

**Innovating on Adultery:  
Cervantes' Camila and the Wives of Day 7 in *Il Decameron***

Michael Gordon  
(University of North Carolina Wilmington)

Part 1 of *Don Quijote* contained numerous intercalated stories recounted orally that recalled in some ways those of *Il Decameron*, yet it was Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* that cemented his legacy as the Spanish Boccaccio, a moniker bestowed upon him by his contemporary Tirso de Molina (Canavaggio 322, 331; Carreño 155). Some prominent nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics such as Menéndez Pelayo, Alarcos García, and Amezúa, however, disagreed with the spirit of the seventeenth-century playwright's assessment, arguing that Boccaccio's influence on Cervantes was not as important as previously thought (Talens 169). Meregalli (8, 11), on the other hand, has argued that Cervantes followed in Boccaccio's footsteps, although curiously there is not one direct citation of the latter in the former's oeuvre. Güntert (194), for his part, has noted that there is no demonstrable link between *El curioso impertinente*, the only intercalated *novela* read aloud in part 1 of *Don Quijote*, and *Il Decameron* or the Italian *novella* of the sixteenth century in general, but here Güntert was only referring to direct sources. Nevertheless, the goal of this article is not to establish an undisputable one-to-one correlation between Boccaccio and Cervantes or between three adulterous wives (Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia) of day 7 in *Il Decameron* and Camila in *El curioso impertinente*, but rather to demonstrate significant traces of the former in the latter, with special attention given to how the female protagonist from Cervantes' interpolated tale follows in the footsteps of Boccaccio's unfaithful spouses, despite ultimately failing in her endeavor.

More specifically with respect to the debt that *El curioso impertinente* owes *Il Decameron*, critics have highlighted the pursuit of the truth, both absolute and relative (Arbesú Fernández 24), the use of tricks, deceit and intrigue (Barbagallo 210), and the constellation of characters who follow the tradition of the Italian *novella* started by Boccaccio (Neuschäfer 610). And the reason why day 7 was chosen to serve as the model for this study is because the theme of its tales (as established by that day's king Dioneo) all center on female ingenuity within marriage: "I should like us to talk tomorrow about *the tricks which, either in the cause of love or for motives of self-preservation, women have played upon their husbands, irrespective of whether or not they were found out*" (*Dec. 6.Conc.478*).<sup>1</sup> One particular aspect of this literary relationship that has not yet been properly investigated, however, is the influence of and innovation on married women committing adultery, particularly as it relates to voice, female agency, and the façade of marital honor, which are not only foundational elements of stories 2, 4, and 9 on day 7, but also indispensable to *El curioso impertinente*. Finally, the honor of those three married couples in *Il Decameron* remains intact (not in the sense that there is no adultery, but rather that it does not become public knowledge), while that of Anselmo and Camila does not, and even further reinforcing the unique kinship Camila shares with Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia is their existence in literary works that are read aloud and that pertain to the genre of the *novella*.

Originally taken from the Provençal term meaning new or novelty, *novella* acquired its literary definition of a short narrative after it became associated with Boccaccio's *Il Decameron* (López Díaz 247). The popularity that work enjoyed during the author's lifetime paled in comparison to the fame it would garner across Europe in the late-fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century as a result of the introduction and expansion of the printing press (Muñoz Sánchez 177-80), a technological advancement that Cervantes exploited to his benefit. Muñoz Sánchez argues that the *novella* as a genre, situated between history and poetry, had the unique ability to

<sup>1</sup> All citations from *Il Decameron* are taken from Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, translated by GH McWilliam (London: Penguin Books), 2003, and will be cited as follows: (*Dec. day.story.page*).

record everyday life and the historical reality of its time, and perhaps it was this privileged position that allowed it to eventually thrive in Early Modern Europe (177). Another advantage the *novella* had over more established genres was its lack of classical antecedents, which granted writers the freedom to innovate without having to abandon previously-held conceptions about the art itself (Carreño 160). Recognizing that Boccaccio and Cervantes were first and foremost storytellers who overshadowed their contemporaries in narrating tales (Fajardo 1, 18-19), it is logical, then, that they thrived in this genre because “[b]asically, the novella is a form of rewriting in the mode of retelling, thus bringing an elementary narration to higher complexity” (Stierle 582). While the origins of the *novella* are firmly rooted in Boccaccio, its propagation in Europe after the turn of the seventeenth-century owes much to Cervantes, yet its success as a literary genre was by no means guaranteed “because medieval writers, like the ancients, considered prose inferior to verse for the purposes of imaginative literature” (Good 12).

