacy as the holder of religious dogma. Similarly, Montaigne too tries to balance his steadfast Catholicism with a necessity to warn against the evils of an unrestrained or unchecked willingness to believe. He writes:

> The witches of my neighborhood are in mortal danger every time some new author comes along and attests to the reality of their visions. To apply the examples that the Holy Writ offers us of such things, very certain and irrefragable examples, and bring them to bear on our modern events, requires greater ingenuity than ours, since we see neither their causes nor their means. It belongs perhaps only to that *most powerful testimony* to say to us: 'This is a miracle, and that, and not this other.' God must be believed in these things, that is truly most reasonable; but not, by the s[a]me token, one of us, who is astonished at his own narrative (and he is necessarily astonished unless he is out of his senses), whether he tells it about someone else or against himself. (*Essays* 789, emphasis added)

In spite of his carefulness, Montaigne's irony does not go undetected, for even when one balances his skepticism against his Catholic fideism one is still pressed to read "most powerful testimony" as God himself, and not as ecclesiastical Church authorities.

Having exposed the theological core embedded in "La fuerza de la sangre," one must remember that Cervantes' critical lenses hardly ever focus on a single point. The social and religious commentaries are interwoven in the text, for in finding a socially acceptable answer to her dishonor, Leocadia is, as the narrator ironically suggests, blessed by a series of *miracles* all of which lead her to become the forever possessed female crucible of sexual pleasure, trapped not only by the law of the patriarchy but also by the body of her assailant. The reader is told why she faints for a third time: "Consideraba cuán cerca estaba de ser dichosa o sin dicha para siempre. Y fue la consideración tan intensa y los pensamientos tan revueltos, que le apretaron el corazón de manera que comenzó a sudar y a perderse de color" (2: 93). While critics have suggested that what she fears is not being able to marry Rodolfo after all, the reality of her situation implies, as the narrator also expresses, that what overcomes her is the anticipation that she has no way out; that even in her contrived, premeditated "dicha," she would still be forever *sin dicha*, constrained by her role as a physical object of desire, *enjoying* her honorable place next to her rapist. Her reaction, as she recovers consciousness, points more to the horrible and conflicting reality she experiences than to the response of a woman who is deeply in love: "Hallóse Leocadia entre los brazos de Rodolfo, y quisiera con honesta fuerza desasirse dellos" (2: 94). Leocadia revisits at this moment the anguish of the rape. Fearful of seeing her plan not fully realized, particularly as she had already promised Leocadia as a wife to Rodolfo, Doña Estefania intervenes and rushes the couple into marriage. Leocadia's fate is forever sealed.[51] A

[51] "A esta razón acabó de todo en todo de cobrar Leocadia sus sentidos y acabó Doña Estefania de no llevar más adelante su determinación primera, diciendo al cura que luego desposase a su hijo con Leocadia" (2: 94).

now dignified and rightful bearer of children, Leocadia will, for lack of a better choice, endow Toledo with many noble offspring, and perpetuate that way the structure that brought her so near to her demise.

Amidst such presumed happiness and widespread jubilation, the conclusion of the story helps to highlight the narrator's sarcasm, in that it returns the reader to the ambivalent darkness of the beginning, a darkness that can foster both the purity of the mystical encounter and the evil of an act of rape. Rodolfo is again prowling, the helpless sheep of his desire now a sanctioned possession of his own: "Y aunque la noche volaba con sus ligeras y negras alas, le parecía a Rodolfo que iba y caminaba no con alas sino con muletas: tan grande era el deseo de verse a solas con su *querida* esposa" (2: 94, emphasis added).

The reader may be aware of Leocadia's cunning plans, of her dissimulation, her preserved anger, and her desire to achieve her goal, but the irony of the narrator, particularly as he disguises the horror of the conclusion with traditional, reassuring signs of the return to a wanted order – "Llegóse, en fin, la hora deseada, porque no hay fin que no la tenga" (2: 95) – again and for one last time destabilizes previous perceptions and demands that the reader reevaluate her interpretation. This is precisely the mental attitude advocated by the Pyrrhonians, and very likely the one reproduced here by Cervantes in his fiction. Is he provocatively bringing attention to an epistemological crisis by conceiving a blend of theological investigation and social commentary that, through shock and irony, discloses the perils of a manipulative human agenda? Is he attempting to expose, through a chaotic epistemic system, a mentality that allows for the abhorrent acts of the nobility to pass as manifestations of God's virtuous harmony? Is he questioning God and grace or the ecclesiastical and noble ranks that manipulate perceptions of the divine in order to conceal their own hypocrisy?

To venture into the topic of Cervantes' personal religiosity is neither a useful endeavor nor the goal of this discussion. Such line of inquiry disregards the powerful questions raised in "La fuerza de la sangre" and undermines the display of skeptical thought and attitudes found throughout the text. The text, after all, more than revealing any truth about Cervantes' allegiance to one or another side of the religious argument, shows how the open-endedness of skeptical inquiry is much more productive, even if uncomfortably so, than the dogmatism of arbitrary conclusions. The much discussed title of this *novela* itself highlights another aspect of this unrestrained inquisitorial aspect of skepticism. *Sangre*, or blood, in itself carries a vast symbolic charge, as it relates directly to both lines of critique pursued in the text: the social and the theological. Friedman finds embedded in the title a "thesis that blood will win out, that the spilling of Luis's blood draws Rodolfo back to Leocadia, whose blood he had spilled earlier" (153). In this sense, blood becomes a fatalistic symbol of Leocadia's partial restitution and of the deterministic element encompassed by hereditariness.[52] Aylward's opinion echoes that of Friedman, in that he sees Luisico's blood as "intended to evoke the earlier image of the ruptured hymen of his mother . . . . Both the crime and its eventual reparation are portrayed as having their origins in violence and blood-shed; the wrong will be righted, poetically, through *la fuerza de la sangre*" (113). Forcione notes that "La fuerza" is the only one among the twelve *Novelas ejemplares* that does not allude to a character in its title, but rather to a theme. He adds that "as the reader discovers in the final sentence of the story, [the title's] significance is ostensibly limited to the central event of the plot," that is, Luisico's accident (354). Realizing the rather scarce presence of the word blood within the actual text, Forcione concludes that

[52] Forcione reminds us of that "[a]ccording to an ancient belief very much alive in Cervantes's age, the members of a family constitute a single body, and their blood is linked by occult affinities that can cause recognition of kinship in relatives who know nothing of their family bond. There is nothing supernatural about such mysterious power of blood" (381, n. 109).

> '*sangre*' is all-pervasive in the imaginative texture of the work, and even a modern reader, whose sensibility is untouched by the distinctive resonances of the word in the religious culture of Cervantes's Spain, can respond to the associations of the symbol and admire Cervantes for his recognition of the effectiveness of understatement and insinuation in the handling of such a powerful and multivalent symbol. (354)

Indeed, the title insinuates more than it affirms, and hence constitutes an integral part of the skeptical effort mounted here by Cervantes to simulate the theological dialogue taking place between reformers and counter-reformers of the Church. But as Forcione recognizes, the title, much as the content of "La fuerza," pertains also to the realm of the social, in that it invokes the subjects of economic and ancestral superiority and raises the question of justice and injustice based on perceived or alleged bloodlines. The conclusion of the text, which not only reinforces social order but also reiterates an ironic and unconvincing widespread sense of happiness, conspicuously brings together these two domains, in that it recalls the illustriousness of Rodolfo's heritage and the much implied presence of divine intervention: "y ahora viven, estos dos venturosos desposados, que muchos y felices años gozaron de sí mismos, de sus hijos y de sus nietos, permitido todo por el cielo y por la *fuerza de la sangre*, que vio derramada en el suelo el valeroso, ilustre y cristiano abuelo de Luisico" (2: 95). By making sure that both heaven and earth, through the power of blood, are named in his final, but no less ironic, observation, the narrator prevents the distracted reader from falling into one or another association as to the possible reference embedded in the title. *La fuerza de la sangre*, or the power of blood, is a symbol as heavenly inspired as it is forged in this very Earth of partial justices, social inequalities, and blood hierarchies. In fact, the insistence found throughout the text on challenging both theological and social fronts points to a necessity to direct the critique at the

common elements shared by both these entities: the patriarchal structure. Through an attempt to appropriate for itself the right to interpret the divine – and through that, the power of the blood of alleged Church martyrs and, ultimately, Christ's own sacrificial blood – the Catholic Church activates the core of the patriarchal structure that defines it and engages its exclusivist mode of operation to define not only God's will but also his *modus operandi*. Cervantes, and along with him an abundance of Church reformers, comments on this reality in "La fuerza de la sangre," and invites the reader, through navigating in and out of the narrator's irony, to consider its status and viability. At the same time, Cervantes highlights the atrocious effects the same patriarchal structure has on the social and personal realms of those caught in the weaker side of the binary, as was the case of Leocadia and her parents. After all, in this tale *fuerza* is also associated with the verb *forzar*; the violence of Rodolfo's act and temperament are never completely written over.

It appears evident then that "La fuerza de la sangre" is neither "Cervantes' most extreme affirmation of faith in the harmony which beauty and virtue can produce" (El Saffar, *Novel to Romance* 128-9), nor is it an arbitrary affirmation that "this world can be blessed by the restoration of the spirituality which originally informed it" (Forcione, *Humanist Vision* 397). As Leocadia's words remind us – "¿Estoy en el limbo de mi inocencia o en el infierno de mis culpas?" (2: 79) – Cervantes' message, like Montaigne's, is one that shines a skeptical light through the cloudy spectrum of human reason in relation to God and to itself, and invites each reader to ponder about the precious uncertainties of her own rules of faith.

CHAPTER THREE

Dogs, Witches, and the Imagination:

The Maker's Knowledge Argument in "El coloquio de los perros"

Anyone who faces the challenge of assimilating the body of criticism pertaining to "El coloquio de los perros," the *novela* that closes Cervantes' collection, will experience the overwhelming impact the text has on its readers. Even the most comprehensive and exhaustive analyses, like those of Alban Forcione, have to be selective as to what aspects of the *novela* to consider, and from which selective angles to consider them, such are the exegetical possibilities offered by the "Coloquio."[1] An Aleph in its own right, it manages not only to concentrate the great variety of commentary articulated previously throughout the eleven preceding stories – literary, social, religious, ethical, philosophical, epistemological – but it also raises the ultimate question of what reality is, as it forces the reader to transcend the division between what is perceived as real and what is deemed as imaginary.

The challenge in arriving at a less segmented reading of the "Coloquio" rests in finding the common thread that links the unstable epistemic frames provided by the author. I focus this analysis on the intersection of two concepts that, I believe, unite all themes and commentaries: skepticism and the imagination. I argue that Cervantes uses multiple narrative frames to assert human creativity and to highlight the unique power of the creator to *know* his creation. In the profoundly skeptical environment of the *Novelas ejemplares*, any hint as to the possibility of *knowledge* asks for a close consideration.

Not unlike the *novelas* previously discussed, the "Coloquio" also presents contrasts, paradoxes, and juxtapositions, one of which is the generic blending of the picaresque novel and

[1] I refer here to Forcione's *Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness*.

the satirical dialogue, which anticipates the epistemic challenge the reader is about to experience.[2] While the satirical-philosophical dialogue mimicked in the text points to an inclination to use reason to arrive at dogmatic conclusions about human nature and ethics – an inclination that is challenged in the text – the controlled haphazardness of the picaresque highlights the epistemic instability that challenges the concepts of good and evil, virtue and sin, and that exposes the individual's exercise of free will.[3] Yet, beneath this underlying contrast there is an even more unsettling system that strives to nullify all sense of epistemic stability provided in the text. The frame structure that encapsulates the "Casamiento" and the embedded "Coloquio" and the subsequent frames that are contained in the "Coloquio" itself challenge the substantiality of the very commentary they offer. The "Coloquio" springs out of the "Casamiento engañoso," from which it inherits not only a cynical attitude toward humanity but also a system of images that highlights hypocrisy, greed, and physical decrepitude.[4] But this imagery and the poignant satire that accompanies it are put into question by the fact that the narrator's reliability is also challenged. In fact, the credibility of everyone and the veracity of everything that is presented in the paired *novelas* are in dispute.

In retrospect, the careful reader, after having assimilated the unsettling challenges posed by the "Coloquio," cannot overlook the fact that the apparent authenticity of the "Casamiento," whose plot is centered on the realism of a well-established literary motif – the tale of the

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[2] For a discussion about generic manipulation and the relationship between an erosion of romance and a credibility crisis in seventeenth-century peninsular literature, see Ife, "Cervantes and the Credibility Crisis."

[3]Forcione recognizes that while the picaresque and the philosophical-satirical dialogue diverge in their approaches – the former depicting "a succession of loosely related events with little apparent development linking them," and the latter providing a more analytical and intellectual method of fictionalization – they share a "potential for variety and disorder", since both styles invite and accommodate the freedom of restless and digressive narrative. See Mystery of Lawlessness 21-26. All references to Forcione in this chapter will refer to Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness, unless otherwise specified. For a discussion of Cervantes' possible affirmation of free will as an antidote to picaresque determinism in the Novelas ejemplares see Boruchoff.

[4] For more on the interrelatedness of the imagery between the "Casamiento" and the "Coloquio" see Forcione, *Mystery of Lawlessness* 108-126. For the role of cynicism in the "Coloquio" see E. C. Riley, "Cervantes and the Cynics."

deceiver who is deceived – is also threatened by the possibility of an imaginative fantasy. Peralta's subtle comment at the end of Campuzano's narration highlights this epistemic instability: "[H]asta aquí estaba en duda si creería o no lo que de su casamiento me había contado, y esto que ahora me cuenta de que oyó hablar los perros me ha hecho declarar por la parte de no creelle ninguna cosa" (2: 293). Since these two *novelas* are interconnected by a frame structure, the "Casamiento" both succeeds and fails to create a stable basis from which the "Coloquio" can be interpreted. Both stories, albeit masterfully narrated by Campuzano, share the same problematic genesis, that of being the narrative creation of a recovered but previously hallucinating syphilitic patient.[5] It is not until Peralta attracts attention to the possibility that the events narrated in the "Casamiento" are not veracious that the reader gains full realization of the epistemological vortex presented in these texts. As the frames multiply and the reader becomes more conscious (and self-conscious) of being an integral part of a monstrous imaginative enterprise, understanding the role of the imagination within Cervantes' narrative world – be it in the reality proposed in the framed narratives or in the reality that claims to sustain the frames themselves – becomes indispensable.[6] Also crucial to appreciating the epistemic challenges posed by the "Coloquio" is to recognize the skeptical vein that manifests itself through the destabilizing agency of the imagination. In both "Casamiento" and "Coloquio" skepticism works toward further deconstructing reality as it argues blatantly for a reevaluation of all epistemic systems.

[5] For an enlightening discussion of Campuzano as a masterful story teller, see Clamurro's chapter, and in particular, 259-262.

[6] I use the term "monstrous" here in reference to Forcione's analysis. He sees the metaphor reflected not only in the generic hybridity of the text, but also in what he considers Cervantes's "acknowledgment that his subject matter is ugly, that the effect for which he strives is disgust, and that its dominant formal principle is the monstrous, the disproportionate" (8). My use of the concept of monstrosity diverges from Forcione's. I see it expressed in the absolute epistemic evanescence promoted by all the embedded narratives that compose the text, as this chapter will make clear.

Skepticism and the imagination share a deep – albeit not always evident to modern eyes – common denominator within the intellectual history of Western culture: reason. For Aristotle and his followers, *knowing* combined the power to retain sense-derived images in the mind with the power to create and retain intelligible forms. As John Randall explains it, for Aristotle, to whom the intellect was a corporeal attribute of being associated with the sense impressions, "there can be no knowledge of the what or the why of things without sensing them, without at least having sensed them, without images, *phantasmata*, persisting in the *phantasia*: that is, there can be no knowledge without sense observation" (95). Randall adds that the imagination "is a kind of motion generated by actual sensing: it is a physical occurrence. And sense images . . . are corporeal, not 'mental.' Aristotle holds . . . that there can be no knowing . . . without particular physical events in the body" (95).[7] Through Aquinas and the Catholic tradition, the view of the imagination as a link between reason (through which knowledge is partly established) and sense perception (which is here responsible for capturing and delivering outside input to the intellect) became predominant in Early Modernity throughout Western Europe.

It is easy to anticipate from this scenario how sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists, who embraced a culture obsessed with the fallibility of the senses and with the breakdown in knowledge that this unreliability could cause, would have become so preoccupied with issues of epistemology. They were absorbed with pointing out that, in the absence of sound reason, the imagination could cease to be an ally in the process of building coherent cognition and could become an adversary in the task of interpreting sense perception and constructing knowledge. The magnitude of the problem becomes even more conspicuous when one recalls the

[7] In referring Aristotle's views to the humanists who would resurrect them in the sixteenth century, Randal mentions how Pomponazzi, in 1516, emphasized the Aristotelian view that "the intellect . . . cannot exist 'without' images, and hence cannot exist 'without a body'" (95). Also Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola remarks in "On the Imagination" (1501) how "phantasy has its starting-point in the sense" (25).

ideas of Montaigne and the Pyrrhonian skeptics, who argue that definite knowledge is all but unachievable through either reason or the senses. John Lyons remarks that, for Montaigne, "the study of knowledge – of our ability to know – was the study of imagination (the faculty through which all knowledge of the physical, external world must pass)" (*Before Imagination* 33).

The epistemic volatility of the "Coloquio," which is built on the juxtapositions of reality, dream, and imagination, suggests that Cervantes was not only aware of his intellectual heritage and its reverberation in the thought and attitude of his intellectual milieu but also that he was inclined to play with it. To Alban Forcione, this involvement with cultural heritage manifests itself in the "Coloquio" as a type of anti-humanism, hence the prominence of the picaresque, a presumed anti-humanist genre. Forcione explains:

> [Cervantes] would appear to be renouncing the utopian aspirations that are so prominent in certain of the preceding tales and moving toward a full rapprochement with the ascetic vision animating the contemporary literature of *desengaño*, a literature which, in its obsession with man as a creature hopelessly torn between the irreconcilable extremes of *feritas* and *divinitas*, bestiality and divinity, showed virtually no interest in that vast middle ground of *humanitas* to which the human program for spiritual *renovation* was primarily addressed. (15)

I see the "Coloquio," despite its "repugnant content and deep pessimism" (Forcione 14), as an affirmation of man as a powerful creator and master conjuror of imaginative *realities*. Here, Cervantes fully embraces not only the humanistic ideal of individual autonomy but uses a newly resurrected ancient tool, Pyrrhonian skepticism, paradoxically, to assert man's creative freedom and question his intellectual sovereignty.

Critics have linked the role of the imagination in Cervantes' fiction with the theoretical divide between ancients and moderns, that is, neo-Aristotelians and non-Aristotelians. Forcione remarks that "the errantry of the creative imagination" observed in *Don Quijote* was at the center of these theoretical disputes, as it questioned the idea that art, conceived and expressed partly through the faculty of the imagination, should mimic nature, as if to maintain the balance between reason and sense perception always within an universal orderly manner. Forcione describes the classical literary theory that Cervantes questions as characterized by

> its obsession with artistic creation as mimesis, the doctrine of imitation, its anxieties concerning the roving, unruly imagination and the destructive deceptions of poetry, and its assumptions that a rationally decipherable world order and a rationally comprehensive essential man exists to offer the poet reliable models and foundations for his creations and his projected audiences. ("Night-Errantry" 458)

It is fair to say that just as he did in *Don Quijote*, Cervantes employs in the "Coloquio" the seemingly free power of his characters' and reader's imagination to challenge every one of these classical precepts. Again, Forcione affirms that Cervantes "is suggesting that the unfettered imagination is in fact a constructive faculty and that its creations are not to be limited by the rational models of cosmos and nature" ("Night-Errantry" 463).[8]

It can also be said that in the "Coloquio" the unlimited creative power of the "unfettered imagination" is invoked not only to challenge classical rational models but also to question reason itself, and to expose within the framework of skepticism, the fragility of the link between

[8] In "Cervantes and the Imagination" Ruth El Saffar also explores the theme of Cervantes as a subverter of classical rules. She, like Forcione, centers her analysis on the *Quijote*, but her overall conclusions can fairly be applied to the "Coloquio." She proposes that "[i]magination, in the late Cervantes, is no longer in conflict with the intellect. Both faculties, one based on the information provided through the senses, the other, on the soul's capacity to give that information order and coherence, are radically free of convention, and therefore subject to infinite change according to one's power of invention" (89).

reason and sense perception. The imagination, this axis about which reason and senses coalesce according to the Aristotelian model, when left unchecked by the other faculties could become a source of disruption and a cause for a breakdown in the rational system. It is clear that Renaissance humanists were preoccupied with the disruption of rationality caused by an unruly imagination. Juan Huarte de San Juan (c. 1529-1588), whose thought illustrates early modern views about the nature and role of the imagination within the cognitive process, is emphatic in his articulation of this preoccupation. Among the numerous references he makes to the imagination and to the imaginative faculty of the *ánima*, he stresses the fact that, when distracted, the imagination fails to be a reliable tool in the interpretation of reality:

> [P]rueban claramente los médicos, diciendo que si a un enfermo le cortan la carne o le queman, y con todo esto no le causa dolor, que es señal de estar la imaginativa distraída en alguna profunda contemplación. Y así lo vemos también por experiencia en los sanos, que si están distraídos en alguna imaginación ni ven las cosas que tienen delante, ni oyen aunque los llamen, ni gustan del manjar sabroso o desabrido, aunque lo comen. Por donde es cierto que la imaginativa es la que hace el juicio y conocimiento de las cosas particulares, y no el entendimiento ni los sentidos exteriores . . . porque la mucha imaginativa no se puede juntar con mucho entendimiento y memoria. (498)

As he warns about the nullifying effects an unfocused imagination can have on the senses, Huarte also cautions against the stimulating influence it can have on the body:

> [S]i alguno se pone a considerar y meditar en la injuria que otro le ha hecho, luego se sube el calor natural y toda la sangre al corazón, y fortifica la facultad irascible y debilita la racional; y si pasa la consideración a que Dios manda perdonar las injurias y hacer bien a nuestros enemigos, y al premio que da por ello, vase todo el calor natural y sangre a la

> cabeza, y fortifica la facultad racional y debilita la irascible. Y, así, estando en nuestra elección fortificar con la imaginativa la potencia que quisiéremos, con razón somos premiados cuando fortificamos la racional y debilitamos la irascible, y con justa causa somos culpados cuando fortificamos la irascible y debilitamos la racional. De aquí se entiende claramente con cuánta razón encomiendan los filósofos morales la meditación y consideración de las cosas divinas, pues con sola ella adquirimos el temperamento que el ánima racional ha menester y debilitamos la porción inferior. (273-4)[9]

Huarte raises three points that deserve particular attention. First, the imagination has the power to conjure up a version of *reality* vivid enough as to cause the body to respond as if it were responding to actual sensorial stimulation; second, the imagination, for being able to produce vivid experiences, is associated with the question of free will as it can cause one to behave ethically (or unethically) and in compliance (or disagreement) with Christian precepts; and third, one has the power and, more importantly, the will, to imagine what one wants, which ties the workings of the imaginative faculty not only to one's ability to create a parallel, self-sustained reality but also to one's affinity (or dislike) for moral, ethical, religious, and philosophical engagement.

