

Self-Consuming Narrative: The Problem of Reader Perspective in “La fuerza de la sangre”

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“La fuerza de la sangre” can be summarized as a tale of rape, recognition, and redemption. In some measure, discussion as to the story’s “meaning” has revolved around the unsettling fact that the story’s protagonist, Leocadia, a victim of rape, ostensibly finds justice in marriage to her rapist, Rodolfo.¹ The heroine’s redemption of her honor is the culmination of a series of recognitions, with Rodolfo finally recognizing his victim and their biological son born of rape. As the tale’s title suggests and as its final sentence reaffirms, the “force of blood” is what will in the end bind together the estranged members of this family. Yet, the fact that the happy ending is contingent upon successful recognitions becomes rather perplexing when we realize the epistemologically tenuous, sometimes contradictory, and also anachronistic circumstances of recognition itself. This thwarting of recognition’s smooth move “from ignorance to knowledge,”² is inscribed within a more generalized problematization of the tale’s whole internal epistemology, or basis for establishing knowledge within the tale. The effects of this are felt by the reader who, only by suppressing his own knowledge of certain problematic details, can make sense of a story that tends to “self-consume” at particularly crucial junctures.³ Consequently, Cervantes’ reader is often left in a state of interpretative uncertainty, as a coherent reading of the tale is steadily undermined by certain curious and insoluble interpretative problems. What follows is not a solution to these exegetical problems, but rather an analysis of how these textual phenomena give rise to a reading experience which Stanley Fish would describe as “progressive decertainizing” (384).

We observe two separate but intimately related cases of recognition unfolding over the course of the story. The first begins with Leocadia's famous "designio" involving a silver crucifix, which becomes circumstantial proof of her son's lineage (the stolen cross proves that she had been in Rodolfo's room, had been raped by him, and, consequently, that Luis is his child). The second recognition, related to the first, is the recognition of Luis's physiognomy by his grandparents and father, with the child's resemblance to the father becoming proof of their consanguinity. The first topic I will discuss is the silver crucifix which Leocadia steals from Rodolfo's room the night of the rape. Only by following the trail of the cross—apparently a key sign of recognition—do we discover its ultimate failure as a proof of Luis's identity, something with obvious implications for the reader's basic comprehension of the story. Secondly, beyond the crucifix, we will closely focus on the "human" dimension of recognition as represented in the text, which places great emphasis on the grandparents'—not the father's—recognition of Luisico based on his physical resemblance to his father.

To begin, I would like to cite Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce's critical introduction to the *Novelas ejemplares*. In his brief summary, he offers a model for how the story is generally read, with the silver cross playing a particularly central role:

La fuerza de la sangre narra una violación y una reconciliación, separadas por un intervalo de siete años, en los cuales nace y crece Luisico, el producto de dicha violación. La violación tiene lugar en la alcoba de Rodolfo, en la casa de sus padres. Se llega a la reconciliación a través de la identificación de dicha alcoba por Leocadia en la casa de los padres de Rodolfo. En la escena de la violación Leocadia sustrae un crucifijo de Rodolfo. Para llegar a la reconciliación figura como figura descollante dicho crucifijo. (28)

Avallé-Arce goes on to state: "El crucifijo es esencial para el feliz desenlace de ambas obras, y si bien en la obra cervantina no hay milagro, esto queda contrapesado por la efectividad actuante del mudo crucifijo" (30). Others cite the cross's prominence in the story, with Joaquín Casaldueiro going so far as to interpret it as "la promesa [. . .]

de ser vengado del demonio" (155). Likewise Güntert acknowledges that "si el crucifijo robado es una de las pruebas del encuentro entre Leocadia y Rodolfo, la semejanza del niño con su padre representa la otra" (183). As we know, after being raped, Leocadia later produces the cross before various people to demonstrate that she had been in Rodolfo's room and, hence, had been raped and impregnated by him. This leads to Rodolfo's mother cunningly arranging a meeting and marriage between Leocadia and Rodolfo, as the latter falls in love with Leocadia and is then convinced that Luis is his son. If the cross does play a key role in the story's recognitions and in its dénouement, what, then, are we to make of the fact that the cross, whenever presented by Leocadia for purposes of recognition, is simply not recognized?

Let us recall the first encounter between Leocadia and Rodolfo's parents. Luis had been trampled by a horse and spirited away to the house of Rodolfo's parents, Estefanía and her husband, a "caballero anciano" (2.86).⁴ Leocadia and her parents arrive to find Luis in stable condition. As Leocadia begins to examine the room in which she now finds herself, she recognizes it as the exact site of her rape seven years prior: "miró atentamente el aposento donde su hijo estaba, y claramente por muchas señales conoció que aquella era la estancia donde se había dado fin a su honra y principio a su desventura" (2.87). She then informs her mother of these findings, who then inquires "si el caballero donde su nieto estaba había tenido o tenía algún hijo" (2.87). The affirmative response along with a calculation of the years Rodolfo was said to have been in Italy finally completes Leocadia's recognition that this was the room in which she had been raped and that, consequently, Rodolfo was the rapist.

For one month, Luis convalesces in the home of the noble family. On a visit to see her son, Leocadia decides to tell Estefanía that Luis is in fact her grandson. Estefanía has just observed how Luis "se parecía tanto a un hijo suyo" before the narrator summarizes what Leocadia tells Estefanía of "la travesura de su hijo, la deshonra suya, el robo, el cubrirle los ojos, el traerla a aquel aposento, las señales en que había conocido ser aquel mismo que sospechaba" (2.88). To substantiate all of this, Leocadia produces the stolen cross: "Para cuya confirmación sacó del pecho la imagen del crucifijo, que había llevado. . ." (2.88). Leocadia then launches into a monologue addressed to the crucifix before falling "desmayada en los brazos de Estefanía" (2.88). In the completion of recognition that follows, I would like to

call attention to the fact that the crucifix, as described in the text, is never recognized by Estefanía nor her husband:

[Estefanía], como mujer y 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.

Estando las dos desta manera acertó a entrar el caballero marido de Estefanía, que traía a Luisico de la mano, y viendo el llanto de Estefanía y el desmayo de Leocadia preguntó a gran priesa le dijese la causa de do procedía. El niño abrazaba a su madre por su prima y a su abuela por su bienechora, y asimismo preguntaba por qué lloraban.