In fact, both Boccaccio and Cervantes felt obligated to defend their groundbreaking works within the texts themselves. After Boccaccio had published three days of stories, the Tuscan felt so compelled to respond to critiques of the themes of the first 30 tales and the language utilized (i.e., the Florentine vernacular instead of Latin) that he interrupted the structure of *Il Decameron* by inserting himself into the work and even by telling his own story (*Dec.* 4.Intro.215-19). Cervantes’ defense, or rather explanation of his intercalated *novella*, on the other hand, had to wait ten years until Sansón Carrasco in part 2 of *Don Quijote* recounts that readers criticized *El curioso impertinente* not because of its content or form, but rather because of its irrelevance to Don Quijote (II, 3, 500).<sup>2</sup> These challenges to the *novella* during Boccaccio’s and Cervantes’ lifetimes help explain its intrinsic nature as a rebellious genre, a characteristic pertinent to understanding the relationship between *Il Decameron* and *El curioso impertinente*. With respect to the former work, Bergin concludes that “[t]he presence and ubiquity of women is one of the clearest signs that with *The Decameron* a new culture comes into being, or at least achieves literary recognition” (163), and Bigazzi reinforces that conclusion by astutely observing the following: “Boccaccio, to be sure, did not invent normal women. But he may claim to be a pioneer in seeing them with a clear eye and depicting them with an understanding pen” (156).

This legacy noted by Bergin and Bigazzi is also patently on display in *El curioso impertinente*, yet some critics such as de Armas have acknowledged Cervantes’ innovations within the *novella* genre without accepting the premise of agency for women, arguing that “[i]nvisibility in *Don Quijote* belongs to women such as Camila and Dulcinea” (19). And while Dulcinea falls outside the scope of this study, Camila, as well as her servant Leonela, are the female characters who talk the second- and fifth-most, respectively, in part 1 of *Don Quijote*, and who combine for more than fifty percent of the utterances in the second half of *El curioso impertinente* (Mancing 15 and Hutchinson 199). Complementing Camila’s visibility and audibility are the culpable actions of her husband Anselmo, which is not surprising given that Cervantes also distinguished himself from most other writers of his era by explaining female adultery through the behavior of their husbands (Hutchinson 196). Thus, Cervantes in *El curioso impertinente* built and innovated upon the interconnected, foundational elements of narrative frames and strong adulterous wives that Boccaccio had established in *Il Decameron*, particularly on day 7, yet Camila ultimately fails in her endeavor to reestablish honor in her marriage after being unfaithful due to circumstances beyond her control.

Returning to the frame of an orally-recounted *novella* in general, Stierle and Good provide pieces of a puzzle that together cement the bond between Camila and her predecessors Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia, with the former critic observing that in this setting “time becomes a primary structure” (582), while the latter concludes that a story’s “length is related to the attention span of a live audience in a single sitting [...and that the] narrator and listener are fictively

<sup>2</sup> All citations from *Don Quijote* will follow this format (part, chapter, page).

copresent” (211). Despite the difference that the 100 stories recounted by the *brigata* form the core of *Il Decameron*, and *El curioso impertinente* is only one tale, both works hinge on a collective telling and a healthy discussion about literature itself. Before the characters in *Don Quijote* who arrive at the inn are aware of and listen to *El curioso impertinente*, for example, they engage in a spirited literary debate in chapter 32. The curate’s reading of the tale occupies the following two chapters and, after Sancho’s and Don Quijote’s brief interruption, concludes in chapter 35, after which the characters return to their reality and resume their roles as active participants in their own lives, albeit fictional ones from the point of view of the reader.

While in Boccaccio’s masterpiece there is no indication of the 100 tales told being previously known to the other members of the *brigata*, the innkeeper Juan Palomeque el Zurdo mentions that the manuscript has already been enjoyed by previous guests, indicating its value as a literary work (I, 32, 289). Moreover, the task of reading aloud the manuscript falls to the curate, who cannot improvise as other characters in *Don Quijote*, as well as those of the *brigata*, could when telling their stories due to the fact that “[t]he novella is a closed form whose end is latent in the beginning” (Good 211). Related to that lack of freedom is the fact that Cervantes’ interpolated tale is dominated by a single, moralizing (and presumably male) narrator, whereas women comprise 70 percent of the storytellers in *Il Decameron* overall, with Lauretta telling story 4 on day 7 (and two men recounting the second and the ninth).

The public reading and content of *El curioso impertinente*, with respect to multiple narrative frames related to female agency and adultery, illuminate our understanding of the extent to which *Il Decameron* influenced that intercalated *novella*, as well as how it did not (i.e., which aspects of the latter work were Cervantine innovations). As is the case in *Il Decameron*, where chance encounters and escape are underlying, fundamental aspects of the plot (*Dec.* 1.Intro.13-18), in *Don Quijote* the characters who meet in the Sierra Morena Mountains are all fleeing something: Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, the *Santa Hermandad*; Cardenio, Luscinda’s supposed marriage; Dorotea, the loss of her honor to Don Fernando. The gathering of these characters at an inn in La Mancha evokes the congregation of the *brigata* in the countryside, and the fact that passing the time with literature is central to both groups further strengthens their mutual bond.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the protagonists seeking to escape their realities, there are also minor female characters in chapter 32, which serves as a prologue of sorts to *El curioso impertinente*, who gain voice and actively participate in the discussion of books of chivalry, a lively debate that Lucía Megías and Sales Dasí categorize as the quintessential recreation of how texts read aloud in that era were received and interpreted (37; see also Alcalá Galán 1996, 13). During this gathering at the inn, as happens with the *brigata*, all women have the freedom to speak, even the servant Maritornes, whose association with the lower class is relevant to the interruptions in chapter 35 of *Don Quijote* and on day 6 in *Il Decameron*.