These points reverberate loudly within the structure of the "Coloquio." Here, Cervantes' rumination over the question of external and imaginary realities is most clearly mirrored in a succession of framed narratives. The parallel realities elaborated through these framed accounts, in turn, emphasize the creative imagination of characters like Campuzano, Berganza, and Cañizares, for they, like Cervantes, are creators within the imaginary scheme contained in the "Coloquio," and also struggle, perhaps as Cervantes did, to negotiate life within the poles of

[9] Huarte was hardly the only humanist to comment on the composition of the human physical and intellectual apparatus, and on the relationship among all its elements. See, for example, Mejía y Vives. For a concise but enlightening discussion of sixteenth-century thought and attitude toward the imagination see Soufas 287-290.

virtue and vice.[10] Within the epistemic instability comprehended in the text, Campuzano may imagine not only the dialogue between the dogs but also the marriage tale that frames the "Coloquio"; Cañizares' experiences as a devil-cavorting witch may be, as she herself postulates, *real* only in her imagination; likewise, Berganza's seemingly realistic life story as a *pícaro* may have been, like his experiences meeting Cañizares, the product of a storytelling impulse caused by the jubilation of being able to speak (that is, if he ever existed, and if in existing, he ever truly spoke). The reader does not *know*, since nothing, it appears, is really meant to be *known* in this pair of *novelas*. If the Aristotelian view that knowing, and hence the ability to conceive reality, is intrinsically connected to the ability of the imagination to apprehend input delivered by sense perception and, with the help of reason, interpret this input, then the world depicted in the "Coloquio" may well be one of a succession of uncertain, suspended realities.

Christopher Soufas remarks on how "[u]nder classical systems, correct thinking requires that one view the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom as an interpretive process, always as a means and never as an end in itself, as an opportunity for a discursive exchange within the world. There must be interaction between the mind and the objects of experience, harmony between words and the world, between thoughts and acts" (288). Evidently, when knowledge is the product of an interpretative process that bypasses tangible experience and relies solely on the wandering of the imagination, be it deliberately or unintentionally, the reality it constructs will

[10] Michael Nerlich also stresses the importance of the imagination in what he describes as the "telescopic structure" of the "Coloquio." He finds that Cervantes challenges the classical model of art as a imitation of nature by allowing Campuzano to imagine the unnatural: a couple of talking dogs. Nerlich explains: "what affects the strange figure of Campuzano most is the fact that it is possible to create something which is not the reflection of reality, but which is, moreover, a pleasant artifact and instrument of philosophical knowledge. This is made possible . . . by means of *invención*, by the activation and structuring of 'cosas' stored in the *memoria*" (301). Interestingly, Nerlich opts for not generalizing the epistemological implication found in this use of the imagination toward the "Coloquio's overall message, which I think is an oversight. He states: "from an epistemological point of view, the main problem in this passage (and in the entire dialogue) is the philosophical truth, which is, inevitably, the truth about us and about the real world. Of course, we could mobilize now, immediately, Plato and *tutti quanti*. But let us renounce here the big machine, particularly since Cervantes does not activate it either" (301). My position is that Cervantes does activate the "big machine," albeit not directly, through his utmost insistence in challenging any and every notion of reality as a definable, fixed, and dogmatic constant.

reflect this insubstantiality. Soufas also offers that "[t]o be wise, one must be willing to interpret experience within the world and to affirm the continuity and sameness of things. Since words bear an intimate affinity with the objects they describe, acquiring wisdom is comparable to reading a text" (288). The "Coloquio" challenges this view, since the reality it articulates invites the reader to question the relationship between the written sign and the reality the sign is intended to describe. The result is a seemingly tight argument that lacks, nonetheless, a viable epistemic basis. Cervantes' text demands active interpretation even as it highlights the impossibility of asserting the primacy of one interpretation of *reality* over another.

Montaigne and Huarte write about the imagination roughly around the same time, and while both are acutely aware of the classical tradition upon which their commentaries rest, Montaigne's approach is personal and anecdotal.[11] Yet, he recognizes that many of the *mistaken* realities that are conceived by the "common people" can be attributed to the "narrow seam between the soul and body, through which the experiences of the one is communicated to the other" (*Essays* 74). This acknowledgement points to an opinion relatively analogous to that of Huarte. Montaigne states, perhaps ironically, perhaps defiantly, that "[a] strong imagination creates the event" (*Essays* 68).[12] He illustrates this position in ways that closely resemble Huarte's: "We drip with sweat, we tremble, we turn pale and turn red at the blows of our imagination; reclining in our feather beds we feel our bodies agitated by their impact, sometimes to the point of expiring" (*Essays* 69). He also recognizes, albeit in a nearly satirical way, that the unruly imagination can operate to achieve results that may benefit its holder. When discussing how the imagination can be responsible for bringing about cures for various diseases, Montaigne

[11] Huarte's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* was first published in 1575, in Baeza. For a list of the subsequent editions and translations, see Serés'edition, 110-118.
[12] This and the following quotes in this section come from Montaigne's essay "Of the Power of the Imagination," 1: 21.

appears to support an arbitrary manipulation of the imagination and hence the ensuring of the placebo effect: "This effect is the reason why, in such matters, it is customary to demand that the mind be prepared. Why do doctors work on the credulity of their patient beforehand with so many false promises of a cure, if not so that the effect of the imagination may make up for the imposture of their decoction?" (*Essays* 71). As noted in the previous chapter, Montaigne is inclined to believe that supernatural religious experiences are also products of a hyperactive imagination. He comments: "It is probable that the principal credit of miracles, visions, enchantments, and such extraordinary occurrences comes from the power of the imagination, acting principally upon the minds of the common people, which are softer. Their belief has been so strongly seized that they think they see what they do not see" (*Essays* 70).

In essence, Montaigne's views resonate with Huarte's and with the classical thinkers before him in that they recognize the ability, if not propensity, of the imagination to create realities that exhibit themselves fully equipped with physical manifestations and tangible repercussions. Unlike Aristotle but in alignment with Huarte and Cervantes, Montaigne recognizes that both good and bad can come from an imagination that works independently from sense input. John Lyons summarizes Montaigne's position by asserting that "[i]n connecting the mind to the body, imagination – for Montaigne and other Renaissance thinkers influenced by the Stoics – asserts the superiority of mind over body, since in imagination we can make ourselves absent from the present world, try out the experience of incidents possible in the future, and bring back vividly a moment from the past" (*Before Imagination* 36). In this light, the imagination also becomes responsible for one's engagement with *eutrapelia*, the ancient virtue of moderate and moral entertainment alluded to by Cervantes in the "Prólogo al lector."

Moreover, and as I will discuss in the next chapter, *eutrapelia* becomes subjected to the idiosyncrasies of the mind and detached from its traditional, dogmatic connotation.

It can be inferred that the property of the imagination that allows the individual to become not only a creator in her own right but also a dissolver of the limits of time and space is systematically mobilized in the fabric of the "Coloquio." In it, nonetheless, the issues raised by the classical and Renaissance examination of the *skillful* or *unskillful* use of the imaginative faculty are further complicated by the meta-creative and meta-narrative nature of the text, in which the mere telling of previous events becomes, through the acts of the imagination and the memory, an agent of epistemic destabilization and skeptical commentary.[13]

Berganza composes his memoirs, albeit not in written form, as he relates them to Cipión; inside Berganza's story, Cañizares tells her version of Berganza's birth, hence challenging his own narrative, as she recounts her own experiences in what is perhaps the most commented upon episode of all of Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares*. Campuzano is twice a creator in the "Coloquio," once as he narrates for Peralta the tale of his marriage to Estefania, and once more as he transposes the dogs' alleged dialogue into a written text. The astonishing synchronicity of these imaginative *events* alerts the reader to the important relationship among imagination, reality, and storytelling within the "Coloquio," and reminds her that she too, by allowing Cervantes' words to infiltrate her imagination through visual perception, is an accomplice to this juxtaposition of realities. William Clamurro detects the depth of Campuzano's involvement with the art of storytelling. In fact, Clamurro's observation may suggest some intentional tampering

[13] Huarte de San Juan recognizes the importance of the memory within the overall cognitive process. He considers it a property of *ingenio* and, following the lead of classic authors, believes it to be a subordinated part of the imaginative faculty: "mete Cicerón a la memoria en cuenta de ingenio; de la cual dijo Galeno que carecía totalmente de invención, que es decir que no puede engendrar nada de sí, antes su mucha intensión y grandeza (dice Aristóteles) es causa que el entendimiento sea infecundo y que no se pueda empreñar ni parir. Sólo sirve de guardar y tener en custodia las formas y figuras que las otras potencias han concebido, como parece en los hombres de letras muy memoriosos, que cuanto dicen y escriben todo tiene otro dueño primero" (194-195).

with *reality* on the part of Campuzano as if to make his tales more attractive to his listener and reader:

> Campuzano's story of his seduction by the deceitful and mysterious woman . . . itself turn out to be a larger seduction, that of his friend Peralta, or more properly, of Peralta's curiosity and natural desire for the further pleasures of hearing or reading new narratives. Needless to say, Peralta's curiosity and seduction parallel our own. Campuzano's orally narrated story (which is, for us, already a text) stresses its real-world plausibility. The wonder or amazement that the story supposedly causes Peralta stems in part from the improbable folly and credulousness of the man telling it. (260)

In fact, Campuzano's conspicuous use of prolepsis suggests the possibility of a manipulation of the dialogue between the dogs. As if anticipating further skepticism from Peralta, he volunteers: "todo lo tomé de coro, y *casi* por la mismas palabras que había oído lo escribí otro día, sin buscar colores retóricas para adornarlo ni qué añadir ni quitar para hacerlo gustoso (2: 294, emphasis added). Cervantes' implication of the memory as part of this transcription process also adds to the epistemological concerns already raised. Therefore, what makes Campuzano's realistic tale seem implausible is the implicit role that the imagination occupies within its conception. Both his tale of a deceitful and desecrated marriage and its latent canine colloquy may constitute a sincere and sense-driven interpretation of reality, which he narrates (or re-creates) as *realistically* as he can. They can also constitute an intentional deviation from objective truth, as one could find in a work of fiction (or non-fiction), in which he may articulate *realities* as exploitatively as he wishes. Last, his narratives can be the result of an unintentional roaming of the imagination. As such, and taking into consideration the opinions of Huarte and Montaigne, both tales have the imaginative faculty as a common denominator, and

hence both, as well as all the embedded narratives that stem from them, are suspended by their own intrinsic epistemic vulnerability.

The implications of such realization are as unsettling as the narratives that sustain them, for they point to the fact that Cervantes, as Forcione observes in regard to *Don Quijote*, may be reacting to the crisis generated by the collapse of the epistemic stability partially enjoyed before the Copernican challenge and the social, political, and religious disorder of Early Modernity.[14] Forcione maintains that the hexameral literature that was revived during Cervantes's day – a literature that is allegorically represented in the *Persiles* and that depicts man not as a creator or a critical reader of God's creations but rather as a being "whose role is to bow down in veneration" ("Night-Errantry" 457) – constitutes an effort at "picking up the pieces of a fragmenting world order" (453). On the other hand, he recognizes that in Don Quijote's fanciful and unrestrained imaginative wanderings Cervantes unveils "the non-rational, psychic depths in which the foundation of art and the source of its greatest powers lie, areas of experience beyond the reach of the classical aesthetic with its exclusive rational system and in fact beyond the reach of any reassuring, objective 'world reason' postulated, perhaps delusively, by human beings" (463).[15]

In the "Coloquio" one could argue that the motion toward exposing the workings of the creative imagination is even more conspicuous than in the *Quijote,* given the relatively short length of the work, which makes its extraordinary concentration of parallel, questionable imaginative *realities* seem all the more alarming. As Forcione points out, Cervantes could indeed

[14] "[T]he hexameral literary phenomenon was a response to the anxieties rooted in a much broader and more menacing panorama of breakdown and dissolution: a spectacle of metaphysical and cosmic disorder that historians of the crisis of early modernity have commonly associated with the challenges of Copernicanism; of geographical disorder, with the voyages of discovery; of political disorder, with the raise of statism and the undeniable insights of Machiavellianism into the hard realities of human beings' behavior in their community life; of religious disorder, with the Protestant Reformation and fragmentation of a unified Christendom and the renewed menaces from the alien world of Islam" (Forcione, "Night-Errantry" 453).

[15] Forcione will eventually tie the *Persiles* and the *Quijote* under the same argument in order to demonstrate how Cervantes, through a meta-fictional discourse that involves scenes of "literary parody and farce," is celebrating, and not condemning, the imaginative power of the human mind in both works. See "Night-Errantry" 471.

be expressing in the "Coloquio," as he did in *Don Quijote*, a response to the epistemic crisis of his epoch. If so, one could argue that by manufacturing a complete and very controlled collapse of all epistemic stabilities Cervantes embraces the skeptical attitude that calls for a suspension of judgment and restraint from attaching a fixed value to knowledge that cannot be fully authenticated through reason or the senses. In this sense, Cervantes responds to the epistemic crisis of Early Modernity with an invitation for the reader to assimilate the seemingly chaotic state of knowledge presented in the text by withholding judgment and remaining open to all interpretations. This attitude, particularly as observed through the act of reading and understanding texts, promotes the idea that the epistemic crisis that the "Coloquio" seems to reflect may point, after all, to matters of intellectual and philosophical discipline, and not a perceived cosmic breakdown. In fact, the "Coloquio" seems less disturbing to the reader who is able to accept its epistemic restlessness than to the one who seeks to rest a fixed hierarchy of credibility to its competing *realities*.

Furthermore, both "Casamiento" and "Coloquio" may offer another possible perspective on Cervantes' level of engagement with skepticism. Even more unsettling within the skeptical frames employed in these two works is the fact that in the "Coloquio" the possibility of Campuzano's intentional manipulation of *realities* may point not to an attempt at underscoring the fact that unambiguous knowledge is unattainable but to highlight the fact that, to the creator of narrative, knowledge is, instead, fully accessible. By activating the very rational system of creation through storytelling – a system whose core Cervantes blatantly exposes in the "Coloquio" – Campuzano is asserting his power as a master architect, as the originator of a world that he not only *knows* but fully controls. The "Casamiento" and the "Coloquio" may well be Cervantes' articulation of the maker's knowledge argument, and that changes everything.

The maker's knowledge argument, perhaps as an attempt to mitigate the severity of the *crise pyrrhonienne*, advances the idea that one can know what one creates.[16] The implications of this assertion are multifold. As Danilo Marcondes explains, one could take this position to indicate that, in a world that was created by God, man was therefore allowed no absolute knowledge of nature: "Since God is the creator of nature, only God can know reality as it is. Human knowledge, if it deserves that name, is confined to mere appearances, to phenomena, and cannot be considered true, demonstrable or grounded, in any definite way" (114). The theological implications of this view of the maker's knowledge argument are clear, and conform not only with the idea of man as a deferential being to God and his creation (as exemplified in Forcione's characterization of man's role in the universe according to the *Persiles*), but also to the view so forcefully promoted by Montaigne that man must embrace humility in the face of his ineptitude to apprehend God's might. On the other hand, when embraced from the opposite direction as to highlight man's creative power as an inventor of things and of *realities*, the maker's knowledge argument can become an empowering tool through which, by claiming to know that which he himself creates, man becomes an "*imitator Dei*" (Marcondes 114).

Although initially a tool in the justification of the possibility or impossibility of scientific knowledge, the maker's knowledge argument, like the entire spectrum of skeptical ideas, became generalized to a broad variety of disciplines and associated with the thought of several early modern thinkers. Antonio Pérez-Ramos comments on how "[t]he secularization of [the maker's knowledge argument] and its subsequent insertion into such diverging currents of thought . . . is

[16] Although this argument was developed by ancient Greeks and articulated indirectly in the works of Plato and Aristotle, it was not explicitly postulated until the eighteenth century, in Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova* (1725). For a detailed discussion of the history and specific philosophical implications of the maker's knowledge argument see Perez-Ramos 48-64. For a brief overview of how Nicholas of Cusa and Fancisco Sanches articulated their views of the maker´s knowledge argument, and how those views relate to the idea of God as supreme creator, see Pérez-Ramos, 58.

witness to its fecundity and versatility, as a maxim reason enabling man to conceive and/ or to understand the terms of gnoseological account" (58). Elizabeth Spiller's examination of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* corroborates the idea that the maker's knowledge argument found its way into non-scientific modes of expression. Yet, in her analysis of how art functions as a way of knowledge in Shakespeare's play, she finds that within the emergent scientific cultures of early modern England "art was not separate from the practices that became science but instrumental to them" (25).[17] Her explanation of the philosophical background upon which the maker's knowledge argument further developed points, again, to a motion toward breaking free from the limiting rigidity of Aristotelian epistemology. She remarks:

> For Aristotle and the natural philosophers of the Renaissance who followed his model of physics, the things of art were indeed separate from those of nature. A scientific explanation, in Aristotle's terms, involved understanding the nature of things in a teleological sense (how and why they were what they were). Art and other forms of human invention could not lead to true knowledge because art was the product of a human intention rather than the expression of an essential teleology. Through art, one could only learn about man and his ideas, not about nature or truth. At the same time, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* made it clear that not all of nature realized its teleological end, and the resulting accidents, anomalies, and monstrosities could not serve as the basis for knowledge. Challenges to these two key tenets of Aristotelian natural philosophy were at

[17] Spiller's thesis argues that "[t]hrough a new assessment of the possibilities of invention—artificial contrivances and human interventions of the kinds proposed by Francis Bacon and others—oddities that were once classified as the domain of the theologian and the natural historian became the basis for the new science of experimentalism. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* both depicts and participates in this transition. Prospero's 'Art' expresses the remarkable power of this model of art as a knowledge practice; yet, as we shall see, the play also suggests reasons why the Renaissance conception of art as knowledge was ultimately displaced by a modern science of facts" (24-25).

the center of a radical redefinition of knowledge, art, and science in the late Renaissance. (25)

Spiller's observations can be applied productively to the world of Cervantes and his fiction. After all, we have already noted how, even in what concerns only the realm of literary tradition, Cervantes push has been toward questioning the *status quo* and stretching the limits of what conformity to literary models advocates. His possible employment of the maker's knowledge argument in the "Casamiento" and the "Coloquio" further highlights his interest in contriving epistemological challenges. First, in creating his own fictional universe Cervantes is, perhaps more closely than the early questioners of scientific knowledge, imitating the awesome wholeness of God's creative impulses. [18] As God conceives a world according to His imaginative will, so does Cervantes, and his narrative universe so reflects God's creative power that, like God's creation, Cervantes' fiction cannot be fully apprehended by his readers. The same could be said of the creators within the creator's work, that is, Campuzano, Berganza, and Cañizares. Second, in being what they are – a logical articulation of the dynamics between reason and imagination through the power of reason's most essential accomplice, language – these *novelas* serve as validation of the notion of language as a human creation, which emphasizes the idea embedded in the maker's knowledge argument. In other words, Cervantes may be engaging the maker's knowledge argument not only to claim that a type of knowledge is possible, but also to suggest that the very tool that he uses in articulating this claim – language – is in itself proof of

[18] As Pérez-Ramos makes clear, the maker´s knowledge idea-type, as he refers to it, was initially a means of arguing against the impossibility of scientific knowledge as it pertained to nature, as was, one can claim, skepticism in general: the idea-type of maker's knowledge can be first conceived as an internalization of operational skills in the most disparate fields of activity. As such, this notion might constitute one of the oldest, and hold one of the strongest, claims to validity in the cognitive make-up of our species. . . . Here knowledge is not only the bare capacity to make, but the capacity to understand a reliable procedure for making" (50).

his position. With man being the creator of language, of narrative worlds, and of the realities encompassed in them, Cervantes' role as an imitator of God is thoroughly authenticated.[19]

Marcondes sees the relationship between language and the maker's knowledge argument in that, as he puts it, "language can be seen as a human creation and therefore as part of the so-called 'maker's knowledge tradition'" (112). But more importantly, he sees that in questioning the epistemological properties of language Renaissance humanists come to either oppose or favor the maker's knowledge argument, and those who favor it "tend to value language, whereas those who reject it do not give a significant role to language in their systems" (112).[20] Marcondes adds: "[S]keptical arguments, which were mainly arguments purporting to establish limits to knowledge, opened the way to the consideration of language as an alternative to mind's intuitive powers in the apprehension of reality. Linguistic representation becomes important as a way of avoiding some of the main problems affecting mental representation" (112).[21]

While Marcondes establishes that humanist thinkers did not share a unified view of the place of language within epistemology, he makes it clear that, directly or indirectly, these questions were effectively being explored and that this exploration was being done within the

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[19] El Saffar, without considering the Maker's knowledge argument, also comments on the relationship between language, which she refers to as "speech," and the construction of reality. She finds that "[epistemic] disorder threatens to sever the bonds between speaker [or writer] and listener [or reader], destroying the possibility for speech" (*Romance to Novel* 74). She justifies this view by explaining that "[t]he fantastic, when converted into words, is no longer credible and must find its justification not in its ability to reflect the natural world, but in the pleasure it offers its beholder. . . The narrator finds himself caught between the reality which the past had been to him and the fiction into which he has transformed it for the benefit of his listener" (74). I tend to think that through the prism of the maker's knowledge argument and through its reliance on the imaginative faculty as its pillar, this divide that El Saffar detects between the credible and the fantastic, past realities and present fiction, are all assimilated under a justifiable master plan. The maker (be it Cervantes, or Campuzano, or Berganza) needs not seek a justification for his creation. It is only the reader who must, futilely, attempt to understand the maker's invention.