—Grandes cosas, señor, hay que deciros—respondió Estefanía a su marido—, cuyo remate se acabará con deciros que hagáis cuenta que esta desmayada es hija vuestra y este niño vuestro nieto. *Esta verdad que os digo me ha dicho esta niña, y la ha confirmado y confirma el rostro deste niño, en el cual entrambos habemos visto el de nuestro hijo.*” (2.89; my emphasis)

Thus, while Leocadia deliberately produces the cross in order to be recognized as having been in Rodolfo’s room the night of the rape, it is never indicated that the crucifix is recognized by Estefanía, who never makes any reference to it. Nor does the narrator mention Estefanía as having recognized the crucifix. Estefanía appears more convinced of Leocadia’s story based specifically on her pre-established recognition of Luis’s physiognomy—“el rostro deste niño”—not the crucifix. At one moment, Estefanía’s words might seem to refer to Leocadia having substantiated her narrative with some proof—“y la ha confirmado”—yet the subject here is unclear; it could correspond to “el rostro deste niño,” although “el rostro” is subject to the verb “confirma.” Otherwise, “confirmation” could easily refer to the verbal proofs offered by Leocadia as to her knowledge of the family home: “las señales en que había conocido ser aquel [aposento el] mismo

que sospechaba.” Subsequently, to his wife’s revelation, the *caballero* responds, “señora, yo no os entiendo” (2.89). When Estefanía tells him “todo aquello que Leocadia le había contado,” he “lo creyó, por divina permisión del cielo, como si con muchos y verdaderos testigos se lo hubieran probado” (2.89). Thus, neither Estefanía nor her husband ever recognize the circumstantial proof of Luis’s paternity—the cross—presented to them by Leocadia, an object never so much as mentioned by its original owners. Rather it is the face of the boy, Luis, in whom they see the compelling resemblance of their own son. Consequently, the question is not whether the reader or characters are confronted by signs of dubious authenticity; the reader is perfectly aware of the cross’s provenance. The problem lies in the sign never serving as sign. Hard proof of Luis’s lineage is presented, yet it goes unrecognized by his grandparents who have by now seen so much of their wandering son in the visage of this little boy named Luis.

We now follow the crucifix to its reappearance in the final recognition scene. One could surmise that the absence of an explicit recognition of the crucifix by Rodolfo’s parents is secondary to Rodolfo himself recognizing it, as it is his recognition of Luis’s paternity via the crucifix that truly matters. Yet, Rodolfo’s recognition of the cross never occurs either. As we will see, Rodolfo’s non-recognition of the crucifix is one of various interpretative dilemmas in this final scene, whose events follow a very odd chronology in which marriage actually precedes recognition.

Thus, we begin with the fact that Rodolfo and Leocadia are married—at his mother’s behest—before Rodolfo is ever informed of Leocadia’s true identity or that of his son (2.94). By extension, neither Rodolfo’s ostensible recognition of his error (rape) nor recognition of his child occasion the marriage. Rodolfo, in marrying Leocadia, has not done so based on any inner transformation or recognition of the injustice committed against her, of which Luis is the living sign. Luis’s existence remains unknown to Rodolfo as he falls for Leocadia—still unaware of her identity—driven not by spiritual affinity but by raw desire: “llevado de su amoroso y encendido deseo” (2.94).⁵ Only after the marriage and in the midst of a celebration does Estefanía (via the narrator) reveal the truth to Rodolfo and his “camaradas”: “que Leocadia era la doncella que en su [las camaradas de Rodolfo] compañía su hijo había robado” (2.94). In theory, this marks the moment of Rodolfo’s recognition of Leocadia’s identity, although

whether he is actually capable of recognizing her is subject to doubt.: “Rodolfo se fue [a Italia] con tan poca memoria de lo que con Leocadia le había sucedido como si nunca hubiera pasado” (2.85). Here we have a conflict in signification in which the text casts doubt on Rodolfo’s ability to remember this victim of his. A second example will serve to further undermine our faith in the character’s ability to recognize the truth of things.

Next, the narrator describes Rodolfo’s reaction to the revelation of Leocadia’s identity: “Y por certificarse más de aquella verdad preguntó a Leocadia le dijese alguna señal por donde viniese en conocimiento entero de lo que no dudaba, por parecerles que sus padres lo tendrían bien averiguado” (2.94). Leocadia responds with, as she describes it, a presentation of two signs:

Cuando yo recordé y volví en mí de otro desmayo me hallé, señor, en vuestros brazos sin honra; pero yo lo doy por bien empleado, pues al volver del que ahora he tenido, ansimismo me hallé en los brazos de entonces, pero honrada. *Y si esta señal no basta, baste la de una imagen de un crucifijo que nadie os la pudo hurtar sino yo: si es que por la mañana le echastes menos y si es el mismo que tiene mi señora.* (2.95; my emphasis)

Rodolfo demonstrates no recognition of these “señales,” as the narrator has the next word: “Y abrazándola de nuevo, de nuevo volvieron las bendiciones y parabienes que les dieron” (2.95).⁶ Again, not only does Rodolfo not acknowledge the crucifix, but also, on close inspection, we find that the crucifix is probably not even in his view; Leocadia clearly does not present it to him, but rather only references the crucifix as being “el mismo que tiene mi señora,” meaning that the cross may or may not even be present.⁷ Whether the crucifix is visible to him or not would probably make no difference, for, according to the narrator, neither Rodolfo nor his parents would probably be capable of recognizing a crucifix of which they are hardly even aware: the morning after the theft, seven years prior, “Rodolfo [. . .] echando de menos la imagen del crucifijo, imaginó quién podía haberla llevado; *pero no se le dio nada, y como rico, no hizo cuenta dello, ni sus padres se la pidieron cuando de allí a tres días que él partió a Italia, entregó por cuenta a sus camarera de su madre todo lo que en el aposento*

dejaba" (2.84; my emphasis). As early as the time Rodolfo had left for Italy, seven years prior, this cross seems to have figured little—if at all—in the household's collective consciousness, nor does it now figure in its written inventory. Once again, the cross appears to be instrumental to recognition, yet now it might not even be present in the recognition scene. To be sure, this would not be the only time that Cervantes would attenuate the certainty of recognition by excluding the signs themselves from the recognition scene.⁸