While the structure for this intercalated Cervantine story undoubtedly owes a debt to Boccaccio’s masterpiece, the importance of *Orlando furioso* in helping shape part 1 of *Don Quijote* should not be overlooked, specifically with respect to the intersection of myriad plotlines and characters (Bigazzi 159). Despite this symbiotic relationship between frames and female voice, as well as the apparent indebtedness of *El curioso impertinente* to *Il Decameron*, other literary works such as Apuleius’ *Asinus aureus* (second century CE) and Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1516) are more prominently on display in *El curioso impertinente* (Segre 26-27). Following the well-known models of the two friends and of wife-testing, Cervantes’ *novella* recounts how Anselmo, inspired by an unrelenting curiosity, decides to test his wife Camila’s faithfulness to him

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<sup>3</sup> The first queen Pampinea presents her case for the storytelling thusly: ““But if you were to follow my advice, this hotter part of the day would be spent, not in playing games (which inevitably bring anxiety to one of the players, without offering very much pleasure either to his opponent or to the spectators), but in telling stories – an activity that my afford some amusement both to the narrator and to the company at large [...] Let us, then, if the idea appeals to you, carry this proposal of mine into effect” (*Dec.* 1.Intro.23).

by having his best friend Lotario attempt to seduce her. Cervantes' inclusion of elements from Apuleius' and Ariosto's works was by no means ground-breaking in itself, but what was innovative was how he resourcefully synthesized those sources into a relatively new genre to create the unique *novella* called *El curioso impertinente*, whose tragic ending serves to distinguish Cervantes' work from those that came before.<sup>4</sup> Or, in the words of Ife, "we are left with a strong sense of its originality, that for all that this story looks like and feels like an Italianate *novella*, it has no source. It is, in a way, its own source, its own origin" (680).

With respect to the plot of the *novella* throughout chapter 33, its folkloric origins, including its setting in early sixteenth-century Florence, and its focus on male characters, give the impression of a story that will follow tradition and reinforce the social status quo (Jehenson 27 and 38; de Armas Wilson 26). In the society in question, married women were the property of their husbands and had to obey their commands, no matter how illogical they appeared to be, as was the case when Anselmo leaves Camila alone with Lotario for an extended period of time, a situation that she questions in a letter to her husband: "Así como suele decirse que "parece mal el ejército sin su general y el castillo sin su castellano", digo yo que parece muy peor la mujer casada y moza sin su marido, cuando justísimas ocasiones no lo impiden" (I, 34, 306). Frye's conclusion that "[b]ecause representation of women's lives is so closely tied to cultural expectations, most narrative form is in some sense based on female objectification" (143) is only relevant to the first half of the intercalated tale, as Camila gains agency starting with that aforementioned letter and then voice after committing adultery with Lotario (I, 34, 307). These two halves of, and distinct sets of behavior within, the intercalated tale correspond roughly to chapters 33, pages in which Camila does not speak, and 34, which she dominates. In this manner, Camila experiences a metamorphosis from a passive object to an empowered agent, transforming herself into "a narrating 'I' who refuses to be a 'she'. A woman who speaks in her own voice of her own experience is a subject rather than an object, and as such, she is capable of self-definition and autonomous action" (Frye 143).

*El curioso impertinente* not only occupies the privileged middle position within *Don Quijote* as the fourth of seven intercalated tales, but also within the *novella* itself, the location of the defining action for both Camila and the plot (i.e., her decision to be unfaithful) is noteworthy.<sup>5</sup> Although the narrator unceremoniously signals her adultery ("Rindióse Camila. Camila se rindió", I, 34, 307), the position of these words within the manuscript is quite significant, as "[i]t is no accident that this phrase is located almost exactly in the geographic center of the whole narrative" (Mancing 13). Moreover, it must be remembered that this centrally-placed act is the genesis for Camila's protagonism in which she ultimately controls the discourse and performs an intricately-designed theater that restores order (Mancing 13), much in the same vein as her adulterous predecessors Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia.