[20] Marcondes identifies Montaigne, Descartes, and the Cartesians of Early Modernity among those who do not favor language in their system. He claims that they believed that true knowledge could be attained through intuition, usually under the influence of revelation. See 112 and 115-119.

[21] One cannot help noticing the ambiguity of this comment, since, according to classical models, language would have been one more by-product of the reason/ senses/ imagination intellectual apparatus. What language does, perhaps, is to provide a tangible representation of what rationality and the imaginative faculty can attain as an ensemble, whether or not that leads to or constitutes a break from verifiable verisimilitude.

philosophical domain of skepticism.[22] Paradoxically, skepticism both affirms the properties of language that allow it to be seen as a tangible product of an autonomous imagination, and stresses the fact that its reason-based structure lacks the power to signify with certainty. Forcione summarizes this tension when commenting on the role of the writer who, naturally, finds in language his most fundamental tool: "The mission of the artist is to master and use the illusion of language in order to undeceive, to bring such lucidity and freedom to his readers, and he enhances the power of his demasking criticism by reminding them of the insubstantial quality of the very medium in which he works, of the fraudulence of his very own mask" (234).

It is only reasonable to contemplate the possibility that an engaged humanist like Cervantes, whose fixation on issues of epistemology and skepticism are so transparently articulated in his work, would himself have considered the role of language within the maker's knowledge argument.[23] The "Coloquio," as we will see, offers confirmation of that.

By the time the reader reaches the opening words of the dialogue between Cipión and Berganza, Cervantes has already allowed her to experience the epistemic instability that will further unfold within the "Coloquio." In sharing Peralta's hesitation – "estaba en duda si creería o no lo que de su casamiento me había contado" (2: 293) – the reader feels compelled to doubt. Peralta, not being the maker of this narrative reality, is not allowed an insight into its essence. Yet, Cervantes compounds the problem by alerting the distracted reader to the question of who is the ultimate creator of this narrative universe. After all, the putative maker, Campuzano, is apparently inclined to doubt his own words: "[Y]o mismo no he querido dar crédito a mí mismo,

[22] "[T]here is no basic view shared by Humanist thinkers and early modern theoreticians of language, on the contrary, there are different viewpoints adopted by various thinkers, as well as on different purposes according to which language was considered. Nevertheless, in a broad sense, we can make a general distinction between those thinkers who adopted a version of the maker's knowledge tradition and those who rejected it and sought to defend the need for a knowledge of essences, appealing directly to divine illumination or to the light of the soul as ways of getting access into the deepest nature of reality" (112-113).

[23] For a consideration of language and its epistemological implications in *Don Quijote* see Brink, 20-45.

y he querido, tener por cosa soñada lo que realmente estando despierto, con todos mis cinco sentidos, tales cuales nuestro Señor fue servido de dármelos, oí, escuché, noté y, finalmente, escribí, sin faltar palabra por su concierto" (2: 294). Cervantes plays with the notion that a well-balanced alliance between reason and the senses ought to amount to some level of knowledge. Here, this knowledge is questioned by the metaphysical and epistemological dilemma it poses. Dogs, after all, do not ordinarily talk. Yet, Campuzano, who by now has managed to characterize himself as a possibly credible but unlikely veracious agent, determines that the subject of the dog's conversation was beyond his intellectual ability, and hence declares the conversation to be true: "Las cosas de que trataron fueron grandes y diferentes, y más para ser tratadas por varones sabios que para ser dichas por bocas de perros; así que, pues yo no las pude inventar de mío, a mi pesar y contra mi opinión vengo a creer que no soñaba y que los perros hablaban" (2: 294).

Campuzano, therefore, opts to adhering to the view that knowledge is formed through a combined effort of senses and reason (which build an impression in the imagination), and through reason, again, he elects to accept the eccentric nature of this knowledge. Whether his reasoning is sincere or, as Clamurro suggests, it is only a calculated effort to hook his potential reader, we are not meant to know. Cervantes allows his own role as supreme architect to be reflected in Campuzano. This not only accentuates Cervantes' omniscience but also serves as a disturbing reminder that all that is, or seems to be, is possibly someone's imaginative venture.

Cervantes does not stop there. These epistemic uncertainties are exacerbated by the fact that Cipión and Berganza doubt the fact that they can talk:

> Berganza: Cipión hermano, óyote hablar y sé que te hablo, y no puedo creerlo, por parecerme que el hablar nosotros pasa de los términos de *naturaleza*.

> Cipión: Así es la *verdad*, Berganza, y viene a ser mayor este *milagro* en que no solamente hablamos, sino en que hablamos con discurso, como si fuéramos capaces de razón, estando tan sin ellas que la diferencia que hay del animal bruto al hombre es ser el hombre animal racional, y el bruto, irracional. (2: 299, emphasis added)

When Berganza qualifies his and Cipión's newly acquired ability to speak as an unnatural act, and when Cipión labels this act as a miracle, Cervantes recalls an ancient debate that permeated Renaissance thought.[24] According to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, all forms of extraordinary natural manifestations are deemed "accidental, [in] that there can be no scientific treatment of [them]. This is confirmed by the fact that no science practical, productive, or theoretical troubles itself about it" (6: 2). In other words, the unexplainable not only defies the epistemological model delineated in the reason-imagination-senses-knowledge paradigm but it also exonerates scientific methods from having to explain it.[25] The dogs' ability to talk, being unnatural, cannot be a matter of science but, as Cipión implies by the word miracle, could well be a matter of theology.[26] He adds: "[M]e doy a entender que este nuestro hablar tan de improviso cae debajo del número de aquellas cosas que llaman portentos, las cuales, cuando se muestran y parecen, tiene averiguado la experiencia que alguna calamidad grande amenaza a las gentes" (2: 300). Cervantes, much like Campuzano in his conversation with Peralta, is trying to hook his reader by creating an atmosphere of suspense. Something could happen, and most likely

[24] Forcione rightly links the dogs' sudden and miraculous ability to talk with a "favorable view of humanity as hierarchically placed above the beast and endowed with speech and reason as distinguishing characteristics" (215), an idea that Montaigne, as will be seen later, challenges. Clamurro, on the other hand, sees the question raised by the dogs in regard to the "miracle and impossibility of animal speech" as a "partial diversion" from the more pressing question embedded in the text, the one that addresses "the limits of language, the nature of knowledge in a work of verbal art, and the locus of imaginative authority" (263-264).

[25] For a discussion of the relationship between skepticism and the unknowable origins of the dogs' speech in the "Coloquio" see Checa.

[26] As discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine believed that miracles should be measured based on their impact on the observer, and Aquinas stressed both that miracles occur outside the natural order of nature and that they are above human reason. See Chapter 2, n. 22.

something will happen. But the question remains as to whether Cervantes' hint of a possible supernatural interpretation for the dogs' aberrant ability is only meant to grab the reader's interest or to add yet one more embedded line of commentary. The answer is likely to be both, as the episode involving Cañizares illustrates. For now, Cervantes chooses to present the reader with a caveat that both affirms and challenges the maker's knowledge argument: only the will of God, the ultimate creator, could superimpose itself on the laws of nature so as to produce the unthinkable without challenging the physical cohesion of the universe. Cipión concludes: "[S]ea lo que fuere, nosotros hablamos, sea portento o no; que lo que el cielo tiene ordenado que suceda, no hay diligencia ni sabiduría humana que lo pueda prevenir" (2: 301).

Cipión and Berganza seem to operate within the parameters set by neo-Aristotelian thought. In fact, the very nature of their first exchange and the lexicon they employ – words like "naturaleza," "discurso," "razón," "racional," "irracional," "entendimiento" and "memoria" – point to an effort on Cervantes' part to connect their deliberation to the ancient tradition from which it stems. Yet, not all sixteenth- and seventeenth-century humanists were ready to pass on to nature (or God) the blame that could be attributed to the unbalanced relationship among reason, senses, and the imagination. Montaigne, as seen in the previous chapter, expresses the opinion that miracles are most likely the result of the suggestive imagination of common folk.[27] The reader is left to follow the given clues and either try to construct some fundamental truth from them, suspend judgment altogether, or accept her subordinate role to Cervantes' omnipotence as master storymaker. Again, Cervantes does not leave it at that. When he commands Cipión to raise the issue of dogs and reason, or dogs as capable of reasoning, he taps into another established intellectual tradition.

[27] Cervantes himself in the *Persiles* offers that "los milagros suceden fuera del orden de la naturaleza, y los misterios son aquellos que parecen milagros y no lo son, sino casos que acontecen raras veces" (163-164).

Critics have commented widely on the possible literary precedents for the "Coloquio."[28] Adrián Sáez corroborates the general opinion about the presumed classical and biblical models for the "Coloquio" but also discusses the implications of the dogs' speech as the product of either a miracle or satanic intervention. While siding with Augustine and stressing that "los demonios no obran según la potencia de su naturaleza […], sino según la permisión de Dios, cuyos juicios son ocultos pero nunca injustos" (800), Sáez concludes that the reader cannot judge whether Cervantes is simply following literary models and applying sound patristic interpretations to matters unexplainable through reason, or whether he is questioning the Aristotelian rational system by exposing its restricted concept of knowledge acquisition (804). Indeed, we do not know. But what we do know, particularly in the face of all the skeptical activity already highlighted here and in the previous chapters, is that Cervantes is using a philosophical concern, and not exclusively a literary model, to mirror the epistemological challenges posed by the talking dogs. Speech in the "Coloquio" stands for more than the mere ability to talk. As expressed by Campuzano and later by the dogs themselves – "hablamos con discurso como si fuéramos capaces de razón" (2: 299) – speech here signifies the ability to use the rational faculty to conjure up meaning and *truths* about self and world. If Cervantes' dogs were capable of reason but not of speech, the "Coloquio" could not have held its sequence of framed narratives, and could not have existed in its present form.

Reason is the faculty that, with the senses and the imagination, attempts to determine the veracity or falseness of everything, and is traditionally seen as what ultimately separates man from beast. By momentarily suppressing this separation within a narrative environment that is so deeply skeptical, Cervantes goes beyond simply engaging the literary motif of talking animals.

[28] Forcione, throughout his *Mystery of Lawlessness*, and E.T. Aylward in *The Crucible Concept* (240-245) discuss the matter in detail.

He may be both mocking the idea that reason is an exclusively human gift, and the fact that reason is a useful gift after all, since it is incapable of bringing one closer to any verifiable truth. Reason is also, according to Montaigne (and to Berganza and Cipión, as will be shown later), a cause for human arrogance and hence capable of propelling humankind toward sin and dissociation from God. Under this light, Berganza and Cipión constitute more than just a monstrous natural anomaly; they represent a challenge to man's intellectual and moral supremacy and expose, within the precepts of Pyrrhonian skepticism, the futility of the rational enterprise. Just as the dogs cannot arrive at a rational explanation as to why they talk, neither can Campuzano, sincerely or not, easily decide whether his experience hearing the dogs was true or false. The same unsatisfactory experience of knowledge through reason is repeated several times during the story, and one last time by the external reader who attempts to make sense of it all.

One needs to go no farther than Montaigne's Pyrrhonian manifesto, the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," to find a passionate expression of dissatisfaction, or rather, a loathing, for both man's rational incompetence and his intellectual arrogance: "Let Man make me understand, by the force of discursive reason, what are the grounds on which he has founded and erected all those advantages which he thinks he has over other creatures and who has convinced that it is for his convenience, his service, that, for so many centuries, there has been established and maintained the awesome motion of the vault of heaven" (*Apology* 13).[29]

While Montaigne's disgust for human intellectual arrogance and for humanity's presumption in considering itself superior within the animal kingdom is well documented in the

[29] Montaigne is absolutely relentless in characterizing man's vain and egotistical attitude in regard to his place in the universe. He adds: "The natural, original distemper of Man is presumption. Man is the most blighted and frail of all creatures and, moreover, the most given to pride. This creature knows and sees that he is lodged down here, among the mire and shit of the universe . . . his characteristics place him in the third and lowest category of animate creatures, yet, in thought, he sets himself above the circle of the Moon, bringing the very heavens under his feet. The vanity of this same thought makes him equal himself to God; attribute to himself God's mode of being, pick himself out and set himself apart from the mass of other creatures . . . What comparison between us and them leads him to conclude that they have attributes of senseless brutes"? (*Apology* 16-17).

"Apologie," so is his dislike for the privileged place reason itself occupies within philosophy. Ultimately, the accidental philosopher claims to entertain a profound dislike for philosophy itself. These two complaints are obviously not unrelated. If man were capable of realizing the futility of his rational enterprise in achieving unequivocal knowledge he would be able to see how feeble his claim to superiority is. Montaigne states:

> We want to find out by reason whether fire is hot or snow is white . . . . There are ancient stories of the replies made to the man who doubted whether heat exists – they told him to jump into the fire . . . . [Let philosophers] abandon their professional intention, which is to accept nothing and approve nothing except by following the ways of reason. When they have to assay anything, reason is their touchstone. But it is, most surely, a touchstone full of falsehood, error, defects and feebleness. How better to test that than by reason itself. If we cannot trust reason when talking about itself, it can hardly be a judge of anything outside itself. (*Apology* 116-117)

If indeed Cervantes shares Montaigne's views and if he is in fact using the talking dogs to highlight a common antipathy toward a presumed human intellectual supremacy (which is expressed through the cult of reason and its glorification within philosophy), then the "Apologie" can be further taken as another possible source of inspiration for Cervantes. In this case, the advent of the talking dogs would not only constitute a natural aberration but also a metaphor for the conviction that Montaigne articulates repeatedly and unequivocally throughout the "Apologie": "We are neither above nor below [other creatures]" (*Apology* 24). The epistemic instability caused by the fact that Cervantes' dogs can reason leads precisely to Montaigne's point about human arrogance: neither through reason nor the imagination can man accept his shared status with other creatures.

There are a disproportionate number of examples throughout the "Apologie" that describe animals' various prerogatives over humans. In fact, Montaigne's fixation on animals and his desire to debunk man's superiority raises the question as to whether he too was engaging literary tradition in a novel and provocative way. Among his countless examples, drawn from personal observations as well as from classical and biblical sources, dogs occupy a conspicuously privileged place. It is easy to notice how the overall summary provided by Berganza and Cipión of the general positive attributes and reputation of dogs seems to comply and synthesize the examples offered by Montaigne:[30]

> Berganza: [H]e oído hablar grandes prerrogativas nuestras; tanto que parece que algunos han querido sentir que tenemos un natural distinto, tan vivo y tan agudo en muchas cosas, que se da indicios y señales de faltar poco para mostrar que tenemos un no sé qué de entendimiento capaz de discurso.
>
> Cipión: Lo que yo he oído hablar y encarecer es nuestra mucha memoria, el agradecimiento y gran fidelidad nuestra. (2: 300)

While borrowing from Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne reworks the much commented case of Chrysyppus' dog, an animal that appears to be able to conceive a disjunctive syllogism, and hence be capable of logical thought.[31] Andrew Aberdein summarizes Montaigne's understanding

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[30] Montaigne's first clear effort at challenging man's superiority – moral and rational - over other animals' takes place toward the beginning of the *Apology* (roughly pages 14 through 51), where he compares man's and animal's intrinsic characteristics to conclude that "we should admit that animals employ the same method and the same reasoning as ourselves when we do anything" (25). These general comments are followed by at least three anecdotes describing dogs' abilities to conceive syllogisms (28), to be actors in plays next to their human counterparts (29) – an example that greatly echoes Berganza's roles as an entertainer – and behave as supreme problem solvers (31). Between pages 40-50 of the *Apology*, Montaigne tells stories of dogs that intelligently defended their masters and their properties. Similarly, he praises the "greatness of spirit" of a dog who was sent to King Alexander from India and who would only fight against a lion, for "such an animal was indeed worthy of the privilege of fighting against" (45). Montaigne concludes this section with the judgment that "we do not, after all, excel over beasts by wit and our power of reason but merely by our physical beauty, our beautiful color, the beautiful way our members are arranged!" (51).

[31] "In all other cases Chrysippus was as scornful a judge of the properties of animals as any philosopher there ever was, yet he watched the actions of a dog which came upon three crossroads- it was either looking for his master or

of the logical dog's tale in the following manner: "[T]he dog's logical acuity serves the very different purpose of undermining what these skeptical authors perceive as an exaggerated reverence for human reason. . . . If dogs can perform syllogisms . . . we might not be so superior, and so we must concede that ours is merely one way of seeing the world" (171-172). In fact, contempt for the logical, rational intellect, or at least a willingness to expose both its assets and liabilities seems to be a concern of Cervantes in the "Coloquio," as he chooses, like Montaigne, to analyze the intellect's properties through its most rational activity: philosophy. In this *novela* the term *filosofar* has been indisputably linked to gossiping, or *murmurar*, which if taken a step further, can signify that within the overall semantic aura of the "Coloquio," all judgment-rendering action of reason is considered philosophy.[32] Berganza's plea illustrates this possibility: "Cipión hermano, así el cielo te conceda el bien que deseas, que, sin que te enfades, me dejes ahora filosofar un poco; porque si dejase de decir las cosas que en este instante me han venido a la memoria de aquellas que entonces me ocurrieron, me parece que no sería mi historia cabal ni de fruto alguno" (2: 318). As previously observed in the text, the byproduct of imagination, memory, and reason (or judgment) is questioned within the dogs' deliberation. Cipión answers: "[N]o sea tentación del demonio esa gana de filosofar que dices te ha venido; porque no tiene la murmuración mejor velo para paliar y encubrir su maldad disoluta que darse a entender el

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chasing some game fleeing before it; it tried first one road then a second; then, having made sure that neither of them bore any trace of what it was looking for, it charged down the third road without hesitation. Chrysippus was forced to admit that the dog at least reasoned this way: 'I have tracked my master as far as these crossroads; he must have gone down one of these three paths; not this one; not that one; so, inevitably, he must have gone down this other one.' Convinced by this reasoned conclusion, it did not sniff at the third path; it made no further investigations but let itself be swayed by the power of reason. Here was pure dialectic: the dog made use of disjunctive and copulative propositions and adequately enumerated the parts" (*Apology* 28). For commentaries on Chrysippus' dog see Hassan, Aberdein, and Popkin (48).

[32] Pertinently, and in a way that much resembles Berganza's attitude, Montaigne states that "[philosophy] has so many faces, so much variety and has been so garrulous, that all our ravings and our dreams may be found within her. Human fancy can conceive nothing, good or evil, which is not already there . . . So I am all the more ready to give a free run to my own whims in public" (*Apology* 122).

murmurador que todo cuanto dice son sentencias de filósofos y que el decir mal es reprehensión y el descubrir los defectos ajenos buen celo" (2: 318).

The definition of philosophy as a discriminatory, sententious, and perhaps malicious mode of reasoning is reinforced by the dogs' discussion about the pretentious inclusion of Latinisms within the Romance language.[33] At the end of his deliberation about the subject – a deliberation that amounts to sound social and literary criticism – the dogs conclude:

Cipión: Dejemos esto, y comienza a decir tus filosofías.

Berganza: Ya las he dicho: éstas son que acabo de decir.

Cipión: ¿Cuáles?

Berganza: Éstas de los latines y romances, que yo comencé y tú acabaste.

Cipión: ¿Al murmurar llamas filosofar? ¡Así va ello! Canoniza, Berganza, a la maldita plaga de la murmuración, y dale el nombre que quisieres, que ella dará a nosotros el de cínicos, que quiere decir perros murmuradores. (2: 319)[34]

It appears after all that both definitions, that of *murmurar* and *filosofar*, are being stretched here, hence the dogs' difficulty in reaching common ground as to what Berganza's ramblings may actually constitute.[35] The issue is complicated by the fact that Cipión concludes

[33] Interestingly, Covarrubias definition of the term *filósofo* points to a very different semantic root: "El primero que se intituló con este nombre fue Pythágoras, pareciéndole que el hombre de sabio absolutamente era arrogante, presupuesto que ningún hombre sabe tanto que no le falte mucho que saber. Y de allí adelante todos los profesores de la filosofía no se llamaron Sofistas, sino Filósofos y por donaire dejaron el nombre de Sofistas a los que sabían poco y presumían mucho con doctrinas aparentes y falsas" (405).

[34] For more on the episode of the Latinisms and how it may relate to Montaigne's thought see Nerlich 264-268.

[35] Cervantes insistence on the topic of *murmurar* is, rightly so, the object of vast critical commentary. Forcione links it to "fundamentally serious and central issues as original sin, slander, satire, piety, humility, free will, merit, and Divine Grace, [which] are mingled with and, in fact, concealed beneath what appears to be trivial" (173); El Saffar finds that *murmuración* represents human hypocrisy within the text, and points to it being a symbol of a "break down in the relationship between reality and the signs which are used to represent it." She concludes that "[t]he only way that Berganza can show himself not to have been determined by the corruption in which he grew up is to avoid in his present narrative the hypocrisy and slander of his masters" (66); Clamurro highlights the ethical aspect *murmuración* acquires in the text and states, while commenting on Cipión's advise that Berganza should not harm with his speech, that "[i]f true wit and judgment . . . lie in knowing and always observing this limit between *señalar* and *herir*, then this will be the boundary line of language, judgment, and tone that neither the dogs nor their readers

his remark by alluding, in a condemning way, to an established philosophical current – Cynicism – to further characterize Berganza's digressions. Cipión, who initially appears to distinguish slander from philosophy, concludes that affiliates of a recognized philosophical school can be equaled to slandering dogs. Whether Cipión's charge is directed at Cynicism only, at philosophy and philosophers in general, or purely at what he alone recognizes as a "damn plague of slander," his comment reveals an effort to blur the distinction between philosophy and slanderous misrepresentation, and to scorn the rational faculty that produces these disparaging rational articulations.