Finally, in her presentation of signs to Rodolfo, we find that Leocadia has omitted the one sign that others have found so compelling: Luis's physiognomy. Curiously, she simply never cites her son's visage as proof of Rodolfo's paternity. When Rodolfo finally, on his own accord, does recognize Luis, it is a fleeting moment of little consequence, described in one brief sentence embedded within the narrator's description of the wedding festivities: "Vino la cena, y vinieron músicos que para esto estaban prevenidos. *Viose Rodolfo a sí mismo en el espejo del rostro de su hijo*. Lloraron sus cuatro abuelos de gusto. No quedó rincón en toda la casa que no fue visitado con júbilo. . . ." (2.95; my emphasis). Once again, as he is only now recognizing his son, we know his marriage to Leocadia to not have been motivated by a sense of paternal duty, just as he too only learned of Leocadia's identity after taking the marriage vows. Recognition of his son, *ex post facto*, occurs easily for Rodolfo as the proofs now seem overwhelmingly clear to him: not only does he have his mother's assurances, Leocadia's testimonial and her *mention* of the cross, he now is able to see himself in his son's visage. In any case, as he himself suggests, Rodolfo need not trouble himself too much as to the veracity of Leocadia's story as certainly "sus padres lo tendrían bien averiguado."⁹ However, we recall, they too had failed to recognize the one sign—the crucifix—indicating Leocadia had even been in their home as she had claimed. And, they too, as the narrator already informed us, might not remember owning such a cross: "ni sus padres se la [imagen del crucifijo] pidieron cuando de allí a tres días que él partió a Italia."

Thus, the cross appears to never actually function as a proof of Luis's identity within the text. Nowhere does the text indicate that the characters recognize the cross when it is shown to them. Moreover, the text even goes so far as to self-reflexively prompt the reader to question the recognizers' ability to recognize the cross. What this

means is that, thus far, Cervantes has put the reader in the peculiar position of having to make sense of recognitions that only superficially appear to satisfy recognition's theoretical move "from ignorance to knowledge," but which actually disrupt the reader's comprehension of the story by infusing textual content with epistemological uncertainty. It should be mentioned that such an unusual textual configuration actually has theoretical underpinnings in an ingenious narrative "trick" based on *anagnorisis*, as understood by certain neo-Aristotelian theorists.¹⁰ Whatever the theoretical case may be, in various instances, the basis for establishing knowledge within the text, acceptable for the characters, is actually filled with holes and elicits questions from the reader. Yet, the cross is only one of two means of establishing truth and identity within the tale. The other is of course Luis' physiognomy. In what remains of this paper, I would like to re-examine how the process of recognition might otherwise unfold in the text in exclusion of the cross. Toward this end, I would like to resume my analysis at that crucial point in the narrative when Luis is trampled by a horse and his paternal grandfather comes to his rescue, unbeknownst to him that the boy is actually his grandson.

Alban K. Forcione describes the encounter between Luis and his grandfather as follows:

With the appearance of the child, people begin to look at one another, and, when the grandfather asserts that, gazing on the fallen child lying in the pool of blood pouring from his head, 'it appeared to him that he had beheld the face of a son of his, whom he dearly loved,' it is as if all the masks, the coverings, and the shadows that have remained impenetrable to vision in the tale were suddenly lifted. (368)

Whereas Forcione sees this moment as a lifting of shadows and a moment of clarity, I would like to propose that it, rather differently, marks the beginning of a process of recognition which we have already seen to be so problematic, from the reader's perspective. As we will now see, the grandfather's first encounter with Luis initiates another means by which recognition will be effected over the course of the story, recognition via Luis' physiognomy. Yet, as was the case with the cross, recognition based on physical appearance will be no less problematic, as far as the reader is concerned.

In fact, this first encounter between the grandfather and Luis is itself unusual as first demonstrated in Forcione's citation, which in the original Spanish reads: "cuando vió al niño caído y atropellado, le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo, a quien él quería tiernamente, y que esto le movió a tomarle en sus brazos y a traerle a su casa" (2.86, my emphasis). That is, the *caballero's* initial fortuitous recognition of his injured grandson and subsequent desire to take him home is not textually represented to be an instinctive "blood-will-tell" type attraction; nor does the narrator at that particular moment describe the grandfather as "gazing on the fallen child lying in the pool of blood pouring from his head," as Forcione suggested above. That is, neither real blood nor any kind of blood-type attraction has been mentioned yet. Instead, recognition, we are told, is based solely on what *seemed* to the *caballero* to be the face of his son: "le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo." As stated in the text, it is this *parecer* and this alone which "le movió a tomarle en sus brazos y a traerle a su casa," not any biological attraction. In the context of *anagnorisis*, the use of "parecer" serves to further attenuate the already uncertain recognition based solely on physical resemblance ("parecerse"); that is, not only does the narrator not state that there was a biological attraction between the two, nor does he simply state that the child "resembled" the man's own son, but rather we are told that "it seemed" to the man that he had seen the visage of his own boy in Luis's face. This, of course, recalls the well-known Cervantine perspectivist equivocation based on "pareceres," as first explained by Américo Castro.¹¹ Subsequently, the text will re-emphasize this recognition based solely on perspective and appearance in a comment made by Estefanía: "Y algunas veces, hablando con Leocadia doña Estefanía [. . .] le decía que aquel niño se parecía tanto a un hijo suyo que estaba en Italia, que ninguna vez le miraba que no le pareciese [ver]¹² a su hijo delante [. . .]" (2.87, my emphasis). It goes without saying that this whole question of resemblance between Luis and Rodolfo is further attenuated given their age disparity, one a grown man, the other a boy 8 years of age.

The effect of these comments made by the grandparents is that the epistemological uncertainty connoted by the verb "parecer" has been introduced into the process of recognition, a process whose certainty will only continue to become attenuated in the characters' repeated failure to recognize the crucifix and the narrator's suggestion that such

a cross was unrecognizable to them. Whatever one chooses to make of the relationship between “parecer” and recognition, it does serve to erode the epistemological basis of recognition, as perception and physical resemblance are emphasized to the exclusion of the traditional instinctive or “blood” attraction.¹³ Again, it is not a question of the reader not knowing the child’s identity, which he does know, but rather it is a question of the reader continuing to witness recognitions occurring among characters that fail to establish “knowledge” in a way that is convincing to the reader. The text continues to elicit questions in the midst of recognition, a process whose theoretical function of bringing forth the underlying truth of things now becomes problematized at every step.