The main arguments of Mancing's insightful article form an indispensable supporting element of this study with respect to the empowerment of adulterous wives. Mancing correctly places the "primary emphasis on Camila as the protagonist of the story" because she "transforms herself from a passive object to an active agent; she takes control of her life and her story and in the process relegates to secondary status the men who quibble over abstract concepts", and her taking Lotario as a lover is further proof of that agency (9, 16, 18). In fact, the first time Camila expresses herself it is not orally, but rather in written form, and it must be remembered that it is only after committing adultery that Camila gains voice (Hutchinson 200). I also concur with Güntert (197) that these protestations by Camila and her initial attempts to dissuade and reject Lotario are not extraordinary, but rather the humanly comprehensible actions of a woman who feels trapped by a situation created by men and who attempts to make the best of bad circumstances. Although

<sup>4</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of sources, see Francisco Ayala, "Nota sobre la novelística cervantina," *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 31, no. 1/4 (Homenaje a Ángel del Río) (October 1965): 39 and Mercedes Alcalá Galán, "Épica y novela en el Quijote," *Actas del Tercer Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas* (1998), 320.

<sup>5</sup> See de Armas 14 for a more detailed discussion of *El curioso impertinente*'s placement.

Camila's resistance to adultery initially distinguishes her from the aforementioned wives of day 7, her eventual decision to betray her husband and take control of her life aligns her with her Boccaccian predecessors, a process in general that Frye defines thusly: "When the protagonist of the novel is made her own narrator, she thus achieves a very immediate kind of agency and a capacity to renew our notion of plot. She is the agent by whom events come into being as part of her story [...] She cannot, of course, claim total control" (56).

Perhaps the most prominent example of Camila advantageously utilizing her newfound voice, while simultaneously relegating her husband Anselmo and lover Lotario to passive spectators and therefore objects (a process that also occurs in stories 2, 4, and 9), is the theater that she performs in an attempt to restore equilibrium between the three of them. Anselmo has been duped into watching and believing his wife's performance in which she affirms her fidelity, while Lotario unwittingly participates as an actor, unsure of what is true and what is theater (I, 34, 319). Essentially, Camila, as the author of the theatrical representation with the confidence and space to assert herself as a subject (and, like Lidia from story 9 of day 7, with the help of her servant) attempts to restore not only a tenuous equilibrium and order to a chaotic situation created by men, but also the honor between husband and wife, two lovers, and two best friends (Jehenson 32-33; see also Hutchinson 201). And perhaps even more incredible than her undertaking is the fact that Camila is actually successful, temporarily creating a happy ending that mirrors those found in tales 2, 4, and 9 of day 7 about unfaithful wives and cuckolded husbands: "The initial truth from which the lie emerges in this spectacle is that Lotario is a good friend of Anselmo [...] and that Camila is as good and faithful a wife as Anselmo thinks she is" (Wardropper 599).

While this happy ending that Camila engineers in which her husband and lover are none the wiser lasts months for them, for the listeners at the inn and for the reader of *Don Quixote*, it is quite short-lived, as it is followed a few sentences later by ominous words from the narrator (I, 34, 321). This prolepsis corresponds with the end to chapter 34, yet Sancho's interruption at the opening of chapter 35 delays the reading of the conclusion of the story for the public and provides a perfect example of a Cervantine innovation on the narrative structure found in traditional Italian *novella*. The fact that a squire interrupts a *novella* about three upper-class protagonists immediately draws attention to socioeconomic differences, much like what happens at the start of day 6 in *Il Decameron*.<sup>6</sup> Sancho's interruption differs slightly from that of the maid Licisca and manservant Tindaro, however, because the latter delay the *start* of the storytelling, while the former disrupts the reading of the manuscript right before its dramatic conclusion. Sancho also distinguishes himself from the steward who first informs the *brigata* of the argument in the kitchen by the fact that the squire has become accustomed to speaking freely, even in the company of nobility. More relevant to this study than the placement of the interruption, however, is the fact that Licisca's and Tindaro's heated argument about female purity before, and faithfulness during, marriage inspires the next king Dioneo to declare it the theme for day 7, where we meet Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia (*Dec.* 6.Conc.478).

The second story of day 7 contains numerous elements that will reappear in *El curioso impertinente*, such as a moralizing narrator, the relationship between an absent husband and marital honor, and the wife's attempt to conceal her affairs by openly admitting it. Before commencing the storytelling, Filostrato encourages the female listeners of the *brigata* (and, by extension, the female readers of *Il Decameron*) to tell as many tales as possible about women ingenuously deceiving their

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<sup>6</sup> The location of the disruption on day 6 in *Il Decameron* is significant, as it is placed exactly midway through the work in terms of the number of stories told. Bigazzi (159) notes, for example, that the forty-six cantos in *Orlando furioso* are neatly divided by Orlando's madness in canto 23, while Meregalli (12) argues that Ariosto and the disruptions he included throughout *Orlando furioso* influenced Cervantes' decision to interrupt the narration at key moments. And although this interruption in chapter 35 does not necessarily occur at the height of maximum tension, mostly due to the aforementioned prolepsis, it is located almost immediately after Camila's dramatic representation and provides a welcome comic relief (Hahn 136; see also Jehenson 144).