The final piece of this semantic puzzle is given by Cipión as he responds to Berganza's guilty feelings about allowing his merchant master's African servants to meet secretly during the night:

> Berganza: [L]levado de mi buen natural quise responder a lo que a mi amo debía, pues tiraba sus gajes y comía su pan, como lo deben hacer no sólo los perros honrados, a quien se les da renombre de agradecidos, sino todos aquellos que sirven.
>
> Cipión: Esto sí, Berganza, quiero que pase por filosofía, porque son razones que consisten en buena *verdad* y en buen entendimiento. (2: 320, emphasis added)

One cannot help wondering whether the tone employed here is one of irony or not, given the overwhelmingly Pyrrhonian aura of the "Coloquio" and of the *Novelas*. After all, *verdad*, up to now, has been demonstrated to constitute nothing but illusion and misguided reasoning. What makes Cipión accept Berganza's remark as *filosofía* is the remark's endorsement of virtuous behavior, its capacity to posit a dogmatic position, or a combination of both. Cipión's definition of philosophy seems, therefore, to embrace a virtuous kind of dogmatism in which judgment is

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will ever be able to recognize with total certainty. Like Satire itself, the limits of the permissible in language and the mere task of telling without hurting prove difficult first to determined and then to negotiate" (269).

passed but not at the expense of others. Curiously, this is precisely the opposite type of narrative that the "Coloquio," with its many distinct narrators and their distinct agendas, displays. The *novela* that perhaps most closely engages Pyrrhonian skepticism also fails to define philosophy according to Pyrrhonian precepts. Cervantes, again, leaves the reader in a total state of epistemic disorientation.

If the "Coloquio" indeed presents a possible attack on reason, one mounted nonetheless by a couple of reasoning, logical dogs, and one that revolves partly around an unstable definition of reason's most celebrated enterprise – philosophy – it could easily be linked to the anti-intellectual current present in seventeenth-century Iberian peninsula.[36] Moreover, it can be linked to the anti-intellectual thought displayed by Montaigne in his "Apologie." Yet, the "Coloquio" proves time and again to be a text that defies simple characterizations and simple associations. Montaigne's revulsion at human intellectual pretension stems from the fact that he believed God to be the only real knower of nature and things:

> Whatever share in the knowledge of Truth we may have obtained, it has not been acquired by our powers. God has clearly shown us that . . . . That being so, weakness of judgment helps us more than strength; blindness, more than clarity of vision. We become learned in God's wisdom more by ignorance than by knowledge . . . . I think man will confess, if he speaks honestly, that all he has gained from so long a chase is knowledge of his own weakness. (*Apology* 66-67)

While Montaigne directs this particular comment at religious knowledge or faith in itself, his attitude is known to be generalized to all epistemological considerations. Marcondes observes

[36] For more on anti-intellectualism in seventeenth-century Spain see Robbins, *Arts of Perception* 196-199. Forcione recognizes the epistemic imbalances contained in the "Coloquio" but far from concluding that they point to an attack on reason he asserts that the "Coloquio" "begins and ends with a celebration of language and rationality as divine gifts which distinguish man from the beast and lift him out of the 'dark silence' of animality" (221).

this same posture in regard to scientific knowledge, and remarks that "[i]f Montaigne is right, science, as it was then conceived, would be impossible" (115).[37] Although other skeptics have tried to mitigate the severity of the Pyrrhonian enterprise by embracing the maker's knowledge argument, Montaigne remained steadfast about man's utter incapacity to fully know anything. It would become Descartes' mission to bridge the gap between God's and man's knowledge.[38] As far as the "Coloquio" is concerned, this realization highlights the chaotic epistemic scenario that Cervantes assembles here, a scenario that resembles, as critics have argued, the text's *pulpo*-like nature.[39]

Contrasting ideas and attitudes like Montaigne's fideism and anti-intellectualism and, for example, the maker's knowledge argument, represent the core of the epistemic crisis that permeated early modern European thought. In this light, the "Coloquio" could be considered Cervantes' attempt at a theory of knowledge that, following the overall mindset of his generation, leads toward instability and either an ultimate withholding of judgment or an acceptance of the maker's knowledge argument. In fact, the way the maker's knowledge argument is articulated within the "Coloquio" – through the theme of story-telling and story-writing, and through the fact that this theme is so tightly interwoven with a meta-creative

[37] Marcondes draws this conclusion based on the following deliberation by Montaigne: "So that when any new doctrine presents itself to us, we have great reason to mistrust it, and to consider that before it was set on foot, the contrary had been in vogue; and that as that has been overthrown by this, a third invention in time to come, may start up which may knock the second on the head" (Quoted from Marcondes, 115).

[38] See Marcondes, 115-119.

[39] The octopus metaphor is one of the most recurring focuses of the criticism pertaining to the "Coloquio." Forcione associates the octopus with "an analogous representation of his plot – the imagery of the animal world, primarily the animal world of savagery, depredation, and mutilation" (109). Nerlich, who also tries to expose a link between Cervantes' and Montaigne's thought in his essay, dedicates several pages of his study to discussing this symbol (283-289). Given the way the image of the *pulpo* is introduced by the dogs, Nerlich's first associates the image with language's ability (or inability) to properly signify. He remarks: "the idea of not denoting things by their names would not have occurred to [Berganza], just as it would not have occurred to Montaigne to refute the register of the 'langage des hale'." He eventually uses the metaphor to create a link between Montaigne's and Cervantes' (as expressed through Berganza) writing styles: "[It] becomes obvious that, in the realm of epistemology, the octopus, with its infinite tentacles, is a perfect metaphor for what in his philosophical activity Montaigne has called an *exagium*, an essay: the infinite digressions are the tentacles of the octopus, groping the objects of our curiosity in order to examine and to know them" (284).

commentary – reflects, again, an internal instability that challenges the very argument being put forth.

The first time Cipión interrupts Berganza's narration of his life story, he offers Berganza an explanation of the distinct kinds of artfulness found in narrative tales: "[Y] es que los cuentos unos encierran y tienen la gracia en ellos mismos; otros, en el modo de contarlos" (2: 304). Cipión goes on to elaborate on how in some tales, content alone can be artful, while in others, a manipulation by the storyteller is necessary to make the tale more appealing or engaging.[40] While this elucidation offers insight into the possible relationship between the maker and his creation – that is, into the way a storyteller, having omnipotent knowledge of his product, can shape it to match his imagination's desire and the necessities imposed by his personal agenda – it is Berganza's answer that reveals a tension within Cervantes' appropriation of the maker's knowledge argument. He consents to Cipión's request saying: "Yo lo hare así, si pudiere y si me da lugar la grande tentación que tengo de hablar; aunque me parece que con grandísima dificultad me podrá ir a la mano" (2: 304). Berganza, a master storyteller in his own right, appears to question his own ability to control his final product, as to suggest that his creation is the result of an accidental impulse and not the product of careful consideration. That way, his knowledge of his creation would be a contingent afterthought, and hence would offer a challenge to the idea of the maker's knowledge argument. In fact, Cipión's identification of *murmurar* as an integral component of Berganza's rambling style points to the possible haphazard nature of his narration.[41] After having been repeatedly warned by Cipión of his propensity to engage in slandering, Berganza replies: "Agradézcotelo, Cipión amigo; porque si no me avisaras, de

[40] "[Q]uiero decir que algunos hay que aunque se cuenten sin preámbulos y ornamentos de palabras, dan contento; otros hay que es menester vestirlos de palabras, y con demostraciones del rostro y de las manos y con mudar la voz se hacen algo de nonada, y de flojos y desmayados se vuelven agudos y gustosos" (2: 304).

[41] One cannot help it but to think of Montaigne´s rambling and somewhat righteous style employed in his *Essais* and particularly in the "Apologie." For Nerlich's opinion see footnote 40.

manera se me iba calentando la boca que no parara hasta pintarte un libro entero destos que me tenían engañado" (2: 309).[42] Berganza recognizes that, in a way, his story writes itself based on impulses he cannot contain, but in doing so he also alludes to a factor that may be playing a part in the composition of its seemingly digressive narration. Earlier, Berganza states: "En estas materias nunca tropieza la lengua si no cae primero la intensión" (2: 308). Intention here denotes not an accidental gossiping but rather a deliberate behavior that is incorporated into the narrative Berganza fabricates. If indeed the attraction to gossiping and satirizing results in calculated rhetorical devices, a deterministic component to the composition of the "Coloquio" becomes immediately evident. Berganza, despite a concerted effort to make his immediate listener, Cipión, believe that his *murmuración* is an uncontainable impulse, has inherited from Campuzano (his creator) the ability to manipulate the story as to engage (through curiosity or irritation) his reader. Campuzano, in turn, has inherited from Cervantes the very same ability to mastercraft a captivating tale. We, as the lineage's ultimate readers, experience the jolt of their combined ingenuity. Despite the characteristic Cervantine complication, the maker's knowledge argument may, after all, be fully expressed in the "Coloquio."

Berganza's inherited savviness in the art of storytelling compels him to introduce – but not give way to – the next of kin in this distinguished genealogy. Cañizares is not scheduled to take her place within the story until nearly thirty pages later, but Berganza's intention, more than his impulses, tell him that an early allusion to such colorful character can only further his cause of gripping the reader. He displays this ability to captivate through impeccable knowledge of both narrative technique and the story's ultimate content. Cipión is curious, but most

[42] For a commentary on the moral aspects of Berganza's affinity for gossiping and on the meta-literary commentary involving the Pastoral, to which he refers here, see Forcione 171-186 and 112-117, respectively.

importantly, he is helpless, lost within his own desire to learn that which only his talking companion knows:

> Berganza: [M]as ahora que me ha venido a la memoria lo que había de haber dicho al principio de nuestra plática, no sólo no me maravillo de lo que hablo, pero espántome de lo que dejo de hablar.
>
> Cipión: Pues ¿ahora no puedes decir lo que ahora se te acuerda?
>
> Berganza: Es una historia que me pasó con una grande hechicera, discípula de la Camacha de Montilla.
>
> Cipión: Digo que me la cuentes antes que pases más adelante en el cuento de tu vida.
>
> Berganza: Eso no haré yo, por cierto, hasta su tiempo; ten paciencia, y escucha por su orden mis sucesos, que así te darán más gusto, si ya no te fatiga querer saber los medios antes de los principios. (2: 310)[43]

As promised, Berganza does not share the tale of the witch. Instead, he continues on within his picaresque tale of disillusion and heartbreak, through which Cervantes communicates a plethora of familiar themes that articulate contrast, dissimulation, and appearances, and contribute toward the overall skeptical aura of the *Novelas*.[44] When Berganza finally comes

[43] Forcione remarks that "[in] Berganza's arbitrary dealings with his listener, Cervantes is manipulating his own audience as he arouses restlessness and curiosity by acknowledging that they are natural reactions to such tantalizing hint and by promising a pleasurable reward for the reader's patience" (40). It is questionable whether or not this reward is ever delivered.

[44] In part, what makes the "Coloquio" such an intense reading experience is the fact that every episode narrated and every reflection offered by Berganza about his own experiences is charged not only with a deep moral and ethical element, but often with a literary, religious, or philosophical comment as well. The episode in which Berganza describes his life as a shepherd dog, for example, highlights the vulnerability of the senses to measure appearance against reality: "Pasméme, quedé suspenso cuando vi que los pastores eran los lobos y que despedazaban el Ganado los mismos que le habían de guardar" (2: 311). What follows is a clear allusion to what will later be highlighted by prophetic verses revealed by Cañizares. Berganza comments: "Quién podrá remediar esta maldad? ¿Quién será poderoso a dar a entender que la defensa ofende, que las centinelas duermen, que la confianza roba y el que os guarda os mata"? It is also interesting to notice how Cervantes uses the dog to exult, by contrast, the quality that Montaigne detected as most important and most lacking in man's character: humility. Berganza's words could easily have been plucked out Montaigne's "Apologie": "digo que ya tú sabes que la humildad es la base y fundamento de de todas las virtudes, y que sin ellas no hay alguna que lo sea" (2: 312).

around to narrating his experiences with Cañizares, he does so with the implication that these events can justify the mystery of their sudden ability to talk. He also alludes to the fact that, as a master knower and storyteller, the choice of withholding information until now was a conscious, deliberate one: "Esto que ahora quiero contar te lo había de haber dicho al principio de mi cuento, y así excusáramos la admiración que nos causó el vernos con habla" (2: 336). Berganza's statement suggests a solution, albeit a problematic one, to one of the epistemological challenges of the "Coloquio," but as it will be revealed, this possibility cannot easily be embraced, as it also relies on an unstable epistemic foundation.

Cañizares' introduction is loud and forceful, as she literally screams her way into the text by denying her involvement with witchcraft. The reader is soon invited into her world of dissimulation, for she will spend considerable time recounting to Berganza her involvement with learning and practicing *brujería*. Her reliability, therefore, is immediately challenged by the antithesis comprehended in her public persona and her private behavior. Moreover, it is imperative to notice how she also manages to apprehend Berganza's curiosity, like Campuzano with Peralta and Berganza himself with Cipión, by promising to narrate him a story. Her style will prove to be designed both to captivate and confuse her listener. Cañizares shares a master-teller status within the series of frames that form the "Coloquio." Yet, while Campuzano and Berganza are rightful speakers within their conversations with Peralta and Cipión, Cañizares' deliberations always appear within quotation marks. Campuzano (or Cervantes) may be using the *sermocinatio* to remind his reader that, though she appears to be a *real*, present speaker, all we really know about Cañizares we have learned through Berganza's grotesquely detailed depiction

and tactically manipulated account.[45] Again, Cervantes asserts his ultimate authority as supreme holder of knowledge only he may have. It is critical that the one character within the "Coloquio" who is supposed to hold the only offered justification for the dogs' sudden ability to reason – Cañizares – is the most ephemeral and the one who sits the farthest away from her ultimate creator. Cañizares may, after all, be the product of Berganza's imagination, whose existence and talking ability may be the product of Campuzano's imagination, who himself is a product of Cervantes' imagination, whose fiction becomes a dynamic presence in our imagination. It is also conspicuous that the most direct commentary on God's omnipotence found in the text should come from Cañizares, a devil-friendly witch whose very existence seems to rely on the words of a perhaps illusory talking dog. The epistemic chaos of the "Coloquio" is hence further complicated.

Returning to his narration and despite his physical aversion to her appearance, Berganza falls prey to the seductive power of a promised story and ends up alone with Cañizares in her cell. She reveals Camacha's ultimate responsibility for the fact that Berganza (and possibly Cipión) has lost his presumed human form, and shares the lines that Camacha used to prophesize, at the time of her death, the dogs' return to their human forms:

> [Los cachorros] volverían a su ser cuando menos pensasen; mas que no podía ser primero que ellos por sus mismos ojos viesen lo siguiente:
>
> Volverán en su forma verdadera
>
> Cuando vieren con presta diligencia
>
> Derribar los soberbios levantados,
>
> y alzar a los humildes abatidos

[45] Clamurro also associates Berganza's employment of the *semocinatio* with a technique of epistemic destabilization: "Each level of remove ought to alert us to a greater degree of unreliability of authoritative ambiguity (275). See 273-276.

por poderosa mano para hacello. (2: 338)

The reader of the "Coloquio" is hence asked to consider the meaning of some suspicious words that were supposedly uttered by a vengeful and deceiving sorcerer to a couple of no less rancorous and deceitful, devil-cavorting witches; or so does a story-telling talking dog claim. Cervantes seems to be interested in extracting the last filament from this apparently ever-lasting narrative thread that, albeit visible through words, demands to be characterized as intangible and illusory. The seemingly solid frames of the "Coloquio" offer a reminder of their insubstantiality and of the reader's inability to know. The reader, in fact, cannot know, and should not know. Her job is to apprehend the vastness of a creative effort and hold it far from any dogmatic explanation. The "Coloquio," in this way, is a Montaignian exercise in humility for a reader who is faced with a greater creative power.

Surprisingly, Cañizares' advice for Berganza on how to respond to Camacha's revelation invokes not the devil – whose art may have come to play a role in Berganza's condition as a dog – but God. She suggests: "Lo que has de hacer, hijo, es encomendarte a Dios allá en tu corazón, y espera que éstas, que no quiero llamarlas profecías, sino adivinanzas, han de suceder presto y prósperamente; que pues la buena Camacha las dijo, sucederán sin duda alguna, y tú y tu hermano, si es vivo, os veréis como deseáis" (2: 339).[46]

Taking into consideration Cañizares' untrustworthiness, her allusion to Camacha as *buena* can only be taken ironically. After all, Camacha is putatively responsible for the dogs' canine condition, a responsibility which she did not accept until her dying hour and which, if true, points to her vindictive and rancorous character. Ultimately, her words may be a product of Cañizares' storytelling skills and savvy imagination. In either case, the reader is asked to

[46] For a discussion about the "Coloquio" as a commentary on Satan's role in seventeenth-century religious mentality and as a hermetic challenge against the Church's definition of faith, see Lewis-Smith, "Circean Apocalypse."

consider two things: the possible meaning of the prophecy, whatever its origin may be, and the fact that Cañizares voluntarily and privately urges Berganza to rely on God, which may be characterized as an odd attitude coming from a self-professed ally of the devil.[47] These two considerations are obviously not unrelated, particularly if one contemplates the meaning of the prophecy from a social angle. Given all the injustice and social disarray depicted in Berganza's picaresque narrative, one could reasonably assume that the "mano poderosa" to which the Camacha refers is that of God, since no political or order-establishing entity could have repaired the moral disintegration of the society experienced by Berganza.

If seen from the perspective of the maker's knowledge argument, "mano poderosa" could signify the very hand that writes and hence creates these unjust worlds. In a text that accommodates so many layers of master creators and that invites so many questions as to the nature of authenticity and authorship, one perceives a series of relatively powerful hands, all of which can influence the final overall product. In infusing so much uncertainty into each of his co-creators' creations, Cervantes seems to be sharing the burden of responsibility for the final outcome, and yet, his absolute knowledge is, perhaps, the only knowledge that can withstand scrutiny. Within this atmosphere of epistemic volatility one finds reason to wonder whether or not the verses are indeed by Camacha, or whether they are a premeditated storytelling device of Cañizares or Berganza. After all, while Cañizares is about to articulate an idea of God as the ultimate knower, it is Berganza who has been nearly imperceptibly anticipating the words Cañizares would eventually reveal. While relating the episode of the deceitful shepherds Berganza ponders: "[P]areciéndome ser propio y natural oficio de los perros guardar, que es obra

[47] Forcione sees the encounter of Berganza and Cañizares, and particularly the shared verses with all their inconclusiveness, as an "aborted anagnorisis [which] should be seen as an inversion of the traditional conclusion of romance, where plots generally develop through conflict and disorder toward some climatic struggle or revelation, which restores all usurped identities, resolves all tensions, and establishes an order that is pleasurable to the reader" (43).

donde se encierra una virtud grande, *como es amparar y defender de los poderosos y soberbios los humildes y los que poco pueden*" (2: 305, emphasis added).[48] Berganza's willingness to incorporate the very lexicon employed by Camacha in *her* lines may point to either how deep an impact those words had on him, or to the fact that the words are, in fact, the product of *his* storytelling-slick imagination. Again, the reader is not meant to know.

Cañizares' multifaceted theological deliberation is conspicuous in many ways, and particularly so since it comes after a detailed description of all the evils encompassed by witchcraft. Her blend of theology, curiously, aims both at instilling doctrinal knowledge and inspiring appreciation for God's overwhelming might. It also highlights Huarte's and Montaigne's views that the exercise of free will is intrinsically tied to the workings of the imagination since, as Cañizares is about to recognize, all her frolicking with the devil may not exist beyond her mind. While reaffirming Justus Lipsius' neo-Stoic view that through free will one has the option to behave in sin within the great, benevolent scheme designed by God, she also states, as Lipsius did, that no acts can be committed without God's ultimate approval: "Y lo que más le importa [al diablo] es hacer que nosotras cometamos a cada paso tan cruel y perverso pecado; y todo esto lo permite Dios por nuestros pecados, que sin su permisión, yo he visto por experiencia que no puede ofender el Diablo a una hormiga" (2: 341).[49] Cañizares, perhaps in an

[48] Forcione also notices a recurrence of "fragmentary hints concerning the existence of the dogs," but does not link them directly to the genesis of Camacha's verses. He believes that these hints imply "the presence of a horrible secret lurking behind it, and the distinct possibilities of witchcraft metamorphosis, and demonic possession, as well as through repeated adumbrations of a climatic revelation, Cervantes has by the midpoint of his narrative created a plot and sustained its development while allowing the episodes and commentary to burgeon with no apparent confining shape or limitation" (40).

[49] This allusion to neo-Stoicism and possibly to Lipsius' thought in particular is a testament to Cervantes' deep commitment to the humanist agenda. Lipsius affirms: "[We] do both allow Fate and Destiny, and also join hands with liberty or freedom of will… Is there fate? Yes. But it is the first and principal cause, which is so far from taking away the middle and the secondary causes that, ordinarily and for the most part, it works not by them; and your will is among the number of those secondary causes, think not that God forces it or wholly takes it away. For God that created all things uses the same without any corruption of them" (*On Constancy* 69). Cañizares allusion to neo-Stoicism and the thought of Lipsius does not end there. In the next page she refers to "males de daño" and "males de culpa", which again relate to Lipsius' idea of principal and secondary causes. Forcione connects this episode to the

attempt to gain credibility, takes responsibility for her acts, for her spiritual and moral weakness, and for her lack of faith, while recognizing that even her acts fall within the greater design imagined by God. Her astonishing conclusion is that His is the absolute maker's knowledge of the universe.[50] Yet, if one pauses to consider her words within the juxtaposed frames observed in the "Coloquio," one is forced to see that Cañizares' idea of God is, in fact, also framed and encapsulated within Berganza's, Campuzano's, and Cervantes' creation. God's authenticity is made questionable by the unreliability of his describer. Like one mirror reflecting another, the "Coloquio" keeps superimposing a sequence of potentially insubstantial realities that themselves deny epistemic assurances.