However, this is only one of various moments in the text in which the grandfather’s recognition of Luis is described, which we have seen to not be based on an instinctive biological attraction. The “parecer” comment we just analyzed was made retrospectively, after Luis was in the safety of his grandparents’ home well after the accident. Let us now return to the actual moment of the accident to see how recognition might have unfolded. The accident:

[D]ejó [Luis] como muerto tendido en el suelo, derramando mucha sangre de la cabeza. Apenas esto hubo sucedido, cuando un caballero anciano que estaba mirando la carrera, con no vista ligereza se arrojó de su caballo y fue donde estaba el niño, y quitándole de los brazos de uno que ya le tenía le puso en los suyos, y sin tener cuenta con sus canas ni con su autoridad, que era mucho, a paso largo se fue a su casa [. . .]. (2.86)

First, the “miraculousness” of the encounter between Luis and his grandfather seems slightly diminished given that the *caballero* actually takes the injured Luisico from somebody else who was comforting him: “quitándole de los brazos de uno que ya le tenía.” More significantly, the text does not indicate that there was a recognition prior to the *caballero*’s taking of Luis from the other onlooker. In fact, everything transpires so rapidly as to almost prevent such a recognition; the man acted “con no vista ligereza.” That is, as the narrator tells us, neither the sight of blood nor the child’s visage—neither of which are mentioned—provoke anything similar to recognition at the moment

the *caballero* first encounters the injured boy. Nor do we observe any kind of “blood” attraction.

Let us compare this to the third description of that encounter, found in the last sentence of the tale: “*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). Different than the previous two descriptions, this one appears to represent recognition not as a function of Luis’s appearance, but rather as a result of “*la sangre, que vio derramada en el suelo.*” Again, at the actual moment of recognition the narrator never described any such sighting of “blood on the ground” by the *caballero*. Moreover, *spilled* blood, it should be noted, is not a component of the “blood will tell” motif, which is a psychological-biological reaction in the recognizer when in the presence of the recognized, something which never occurs here, as far as the reader knows. Therefore, any definitive statement of recognition based on Luis’s unquestionable likeness to Rodolfo appears to self-consume in these three distinct and even contradictory representations of recognition, all of which leave questions as to how and why recognition was actually precipitated in the grandfather’s mind. Most curious is that the narrator never describes recognition as happening at the moment at which it is in fact supposed to have transpired. Thus, when the grandfather observes that “*le pareció que había visto el rostro de un hijo suyo,*” it is well after the fact, a retrospective comment, specifically made when the child is lying in the bed of the *caballero*’s own son, Rodolfo, now years absent from home.

Just as Doña Estefanía previously emphasized “*el rostro de este niño*” as proof positive of Luis’s paternity, the grandfather’s recognition appears to be exclusively based on appearances. In and of itself, recognition based on physiognomy might not strike a reader as running contrary to sound literary logic. Whatever one’s opinion might be, the notion of recognition based on physiognomy will indirectly be questioned when the text eventually subjects Luis’s paternity to doubt, a topic which one must set aside for the moment.

In any event, the *caballero* is driven to take Luisico to his home, ostensibly based on the man’s recognition of a resemblance between the boy and his own son. It is now that his wife, Doña Estefanía, also begins to develop a relationship with Luis. She, as already mentioned, also sees the resemblance. If her husband was responsible for bringing the boy to the family home, then it will be Doña Estefanía

who takes charge of reuniting and facilitating recognition among all the parties involved, Rodolfo, Leocadia, and their son Luis. In fact, Doña Estefanía reveals her Odyssean sagacity when cunningly choreographing a ruse in order to manipulate her son into marrying Leocadia, a rushed marriage occurring well before Rodolfo even recognizes Leocadia as the mother of his child.

Like the *cura* in the Captain's story (*Don Quixote* 1.39–41), Doña Estefanía will now assume the role of mediator in recognition, in this case between Rodolfo and Leocadia.¹⁴ That is, Doña Estefanía's "designio" will now be implemented (2.90).¹⁵ The first move is to send Rodolfo, now in Italy, a message informing him that "le tenían concertado casamiento con una mujer hermosa sobremanera y tal cual para él convenía" (2.89). Rodolfo, upon hearing the news, eagerly departs for Toledo "con la golosina de gozar de tan hermosa mujer" (2.89). The news about the arranged marriage is actually true, as Rodolfo's parents hope to marry him to Leocadia. Yet, what follows is pure deception on his mother's part. Rodolfo arrives and is discussing his bride-to-be with his parents. Doña Estefanía shows him a portrait not of Leocadia, but of an unknown girl who we learn is rather unattractive: "Este es su verdadero retrato; pero quiérote advertir que lo que le falta de belleza le sobra de virtud; es noble y discreta y medianamente rica, y pues tu padre y yo te la hemos escogido, asegúrate que es la que te conviene" (II, 91). Thus, Doña Estefanía has begun to spin an ingenious fiction directed at her son, and she fools him by showing him a portrait not of Leocadia but of some anonymous and unattractive girl. Upon seeing the portrait, Rodolfo responds negatively, emphasizing that he must have a beautiful wife: "sin duda creo que el original debe de ser la misma fealdad [. . .]. Pues pensar 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, puede deleitar, otra vez digo que lo tengo por casi imposible [. . .]. La hermosura busco, la belleza quiero [. . .]" (2.91). It turns out that this reaction of disgust is just what his mother had hoped for, given (as the text implies) she believes Rodolfo will now be more inclined to fall for the ostensibly more beautiful Leocadia: "Contentísima quedó su madre de las razones de Rodolfo, por haber conocido por ellas que iba saliendo bien con su designio" (2.91).

Above, we observed the cunning of Estefanía in tricking her son. This simple trick now becomes quite elaborate and will reach theatrical proportion as her entire staff, Leocadia's parents, and Leocadia

and Luis themselves are given “roles” to play, all with the goal, not of effecting recognition, but rather of luring Rodolfo into marrying Leocadia. Leocadia appears before Rodolfo:

Venía vestida, por ser invierno, de una saya entera de terciopelo negro llovida de botones de oro y perlas, cintura y collar de diamantes. Sus mismos cabellos, que eran luengos y no demasiado rubios, le servían de adorno y tocas, cuya invención de lazos y rizos y vislumbres de diamantes que con ellos se entretenían, turbaban la luz de los ojos que los miraban. Era Leocadia de gentil disposición y brío. Traía de la mano a su hijo, y delante della venían dos doncellas alumbrándola con dos velas de cera en dos candeleros de plata. (2.92)

The elaborate appearance of Leocadia and choreography of this entire scene are all part of Doña Estefanía’s strategem which, as we now see, produces the desired effect on Rodolfo: “que desde más cerca miraba la incomparable belleza de Leocadia, decía entre sí: ‘Si la mitad desta hermosura tuviera la que mi madre me tiene escogida por esposa, tuviérame yo por el más dichoso hombre del mundo.’ ¡Válame Dios! ¡Qué es esto que veo! ¿Es por ventura algún angel humano el que estoy mirando?” (2.92).