husbands so that one day “men will come to realize that women are just as clever as their husbands” because “when a man knows that he has clever people to deal with, he will think twice before attempting to deceive them”, a sage warning that had Lotario included in his litany of arguments against Anselmo’s wife-testing, the latter might have aborted his experiment (*Dec.* 7.2.490-94; see also I, 33, 296-300). Although Peronella’s husband (he is curiously never named) and Anselmo leave their wives alone for periods of time, the crucial difference is that in the case of the former, he is gone all day for work, while the latter purposefully does so for days at a time as part of his wife-testing, yet in both cases the wives take advantage of that lack of marital supervision to commit adultery. Moreover, Peronella only addresses her husband’s absence and its relation to marital honor *after* she takes her lover; Camila, by contrast, writes a letter to Anselmo in which she worries about their collective honor *before* being unfaithful: ““Así como suele decirse que “parece mal el ejército sin su general y el Castillo sin su castellano”, digo yo que parece muy peor la mujer casada y moza sin su marido, cuando justísimas ocasiones no lo impiden”” (I, 34, 306).

Peronella’s husband’s unexpectedly early return home from work one day forces her to act quickly and hide her lover Giannello Scignario in a large tub, an object in plain sight that becomes an indispensable prop in her theater to deceive her spouse with the truth. Feigning anger, Peronella scolds her husband for his dereliction of an expected marital duty (i.e., providing financially for the family) and then, after bursting into tears, wonders aloud why she has not taken a lover like all of her married female friends, employing an artful use of language, which unbeknownst to her, but known to the *brigata* and us as readers, was the theme of day 6 (*Dec.* 7.2.492). The husband challenges his wife’s claim of his laziness, however, by telling her that he has sold that large tub for 5 silver ducats, a declaration that sparks Peronella’s creativity and her quick retort that she has sold it for 7 to the man who is currently inspecting it from the inside (i.e., her lover). Giannello understands perfectly Peronella’s ploy in pretending to sell the tub, prompting him to jump out at the precise moment as the alleged buyer so as to not reveal their affair; Camila, on the other hand, does not fully disclose her plans about her theater to her lover Lotario, so his participation in that acted-out aspect of their deception is only partial.<sup>7</sup> Peronella must improvise on the spot, while Camila has the time to organize a more elaborate theatrical performance for her husband (without him knowing, obviously, that it is not real) in which she affirms her honor: ““Sepa el mundo, si acaso llegare a saberlo, de Camila no sólo guardó la lealtad a su esposo, sino que le dio venganza del que se atrevió a ofendelle. Mas, con todo, creo que fuera mayor dar cuenta desto a Anselmo. Pero ya se la apunté a dar en la carta que le escribí al aldea”” (I, 34, 316-17).

After Giannello jumps out of the tub, he follows Peronella’s lead and tells her husband that it is not thoroughly clean on the inside, prompting the latter to enter and spend an extended time inspecting the coating. Much like Lotario who takes advantage of Anselmo’s absence, Giannello proactively satisfies his sexual desires with the husband unawares: “So he went up to Peronella, who was completely blocking up the mouth of the tub, and in the manner of a wild and hot-blooded stallion mounting a Partian mare in the open fields, he satisfied his young man’s passion, which no sooner reached fulfilment than the scraping of the tub was completed” (*Dec.* 7.2.494). This explicitly sexual, animalistic description contrasts starkly with the cold, succinct, and almost imperceptible narration of the first amorous encounter between the lovers in *El curioso impertinente* (“Rindióse Camila. Camila se rindió”; I, 34, 307), signaling perhaps the greatest difference between these two tales. Peronella successfully carries out an adulterous affair, a not-so-insignificant feat considering the proximity of her husband, which in turn signifies a happy ending for all parties involved, yet Camila, Anselmo, and Lotario are not so fortunate, as will be subsequently demonstrated.

<sup>7</sup> Camila’s performance is so convincing that when she threatens to stab Lotario, “casi él estuvo en duda si aquellas demostraciones eran falsas o verdaderas, porque le fue forzoso valerse de su industria y de su fuerza para estorbar que Camila no le diese” (I, 34, 319).

The first striking commonality between the fourth story of day 7 and *El curioso impertinente* is the husband Tofano's irrational, unprompted jealousy soon after getting married. Yet, as de Armas Wilson correctly notes, how Anselmo discusses his *curiositas* is a notable Cervantine innovation due to the allusions to suffering like a woman (19)<sup>8</sup>, while the one significant advantage that Monna Ghita has over Camila is that she is aware of Tofano's obsession and prepared to use her wits to combat it. Monna Ghita achieves her nocturnal freedom by facilitating Tofano's drinking of alcohol and waiting until he passes out, although Tofano eventually gets wise to his wife's ploy, and one night he pretends to pass out, which then allows him to lock Monna Ghita out before her return home from her lover. Whereas in *El curioso impertinente* all discussions of honor and infidelity occur within the confines of Anselmo's house, in this Boccaccian tale the married couple argues in a public space. Tofano declares his intention to have Monna Ghita spend the night in the plaza, thereby publicizing her infidelity: "[Y]ou won't return to this house till I've made an example of you in front of your kinsfolk and neighbors" (*Dec.* 7.4.502).