Despite her willingness to acknowledge God's omnipotent status, Cañizares' deceitful conduct invites skepticism. She too is a manipulative creator of appearances and, as her conversation with Berganza may show, of narratives as well. She has confessed to have engaged in dissimulative behavior – "rezo poco y en público; murmuro mucho y en secreto; vame mejor con ser hipócrita que con ser pecadora declarada" (2: 340) – and to have a panoramic understanding of her moral and spiritual weakness, a weakness in which she has agency and which she fully embraces. She says: "Yo tengo una destas almas que te he pintado: *todo lo veo y todo lo entiendo*, y como el deleite me tiene echados grillos a la voluntad, siempre he sido y seré mala" (2: 342, emphasis added). Cañizares is, therefore, calling attention to the fact that despite, or perhaps because of, her wretchedness and decrepitude, she is also inclined to assert her maker's knowledge. She sees it all and understands it all; being "mala" represents, like the narrative she offers Berganza, an assertion of agency and free will, which rescues her from

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thought of Pedro de Rivadeneira, and comments that "whether the result of man's sinfulness or the natural infirmities and catastrophes to which he is heir, [man's miseries] are somehow necessary ingredients in the highest good to which he can aspire and are part of an ultimate benevolent providential design" (63).

[50] Nerlich makes the interesting observation that "Cañizares is the only figure in this *Coloquio* that speaks respectfully and with veneration of God," which further confuses Berganza and us, the external readers (296).

ultimate powerlessness. David Boruchoff also remarks on the relationship between the imaginative faculty and free will, and on how the exercise of free will can enhance one's sense of autonomy:

> This is the essence of free will or, more properly, free choice (*liberum arbitrium*, *libre albedrío*), an imperative that consists in the capacity of all human beings to distinguish and, therefore, choose between right and wrong, and also in the power to act upon this decision. This conjointly intellectual and moral agency, which theologians like Thomas Aquinas called *potestas rationalis et voluntatis*, and without which there would be neither error nor sin, is at the core of the Catholic understanding of salvation. (377)[51]

Cañizares therefore narrates, as others have before her, to create and affirm her status as an autonomous master knower. She chooses the elements of her fiction as she does the elements of her actions and faith and, paradoxically, recognizes God's laws while opting to sin. Through her maker's knowledge, which she applies equally to the narrative creation she delivers to Berganza and to the narrative of her own life, she compounds the epistemic challenge articulated in the text. As perhaps a fictional product of Berganza's master narrative, Cañizares contributes both toward solidifying and further destabilizing his tale, just as Berganza does to Campuzano's story and Campuzano ultimately to Cervantes' creation.

This scenario is, again, further confused by the fact that Cañizares resurrects the question of the imagination's role within the construction of reality. Accepting her own *maldad* and her devil-enforced addiction to pleasure, she invokes the science of *tropelía* and holds on to the idea of being a witch while considering that the sensorial benefits of witchcraft, and perhaps

[51] Boruchoff comments further on the relationship between Cañizares' and free will, and the inclination to sin. See 387-389.

witchcraft itself, may be a product of the imaginary faculty.[52] In a statement that could have been uttered by either Montaigne or Huarte, Cañizares reveals:

> Hay opinión que no vamos a estos convites sino con la fantasía en la cual nos representa el demonio las imágenes de todas aquellas cosas que después contamos que nos han sucedido. Otros dicen que no, sino que verdaderamente vamos en cuerpo y en ánima; y entrambas opiniones no sabemos cuándo vamos de una o de otra manera, porque todo lo que nos pasa en la fantasía es tan intensamente que no hay diferenciarlo de cuando vamos real y verdaderamente. (2: 340)

The fiction created in the imagination, she maintains, is difficult to tell from external reality, its pleasures and delights being all too *real* to the senses. Later on she will provide a more finely tuned version of the same thought, in which she reiterates the invisible line between reality and fantasy, and further suggests that the fruits of fantasy are even more delightful than those of reality: "[Q]uiero decir que aunque los gustos que nos da el demonio son aparentes y falsos, todavía nos parecen gustos, y el deleite mucho mayor es imaginado que gozado, aunque en los verdaderos gustos debe de ser al contrario" (2: 343). When examined in the context of narrative fiction and the maker's knowledge argument, Cañizares' elucidation may once more highlight the connection between the power to create, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the knowledge that only one has of her creation, and the self-indulging delight that such creation can bring its creator and those who witness it. No real-life story can match in interest and complexity the structural excellence of a well conceived tale; no reward gained from a real-life

[52] "[S]é que eres persona racional y te veo en semejanza de perro, si ya no es que esto se hace con aquella ciencia que llaman *tropelía*, que hace parecer una cosa con otra" (2: 337). In commenting about Cañizares' awareness of the power of the imagination to influence one's conception of reality, Clamurro concludes that "the significant issue here for Berganza and for us as readers is that what Cañizares' voice, within Berganza's voice, within Campuzano's text achieves is both the forward motion of the tale and also the further underscoring of an acutely metafictional self-consciousness. Cañizares and her statement participate, on the deepest level, in the deliberate questioning of the problematic elusiveness of fiction that lies at the heart of the larger, encompassing text" (277).

experience can match the gratification achieved through fantasy. From this perspective, Cervantes seems to be utilizing each one of his embedded narratives to celebrate his craft, to delight himself in his creation, and to proclaim the power and joy of his maker's knowledge. The reader cannot avoid smiling at Berganza's rhetorical queries about Cañizares' nature and awareness: "¿Quién hizo a esta mala vieja tan discreta y tan mala? ¿De dónde sabe ella cuáles son males de daño y cuáles de culpa? ¿Cómo entiende y habla tanto de Dios y obra tanto del diablo? ¿Cómo peca tan de malicia no escusándose con ignorancia?" (2: 344).[53] The fact that Berganza asks these questions of his own narrative creation – for we the readers can only experience Cañizares as a narrative effort of Berganza – obscures the fact that only the ultimate creator can have full knowledge of his creation. Cervantes hence engages in an indirect communication with his own character and his character's character, and through them with the reader, and reminds all of us that perhaps only he knows, because absolute knowledge is reserved to him alone, as the ultimate conjurer of this imaginative venture.

Cipión's attempt at halting a freefall into the epistemic abyss presented by Berganza does little more than reinforce the crisis of knowledge in question:

> Todas estas cosas y las semejantes son embelecos, mentiras o apariencias del demonio; y si a nosotros nos parece ahora que tenemos algún entendimiento y razón, pues hablamos siendo verdaderamente perros, o estando en su figura, ya hemos dicho que éste es caso portentoso y jamás visto, y que aunque le tocamos con las manos, no le habemos de dar crédito hasta tanto que el suceso dél nos muestre lo que conviene que creamos. (2: 346)

Although he seems, paradoxically, to advocate both for a suspension of judgment and a dogmatic epistemology, Cipión also questions the very tools the dogs have to attain such posture

[53] For an exhaustive analysis of how Cañizares' fits within the perennial Christian concern of the balance between good and evil, see Forcione 59-99; for a particular elucidation about how her attitude toward the devil intersects with the doctrine of providential evil, see particularly 68-69.

as he engages skepticism to challenge the nature of their experience. In suggesting that now they only *seem* to be able to reason ("si a nosotros nos *parece* ahora que tenemos algún entendimiento y razón") he, again, makes any hope of moderating this epistemic crisis seem groundless. His subsequent exegesis of Camacha's words points to the impossibility of attaching a fixed meaning to any proposition. If interpreted literally, he concludes, her lines are no more veracious than stories used to entertain during cold winter nights: "Considera en cuán vanas cosas y en cuán tontos puntos dijo la Camacha que consistía nuestra restauración; y aquellas que a ti te deben parecer profecías no son sino palabras de consejas o cuentos de viejas como aquellos del caballo sin cabeza y de la varilla de virtudes, con que se entretienen al fuego las dilatadas noches de invierno" (2: 346). If interpreted allegorically, on the other hand, her words continue to have no validity for, as Cipión explains, both dogs have already witnessed the impact of destiny's positive and negative swings in their lives and they are still dogs nonetheless.[54] Cipión concludes in frustration: "la Camacha fue burladora falsa, y la Cañizares embustera, y la Montiela tonta, maliciosa y bellaca, con perdón sea dicho, de entrambos o tuya, que yo no la quiero por madre" (2: 347).

Whether interpreted literally or allegorically, her words fail to convey a verifiable truth, and fail, not surprisingly, to bring the epistemic volatility of the text to rest. Cipión, in an attempt to escape the insubstantiality of this epistemic endeavor settles for a banal but very tangible interpretation: "el verdadero sentido es un juego de bolos" (2: 347).[55] One perceives here an

[54] "[P]aréceme que quiere decir que cobraremos nuestra forma cuando viéremos que los que ayer estaban en la cumbre de la rueda de fortuna, hoy están hollados y abatidos . . . Y asimismo, cuando viéremos que otros que no ha dos horas que no tenían deste mundo otra parte que servir en él de número que acrecentase el de las gentes, y ahora están tan encumbrados sobre la buena dicha que los perdemos de vista . . . Y si en esto consistiera volver nosotros a la forma que dices, ya lo hemos visto y lo vemos a cada paso" (II 346-347).

[55] Nerlich associates the "jugo de bolos" with an "accidental nature of events in (Berganza's) life," and concludes by asking "what does the acknowledgement of chance signify as a structuring and, thereby, ordering principle, if not, *de facto*, the negation of a divine will?" (297). Clamurro, on the other hand, sees a parallel between the "juego de bolos" in the "Coloquio" and the "mesa de trucos" mentioned in the prologue to the collection. He finds that "[t]he

attempt to accept the fact that knowledge through reason is unattainable, and to adapt to a mode of existence that takes into consideration man's (or dog's) fallibility and that ensures, in spite of doubt and exasperation, that life progresses. Berganza's reply seems to echo this sentiment, as he evokes a common place within Western intellectual tradition: the motif of life as a dream. In doing so, Berganza reflects, albeit indirectly, Cañizares' impression that the joys of fantasy are greater than those of *real* life: "de lo que has dicho vengo a pensar y creer en todo lo que hasta aquí hemos pasado y lo que estamos pasando es sueño, y que somos perros; pero no por esto dejemos de gozar deste bien de la habla que tenemos y de la excelencia tan grande de tener discurso humano todo el tiempo que pudiéramos" (2: 347). Like Cipión, Berganza also seems ready to compromise and to live life as a dream while fully enjoying the level of pleasure that only dreams and the imagination can provide. One of these pleasures may be that of being able to conceive and tell stories, for after all this profound deliberation he slips effortlessly into narration mode and continues, apparently unperturbed by the discrepancies between dream and reality, to chronicle his adventures as a *pícaro* dog. Berganza may have instinctively learned to hold off judgment and move on.[56]

The "Coloquio" simulates skeptical thought and attitudes and highlights the subtle divide between external reality and the products of the imagination. As a result, all that is momentarily posited, all epistemic stability that is fleetingly gained is also upheld by the insubstantiality of unreliable narrators. It can be argued that Cervantes' momentary motion toward expressing a Montaignian type of fideism takes place within this intended epistemic fluctuation. Cañizares' recognition of God's supreme power and her advice to Berganza that he surrender to God's plan

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two allusions . . . share the principle of recreation and the idea of the game as a place and an activity set aside from, and yet within, society's routine and vital demands" (282).

[56] In his "Apologie" Montaigne acknowledges that "[we] have done right to emphasize our imaginative powers: all our goods exist only in a dream" (54). He also affirms the notion that "[t]hose who have compared our lives to a dream are right – perhaps more right than they realized" (180).

can only be analyzed based on who she appears to be within the epistemic volatility of the text. From this perspective, Cervantes' articulation of fideism, unlike Montaigne's, prevents even God's power from enjoying a place of unquestionable veracity. Whether this is evidence of Cervantes asserting a supreme maker's knowledge of his fictional universe, we cannot know. What we do *know* is that when all accounts have been given and all questions have remained unanswered and unanswerable, it is Cervantes' voice that seems to endure through the crisis depicted in the "Coloquio."

At the end, when but one layer of the imaginative strata is left to be unfolded, Peralta refuses to attach any truthfulness to Campuzano's account, and as Campuzano refuses to assent one way or another to Peralta's judgment, therefore avoiding making a dogmatic proclamation as to the nature of his tale, the "Coloquio" destroys the reader's hopes for epistemic solidity. Not unlike Montaigne's "Apologie," the "Coloquio" makes a strong case for Pyrrhonian skepticism and for the suspension of judgment. Like Berganza and Cipión, Peralta and Campuzano put aside their epistemic difficulties and set out to enjoy the simple pleasures the life of a fallible, ignorant, and delusional creature can offer.

In a way that is most pertinent to the epistemic crisis observed in the "Coloquio," David Hume (1711-1776) describes a Pyrrhonian as needing to "acknowledge, if he will acknowledge anything, that all human life must perish, were his principles universally and steadily to prevail. All discourse, all action would immediately cease; and men remain in a total lethargy, till the necessities of nature, unsatisfied, put an end to their miserable existence." He adds:

> [S]o fatal an event is very little to be dreaded. Nature is always too strong for principle. . . . When [a Pyrrhonian] awakes from his dream, he will be the first to join in the laugh against himself, and to confess, that all his objections are mere amusements, and can have

> no other tendency than to show the whimsical condition of mankind, who must act and reason and believe. (Burnyeat 117)[57]

One feels very tempted to assign to Cervantes the final laugh, if indeed the "Coloquio" can be construed as the Pyrrhonian dream of a good-natured storytelling philosopher. But the ultimate pain and darkness nested just underneath its chaotic epistemic surface, even if itself contained in a world of imaginary creations and self-serving storytellers, can hardly be overlooked. As with all truths that cannot be fully apprehended, the "Coloquio" evades a final dogmatic characterization. It rests with each reader the choice to resist or bow to its whimsical might.

[57] From *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sec. XII, 128.

CHAPTER FOUR

Skepticism, *Eutrapelia*, and the Erring Exemplar: Cues and Questions in the "Prólogo al lector"

The subject of exemplarity lies at the very core of the early modern intellectual sphere as Renaissance humanists shaped and reflected their ideals concerning the individual and society from lessons observed in ancient exemplars. While ancient cultural tradition provided a steady stream of exemplary individuals whose characters and deeds could be contemplated and imitated within the wide spectrum of the humanist agenda, it was within the creative laboratory of early modern literature that exemplarity came to both embody and question the universal applicability of ancient models. The revival of skepticism and the development of skeptical attitudes toward established conventions, themselves products of the humanist fixation on finding in the past a guide to answering contemporary questions, came to highlight the epistemological challenges that these very ancient models were, to some extent, called upon to moderate. Exemplarity, as can be clearly observed in works by Western European early modern authors, and particularly so in Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and *Novelas ejemplares*, ceases to be a reliable moral and poetic guide and becomes one more contestable, experimental canvas on which to exert authorial autonomy and reshape the relationship between past and present, reader and text.[1]

A useful point of departure is to look at seventeenth-century definitions of exemplarity. John Lyons, remarking on the definition of "example" offered by the *Diccionaire de l'Academie* (1694), asserts that "[a] thoughtful reading of late Renaissance texts that use examples leads one to doubt the usefulness of the rough-and-ready dictionary

[1] See Lyons, *Exemplum*, and Hampton.

definitions that are current and to reject the solution offered by a reduction of example to a narrow pragmatics" (*Exemplum* 25).[2] Sebastián de Covarrubias' definition found in *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611), when compared to the definition by the *Academie*, seems to be more subjective and to rely more heavily on moral and ethical judgment. For this reason, Covarrubias' definition appears to be broader and to hint at the fact that, at least for some seventeenth-century thinkers, exemplarity encompasses more than a mere reference to precise models. It is in fact connected not only to one's ability to exemplify but also to the observer's ability to assimilate and interpret exemplarity. Covarrubias defines "exemplo" in the following manner:

> Absolutamente exemplo se toma en buena parte; pero dezimos dar mal exemplo. Exemplo, la comparación que traemos de una cosa, para apoyar otra. Exemplo, lo que se copia de un libro, o pintura. Y exemplar, el original. Hombre exemplar, el que vive bien, y da buen exemplo a los demás. Dexemplar a uno, vale deshonrarle en lengua aldeana. Estar dexemplado, estar infamado. Exemplificar, traer exemplos para declarar mejor alguna cosa. (391)

"Example" then, as defined in early seventeenth-century Spain, comprises that which should serve as a positive model and from which simulacra could rightly derive. It can be manifested in action and judgment as well as in the aesthetic characteristics of objects. It can,

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[2] Lyons attempts to bridge the gap between the actual articulation of exemplarity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works and contemporary dictionary definitions by naming seven distinct categories that address different aspects of exemplarity, and which he deems useful in fostering a more profound understanding of the complexities of the topic. See 25-34. See the "Introduction" for an exposition of the evolution of exemplarity from ancient times to the Renaissance. The definition provided by the *Academie* goes as follows: "That which is worthy of being put forth to be imitated or to be avoided . . . . It is also said of a thing which is similar to the matter at hand and which serves to authorize it, to confirm it. . . . *You say that that was done in the past, I maintain that it is new, that there are not, that there never have been examples. That is without example. Give me an example of it. I will find you a hundred examples in history. You say that that way of speaking is proper; then give me examples taken from good authors. I am supported by examples*" (Lyons, *Exemplum* 15).

in spite of its "absolutely" positive nature, be simulated negatively, that is, by serving as a model for that which should be avoided and not duplicated. The moral connotation of the example, exemplar and, by extension, exemplarity, cannot be overlooked in Covarrubias' definition: to be deemed as an anti-example (or "dexemplado") was equivalent to being stripped of one's honor. Whether or not the moral overtones of Covarrubias' definition reflect a Spanish obsession with honor and morality, Cervantes clearly associates exemplarity with these issues in his "Prólogo al lector." In fact, when Cervantes opts for presenting his collection as exemplary, he is perfectly aware of the instant association he invokes between his text and an ancient and ever-evolving tradition of persuasion through exemplarity and rhetorical excellence. He also entertains the skeptical view that assertions of honor and morality are no longer statically situated within an epistemic frame of pre-conceived values and readily accepted truths. This skeptical attitude, already profoundly noted in the preceding chapters, is unavoidably articulated in the prologue where, through questioning and redefinition, it will reposition the notion of exemplarity within the new paradigm created by skeptical ideas. Yet, within the traditional dialogue between new and old, author and reader, the concept of exemplarity does not need to be explicitly stated in order to be perceived and internalized.[3] Don Quijote, Cervantes' protagonist who most vividly embodies the essence of emulation and most poignantly highlights the difficulties and complexities of exemplarity, is never labeled in the title of the novel as an exemplar per se. Exemplarity to Cervantes seems

[3] Américo Castro remarks: "Me interesa, ante todo, la clamorosa pretensión de moralidad en las *Novelas ejemplares*. . . . Cervantes quiso escribir de forma grata a la sociedad de mayor rango en tiempos de Felipe III, según hacen ver el tono del prólogo y de las aprobaciones al frente de la obra" (460). He adds: "Pero si la doctrina moral integra la totalidad de las doce novelas y de la consciencia del novelista, ¿a qué llamar tanto la atención sobre ello? . . . En el caso de Cervantes hemos de poner el acento, más que en las obras (que no pienso sean inmorales), en el modo en que el autor sienta el valor y la eficacia social de la ejemplaridad" (*Hacia Cervantes* 461). Previously, in *El Pensamiento de Cervantes*, Castro expressed a similar view in regard to Cervantes' claims to exemplarity through an articulation of proper Catholic conduct. Those claims caused Castro to label the author as an "hábil hipócrita" who ought to be "leído e interpretado con suma reserva en asuntos que afecten a la religión y a la moral oficiales" (*248*).

to be a three-directional beam that shines on traditions inherited from the past and on crucial epistemological questions of the present, as it suggests a new, less dogmatic system of perceiving and communicating reality for the future. Within this new epistemology Cervantes' fiction succeeds in both honoring and confronting conventional models.

Lyons reminds us that during the early modern period "humanist thought throve on example," which retroactively earned it the characterization of the "age of exemplarity." More precisely, he explains how and why the humanist venture found in example such a constructive way to approach the agenda of personal and societal reform: "Example is textual, in keeping with the humanist emphasis on philology. Example is historical and thus suited those who wanted to recover the wisdom of antiquity. Example could be conceived as a tool of practical social change, as a guide to action, in keeping with the strong moral purpose of many early humanists" (*Exemplum* 12). Lyons substantiates this assessment with an elaboration on how thinkers and authors like Erasmus and Juan Luis Vives, in embracing the classical view that poetry (or literature, more pertinently) was an efficient way of transmitting moral messages, came to both uphold ancient tradition and broaden the definition of example in the way they resorted to *exemplifying* in their writings.[4] Erasmus, as Lyons asserts, is keenly aware of the overabundance of examples available in the corpus of the literary tradition, and from this awareness and the wish to resolve the problem of selecting among the many applicable examples, comes to pragmatically redefine exemplarity as a process of selection rather than as a mere act of citing examples.[5] Lyons explains:

[4] "The emphasis on proposing models of conduct is a consequence of the general moral outlook of many humanists, summarized recently as 'the belief in the importance of the active life and the conviction that we are best persuaded to ethical praxis by the rhetorical practice of literature'" (Lyons, *Exemplum* 13).