Soon Leocadia faints and Rodolfo comes to her rescue, also fainting in the process. When he awakens:

su madre, casi como adivina de lo que su hijo sentía, le dijo: —No te corras, hijo, de los extremos que has hecho, sino córrete de los que no hicieres cuando sepas lo que no quiero tenerte más encubierto, puesto que pensaba dejarlo hasta más alegre coyuntura. Has de saber, hijo de mi alma, que esta desmayada que en los brazos tengo es tu verdadera esposa; llamo verdadera porque yo y tu padre te la teníamos escogida, que la del retrato es falsa. (2.94)

Curiously, Estefanía continues by “diciendo al cura que luego desposase a su hijo con Leocadia” (2.94). Leocadia and Rodolfo are swiftly married, and then, anachronistically, Rodolfo receives the truth of Leocadia’s identity, albeit with very little specificity. And, as we

have already seen, the text does not show us that Rodolfo is actually capable of recognizing the crucifix, nor even this girl.¹⁶

Thus, if the *cura*, as did Odysseus long before him, used deceptive means to gauge the recognizer's affections and thereby better control recognition, we find Doña Estefanía taking the use of deceptive recognition to new heights. In traditional recognition scenes, deception is only used as a gauge of affections: either as a means to ascertain fidelity (in the case of Odysseus) or to gauge psychological state so as to more effectively ease two parties into the "shock" awaiting them at the moment of recognition (as the *cura* does in the Captain's tale). The reestablishment of interpersonal relationships then takes place subsequent to recognition. In Doña Estefanía's ruse we observe something very different. The direct result of—and we can safely say the purpose behind—the ruse is not recognition, but rather marriage, which actually precedes recognition. Here, marriage effectively means the spontaneous formation of a nuclear family comprised of Rodolfo, Leocadia, and Luis. As we have already observed, Rodolfo's recognition of his future wife and child does not take place until after marriage, as Estefanía hastened the couple into taking vows. Thus, some very basic questions emerge as to Doña Estefanía's "designio": Why is she so personally invested specifically in her son's marriage, rather than, say, his contrition? Does she have any concrete interest in the couple's marriage, an act she single-handedly orchestrates? While the text offers no specific answers to these questions, what we do know is that Doña Estefanía had long ago decided that Luis was her grandson and that maintaining that relationship would be contingent upon marriage of her son to Leocadia. Marriage, not recognition, appears to be of overriding concern here: if no marriage were to occur, then there would be no grandchild for Estefanía. Thus, *her* needs could appear to be the driving force behind this ruse, not those of her son. Likewise, it appears that this character's "real" interests have insinuated themselves into what began as a "miraculous" process of recognition, initiated in the fortuitous encounter between grandfather and child. Just what motivates Estefanía is subject to doubt and is something that Cervantes leaves the reader to sort out. In any case, recognition continues to call attention to itself, it requires interpretation, yet the text yields no clear answers.

In "La fuerza de la sangre," as in other *Novelas*, recognition persistently figures as a focal point of exegetical uncertainty.¹⁷ What makes

“La fuerza de la sangre” unique is that the reader has for the most part enjoyed a privileged point of view throughout the story, namely concerning the identities of the characters, especially Luis. Nevertheless, there exists considerable uncertainty regarding the reading of signs of identity. The problem of the signs has to do with the text leaving the reader to sort out the fact that characters have not recognized the signs at all—as in the case of the crucifix—or, otherwise, there is textual equivocation as to what actually precipitates recognition of Luis in the mind of the grandfather. In short, one feels a certain “anxiety,” to use Terence Cave’s term, owing to the discernible slippage between what the reader knows to be the truth and the ability of the characters to recognize it for themselves in a way that is convincing to the reader.¹⁸ In spite of recognition’s peculiar shortcomings—in spite of its “pareceres”—it would be gratuitous to even entertain the notion that the grandfather could have been mistaken, that this boy who *seems* to look like his son might not be his son. We categorically reject this idea as being absurd as we know Luis to have been born of Rodolfo’s rape of Leocadia. Yet, the text does not let us reject it so easily, for once Luis has reached the age of seven, the narrator does not describe him as looking like Rodolfo, the man we know to be his father, but rather as looking like “some” man of nobility: “daba señales de ser de *algún noble padre engendrado*” (2.85, my emphasis).

Just what exactly is meant by “de algún noble padre engendrado” would not merit a second thought if not for the persistent interpretative problems posed by recognition throughout this tale, of which we have seen many examples. Thus, the next logical step would be to ask a question which at first seems absurd, yet which the text itself mischievously invites one to ask: Could this child, Luis, have been sired by a man other than Rodolfo? Naturally, we have no way of definitively answering this question. On the other hand, scientifically speaking, we do not have any concrete proof that Rodolfo is the biological father; we simply know that he raped Leocadia. Overshadowing this fact, we also have the narrator telling us that the child resembles “some” (other?) man of nobility. Here, the reader is confronted with a basic conflict of signification and, to be sure, it would not be the first time a Cervantine *Novela* would self-consume at such a crucial narrative juncture.¹⁹

So, what is one to do with this “de algún noble padre engendrado”? On the one hand, the text now opens itself to the reader’s imagina-

tion. A particularly imaginative reader might refashion these textual fragments into a metanarrative as follows: Leocadia was impregnated out of wedlock by ‘some’ man of nobility. Soon after, she happened one night to be attacked by Rodolfo, who, by raping her, unwittingly concealed her previous dishonor, by now granting her victim status. In this scenario, Leocadia, actually submitted to abduction and the horror of rape in order to avoid an even more horrific prospect: having to reveal and having to live with the fact that she previously had had consensual sex with and become impregnated out of wedlock by ‘some’ other man of nobility. In such an honor-bound society, there was paradoxically more honor in being impregnated by rape than by choice when out of wedlock. Thus, in the eyes of her parents and (only after being married) in the eyes of society, Leocadia retains her honor by concealing her initial pregnancy behind the guise of rape. Consequently, it is possible that Luis was fathered by ‘some’ other man of nobility, although we can never truly know his paternity.

Wherever one’s imagination might lead him, the text itself stops well short. We simply cannot know if there was “some” other man of nobility, as the text tantalizingly infers. While the question of paternity appears to lead to a dead end, it is a question meriting further exploration given that it lingers about the text in unexpected ways that will prove still more disruptive to the reader’s ability to make easy sense of what “really” happens in this tale. Our focus necessarily shifts to Leocadia.