Tofano's desire for revenge blinds him to the social realities and norms governing honor at the time, as any public declaration of marital infidelity not only taints the honor of the wife and lover, but also that of the husband (Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers 27 and 46). Anselmo, for his part, comprehends this distinction between the public and private spheres and its relevance to honor, which is why he wants, and how he convinces, Lotario, his best friend whose discretion he values, to test Camila's virtue: "Y estás obligado a hacer estop or una razón sola, y es que estando yo, como estoy, determinado de poner en plática esta prueba, no has tú de consentir que yo dé cuenta de mi desatino a otra persona, con que pondría en aventura el honor que tú procuras que no pierda" (I, 33, 301).<sup>9</sup> Monna Ghita, with a better understanding of these conventions than her husband, speculates aloud how her suicide, which would bring dishonor on Tofano, would play out in the sphere of public opinion (*Dec.* 7.4.503).<sup>10</sup> Despite the fact that Camila remains within the confines of her house and that Monna Ghita risks exposure by arguing as she stands in a public space, both perform theater with the express purpose of maintaining their honor and that of their husbands, feigning suicide to achieve their goals, with the former by throwing a rock down a well and the latter by wounding herself with a dagger:

Y hacienda fuerza para soltar la mano de la daga que Lotario la tenía asida, la sacó, y guiando su punta por parte que pudiese herir no profundamente, se la entró [...] y luego se dejó caer en el suelo, como desmayada. Estaban Leonela y Lotario suspensos y atónitos de tal suceso, y todavía dudaban de la verdad de aquel hecho, viendo a Camila tendida en tierra y bañada en su sangre. (I, 34, 319)

It should be noted that both are successful in re-establishing marital bliss after their affairs, although Monna Ghita's is more lasting than Camila's. After believing his wife has committed suicide, Tofano runs outside to verify her suicide, thereby allowing Monna Ghita to re-enter her domicile, lock her husband out, and ultimately win the argument about honor by demanding his submission: "Seeing what a sorry plight he had landed himself in on account of his jealousy [...] not only did he promise her that he would never be jealous again, but he gave her permission to

<sup>8</sup> "Propuesto esto, has de considerer que yo padezco ahora la enfermedad que suelen traer algunas mujeres, que se les antoja comer tierra, yeso, carbón y otras cosas peores, aun asquerosas para mirarse, cuanto más para comerse" (I, 33, 300).

<sup>9</sup> Lotario, as well, demonstrates his concern for everyone's honor soon after their marriage: "Sólo Lotario era éste, que con toda solicitud y advertimiento miraba por la honra de su amigo, y procuraba dezmar, frisar y acortar los días del concierto de ir a su casa" (I, 33, 292).

<sup>10</sup> Monna Ghita reasons thusly: "Rather than face the dishonour which in spite of my innocence you threaten me with, I shall hurl myself into this well, and when they find me dead inside it, they will all think that it was you who threw me into it when you were drunk; and so either you will have to run away, lose everything you possess, and live in exile, or you will have your head chopped off for murdering your wife, which in effect is what you have done" (*Dec.* 7.4.503).

amuse herself to her heart's content, provided she was sensible enough not to let him catch her out" (*Dec.* 7.4.505). Although Monna Ghita's husband discovers her infidelities while Peronella's does not, both adulterous wives effectively defuse potentially disastrous situations for their honor by resorting to their wits, a positive resolution that Camila also achieves, yet the latter's is merely a fleeting triumph. After faking suicide to convince her voyeur husband Anselmo that her honor as a wife, and their collective honor as a married couple, remains intact, Camila emerges victoriously from what appeared to be an impossible situation (I, 34, 319). In fact, Camila performs her honor play so well that Anselmo is none the wiser: "Con esto quedó Anselmo el hombre más sabrosamente engañado que pudo haber en el mundo. Él mismo llevaba por la mano a su casa, creyendo que llevaba el instrumento de su gloria, toda la perdición de su fama. Recebía Camila con rostro al parecer torcido, aunque con alma risueña" (I, 34, 321). As will be demonstrated during the comparison of *El curioso impertinente* to the ninth tale of day 7, however, Camila's seemingly successful maintenance of her honor at the end of chapter 34 turns out to be a false happy ending.