[5] Lyons traces the evolution and manifestation of this particular view of exemplarity – that is, one that emphasizes the selection process among a nearly infinite number of examples – as the main force shaping exemplarity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe. He analyses Machiavelli, Marguerite of Navarre, Montaigne,

> The Erasmian selection is not based on the quality of the conduct contained in the example but on the quality of the textual *res* and *verba* as they – separately or together as the occasion arises – offer themselves as useful to the writer. . . . Despite Erasmus's undeniable emphasis on the moral and religious utility of the act of writing, this emphasis does not provide the key to the selection of material. Instead the "striking" or "outstanding" [desired quality of the example], an aesthetic-rhetorical criterion, is for Erasmus the criterion for selecting in the gathering of *copia*. An example of good conduct that is not striking would be of no use, for example is not a moral concept but a discursive one. It is not conduct per se but the embodiment of conduct in an unusually noticeable form that lends itself to the needs of the writer or speaker. (*Exemplum* 18)

In highlighting the fact that for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thinkers example, and hence exemplarity, transcends the boundaries of pure morality and becomes tangled with the tensions and complexities embedded in discursive narrative, Lyons opens the way to a contemplation of exemplarity that involves the doubt and contingency implied in skepticism. Narrative, as perfectly observed in Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares*, provides a stable epistemic platform that easily sustains examples. Yet it can also present an environment of epistemic instability that allows these examples to be tainted by the uncertainties that only a dogmatic code of signification could attempt to disguise. If all that has been argued up to this point in regard to the sustained and intended epistemic instability of the *Novelas* is to be taken seriously, then one ought to anticipate from Lyons' assessment that Cervantes' type of exemplarity is going to be one that, perhaps like Erasmus', embraces difference and ambiguity

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Descartes, Pascal, and Lafayette as exponents of this new approach to exemplarity. Cervantes, as I will argue, fully belongs with them.

and exemplifies more by conjecture than by dogmatic assertion. If indeed Cervantes approaches exemplarity with renewed, skeptical eyes, and if this newly conceived approach also relies on selecting or highlighting through creative expression the "striking" and "outstanding" nature of the exemplar, then Cervantes' characters should either embody or visibly lack these characteristics, as to more effectively serve as communicators and educators to the reading public. Yet, the very fact that exemplarity depends on nuances of the hermeneutic process in order to be fully communicated and assimilated points to a dangerous set of contingencies, which as Covarrubias seems to realize, may result in a positive example being perceived as a negative one, or vice versa. Cervantes' engagement with exemplarity seems to reflect his willingness to experiment with contingency, plurality, and skepticism, as his protagonists demonstrate. The risk of selecting or creating an exemplar that can be misunderstood is very much alive in Cervantes' mind. He not only voices this concern in his prologue but also tries, whether ironically or not, to exonerate himself from any possible criticism he may encounter on such basis. Cervantes recognizes, perhaps better than any of his readers, that the crisis of signification brought about by skepticism has to affect the interpretation and acceptance of prescribed models. The very definition of model or exemplar becomes, under the liberating weight of skepticism, an intangible, nearly inapprehensible concept.

Critics have commented amply on the fact that exemplarity acquired a distinct complexion during Early Modernity.[6] They have not, however, explicitly articulated the relationship between what has been referred to as an early modern crisis of exemplarity and the recovery of ancient Pyrrhonian skepticism. Karlheinz Stierle, who has explained the new exemplarity in terms of its dynamic relationship to plurality and contingency, views the

[6] I refer in particular to Hampton, Cornilliat, Stierle, Scham, and Rigolot.

exemplarity of Cervantes' *Novelas* as an exponent of particular "moments in the crisis of exemplarity," a crisis that he delineates through a discussion of the development of *exempla* from Boccaccio and Petrarch to Montaigne and Cervantes. While recognizing that "there has always been . . . the possibility of questioning the exemplary truth of the *exemplum* by opposing it to a never-ending wealth of counter-examples" (580), Stierle proposes that the shift in the essence of exemplarity resides in that "the correlation between *sententia* and *exemplum* was transformed into a more complex relation between moral reflection and particular case" (580). This assessment, while based partly on an analysis of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, is instrumental in contextualizing the problematic, sometimes distressing conclusions of Cervantes' *Novelas*.[7] In an intellectual environment in which the pull of skepticism is so overwhelmingly evident, it is not surprising to find the *truth* or validity of the *exemplum* being systematically challenged. When the very axes upon which exemplarity rests are loosened, the process of affixing meaning to the exemplum – be it through personal bias or need, or hermeneutic dexterity – becomes less direct and predictable and more reliant on conjecture, interpretation, and approximation. The process also becomes a shared and yet unpredictable exchange between author and reader. [8] In other

[7]Stierle comments on how Boccaccio and Petrarch "are the first to reflect, each in his own way, the beginning of a crisis of exemplarity" (583). Hence, they become the first to challenge the tendency to recognize unity and equality as integral parts of a system of exemplarity. This crisis, according to Stierle, finds its culmination in Montaigne and its further exacerbation in Cervantes. Stierle argues that Boccaccio´s *novella* "is a form of rewriting in the mode of retelling, thus bringing an elementary narration to higher complexity. Each of the 'vari casi,' mostly of love-affairs, is a confrontation of exemplarity and contingency. It is the power of contingency or *fortuna* that brings forth the specific particularity of each *novella*" (582). Later on he will add that "because there is an ambiguity between contingency and sense, the exemplary status of each story is, ironically, placed in question. Contingency overcomes exemplarity; however, it never triumphs definitely" (582). Stierle recognizes that Petrarch´s use of *exemplum* greatly diverges from that of Boccaccio: "Petrarch's use of the *exemplum* form seems to be quite the opposite of Boccaccio's. If in Boccaccio the crisis of exemplarity becomes evident in his shift from *exemplum* to novella, Petrarch, in his great letter of justification for his over abundant use of *exempla* (letter to Giovanni Colonna, *Familiares* 4: 4), seems to follow a traditional model of *exemplum*, that of the *exempla majorum*, the examples of the ancestors. . . . For Petrarch, exemplarity exists as a chain of testimonies through time. The abundance of *exempla* in Petrarch does not just mean diversity. It creates a coherent exemplary history which is the horizon of Petrarch's intellectual identity" (583). Stierle also posits that "Petrarch, even more hesitating and uncertain of himself than Augustine, needs *exempla* of virtue to give a shape to his ever-vacillating existence" (584).

[8] The idea of exemplariness being a product of a joint venture between author and reader is the basis of Spadaccini's and Talens' analysis of exemplarity in Cervantes. They state: "The burden of shaping or harvesting the 'provecho'

words, by focusing on the word truth, and taking into consideration the impossibility of its actuality as conveyed in skepticism, Cervantes' simultaneous construction and deconstruction of exemplarity find not only a philosophical tradition in which to anchor themselves but also a literary practice from which to diverge. Stierle reflects that the presence of these unstable, perhaps contradictory elements within the text does not challenge the idea of exemplarity itself: "The validity of the *exemplum* as a rhetorical form of narration that tends towards its own conceptual or ideological structure has an anthropological basis. It presupposes that over time, there is more analogy in human experience than diversity, or that in all situation of civil or political life the pole of equality is stronger than that of difference" (580). Yet he argues that contingency and plurality have infiltrated the realm of exemplarity deeply enough in early modern Europe (and in my opinion, due to the influence of skepticism) to challenge the presupposition of an overwhelmingly analogical human experience.

The implication of an anthropological basis for the unfixed nature of this new paradigm in exemplarity, as offered by Stierle, is that exemplarity can be stabilized by shared experience and, perhaps, by shared ideology. Cervantes must have counted on this presupposed "pole of equality" when he declared his *novelas* to be exemplary, despite their great thematic and generic richness and tendency to elude dogmatic interpretations. Yet he does not neglect to recognize, by means of proleptical argumentation, that to some readers the actions depicted in his stories might serve as negative exemplars, a possibility that he greatly fears and regrets in advance. Cervantes' complex handling of exemplarity acknowledges therefore the contingencies of a varied readership and the heterogeneity of readers' hermeneutics. It also evidences a contradiction between claims of universal exemplarity and an acknowledgement of a pluralistic audience, a

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is placed on the discerning eye . . . of the receiver whose imagination becomes the very instrument for turning and activity – reading – that was traditionally associated with idleness, leisure, and passivity into a productive enterprise connected to an exploration of the self in the world" (220).

contradiction that is perhaps mirrored in Cervantes' verified affinity for hybridity, be it generic or epistemological. Both these characteristics of his fiction may point to an attempt to negotiate, in narrative form, the dynamics of a changing intellectual world. I argue that the *Novelas ejemplares* are Cervantes' documented exploration and proclamation in regard to the state and function of exemplarity during his days.

Before examining the "Prólogo" for clues as to how Cervantes may have internalized and expressed a potential crisis of exemplarity, it may be useful to explore the general critical opinion in regard to the status of exemplarity in early modern European intellectual thought. In general terms, the idea of exemplarity as a monolithic, static concept, be it as a reference for moral or artistic purposes, is no longer uniquely applicable during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Stierle, besides locating the departure from classical and medieval models of exemplarity in the importance acquired by plurality and contingency, asserts that

> there are two different kinds of *exempla* to be found in Boccaccio and Petrarch. The *exemplum* mainly used in Petrarch to illustrate different virtues and vices is what we might call the type of paradigmatic *exemplum*. Its domain is prescriptive moral philosophy or ethics. The second type of *exemplum*, which we find mainly in Boccaccio, refers to a configuration or constellation of moral powers, and could be called a syntagmatic *exemplum*. Since its main use is not imitation but moral reflection, it is here that we may trace the crisis of exemplarity. (584)[9]

[9] Spadaccini's and Talens' take on the nature of Cervantes' exemplarity corroborates with Stierle's idea of a "syntagmatic *exemplum.*" Nonetheless, they highlight the different aspect that exemplarity had attained in Spain already from the twelfth century on: "Spanish writers do not struggle so much against the impositions of a dogmatic, and largely sterile, aesthetic doctrine as against the censorship of the ecclesiastical authorities whose favor they seek to gain. That is, the antimony is not established in the artistic sphere, but in the relationship between *art* and *reality of everyday life*. For this reason the Spanish *ejemplo* and the Italian *novella* are not synonymous concepts" (114). Later they add: "[O]riginality [of Spanish narrative] was rooted in the objective history of a way of seeing reality that exposed the false exemplary character of the narrative" (115).

It is easy to see how this alleged crisis could be associated with the complexity of characters and actions depicted in the *novelas* discussed in these chapters.[10] With few exceptions, the protagonists illustrate complex, novelistic (as opposed to romance-like), and many times oxymoronic personalities that tend to combine virtuous and sinful traits and to resist simplistic characterizations. In an economy of exemplarity that relies on the steadfast contrast between right and wrong, one can almost anticipate the crisis of exemplarity as a by-product of the skeptical *crisis pyrrhonianne*. As a suspension of judgment is articulated as the new ideal rule of intellectual and moral engagement, a singular, dogmatic approach to exemplarity would seem not only old-fashioned but also obsolete. In Stierle's view, "[t]he crisis of exemplarity is the origin of a new moral, historical, and anthropological hermeneutics" (587). Stierle also considers Montaigne – not surprisingly, given the essayist's affinity to Pyrrhonian skepticism – the utmost exponent of this crisis. Nonetheless, he identifies in Cervantes a clear example of the "copresence of exemplarity and its problematization." As Stierle explains, "Cervantes does not put exemplarity into question; however, he pushes it to its ironic corrosion" (588).

Stierle shares with Timothy Hampton the idea that exemplarity was an unstable concept during the Renaissance. Hampton's overall explanation of the cultural and socio-political environment that brought about this crisis seems to refer directly to Cervantes' intellectual context and to the hybrid nature of his fiction:

> As paradoxes of humanist discourse are assimilated, the question of exemplarity becomes intertwined with issues of political and ideological struggle. Ideological anxiety and epistemological scepticism led to an erosion of the authority of exemplary figures. This erosion signals the beginning of a new, posthumanist attitude toward the representation of

[10] One can also argue that Spanish authors have practiced syntagmatic exemplarity since the fourteenth century, since Don Juan Manuel´s *El conde Lucanor* illustrates a tradition of treating the *exemplum* in terms of contingency.

> antiquity in literature. At the same time it helps to define the terms whereby literary discourse breaks away from the Renaissance privileging of ancient heroism and begins to develop new models of virtue and selfhood. (x)

These new models of virtue, one could argue, are implied in the complexity of characters like Constanza in "La gitanilla," in the contradictory actions of Leocadia in "La fuerza de la sangre," and even in the paradox identified in Cañizares' perceived perverse and lascivious satanic rituals and her acceptance of God's might and Christian doctrine. Like Cervantes in the prolepsis articulated in his prologue, Hampton also recognizes that this new, flexible, and movable type of exemplarity is based on the individual reader's hermeneutic tendencies and abilities. In that way, through its reliance on the reader's idiosyncratic assimilation, the new exemplarity is bound to generate as many distinct exemplars as there are readers.[11] Hampton goes so far as to express that "it is in fact from their relationships to their readers and to the space in which those readers define themselves through action that Renaissance texts derive their structure and rhetorical strategies" (5).[12] Both the "relationship" and "space" to which Hampton refers could be qualified as being shaped by the skeptical tendencies and attitudes brought about by the revival of Pyrrhonian skepticism. To the discerning Renaissance reader, the common affairs of thinking, acting, and self-fashioning were all embedded in an atmosphere of epistemic instability and shaped by a hermeneutics of fluctuating signifiers. As these chapters have argued, the tendencies and attitudes to which Hampton refers have been reflected not only in the

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[11] Hampton argues: "The fact that exemplary figures are depicted in Renaissance literature as guides for acting in the world links exemplarity to the issue of how literature relates to the public and political spheres in which its readers define themselves. As humanist ideals of political community are questioned in the late sixteenth century, [writers like Cervantes] use the depiction of exemplary figures as the locus for attempts to work out new relationships between the individual and the public space of political action" (x).

[12] In "the space in which those readers find themselves" Hampton is, as he himself clarifies, alluding to the implicit intellectual, social, and religious currents of thought that would have permeated European Early Modernity. He states: "In the late sixteenth century exemplarity is enlisted by new ideologies, such as Counter-Reformation religious orthodoxy or political absolutism, ideologies that turn away from many of the tenets of quattrocento humanism" (7).

complexity and contradictory nature of the characters, themes, and images that permeate the *novelas* but also, as Hampton suggests, in the problematic endings and self-reflective structure (like that of the "Coloquio") of some of Cervantes' stories.[13] In synthesis, the skeptical attitude found within Cervantes' *Novelas* both contributes to and reflects the intellectual sphere to which he belonged. Similarly, the crisis of exemplarity that Cervantes' skeptical narrative articulates also emanates from and mirrors this dialogic exchange between author and reader. Like Stierle, Hampton also sees in the new paradigm of exemplarity a particular reliance on contingency, since it is through the understanding of how chance and circumstance change the relevance and applicability of examples through the ages that exemplarity comes to transform itself in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Hampton remarks on how "[h]umanism needs and promotes exemplarity even as it subverts it" (16). This subversion, as argued by Hampton and exemplified in Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares*, takes place within narratives in which the dogmatic simplicity of the exemplar is complicated (or subverted) so to put exemplarity itself under scrutiny.

While Hampton acquiesces that it is only through narrative that an exemplar proves virtue and hence exemplarity (23), the reader is challenged to recognize, particularly in Cervantes' writing, that narrative also promotes the destabilization of the exemplar, which causes the pillars of exemplarity to crumble or, at best, be reevaluated. With that in mind, how does the reader, who has been historically urged to imitate the virtues embedded in traditionally exemplary characters throughout the ages, orient herself in this cloud of epistemological and

[13] Boyd corroborates the view that Cervantes' characters in the *Novelas* "do not simply exist as 'illustrations' of good and bad qualities and behavior.'' He adds: "What [Cervantes] does is to readjust and even reverse the focus of traditional tales, by exploring vice and virtue, or, more accurately, the dynamics of their subtle coexistence, *in* his characters rather than *through* them" ("Introduction" 29). Cascardi finds the dynamic between vice and virtue expressed in "the self as the ideal or 'exemplary' subject of universal moral commands." As observed in the *Novelas*, Cascardi posits that "Cervantes rejects conservative efforts to situate the self in relation to the dominant social order through an idealist reshaping of the past or the resurrection of an archaic symbolic law" ("Exemplary Subjects" 52). This idea supports the move away from a static and conservative articulation of exemplarity toward one that embraces the changeability and contingency involved in actual selfhood.

exemplary instability? When Hampton reminds us that during the Renaissance exemplarity was of greater concern to readers and writers than verisimilitude, he is pointing to the fact that the main purpose of the exemplar (whether or not it perfectly reflected a historical entity or tradition) was to "move the reader to virtuous action" (26).[14] Yet, the inappropriateness of the traditionally dogmatic and contingency-blind exemplar caused late sixteenth-century authors to recreate in their narrative endeavors the dissatisfaction felt toward the conventional model. Readers, on the other hand, were forced to contend with an example that no longer was self-explanatory or readily exemplary, and that relied on the reader's critical judgment and more sophisticated hermeneutics in order to articulate its own value as a source of imitation. Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* both address and illustrate this particular moment in the crisis of exemplarity.

From this problematic epistemological and hermeneutical scenario, one in which readers are being asked to consider literary and intellectual tradition, to measure themselves against a perhaps ambiguous exemplar, and to reject or accept the example as indeed worthy of imitation, Hampton discerns a relationship between narrative and self discovery or assessment. In this light, the text, given its unsettled epistemic nature and perhaps unpredictable outcome, provides a narrative laboratory where rhetoric leads to knowledge of the self and world. [15] In the case of the *Novelas ejemplares*, the act of reading ceases to be, despite Cervantes' declaration in the

[14] "In the Renaissance, however, verisimilitude is not the only, or even the principal, concern. Of equal or greater importance is the power of the exemplary character to move the reader to virtuous action. Thus, the exemplar, if his ideological function of inspiring the reader is to be effective, must demonstrate consistently admirable action throughout the narrative of what Aristotle called 'a complete life'" (26).

[15] Hampton concludes that "[t]he question of exemplarity thus implies the understanding of the self in terms of narrative. This central function of narrative is, moreover, linked to the function of the exemplar in the promotion of processes of socialization" (29). He adds: "The transformations of humanist culture in the late sixteenth century bring with them a crisis in the reading of the heroic body. And this crisis in turn helps to generate new models of understanding and representing the self in time" (30).

prologue, uniquely a source of *pasatiempo* and *diversión* and becomes an exercise in philosophical, psychological, and socio-political discovery.[16]

By labeling the collection as *ejemplar* and by providing in the prologue a convoluted, ironic, and highly critical view of his social and intellectual world, Cervantes sets the tone for the hermeneutical and epistemological challenges his texts will pose. The prologue, as the vast body of criticism suggests and as the stories it introduces exemplify, communicates by insinuation, which magnifies the reader's interpretative liability. Cervantes' insistence on asserting the exemplary nature of his stories points to an effort to both articulate the purity of his alleged intent and exonerate his stories of any unintended harm they may cause. Yet, his characterization of exemplarity, like the very exemplarity that he claims to embrace, is clouded by an ambiguous and complex amalgamation of signs that seem to question the very essence of what the author sets out to define. The reader perceives here a feature of Cervantine narrative that will be exposed many times within the body of his *novelas*, in that Cervantes promotes his (soon to be proven ambiguous) exemplarity by engaging in a very critical meta-exemplary discourse.

Following the model that he himself established in the prologue to *Don Quijote* I, Cervantes invokes the figure of a friend – in this case an absent and uncooperative friend – who fails to provide a portrait of the author as an introduction to the collection, hence forcing him to write a prologue himself. What follows is an ekphrastic digression in which Cervantes engages in a meta-exemplary narrative that invokes both self-assertion and criticism of his socio-political milieu. The good-natured tone of his opening lines and the vivid description of his physical traits – including an account of his few remaining teeth and how these are unevenly disposed in his

[16] For a response and challenge to the ideas of both Stierle and Hampton in regard to exemplarity see Cornilliat. See also Rigolot, who considers exemplarity under the lenses of the "fundamental epistemological changes [of the Renaissance]" (561) and defends the idea that "[a] strong case might be built for an active coexistence of humanism and scholasticism in the way that exemplarity becomes the locus of displaced dogmatism and experimental freedom" (563).

mouth – fail to conceal the persistent concerns, practical and philosophical, that lie just below the surface of the text.[17] The prologue purports, among other things, to assert the exemplarity of the stories that it introduces while also questioning exemplarity. Cervantes' reference to his years in captivity, his participation in the battle of Lepanto, and the evident pride he holds for his most famous battle wound conspire to create a covert but palpable sense of exemplariness. By promoting himself as a traditional exemplary figure – one that embodies the essence of the brave Christian soldier who masters the art of the pen and who awaits with faithful stoicism for his freedom from captivity – Cervantes taps into a traditional and suitable model from which to mirror the alleged exemplariness of his *novelas* and positions himself, despite his *hidalgo* status, next to celebrated figures like those praised in the narratives of authors like Pérez de Guzmán and Fernando del Pulgar. An exemplary man, one is asked to believe, is more likely than common folk to produce exemplary texts.

In "Cervantes's Exemplary Prologue" Stephen Boyd, contrary to my reading, identifies the exemplarity of the introductory prologue in the absent portrait of Cervantes. He explains: *"*Because of its richness of implication, the fiction of the missing engraving serves as an exemplary introduction to stories which, as a body, constitute a composite, self-consciously incomplete portrait of human nature and of the possibilities of fiction. Cervantes holds his own imperfect image before us, and offers the *Novelas ejemplares*, as an approximate 'imago hominis' (67). By focusing on the absence of the portrait and on a subsequent "imperfect image" that Cervantes creates of himself, Boyd deems the ekphrastic construction of the prologue to be

[17] One of these concerns is illustrated by Cervantes' allusion to the fact that his works may circulate anonymously - "éste . . . es el rostro del autor de . . . obras que andan por ahí descarriadas, y, quizá, sin el nombre de su dueño" (1: 51). Boyd sees in Cervantes' reference to his own teeth an expression of a common concern in regard to the relationship between literature and art. He states: "In terms of the 'ut pictura poesis' *topos*, which was fundamental to Renaissance debates about the comparative merits of the sister arts of poetry and painting, the implication of this passage, once again, is that visual art is relatively restricted when it comes to the representation of more than the eye can see at any one time" ("Exemplary Prologue" 63)

an exemplar of imperfection. I, on the other hand, by focusing on the narrative that supposedly would have come attached to the portrait, find that this section conveys a message of epistemic integrity and wholeness; a message that, as explained, Cervantes is too willing to contradict.