Leocadia has been the subject of critical attention owing to her “discreción” and general cunning.²⁰ The fact is that, Leocadia, far from being a one-dimensional character, is actually one of Cervantes’ most unfathomable. In addition to being cunning, Leocadia is probably the most duplicitous character in all of Cervantes’ work. Her duplicity has often been cited, I believe myopically, as an example of the author’s failure to create coherent characters in this tale.²¹ Here duplicity—manifested as repeated and inexplicable behavioral contradictions—are what make her not only a highly problematic, but also an unreliable character. She is “unreliable” in the sense that the reader is repeatedly made aware that she is not forthright in what she says and does. This could have far reaching consequences for the reader: If Leocadia is unreliable, then Luis’ paternity, and, ultimately, the “rape and redemption” narrative itself fall under a shadow of doubt. Thus, I echo Kartchner’s feelings on the matter: “Am I suggesting

that Leocadia raped Rodolfo, or that Rodolfo did not rape Leocadia? No. [. . .] [H]owever, certain words or phrases cause me to question the apparent intentions of the narrator and the characters and to readjust the way I view the presentation of the rape" (546). Let us see how Leocadia's character is constructed in such a way as to inspire interpretative uncertainty in the reader.

We are introduced to Leocadia at the beginning of the tale. Soon, she is kidnapped and raped. Once she awakens in her assailant's bedroom, she launches into a lengthy monologue which includes a desperate request for Rodolfo to kill her, "¡Quítamela [vida] al momento, que no es bien que la tenga la que no tiene honra!" (2.79). Soon after, she retracts this request: "No quiero desesperarme, porque te costará poco el dármele" (2.80). Another peculiar behavioral contradiction is seen in the remarkable difference in her reaction to Rodolfo's first attack, during the kidnapping, and a second attack against her when in his bedroom: Rodolfo easily spirited away Leocadia "*la cual no tuvo fuerzas para defenderse y el sobresalto le quitó la voz para quejarse, y aun la luz de los ojos, pues, desmayada y sin sentido, no vio quién la llevaba, ni a dónde la llevaban*" (2.78; my emphasis). Yet, Rodolfo's second attempt to rape her fails as "Leocadia, *con más fuerzas de las que su tierna edad prometían, se defendió con los pies, con las manos, con los dientes...*" (2.81; my emphasis). Perhaps the most troubling contradictions are those arising from her irreconcilable desires to simultaneously forget and to remember her rapist. Leocadia states to Rodolfo: "no quiero acordarme de mi ofensor ni guardar en la memoria la imagen del autor de mi daño" (2.80). Yet, almost immediately afterward, we find that her "discreto designio" involving the theft of the cross and memorizing details of the room has no other purpose than to use these as signs by which to some day recognize (or be recognized by) her assailant. In fact, by the time she reaches home just after the rape, she reveals to her father a cunning scheme by which the cross could be used to determine the identity of her rapist (2.83). Oddly, just moments after arriving home, she had stated that "no deseaba venir en conocimiento de su ofensor" (2.83). Quite simply, the reader has no idea as to whether Leocadia intends to put the rape out of memory, or to hunt down the rapist. Leocadia's character self-consumes amidst her conflicting motivations, thus leaving the reader to wonder just who she is and what her real intentions are.

Still more of Leocadia's equivocations merit our attention. At the moment of the theft, the narrator states that Leocadia took the icon "no por devoción ni por hurto, sino llevada de un discreto designio suyo" (2.82). Yet, the object suddenly acquires sentimental value when she produces it for Estefanía: Leocadia states to the crucifix, "te llevé con propósito de acordarte siempre mi agravio" (2.88). Likewise, we find Leocadia stating that the cross was taken "para rogarte [la cruz] me dieses algún consuelo con que llevar en paciencia mi desgracia" (2.88). In addition to these obvious contradictions, still more could be said of Leocadia's unreliability given her aptitude for ingenious schemes and her subtle but telling suggestion that she might be capable of feigning a swoon.²²

One could debate the inconsistency in Leocadia's character as being the result of careless writing or as being a facet of a greater narrative strategy. Yet, based on the preceding textual evidence that this story tends to inspire uncertainty surrounding the characters and circumstances of recognition, Leocadia's unfathomable character is simply one more attempt to confound the reader's ability to make easy sense of the plot's most basic parameters. We are not told that Leocadia is lying about Luis's paternity, that she is manipulating Rodolfo and the reader into believing something that is not true. Rather it is repeatedly suggested to the reader that Leocadia's actions and words might not be what they appear to be, given her constantly shifting motivations. Compounding the problem is the narrator whose "de algún noble padre engendrado" comment leaves much uncertainty and much room for interpretation, and ultimately casts doubt on Leocadia herself and Luis' paternity. Short of yielding up some hidden truth about Luis' paternity (some "figure in the carpet") all the text does is inspire doubt and nothing more.

Guided by Stanley Fish's concept of "self-consuming artifacts," I have attempted to analyze "La fuerza de la sangre" by following a methodology in which one question ("What does this story *mean*?") has been substituted by another ("What does this story *do*?"). Just what this story does to the reader is, I hope, clearer now that we have enumerated the ways in which the text undermines the reader's sense of the truth of the story's own events. That is, the objective here has not been to "crack the code" of the text to identify a possible hidden meaning. Rather, I have only attempted to describe certain interpretative problems arising from this text's highly problematic means of

communicating information to the reader. Generally speaking, recognition is a process by which latent narrative truths are manifested to reader and/or character. Yet, recognition, as it unfolds in “La fuerza de la sangre,” moves in the opposite direction, repeatedly obscuring (apparent) facts or truths in ways that render reader perspective highly problematic. In other words, one observes in this tale various events (usually recognitions) whose basic truth self-consumes at crucial junctures: a crucifix is presented for recognition, although it appears to have gone unrecognized by those unable to recognize it; Luis’s resemblance to Rodolfo appears to have precipitated the grandfather’s recognition of him, yet the text obscures that event by offering alternative and contradictory explanations of it; Luis’s paternity seems indisputable, yet the text again turns back on itself and asks the reader to question this “fact;” finally, we read this tale as a “rape and redemption” narrative, yet the narrator’s “algún noble padre” comment and the unreliability of Leocadia’s character cast a long shadow of doubt over her role in the rape and over her motivation in general. Leocadia’s duplicitousness also finds form in Doña Estefanía, whose cunning choreography of the marriage scene elicits basic questions from the reader regarding her true motivation, which is unclear in the text. Given “La fuerza de la sangre”’s problematization of reader perspective, it could aptly be labeled as perspectivist, or self-consuming, or, as Américo Castro once generally described Cervantes’s style, “elusivo.”²³ However one chooses to frame it, it is a narrative whose self-reflexive tendency to undermine its own truth vis-à-vis the reader would probably appear unthinkable as a deliberate narrative gambit, if not for the fact that Cervantes is best known for a certain chivalric “history” whose own authenticity and authority never cease to be subject to doubt throughout the story.