The penultimate story told on day 7, Panfilo's narration is more complex than the previously-analyzed tales and shares more of an affinity with *El curioso impertinente*, not only because of the extensive protagonism of its adulterous wife, but also because of the prominent roles that servants play in the affairs. Much like the young, beautiful, and well-to-do Lidia, Camila is also a victim of forces outside her control and, trapped like Lidia, decides to become a subject rather than remain an object of men. Lidia, who is married to the much older nobleman Nicostrato, seeks out an amorous tryst with her husband's most loyal servant Pirro, whose platonic relationship with Nicostrato mirrors Lotario's with Anselmo, albeit with the key difference being that the latter two are social equals and the first two master-servant.<sup>11</sup> Like Peronella and Monna Ghita, Lidia is well aware of the seriousness of her endeavor, so she swears her servant Lusca to secrecy and reminds her the consequences of any possible indiscretion in delivering the message (*Dec.* 7.9.534). Camila displays a similar level of trust with her servant, confiding in Leonela about her affair with Lotario, and placing herself in the compromising position of being beholden to the help, even after Leonela has admitted to dishonoring the household by bringing in a lover of her own: "No pudo hacer otra cosa Camila sino rogar a Leonela no dijese nada de su hecho al que decía ser su amante, y que tratase sus cosas con secreto, porque no viniesen a noticia de Anselmo ni de Lotario" (I, 34, 312).<sup>12</sup> This preoccupation with discretion also finds its way into the previously-referenced conversation between Anselmo and Lotario in which the former proposes his wife-testing experiment and Lotario initially declines, only to later accept because the announcement of Anselmo's plans would have negative implications for everyone's honor (I, 33, 292-300).

So, while both Pirro and Lotario eventually agree to partake in these infidelity games, as it were, each negotiates his own set of preconditions before agreeing to participate, and each has a different objective in mind. Whereas Lotario does not intend to actually court Camila, Pirro will accede to Lidia's request only if she successfully completes three tasks that demonstrate her commitment to publicly challenging her husband (*Dec.* 7.9.536).<sup>13</sup> As a result of this imposed prerequisite, Lidia acquires an unparalleled voice and protagonism that tie directly into the theme of honor, and in many ways, Camila will mimic that behavior in the second half of *El curioso impertinente*. For example, Lidia's strongly-worded speech that she delivers after publicly killing

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that the two lovers Pirro and Lotario are also both lauded in the texts for their exceptional *hunting* abilities (*Dec.* 7.9.533; I, 33, 291).

<sup>12</sup> See also Jehenson, "Masochisma versus Machismo or: Camila's Re-Writing of Gender Assignments in Cervantes's Tale of Foolish Curiosity", 42.

<sup>13</sup> Contrary to Anselmo's test for Camila, which has no definable way to prove success, Pirro's clearly establishes what Lidia needs to do to demonstrate her sincerity, and in this case, the wife is not only aware of the situation, but she is also an active participant. Lotario, on the other hand, has no intention of betraying his best friend and bringing dishonor to all three of them, so his accepting to play a part in Anselmo's test is more theater than real life. Also, by colluding with Anselmo, Lotario gains more control over how the test proceeds and who finds out or, rather, does not find out, about the wife-testing, essentially sacrificing himself for the greater good.



Nicostrato's favorite hunting bird (i.e., task 1) explicitly references the compliance (or in-compliance) of obligations of the husband, much like Camila's letter to Anselmo does at the opening of chapter 34: "Gentlemen [...] I should like you to know for some little time, this bird has been depriving me of all the attention that men should devote to their ladies' pleasure" (*Dec.* 7.9.537).

The second task (bringing Pirro a tuft of Nicostrato's beard) presents no difficulties for Lidia, while the third one (pulling a tooth from her husband's mouth) requires more planning, multiple stages of execution, and assistance from her servant Lusca, who performs a supporting role through this whole charade that foreshadows Leonela's during Camila's affair and theater (*Dec.* 7.9.538-40). By extracting a healthy tooth and quickly switching it out with a rotten one that she had procured, thereby easily convincing her husband that she has his well-being at heart, Lidia has concluded her final task effectively and can now commence her affair with Pirro, yet curiously she orchestrates one more (and unnecessary) undertaking whose essence is similar to Peronella's solution, as well as to Camila's theatrical performance—to deceive her husband with the truth. Essentially, Lidia and Pirro have sexual relations literally right under Nicostrato's nose as he watches them from above in a pear tree, which they had previously convinced him was magical. And like Giannello before him (and to an extent Lotario later), Pirro follows his lover's lead and participates in the stratagem when he proposes the following to his master: "If you think I am wrong, you have only to stop and reflect whether a woman of such honesty and intelligence as your good lady, even if she wished to stain your honour in this manner, would ever bring herself to do it before your very eyes" (*Dec.* 7.9.542). While Nicostrato himself does not respond to this deceptively infallible logic, the narrator first reports that the husband "now felt they must both be speaking the truth and that they never could have brought themselves to do such a thing in his presence" (*Dec.* 7.9.542), and then concludes the tale with these words: "And so the poor deluded husband returned with her and her lover to the palace, within whose walls it thenceforth became easier for Pyrrhus and Lydia to meet, at regular intervals, for their common delight and pleasure" (*Dec.* 7.9.543).