It should not be too difficult to envisage a contemporary reader's reaction to the implied exemplariness of the prologue. She may readily embrace the traditional, dogmatic, and largely static exemplar Cervantes concocts of himself, and may herself be prepared to apply the same standard of exemplariness to the texts that follow, given the explicitness of the collection's title. She may, having perhaps experienced the complexities of the brand of exemplarity offered in *Don Quijote I*, be grasping for an explanation for the traditionalism of this approach. She only needs to read on to see that the questions raised by the problematic exemplariness depicted in *Don Quijote* are about to be reengaged both in this prologue and in the collection it presents.[18] Cervantes seems to signify the paradigmatic, Petrarchan mode of exemplarity in his prologue only to immediately jolt it out of its conventional axes. No sooner has he established grounds upon which to introduce the forthcoming exemplarity contained in his *novelas* than Cervantes turns the table on his own suggested model: "pensar que dicen puntualmente la verdad los tales elogios, es disparate, por no tener punto preciso ni determinado las alabanzas ni los vituperios" (1: 51). In a blunt invocation of skepticism, Cervantes discredits others' and his own recently assembled mode of exemplariness. Neither praise nor vituperation is grounded in truth, for they lack, as Cervantes puts it, both preciseness and determinateness. It can be justifiably inferred that Cervantes refers here to the fact that character and moral judgment, which are both actively involved in determining exemplarity, rely on the contingencies pertaining to personal interpretation, and hence lack universal applicability. The virtues and commendable acts exalted in narratives of acclamation – the very narratives from which traditional exemplarity originates

[18] For a discussion of exemplariness in *Don Quijote* see Hampton 237-296.

and, alternatively, which exemplarity perpetuates through emulation – are, according to Cervantes' redefinition, universally *un-truthful*. The Pyrrhonian vein that runs through this realization is evident, and the alteration it imposes on the idea of exemplarity is that only imprecise and non-dogmatic cultural constructions – ones that may, after all, take into account the plurality and contingency ignored in traditional models – can be deemed exemplary.

Cervantes uses the metaphor of a *pepitoria* – or stew made of "pescueços y alones del ave" (Covarrubias 584) – to describe, in negative terms, what his *novelas* cannot be turned into, for they lack the body parts necessary to make the stew. Boyd recognizes the conceit offered by Cervantes and the fact that, by its nature, it obscures the meaning of the *pepitoria* metaphor ("Exemplary Prologue" 52). After all, Cervantes has just explicitly warned that "verdades . . . dichas por señas, suelen ser entendidas" (1: 51), which leads the reader not only to expect the challenge of a metaphorical, whimsical language but also the idea that signification within the prologue and the texts will become epistemically and hermeneutically unstable. The reader may have, by now, anticipated that the exemplarity of the following stories will also share this instability.

Boyd asserts that the *pepitoria* metaphor may allude to the fact that "with regard to their content, the stories that follow are not what we might term 'pornographic': they do not contain 'spicy' description of body parts" (52). He also offers that "individually or collectively, the stories have the ordered, rational integrity of a complete body: they are works of art written in accordance with reason and Christian principles, not an incoherent mishmash of titillating sex scenes" (52). Boyd recognizes that by the very choice of explaining the nature of his *novelas* through metaphor and conceit Cervantes is informing the reader that he expects a more active and critical interpretive involvement. By recognizing the possible existence of careless and

careful readers – "descuidado o cuidadoso lector" (1: 52) – Cervantes embraces the contingency associated with the reading process and acknowledges the plurality of both of his audience and of the product of their hermeneutic venture. Within this premise, signification, and hence exemplarity, is understood in terms of the fluctuating epistemic sphere that skepticism so powerfully helps to delineate, for not only does it rest upon an unpredictable variety of readers but also on variable personal hermeneutics that, as Montaigne pointed out, could vary incessantly as the individual herself changed from moment to moment.[19] As skepticism advocates for the recognition of contingency and plurality in its defense of non-dogmatism, so the *new* exemplarity relies on these two destabilizing agents in order to reflect the changing skeptical intellectualism from which it stems. Exemplarity, after all, is built upon the same epistemological and hermeneutical blocks as any other intellectual or ideological construction, and will reflect any instability contained in its foundation. In recognizing variety and interpretative uncertainties, and in evoking relativity and the *untruthfulness* of dogmatic judgments, Cervantes informs the reader of the instability embedded in exemplarity and alerts her to the interpretative perils she is about to encounter in the stories that follow.

The fact that, albeit in a dismissive way, Cervantes acknowledges the possibility that his texts may induce immoral or harmful thoughts in the reader demonstrates his awareness of the instability of exemplarity and of the incontrollable multiplicity of readings his texts may generate. He expresses: "[Q]uiero decir que los requiebros amorosos que en algunas hallarás, son

[19] Cascardi also detects this relationship albeit when thinking of *Don Quijote*. Still, his thought is very much applicable to the articulation of an unstable exemplarity as noted in the *Novelas*. He writes: "It is not altogether surprising that the question of a moral order should arise in connection with *Don Quijote*, for one of the problems made apparent from the very beginning of the novel is the difficulty of representing the self in unified and coherent terms, as one whose judgments might be the subject of universal moral commands, given large-scale transformations in the nature of exemplary and heroic discourse" ("Exemplary Subjects" 52).

tan honestos y tan medidos con la razón y discurso cristiano, que no podrán mover a mal pensamiento al descuidado o cuidadoso que las leyere" (1: 52-53).

That he should be nervous about providing potentially harmful examples is more than understandable. Edward Riley recognizes Cervantes' anxious defense of the moral rectitude of his *novelas*.[20] Rejecting the idea that Cervantes' prolepsis is ironic, he states categorically: "He surely meant what he said when he said it" (*Theory of the Novel* 101). In an environment of so much epistemic instability, the task of separating irony from literal signification is a difficult one. As Riley points out, the word *novela* – which Cervantes voluntarily applies to his collection and which he voluntarily couples with the term *ejemplares*, to complicate things – "as well as being unflatteringly interchangeable with words like *patraña*, or 'deceitful fiction', must have conjured up for the public the names of Boccaccio and Bandello and other *novellieri* well known in Spain, bywords for salaciousness" (102). Irony, or at least a playful desire to challenge and confuse, is indeed very possible here, especially if one takes into consideration the amazingly diverse and contradictory list of ingredients that Cervantes activates to introduce his stories: his awareness of the salacious connotation of the term *novela*; his willingness to not only apply the term to his collection but to further destabilize it by joining it with the term *ejemplares*; his decision to make it clear that exemplarity, within the context of this set, is an unstable, questionable convention. However, one should not dismiss Riley's contention that Cervantes "meant what he said" entirely. Cervantes is certainly sincere in regard to the pride he holds for the battle wound he suffered in Lepanto, as he very likely is of his respect for Christian precepts and morality. Again, Riley reminds us how "Cervantes's literary ideals included purity as something taken for

[20] Riley points to the fact that Cervantes "submitted the book to the ecclesiastical, before the civil censor, although the latter alone was strictly necessary." He also mentions the "unusually large number of *aprobaciones* (no less than four)," and the fact that after having taken such care to reflect the appropriateness of his collection he "felt at liberty to tone down the somewhat over-emphatic title, which . . . seem to previously have been *Novelas ejemplares de honestísimo entretenimiento*" (*Theory of the Novel* 102).

granted; and things taken for granted are sometimes neglected." He adds that "the artistic truth or falsity of a work was a matter of greater moment to him . . . than the presence or absence of a few bedroom scenes" (102).

In view of the tradition that Cervantes evokes by asserting the exemplariness of his *novelas*, and considering his sustained effort to challenge the very exemplarity that he recalls, both in the prologue and in the stories themselves, Cervantes may be extending the liberties he allows himself on behalf of the "artistic truth of the work" to the truth or falsity of his philosophical enterprise. Pyrrhonian skepticism advocates for the suspension of all judgment, including that upon which exemplarity rests. Under the skeptical light that shines throughout the *novelas*, it is not necessarily Cervantes' beliefs or moral preferences that shape the content and form of his narrative but rather the beliefs and expressions of morality that most effectively lead the reader to a critical approach to the text and a self-critical approach to existence. As François Cornilliat points out, "[s]yntagmatic examples have renounced their prescriptive or injunctive function, as well as the fixed set of values that justified such a function and guaranteed its efficacy. Instead, they allow expansive reflection on a confused ethical landscape where values are prone to ambiguity, contradiction, and reversal – but where, nevertheless, one has to make choices for oneself" (620). [21] Cervantes' exemplarity exemplifies negatively by reminding the reader that all examples – whether based on Petrarch or Boccaccio or Bandello or Timoneda or whether totally *original* – are only as valid and effective as the perceptive ability and bias of the reader, and as valid and veracious as any of the other *truths* that skepticism is so eager to debunk.

[21] François Cornilliat refers to the early modern crisis of exemplarity as a force that attempts to submit the traditional model into being "transformed into its opposite": "The move from exemplarity to contingency happens in the guise of a shift from exemplarity – or paradigmatic examples – i.e., exemplars – to less exemplary, or syntagmatic examples" (619).

Perhaps one of the most perplexing rhetorical moves in the entire prologue is Cervantes' evasive *negatio*: "Heles dado nombre de *ejemplares*, y si bien lo miras, no hay ninguna de quien no se pueda sacar algún ejemplo provechoso; y si no fuera por no alargar este sujeto, quizá te *mostrara* el sabroso y honesto fruto que se podría sacar, así de todas juntas como de cada una de por sí" (1: 52, emphasis added). Boyd sees in the author's simultaneous offering and withholding information another conceit, this time possibly attempting to entice the reader to "re-evaluate the apparent innocuousness of the language in which it is framed" ("Exemplary Prologue" 53), a technique that Cervantes may well be counting on in order to engage the reader's acute and more critical hermeneutical sensibilities, both here and throughout the stories themselves. Boyd concludes that "the fact that Cervantes does not offer us any such clear statements here or in the stories suggests that this is because what they teach us is not expressible in those terms" (54). In fact, if what the *novelas* teach us is derived from the epistemic instability that is reflected both in their problematic exemplarity and in their sustained engagement with skepticism, then to simply *tell* or *posit* ("mostrar") their message would be to betray not only the story's inherited hermeneutical challenge but to discredit all the plurality and contingency that, within skeptical precepts, they appear to convey. *Mostrar*, within the epistemic reality conveyed here, is no longer a matter of the author's willingness to show but a question of individual hermeneutics. As Spadaccini and Talens remind us in regard to the "Coloquio," "[t]he reader-critic brings to the reception of stories his or her own horizon of expectations while interpretations are at least partially shaped by the conventions used in reading and by the assumption made about those conventions" (225). If indeed Cervantes conceives and structures his *novelas* to imply and not to tell, then the prologue becomes an erring exemplar to the narratives that will follow.[22]

[22] Spadaccini and Talens go so far as to claim that "Cervantes does away with the power exercised by traditional models in the reading process by renouncing the private property of the signifieds – what is said or told. In so doing

That Cervantes should strongly imply a link between his *novelas* and the virtue of *eutrapelia* immediately after questioning the traditional pillars of exemplarity should be seen as an invitation to pause and consider again the possibility of a further digression from conventionality.[23] He writes: "Mi intento ha sido poner en la plaza de nuestra república una mesa de trucos, donde cada uno pueda llegar a entretenerse sin daño de barras; digo sin daño del alma ni del cuerpo, porque los ejercicios honestos y agradables, antes aprovechan que dañan." He adds: "no siempre se está en los templos; no siempre se ocupan los oratorios; no siempre se asiste a los negocios por calificados que sean. Hay horas de recreación donde el afligido espíritu descanse" (1: 52). Bruce Wardropper interprets Cervantes' words literally, and affirms that "esta expresión del intento del autor es una declaración inequívoca de la doctrina de la verdadera eutrapelia" (157). . . . De acuerdo con el estilo juguetón de la eutrapelia, [Cervantes] se ríe de su lector ocultando la clave de su obra, según dice, 'por no alargar el sujeto'" (158).[24] Colin Thompson sees in Cervantes' allusion to *eutrapelia* a sign that "Cervantes' locates the moral and spiritual significance of his stories in their ability to restore to the soul its capacity to resume its serious duties once it has rested from weariness which is the inevitable consequence of any form of labour" (264). Indeed, Cervantes' purpose in so clearly calling upon the accepted and valued concept of *eutrapelia* may have been to allow his epistemically troubled texts to partake in the traditional and purely benign aspects of this idea. In evoking the ancient practice of constructively releasing both body and soul from the hardships and preoccupations of life and work, Cervantes reasserts his trust in the power of tradition to bring to his fiction the respect and righteousness with which he wants to see it associated. *Eutrapelia*, not unlike exemplarity,

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he destabilizes the canonical interpretation and exposes its rhetorical character" (217).

[23] For an overview of the *eutrapelia*, see Rahner and Wardropper.

[24] By "verdadera eutrapelia" Wardropper is referring to the Thomistic redefinition of the term, through which it was freed from the noxious connotations it acquired during the Middle Ages (155-156). Fray Juan Bautista uses the term "verdadera eutrapelia" in his *aprobación* to describe the effects of Cervantes' *novelas.*

conjures images of moral propriety and civil rectitude. The fact that Cervantes' *Novelas* will challenge the reader to rethink and reassess, among other ideas, the very concepts of moral propriety and civil rectitude further illustrates the author's reformist agenda. A good story, it is unquestionable, can indeed provide a means of entertainment that does not harm either soul or body. But between the concept of *eutrapelia* and Cervantes' suggestion of embracing it (he actually never uses the term in the prologue) there lies a gap that may point to Cervantes' inclination to redefine *eutrapelia* as he redefined exemplarity.

Bruce Wardropper summarizes Aristotles' ideas about *eutrapelia* and highlights the fact that, for the philosopher, the term had a broad connotation that involved the virtue of temperance and was associated with games and jocularity: "Como es sabido, el justo medio era para el filósofo la esencia de la virtud. El hábito de la eutrapelia es el justo medio en actividades relacionadas con bromas y con juegos" (154).[25] Wardropper also points out how this view of *eutrapelia* was dampened by the early Church in favor of a more austere view of a Christian life (154). It was during this period that *eutrapelia*, and with it any cheerful and lighthearted form of relaxation, acquired a bad reputation within Church doctrine: "Parte de la [misión de la Iglesia primitiva] era la de reorientar la vida de la civilización pagana, con su alegre despreocupación vital, hacia una aceptación de la seriedad de la vida Cristiana" (154). Both Wardropper's and Thompson's introductions point clearly to the fact that *eutrapelia* was – according to Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Aquinas, and several commentators in between – associated with games and any other recreational activity when engaged in good faith and with decorum, and had the very precise function, as Cervantes acknowledges in his prologue, of relieving the fatigue of both

[25] Wardropper adds: "Aristóteles encuentra dicho medio en la conducta del *eutrapelos*, el hombre que 'gira bien', el *bene vertens*. En la escala de la sociabilidad, el *eutrapelos* se encuentra a medio camino entre dos extremos: el del *bomolochos* (o bufón) y el del *agraikos* (o patán). El *bomolochos* es un bromista vulgar que trata siempre de provocar la risa sin considerar si la circunstancia es propia ni si sus dichos y sus hechos pueden dañar moralmente a los que le escuchan; el *agraikos*, que no tiene sentido del humor, resiente que se diviertan los demás" (154).

mind and spirit so that these could reengage spiritual and philosophical exercises with reinvigorated focus.[26] Thomas Hart observes that "[*eutrapelia*] is both a temporary turning away from more serious concerns and a preparation for returning to them with renewed strength . . . thus [dissolving] the apparent opposition in the familiar Horatian doctrine that poetry should be both pleasant and morally beneficial: poetry is beneficial *because* it gives pleasure" (15-16).

Cervantes' simultaneous appropriation of the concept of *eutrapelia* and reformulation of the idea of exemplarity asks the reader to re-examine the *eutrapelia* implied here. After all, stories like "La fuerza de la sangre" or "El coloquio de los perros," for example, will go a lot further than merely providing innocent, wholesome entertainment for the mind. Instead, they seem to challenge the mind in ways that all the serious and important activities of human life hardly could do. Given their power to possibly provoke critical thinking and engender subversive views of the world, I argue that in these *novelas* Cervantes subjects *eutrapelia* to the same epistemological shift that he used to redefine exemplarity. In doing that, he moves *eutrapelia* from the realm of the regenerative, harmless, and mostly pleasurable, to an analytical dimension in which contingency, plurality, and hermeneutic biases play a defining role. *Eutrapelia* in Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* ceases to be a regenerative avenue to a better rested, more deeply invigorated mind and spirit. Instead, it acquires an autonomy of its own and becomes an end in and of itself. In alignment with skeptical precepts and with an observed effort to entice the reader to suspend judgment, Cervantes informs his audience of his willingness to free exemplarity and *eutrapelia* from their centuries-long epistemic frames. In this way he acquiesces that both concepts are subject to the reader's discretionary interpretation and hence become both unpredictable and inexact. Cervantes' proleptical statement in regard to the possibility that any of

[26] In his illustration of the biblical and patristic opinions in regard to *eutrapelia* Wardropper cites Luke's gospel, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint John Chrysostom and, evidently, Saint Thomas Aquinas (155).

his *novelas* may cause an adverse moral effect in the reader may be interpreted as a hint toward lifting *eutrapelia* from its traditional association with wholesomeness and moral propriety. To further elaborate on Hart's opinion that "poetry [or literature] is beneficial *because* it gives pleasure," it can be inferred that, for Cervantes, entertainment, like exemplarity, is subject to personal nature and interpretation and thus linked to plurality and variation. In this case, literature is beneficial because it questions the nature of pleasure more than because it produces pleasure. As his brand of exemplarity challenges and modifies exemplarity's traditional definition, so does his version of *eutrapelia* challenge the conventional interpretation of the term.[27]

While anchoring his argument on the view that Cervantes articulates exemplarity in a purely traditional manner, Thompson comments that the *Novelas* provide a connection between the didactic element of the Horatian formula and the Christianized acceptance of amusement as spiritually and mentally necessary: "[Cervantes] was familiar with the concept of *eutrapelia*, and that . . . enabled him to reflect on the two poles of Horatian literary theory, *prodesse* and *delectare*, instruction and entertainment, with a frequency and depth rare in Golden-Age writing" (264). What Thompson does not take into consideration is that throughout the *novelas*, and particularly in regard to those analyzed here, Cervantes systematically anchors his writing in tradition only so that he can question and deconstruct these established practices and definitions. Within the world that Cervantes postulates in the *Novelas*, instruction and entertainment comprise a much more dynamic, epistemically unstable pair than Horace's *prodesse et delectare*.

[27] Dunn finds in Cervantes' articulation of *eutrapelia* an exhortation to action toward satisfying one's desire to achieve pleasurable recreation. He comments: "The 'afligido espíritu' must not remain passive, because [activities like planting, designing, leveling, and laying out gardens] will not come to him; he must seek them out with a desire that matches the desire for order and proportion that shaped them." Dunn argues that "[i]f there is a frame for the *novelas*, perhaps it is a compact, or invitation, to engage in the game of *serio ludere* by means of which an integrated community of desires may be forged between author and readers" (91).

With their overtly articulated epistemic anxieties Cervantes' *novelas* will challenge the very notion of instruction, entertainment, and exemplarity, as well as the readers' tools of assessing and determining these accepted concepts. Taking into consideration the recognized plurality of his readership, while some of Cervantes' stories may indeed provide "horas de recreación, donde el afligido espíritu descanse," others may do just the opposite, particularly for the reader who is neither aware nor fully capable of suspending judgment. It is precisely there that Cervantes' take on *eutrapelia* diverges from the norm. His *novelas* do not convey that entertainment, as evidenced by *morally sound* literary fiction, is not a beneficial, sanctioned activity of a virtuous citizen but they do question, despite Cervantes' dogmatic claims and forceful associations, the one-dimensional type of respite from spiritual and mental activity with which *eutrapelia* has been traditionally associated. After all, the epistemically convoluted nature of Cervantes' texts may send both mind and spirit nervously clinging for a fanciful space of stability in which what seems to *be* infallibly *is*, and in which dogma can be comfortably (albeit deceptively) perceived as a representation of *reality*. Thompson concludes: "If Cervantes disguises or hides his *ejemplos*, hints at them in apparently unimportant phrases, it is perhaps because he is inviting us to see ourselves as we are and our world as it is, and offering to undeceive us with the light touch of eutrapelia, an effective, entertaining and refreshing form of therapy" (281). Cervantes most likely is inviting the reader to see beyond the surface of the text, past accepted semantic conventions, and over and above traditional epistemic models. Yet it would be naïve to assume that this motion is restricted to the content and structure of his stories and not generalized to the literary and cultural precepts these texts evoke and critically engage. The "therapy" of *eutrapelia* comes embedded with the transformational power and skeptical effects of any therapy that is

designed to shift perception and reassign values and views, and is far from being engaged as a light, purely recreational type of literary elixir.