Notes

1. As Ruth El Saffar states, “[f]or the modern reader it is almost impossible to understand how a girl could fall in love with and marry the same man who had raped her seven years earlier” (128). Thus, the story’s unsettling outcome has led to a number of symbolical or allegorical interpretations that forward the idea of a morally exemplary ending signified in the rapist’s marriage to his victim and the resultant recovery of her honor.

See, for example, Casalduero (160–65), El Saffar (136–38), Forcione (391), Calcraft (283–85), and Slaniceanu (107). Oppositely, Kartchner (1998) cleverly reassesses the text and questions the nature of the story's events in light of discursive ambiguities that appear to problematize a morally exemplary reading of the tale.

2. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines *anagnorisis*, or recognition, as “a change by which those marked for good or for bad fortune pass from a state of ignorance into a state of knowledge which disposes them either to friendship or enmity towards each other.” I now and will continue to cite *The Poetics of Aristotle*, trans., Preston H. Epps (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 21.

3. Stanley Fish defines a “self-consuming artifact” as a text in which “[t]he prose is continually opening, but then closing, on the possibility of verification in one direction or another” (385). A self-consuming artifact could encompass a variety of phenomena, such as “the projection of syntactical and/or lexical probabilities; their subsequent occurrence or non-occurrence; attitudes toward persons, or things, or ideas referred to; the reversal or questioning of those attitudes; and much more” (388).

4. Unless otherwise noted, all citations from “La fuerza de la sangre,” are from Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, ed., Harry Sieber, vol. 2.

5. I agree with Gitlitz and Zimic that there is little textual justification to believe that Rodolfo has undergone a spiritual transformation by tale's end, an idea set forth by many, for example Calcraft: “Three years in Italy have wrought such a change in him that we seem to be in the presence of a man who understands the complexities of human relationships [. . .]” (201).

6. Zimic perceptively observes that “el crucifijo que Leocadia le muestra no le causa a Rodolfo contrición alguna, ni siquiera la más leve emoción [. . .]” (211).

7. It is interesting to note how the unusual treatment of the cross in these scenes might invite a misreading. Alban K. Forcione's analysis, from which my own reading has greatly benefited, deviates from the text: “However, in the concluding recognition scene, [Leocadia] returns from her third swoon and responds to Rodolfo's request for proof (a “*señal*”) of her identity *by producing the cross* and reminding him that she alone could have stolen it on the day of its disappearance” (380, my emphasis). Again, Leocadia does not “produce” the cross, rather she unequivocally states that it is in the possession of her “*señora*.”

8. In the *Persiles*, the episode of Feliciana de la Voz (288–309) confronts the reader with a similar situation in which the key sign of recog-

niton is simply absent in the climactic final recognition. When recognition does finally occur, the child being “recognized” is not even present, yet is successfully recognized but only on the tenuous basis of verbal asertions of his resemblance to the mother’s brother.

9. In addition to the fact that Estefanía has not (and could not?) recognize the crucifix, we do find her making another attempt to ascertain facts from the night of the rape, so as to assure herself, presumably, of Leocadia’s version of the events. As one can see, this scene continues to inspire uncertainty as to whether these were even the same friends present the night of the rape, thereby showing Estefanía to still be basing her recognition of Luis on the shiftest of foundations: “Los camaradas de Rodolfo quisieran irse a sus casas luego, pero no lo consintió Estefanía por haberlos menester para su designio. Estaba cerca la noche cuando Rodolfó llegó, y, en tanto que se aderezaba la cena, Estefanía llamó aparte los camaradas de su hijo, creyendo, sin duda alguna, que ellos debían ser los dos de los tres que Leocadia había dicho que iban con Rodolfo la noche que la robaron, y con grandes ruegos les pidió le dijese si se acordaban que su hijo había robado a una mujer tal noche, tantos años había . . . *Y con tantos y tales encarecimientos se lo supo rogar y de tal manera les asegurar que de descubrir este robo no les podía suceder daño alguno, que ellos tuvieron por bien de confesar ser verdad que una noche de verano, yendo ellos dos y otro amigo con Rodolfo, robaron en la misma que ella señalaba a una muchacha, y que Rodolfo se había venido con ella mientras ellos detenían a la gente de su familia, que con voces la querían defender, y que otro día les había dicho Rodolfo que la había llevado a su casa, y sólo esto era lo que podían responder a lo que les preguntaban.* La confesión destos dos fue echar la llave a todas las dudas que en tal caso le podían ofrecer [. . .]” (2.90; my emphasis). Various doubts arise, the first being the fact that the narrator conflates Estefanía’s discourse with that of the witnesses, thus making it difficult to ascertain where her imploring ends and where the witnesses’ testimony begins (see highlighted text). Second, we see here Estefanía “creyendo, sin duda alguna” that these two men formed part of the group of three reported by Leocadia that accompanied Rodolfo on the night of the rape. Not only does the narrator never corroborate that “fact,” but also there exists another discrepancy on this point, as the reader knows that Rodolfo was accompanied by “cuatro amigos suyos” the night of the rape, (2.77). Thus, whether these are the same friends that accompanied Rodolfo on that fateful night seven years could be subject to doubt owing to the text’s conflicting accountss of the number of participants. And, might Rodolfo’s cohorts have difficulties in determining one rape from

another, given that Rodolfo's ill behavior appears to have been habitual?: "la sangre ilustre, la riqueza, la inclinación torcida, la libertad demasiada y las compañías libres, le hacían hacer cosas y tener atrevimientos que desdecían de su calidad y le daban renombre de atrevido" (2.77; my emphasis). Is their "confession"—which we do not hear directly—not more like a coerced agreement to the events spelled out to them by Estefanía? Not at all surprising, this "confirmation" of the rape hardly constitutes solid evidence.