The ending of this tale finds echoes in Anselmo's reaction to Camila's theater at the conclusion of chapter 34 and in his subsequent conversations with Lotario. Much like the narrator Panfilo's reflections about Nicostrato's mindset, the narrator's commentaries in *El curioso impertinente* similarly underscore those same notions of truth and fiction: "Atentísimo había estado Anselmo a escuchar y a ver representar la tragedia de la muerte de su honra, la cual con tan estraños y eficaces afectos la representación de los personajes della, que pareció que se habían transformado en la misma verdad de lo que fingían" (I, 34, 320). Lotario, on the other hand, knowing the truth about his best friend's wife's infidelity, does not share Anselmo's joy in seeing his experiment "succeed" (unlike Pirro), which Anselmo attributes to Camila's attempted suicide. The narrator continues describing ironically Anselmo's ecstatic state at seeing his marital honor maintained, yet we have already seen similar instances of husbands' ignorance of their wives' unfaithfulness in the case of Peronella and Lidia: "[Anselmo] se veía levantado a la más alta felicidad que acertara desearse, y quería que no fuesen otros sus entretenimientos que en hacer versos en alabanza de Camila, que la hiciesen eterna en la memoria de los siglos venideros" (I, 34, 321). Despite the narrator's ill-omened prolepsis at the end of chapter 34 ("Duró este engaño algunos días, hasta que al cabo de pocos meses volvió fortuna su rueda"; I, 34, 321), the manuscript continues (after the extended interruption by Sancho and Don Quijote) by highlighting Camila's successful maintenance of the appearance of marital honor that requires Anselmo to be deceived: "Sucedió, pues, que por la satisfacción que Anselmo tenía de la bondad de Camila, vivía una vida contenta y descuidada, y Camila, de industria, hacía mal rostro a Lotario, porque Anselmo entendiése al revés de la voluntad que le tenía" (I, 35, 325).

While Peronella, Monna Ghita, and Lidia all achieve a permanent solution that balances their adulterous behavior with the façade of spousal loyalty, Camila is not so fortunate, despite

being just as clever and employing similar stratagems (even with the help of her servant and her lover, to an extent). Throughout the first half of *El curioso impertinente*, Camila is without voice, an object caught between her husband and his best friend, and ultimately an unwitting victim of Anselmo's wife-testing, yet she transforms herself in the second half into an agent who takes control of her own destiny and aligns herself more with the women of *Il Decameron*. Bergin observes that when women in Boccaccio's masterpiece are victims, they become so more "of circumstances or sheer bad luck" (168-69), which is exactly what can be said of Camila and an explanation of why the happy ending that she carefully engineers, and that mirrors those of the three adulterous wives of day 7, is ephemeral. By chance one night, Anselmo hears footsteps coming from Leonela's room, and he correctly worries about the possible ramifications of a lover's visit and dishonor to his house, so he enters demanding answers. The next day, however, he awakes to find that both Leonela and Camila have fled, and Lotario has disappeared. It is only an encounter with a traveler from Florence that brings Anselmo the expected bad news about his wife and best friend, and since one crucial prerequisite for maintaining honor is to keep any indiscretions private, the fact that the news has spread publically signals a loss of honor for all three (I, 35, 326-28).

Lotario eventually dies in battle fighting with the great Captain Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba, a historical figure whose military exploits are recounted in a text found in the same satchel as *El curioso impertinente* and debated in chapter 32. Boccaccio also referenced "'persons known to fame' to lend authority to some of his tales", providing Cervantes with yet another template that allows for the blurring of distinctions between reality and fiction in a *novella* (Bergin 162). Upon hearing the news of her lover's death, Camila becomes a nun in the convent where she has been hiding since that fateful night, and as for Anselmo, he dies of sadness after acknowledging his culpability in an unfinished note (I, 35, 328). With respect to the goals of his experiment, "Anselmo achieves exactly that to which he has aspired [...] Adultery dilutes opposites [...] By adulterating defined erotic relations in *El curioso* among Anselmo/Lotario/Camila, as well as hierarchical differences in class between Leonela and Camila (the mistress is now on the same level as the maid and moreover dependent on her), Anselmo's perverse strategy has *de facto* obliterated difference" (Jehenson 41). This democratizing effect follows in the tradition of Boccaccio's inclusion of non-traditional characters from all socioeconomic classes in *Il Decameron* and reinforces the similarities between *El curioso impertinente* and the three stories of adultery from day 7 previously examined; however, this tragic conclusion and the manner in which it unfolds do simultaneously represent Camila's failure and Cervantes' innovations on the traditional Italian *novella*.

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