To compound the problem, plurality and contingency pertaining to the reader rather than the author's altruistic and reparative intensions will determine the effect (and affect) of the reading experience. Cervantes knows that he cannot have it both ways, that is, that he cannot appreciate the variety of his readership and recognize their hermeneutic variability while also claiming the absolutely positive, invariably regenerative nature of *eutrapelia.* Therefore, the fact that he affirms the presence of an "honesto fruto" capable of providing "horas de recreación" must be perceived as an expression of irony and as a companion to the dubious, multifaceted kind of exemplarity and *eutrapelia* his texts encompass. Paradoxically, Cervantes irony in the prologue, rather than adding a playful touch of wit, expresses the seriousness of his skeptical agenda and highlights the sobriety of the epistemic crisis the prologue and the *novelas* reflect.

Riley maintains that the classical tradition of using literature to delight and instruct is reflected in "Cervantes's definitive statement on the function of the novel . . . that imaginative literature (the writing as well as the reading of it) is a relief from work and a solace for care. By agreeably occupying the mind, literature for the time being releases it from toils and troubles" (*Theory of the Novel* 86-7). If indeed this was Cervantes' understanding of the function of the novel, by recognizing the unpredictability involved in the readers' reception – which he evidently does – his *Novelas* may be the result of a deliberate experimentation with the tradition of "agreeably occupying the mind" and a reevaluation of the idea of an entertaining narrative. In fact, I would argue that Cervantes performed this experiment previously when he released Alonso Quijano, perhaps his archetypal reader, to the perils of the adverse effects of *eutrapelia*. In other words, Cervantes not only is aware of the contingencies associated with having a

heterogeneous readership but he is also willing to probe the fact that, under the new skeptical epistemology of Early Modernity, *eutrapelia* is also subject to the same contingency and plurality that released exemplarity from its classical, static denotation. In this light and to the extent that *eutrapelia* is here evoked as an integral element of the exemplary *novelas*, even the most forceful and eloquent defenses of the exemplarity of these texts must be seen as only partly persuasive.[28] Cervantes' great advantage resides in that he was well acquainted with the demands of his institutional readers – the Church and the Crown's censors – as to be able to satisfy their demands without compromising the intellectual and artistic integrity of his output. At the same time, he reserves the right to signify by "señas," and trusts that he will be understood by the discriminating group of careful readers.

In his assessment of Cervantes' engagement with the concept of *eutrapelia* in the *Novelas* Hart estimates that "Cervantes probably did not care greatly whether all his readers interpreted the stories in the same way or as he himself might have interpreted them" (17). Although partly correct, this conclusion implies that the author himself had a fixed, preconceived idea of the types of exemplars he intended to communicate. If indeed the *Novelas* can be seen as a laboratory in which to exercise the narrative possibilities as well as the philosophical properties of skepticism, then it is not viable to assume that Cervantes intends to posit a dogmatically message through his work. That he should be concerned with the potentially harmful effects of having any immoral, politically subversive, or religiously heretical message identified with his writing is a real and totally justified concern.[29] That he should have abandoned the epistemic variability that a fiction based on an exploration of skepticism affords him, is difficult to fathom. Riley observes that "[Cervantes] gives more importance to the function of entertainment, but he

[28] I refer here to Cervantes' own defense in the prologue and Fray Juan Bautista's, which comes as an endorsement before the "Prólogo al lector." See *Novelas ejemplares* 1: 45.
[29] See footnote 20.

takes the business of entertainment very seriously indeed" (*Theory of the Novel* 83) and Thompson remarks that "[t]he therapeutic value of literature written for times of leisure is central to the practice of Cervantes, and failure to grasp this risks misunderstanding the nature of exemplarity in his *Novelas* (264).[30] Thompson reiterates that Cervantes employs a traditionally Horacian approach to *eutrapelia* in the *Novelas* and asserts that "[t]o take the concept of *eutrapelia* seriously in reading the novelas liberates critics from having to make an inappropriate choice between a serious or a comic reading, and enables them to reconcile the entertainment of the *novela* with the presence of exemplarity – 'enseñar deleitando', o 'deleitar enseñando'" (265-266).[31]

Recognizing the manifestation of Cervantes' skeptical tendencies and attitudes both in regard to issues of exemplarity and *eutrapelia* does not trap the reader into making a "serious or comic" reading of his fiction. On the contrary, it allows the reader to recognize the push toward a non-dogmatic system of signification in which established tradition is met with a newly invoked critical interpretative tool: skepticism. It is evident that Cervantes communicates in his prologue that his talent and intelligence have been employed toward creating *novelas* as a way of providing opportunity for recreation. It is also strongly suggested that the level or quality of recreation is in great part dictated by the reader, through the profile of her intellectual and hermeneutic abilities and her social, religious, and political biases. In asserting the originality of his *novelas* Cervantes states: "Mi ingenio las engendró, y las parió mi pluma, y van creciendo en

[30] Forcione expresses his analysis of *eutrapelia* by reminding some critics that the image of the game of billiards, and hence of public entertainment, comprise "precisely the elements of play that humanists chose to emphasize in the combination of chance, freedom, and design which the game represents" ("Afterword" 341). See Scham for a discussion of *eutrapelia* in the *Novelas* that takes into consideration the dynamics between the "retreat into internal, domestic spaces" and "a loss of confidence in the public sphere" (61).

[31] Thompson's allusion to a "serious or comic reading" stems from the fact that he finds humor in some of Cervantes' questioning of social structures. As he states, "We laugh with *Rinconete y Cortadillo* at the absurd religion of the community, at the slang which protects them from articulating the reality of the punishments they face, at the ridiculous attempts of Monipodio to impose his authority by his superior intellect. But perhaps in the end, Cervantes is asking us to laugh at ourselves: at our duplicity, our moral evasions, our false justifications" (281).

los brazos de la estampa" (1: 52). This acknowledgement makes clear Cervantes' belief in the continuing development of a text after its conception. He reiterates this idea at the end of the prologue by recognizing that not even the Count of Lemos can protect him from the adverse opinion of critics: *"[S]é que, si [el libro] no es bueno, aunque le ponga debajo de las alas del hipogrifo de Astolfo y a la sombra de la clava de Hércules, no dejarán los Zoilos, los Cínicos, los Aretinos y los Bernias de darse un filo en su vituperio, sin guardar respeto a nadie*" (1: 54, original font). In regard to his *novelas* he adds: "*Tales cuales son, van allá, y yo quedo aquí*" (1: 54). Naturally, Cervantes understands that the expansion that his creation is destined to encounter will take place beyond the printed page, that is, in the minds and spirits of the reader. The way in which he articulates this partnership between author and audience – by means of establishing an almost genetic, evolutionary line – illustrates his understanding of the partial control of the author over his creation. This understanding results in the awareness that exemplarity, as an implied and constructed notion, is not solely dictated by the author who articulates it or by the exemplar itself but is the product of a dynamic exchange between creator and observer, author and reader. Similarly, the degree to which texts can serve as sources of entertainment, frustration, or preoccupation is not uniquely dependent upon the author's perceived goal. The crisis of exemplarity that manifests itself in the *Novelas ejemplares*, as an extension of the epistemic crisis brought about by the rediscovery and renewed engagement with Pyrrhonian skepticism, penetrates all levels of epistemology, hermeneutics, and hence, all dialogue between present and past, author and reader. The concept of *eutrapelia*, despite (or perhaps due to) its classical roots and its Thomistic vein, is not excluded from skepticism's overpowering destabilizing influence. In a world of constantly changing individuals and shifting hermeneutic paradigms, no human fabrication can claim to be stable.[32]

[32] As Thompson and Wardropper point out, Thomas Aquinas was largely responsible for the re-introduction of the

Toward the end of the prologue Cervantes offers one more deliberate interpretive challenge when he refers to the elevating mysteries contained in his *novelas*: "Sólo esto quiero que consideres, que pues yo he tenido osadía de dirigir estas novelas al gran Conde de Lemos, algún misterio tienen escondido que las levanta" (1: 53). Boyd suggests that the *misterio* to which Cervantes alludes may be linked to at least three aspects of life that Cervantes expresses interest in exploring: "the mystery of individual human identity; the mystery of human will; the mystery of the interaction of human and metaphysical worlds" ("Introduction" 31). Indeed, all of these mysteries or concerns are deeply expressed within the *novelas*, and most certainly within the ones discussed in these chapters. Yet, these seem also to be the core concerns that comprise most of Cervantes' literary output, and which are in no way limited to these stories. It would seem somewhat unsatisfactory to expect that a special reference to a mystery, and one that establishes a recondite relationship between Cervantes' texts and a very visible, prominent political figure, to have such broad significance.[33] On the other hand, it may be an exaggeration to expect that Cervantes' enigma may reflect anything more profound than a catchy, advertising strategy to promote his collection, or a mere call to the reader to sharpen up her hermeneutical tools, focus, and be critical. After all, mystery or no mystery, the *Novelas* pose an obvious interpretative challenge, even perhaps to the "careless reader" who succumbs to Cervantes'

Aristotelian term in the theological (and literary) discourse of the late medieval era. His definition of *eutrapelia* as "a form of relaxation necessary for human beings" is the one known and embraced during Early Modernity. Aquinas defended the pursuit of this type of relaxation by asserting that "the soul, like the body, requires rest after labour" (Thompson 262). Forcione affirms that Aquinas "reconciled the Aristotelian concept of the value of play (*eutrapelia*) with Christian doctrines" after centuries of distrust within ascetic Christianity ("Afterword" 341-2).

[33] Curiously, Rahner, who in no way references Cervantes in his discussion of *eutrapelia*, defines its function and utility in terms that are eerily applicable to Cervantes' *Novelas*. He states: "If we contemplate [*eutrapelia*] lovingly, we shall receive an answer to *secret* and heart-stirring questions as to how we are to give a mature Christian character to our modern existence, thrust as we are into the midst of this evil (and yet so lovely) world" (92-3, emphasis added).

alluring (and misleading) offer of hours of recreation and a period of rest for the tired soul.[34] Thompson asserts that the prologue, "with its variations on the theme that all the stories contain 'ejemplos' and 'algún misterio . . . escondido que las levanta' [. . .] can be read as one of the many jokes Cervantes plays on the reader, with a sideways glance, perhaps, in the direction of the censors" (265). It is fair to assume that whatever the nature and extent of Cervantes' jokes, which I believe are in no way extended to the question of exemplarity in the *Novelas,* they would, as does his sense of irony, rightfully and inevitably invite a critical approach to the text at hand. To dismiss Cervantes' reference to a *misterio* as a mere joke on the reader is to undermine Cervantes' attack on traditional signs and disregard his insistence on the problems of epistemology highlighted throughout the *Novelas*. I suggest that Cervantes' mystery reflects the epistemological instability postulated in the *Novelas.* Moreover, I believe that Cervantes is using the count's prominence and the presumed respectability that he would have inspired as a further example of the mystery of exemplarity itself.

Cervantes concludes his prologue by bringing the reader's attention to yet another intended deviation from the norm. Just as in the beginning he points out the absence – or the deviation from what is "uso y costumbre" (1: 50) – of a portrait of the author, one that would have been provided by a hypothetical friend, so at the end he highlights the fact that his dedication of the *Novelas* to the Count of Lemos will not follow the model provided by other dedications:

> [*E*]*n la carta que llama dedicatoria, que ha de ser muy breve y sucinta, muy de propósito y espacio, ya llevados de la verdad o de la lisonja, se dilatan en ella en traerle a la*

[34] By quoting the *misterio* passage in an epigraph that precedes the introduction to his book, Aylward suggests a connection between the *misterio* contained in the *novelas* and the question of their authenticity. He states: "The distinct readings of each story must be compared carefully and with an unbiased eye so as to extract from these documents all that they have to tell us about Cervantes' claim to their authorship and his 'cryptic' comment regarding the 'mystery' that is supposedly hidden among his *Novelas" (Pioneer and Plagiarist* 12).

> *memoria, no solo las hazañas de sus padres y abuelos, sino las de todos sus parientes, amigos y bienhechores. . . . Yo, pues, huyendo destos . . . inconvenientes, paso en silencio aquí las grandezas y títulos de la antigua y Real Casa de vuestra Excelencia, con sus infinitas virtudes, así naturales como adquiridas*. (1: 53-54, original font)

Careful not to be dismissive of the count's infinite virtues, Cervantes manages in this dedicatory to establish his potential patron's exemplarity without actually engaging it as a literary *topos*. By narrowing his praise of the count's glories and talents, Cervantes manages to signify exemplarity without having to qualify it, and hence avoids promoting the traditional aspects of a concept that, as both his prologue and *novelas* illustrate, no longer reflects the intellectual dynamics and the epistemic needs of his generation. Instead, Cervantes leaves the task of turning his patron's attributes into the stuff of *exemplum* to "*nuevos Fidias y Lisipos*" (1: 54) who can register them in traditional and very classical marble and bronze, thus turning them into unquestionable and obsolete exemplars for the ages.[35] Ultimately it is up to the reader to decide how and in what way each exemplar conveys its exemplarity, and how useful each can be as such.

Cervantes' "Prólogo al lector" therefore directs the careful reader into anticipating the interpretative challenges that she will face in the ensuing *novelas*. The skeptical attitude that is so evidently manifested throughout the stories discussed in these chapters is articulated in the prologue through a destabilization of traditional concepts and practices. In Cervantes'

[35] There is probably room here to conjecture about Cervantes' discontent over the way he was treated by the count, or as Canavaggio suggests, by the count's secretary, when the author entertained the idea of being invited to join the count in Naples in 1610. The invitation never came (see Canavaggio 242-247). This disillusion may have incited Cervantes to tactically refrain from singing the count's glories. While Canavaggio describes the dedication of the *Novelas* as "testimony of respect and gratitude" (251) toward the count, Cervantes' tone of irony is visible in the way he reminds this coveted patron of their separation by distance and, at the same time, his unrelenting will to serve. Cervantes writes: "I send them off [to you there in Italy] such as they are, and I remain here, extremely satisfied, because it seems to me that I am beginning to show in a small way my desire to serve Your Excellency as my true lord and benefactor" (Canavaggio 251).

epistemically reconfigured fictional environment, codes and measures of exemplarity absorb and reflect the acknowledged heterogeneity of his readership and the plurality and variability embedded in each pseudo-static exemplar. These newly configured cases of exemplarity also integrate the epistemic instability proposed by Pyrrhonian skepticism, which warns against affixing stagnant, meaningless labels and the adhering to a culture of dogmatic, un-provable truths. Similarly, Cervantes extends the same procedure of epistemic destabilization to the concept of *eutrapelia* by highlighting the subjectivity involved in the concept of recreation and acknowledging, again, a multiplicity of readers and the variability of each reader's approach to both text and personal enjoyment. By extending the same skeptical treatment to both exemplarity and *eutrapelia* Cervantes communicates, in anticipation of what will be observed in the body of many of the following texts, an interest in both engaging and reforming tradition.

While considering Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* (1559) Lyons states that "[t]he novella is the genre that attempts to or pretends to show the world through examples, while the novel in the seventeenth century centers on the vain quest for examples" (72). It is characteristic of his intellectual depth and of his profound engagement with literary tradition that Cervantes should have chosen, in 1613, to claim to be the first to compose *novelas* in the Spanish language while, at the same time, infusing this traditionally grounded genre with the innovations that, according to Lyons, became associated with the more forward-looking novel.[36] The epistemic challenge brought about by the revival of skepticism demands a reassessment of all established conventions, whether they apply to genre, structure, or the content of a written work. The crisis of exemplarity articulated by Cervantes in his "Prólogo al lector" and in the stories it introduces constitutes one more manifestation of a persistent attempt to construct a more open standard of

[36] Cervantes was surely aware that he was not the first Spanish author to write short fiction. His claim expresses a wish to assert the originality of his *novelas*, and to see them separated from the many that were adapted directly from Italian sources. See Boyd, "Introduction" 8-12.

knowledge based on the deconstruction and reformation of old, inflexible models. Within this motion toward the decentralization of the sign and a non-dogmatic approach to cognition, long established concepts like exemplarity and *eutrapelia* become, in life as in literature, a matter of personal bias and individual hermeneutics. Within the fabric of Cervantes' skeptical rhetoric, the ultimate task of forging meaning rests in the minds of the readers, "cuidadosos" or "descuidados" as they may be.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction I refer to both skepticism and Cervantes as prominent cultural entities of early modern Spain; the former, a philosophy that contributed to a discourse of ambiguity, uncertainty, and ultimate disillusion (*desengaño*); the latter, a creative mind that embraced this discourse and channeled through it the perceived metaphysical and epistemic gaps embedded in all conceived realities. My analysis traced in Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* a level of engagement with skepticism that had up to now been overlooked by critics. This engagement, as I hope to have shown, employs the indeterminate and antithetical treatment of characters, motifs, and images to underscore skepticism's relevance to an individual's way of conceiving and embracing the world. More poignantly, it reflects and promotes the unsettling view that full knowledge, whether of self, other, nature, or the world, is unverifiable. The *Novelas* invite the reader to ponder not only the content of what she reads but also the tools employed in her interpretation of this often convoluted content. In a skeptical narrative environment in which essences are neither proved nor completely invalidated, the reader is guided toward embracing hermeneutic plurality and suspending judgment. It is easy to see how the texts discussed here, all of which have already been labeled by critics as meta-literary and meta-dialogical, could also be considered meta-philosophical, for they compel the reader to question the epistemic validity of the very assertions it employs in questioning itself. Cervantes' fictional elaboration on skepticism does what skepticism is supposed to do, turn reason against itself in proclaiming its own irrationality.

I also proposed the possibility of a direct influence on Cervantes by Montaigne's Pyrrhonian brand of skepticism. Despite their divergence in regard to style and genre, the "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" and the *Novelas* share an attitude of contempt toward

established knowledge and stereotypes, and toward the arrogance that a false sense of knowing brings. With the exception of the maker's knowledge argument, Montaigne's deliberations on crucial issues pertaining to skepticism – the problem of the criterion and the rule of faith – are reverberated and revitalized in Cervantes' skeptical fiction. This association points to Cervantes' willingness to identify more than a mere depository of general contradictory material with which to illustrate his age's *desengaño*. Rather, it suggests a tendency to use fiction as a stage from which to experiment with thoughts and attitudes that may lead to a less dogmatic – and hence less politically, socially, and religiously inflexible – way of approaching one's day-to-day epistemological and hermeneutical challenges. Cervantes' emphasis on a skeptical frame in the *Novelas* echoes Montaigne's disdain for human arrogance. It also inspires the reader to embrace the spiritual freedom of relative ignorance while repudiating the restraints of false knowledge.

Cervantes transfers these skeptical ideas and attitudes to the fabric of his *novelas.* The way in which he fictionalizes the problem of the criterion in "La gitanilla" and "La ilustre fregona" – by questioning the way identity and social status are established and *proved* within a social system permeated by decadence and immorality – highlights the futility of attaching stereotypes and fixed values to complex, transient human traits and behaviors. Similarly, the questioning of the criteria of faith in "La fuerza de la sangre" exposes the subjectivity of the individual's belief system and underscores the frivolousness in affixing a set standard for one's belief in God or grace. By exposing how vulnerable religious dogma is in the light of skepticism, Cervantes fictionalizes the debate that consumed Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe, and encourages the reader to consider these delicate, contentious issues in an environment protected from the ever present, watchful Church.

In the "Casamiento engañoso" and the "Coloquio de los perros" the author creates an epistemological vortex by juxtaposing a sequence of framed narratives, each of which is suspended by its own inferred insubstantiality. While the reader struggles to find a point of epistemic solidity from which to anchor her interpretation, it is the voice of the author that seems to ring through the skeptical narrative maze. Cervantes asserts his maker's knowledge and reminds the reader that within the realm of his creation, only he is afforded *true* knowledge.

In the "Prólogo al lector" Cervantes invites the reader to anticipate the skeptical attitude extended to the *Novelas* as he questions the tenets of exemplarity and exposes a new, more critical and skeptical way of establishing and interacting with an exemplar. Ever doubtful of long-accepted conventions and willing to experiment with new ways of envisioning life and contriving fiction, he promotes an exemplarity that encompasses the malleability and subjectivity of morality and that embraces the plurality intrinsic to any audience or human experience. He also employs this same reformist attitude toward redefining the ancient idea of *eutrapelia* in ways that take into consideration the plurality of his readership.

Considering skepticism and issues of epistemology in relation to any of Cervantes' works, and in particular the *Novelas ejemplares*, entails as many joys as challenges. Cervantes' relentless insistence on the juxtaposition of antithetical elements and on questioning the authenticity of truths and judgments causes the reader to eventually detach herself from the most elementary, necessary levels of dogmatism – those embedded in the relationship between signifier and signified – and to become virtually unable to posit anything with certainty in relation to her own interpretation. I believe that Cervantes not only envisioned this result but counted on it as a tool of individual and societal reformation. Although a complete suspension of judgment would render one incapable of functioning within society, the idea of such suspension,

with its implied movement toward a more humble self and tolerant belief system, is constant in Cervantes' works. In the *Novelas* that progressive agenda occupies a place of distinction.

A critic who approaches the *Novelas* from the epistemological angle also experiences the difficulty of selecting the particular aspects of the texts that best illustrate Cervantes' engagement with a crisis of knowledge. Given their complexity, these texts exude a deep skeptical vein in more ways that can be appropriately commented in a study like the present one. The problem of the criterion, given its nature and its fundamental claim, is found to permeate all other epistemological considerations. Similarly, the imagination, given its role in conceiving realities and engendering desire, affixing meaning to sense input and constructing cognition, cannot be extricated from any dialogue pertaining to issues of the nature, methods, and limits to knowledge. In this light, all questions ranging from rhetoric and semantics to religion, society, and politics become relevant. From his choice of words to his challenging of established definitions, from his critical juxtapositions of vice and virtue, duty and desire, morality and immorality, Cervantes conjures a brand of narrative that both overwhelms and charms. Through proposing the impossibility of absolute knowledge his texts incite the reader to embrace an epistemology of openness and antidogmatism, and to consider the world from a different perspective. The question remains as to whether or not his case is sufficiently persuasive to reform the vast pluralities contained in his readership. He may have counted on the properties of each individual's imagination to forward his agenda. As Cañizares points out, "nosotros somos autores del pecado, formándole en la intención, en la palabra y en la obra" (2: 342). The option to open or not the imagination to his message remains with each reader.

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