10. Full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this paper. The idea that Cervantes would try in some way to "trick" his reader in the midst of recognition is grounded in theories set forth by neo-Aristotelians, such as Castelvetro and Robortello. Renaissance commentators seized on Aristotle's discussion (*Poetics* 16 and 24) of *paralogism* (logical fallacy or *falso sillogismo*, as Castelvetro states it) as representing a highly ingenious "type" of recognition. The commentators read Aristotle as saying that the false inference is made not only by the character, but also by the reader or spectator who accepts such false logic as convincing. Castelvetro, referring to *Poetics* 16, describes "un'altra spezie di riconoscenza [recognition], la quale si fa per falso sillogismo, e questo falso sillogismo è dalla parte del riconoscente e del popolo commune, e non dalla parte di collui che dee essere riconosciuto né dalla parte delle persone molto avedute" (2.472). Thus, Castelvetro sees two "victims" of false inference, the character/recognizer and the reader/spectator. However, this glib reader is of the "popolo commune," the common, uneducated people. These commoners are clearly set into opposition to the "persone molto avedute," the "very informed" or literarily savvy reader or spectator. The first group, not versed in the subtleties of Aristotelian theory, is easily fooled, while the well-read "persone avedute," knowing what to look for, can catch the poet's subtle transgression of logic. Based on this, the counterpart to the astute Renaissance reader is now the crafty author, who can devise ways to "fool" unsuspecting readers into believing the appearance of logic where none actually exists. Thus, Piccolomini sees authors "playing on the credulity of the spectators, their susceptibility to false logic" (Cave 76). Robortello notes that *paralogism* is something discerned "by only a very few, by experts" (Cave 77). Finally, Cave observes that "[a]lthough the case here is a special one (it only applies sometimes in certain stories), it is also a kind of paradigm. It requires extreme skill (*artificium*) on the part of the poet to bring about the denouement by means of a confidence trick which deceives not only characters but also spectators: the recognition depends on the spectators' inability to recognize the deceit, an irony only fully apparent to a few initiates" (Cave 77). None of this can be mechanically related to

Cervantes' text, yet one can see that the general concept of "tricking" the reader by configuring recognition in a certain way was not unheard of.

11. Américo Castro was the first to describe Cervantes's fiction as a world in which the author, "en lugar del *es* admitido e inapelable, se lanzó a organizar una visión de *su mundo* fundada en *pareceres*, en circunstancias de *vida*, no de unívocas objetividades," in *El pensamiento de Cervantes* (85).

12. Sieber's edition of the text, that which I have been and will continue to cite, does not contain the verb "ver" here in this spot where it might seem warranted. Upon cross-checking with Valbuena Prat's edition of the *Obras completas* (895), one finds the presence of the verb "ver." For purposes of clarification, I have added "ver" to my citation from Sieber.

13. Ciavarelli describes the "force of blood" specifically as a feeling, a "presentimiento de estar en la presencia de un consanguíneo," 1. We are never informed that Cervantes' characters experience such a reaction. In contrast, a good example of this motif is found in a book well-known by Cervantes, *La Historia etiópica* by Heliodoro. In Fernando de Mena's translation of that work (1587) the recognition between Charikleia and her parents begins as a "blood" attraction: Upon making eye contact with Charikleia, Queen Persina "*sintió en sí un cierto movimiento que le hizo . . . decir al Rey: —¡Oh marido, qué doncella escogistes para el sacrificio . . . Si la hija que yo de vos una vez parí y que tan desdichadamente fué perdida, aconteciera que fuera viva, halláramos que tenía tantos años como aquésta;*" and King Hydaspes states, "*también en alguna manera se me mueve el ánimo a tener compasión desta doncella. . .*" (380–81, my emphasis).

14. See Carroll B. Johnson (145–47) on the role of the *cura* in the process of recognition in the Captain's story.

15. For discussion of cunning female characters in this tale see Slaniceanu, Welles, and Kartchner.

16. Again, "Rodolfo se fue [a Italia] con tan poca memoria de lo que con Leocadia le había sucedido como si nunca hubiera pasado" (2.85).

17. See Price (1989) and Mayer (2005) for discussion of recognition-related interpretative problems in various *Novelas ejemplares*.

18. Cave (1988) has written the most comprehensive treatment of recognition.

19. The last sentence of "El celoso extremeño" self-consumes as the narrator first confesses to "not know" why Leonora behaved as she did, only to then contradict himself by offering an explanation for her behavior: "*Sólo no se qué fue la causa en que Leonora no puso más ahínco en disculparse y dar a entender a su celoso marido cuán limpia y sin ofensa había quedado*

en aquel suceso *pero la turbación le ató la lengua, y la priesa que se dio a morir su marido no dio lugar a su disculpa*" (*Novelas ejemplares* 2.135; my emphasis).

20. Kartchner's is the most thorough examination of Leocadia's character, although Forcione, Slaniceanu, and Welles had previously broached the topic.

21. I must disagree with the eminent Hispanist Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce when he observes, "[c]reo que es evidente el desinterés de Cervantes por la caracterización de sus personajes en la fuerza de la sangre" (II, 28). Georges Hainsworth, most disappointed with Cervantes' "inconsistent characterization," observes: "Leocadia [. . .] qui a juré de haïr à jamais l'auteur de son déshonneur, ne trahit que des sentiments de joie quand, finalement, elle peut l'épouser... En un mot, nous ne connaissons pas dans l'oeuvre cervantesque un plus frappant exemple de mauvais gout," cited in Forcione (362).

22. The fact that Leocadia faints at three crucial junctures during this tale has aroused the suspicions of some readers (for example, Kartchner 546). Nowhere does the text indicate that Leocadia's fainting spells are feigned. However, Leocadia herself at one point remarks to Rodolfo that if she were to submit to his amorous advances, then he might think that her swoon was feigned when he first kidnapped and raped her: "podrías imaginar que mi desmayo fue fingido cuando te atreviste a destruirme" (2.81). That is, Leocadia does not admit to feigning a swoon, yet her comment nonetheless reveals that such a practice is within her character's realm of knowledge, that somewhere, somehow, this or some other character in this particular fictional world just might resort to such a stratagem. Beyond the "desmayo fingido" comment, we know that Leocadia is very cunning, as seen in the crucifix scheme, another scheme proposed to her father when she arrives at home, and still another when she inadvertently reveals that she could, if she wanted to, remember her attacker's identity by remembering his voice (2.80–81).

23. Castro refers to Cervantes' "estilo elusivo" in *Hacia Cervantes* (300-01).

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