

## Early Modern Illusions of Perfect Male Friendship: The Case of Cervantes's "El curioso impertinente"

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The rhetoric of male friendship  
occupied an impossible space.

ALAN BRAY. *The Friend*

Mi amigo *usque ad portam*.

CERVANTES. "El viejo celoso"<sup>1</sup>

“EL CURIOSO IMPERTINENTE” CULMINATES in the death of all three main characters. One traditional explanation of this dramatic ending points to the extravagant curiosity of Anselmo, who plots to test his wife’s fidelity by tempting her with his best friend, Lotario. Anselmo forces Camila and Lotario to share an artificially contrived intimacy for such a prolonged period that they eventually end up falling in love, thus confirming Anselmo’s deepest fears. Later, on the brink of death, Anselmo asserts that his curiosity regarding the limits of his wife’s virtue was a “necio e im-

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<sup>1</sup> See Ramirez-Araujo, about the use of the idiom *Amicus usque ad aras* and its variants in Cervantes as an affirmation of the institution of marriage as more important than the practice of friendship. See Bray for another take on the issue of the rituals of sworn male friendship, which resulted in religious ceremonies in churches (*The Friend* 13-41).

pertinente deseo” (422). Mortally ill after discovering the unfaithfulness of his wife and his best friend, he seeks refuge in the house of another friend. This friend is the anonymous reader of Anselmo’s last writing, in which he repents for his wrongdoings. The actions of this anonymous friend at the end of “El curioso impertinente” are neither idealistic nor heroic; they are grounded in simple common sense. He does what any sensible friend would do—help in moments of distress. But this *novella* is not a story about common sense in friendship; rather, it is about male *perfect friendship*, a highly codified set of rules of male, as well as female, behavior, which underwent a transformation between the Middle Ages and Modernity.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will analyze the connections between the fraught friendship of “El curioso impertinente” and the models of friendship proposed for commercial societies, as well as the weakening of the patronage economy in Western Europe. In order to do so, I will answer the following questions: Is friendship in “El curioso impertinente” modern, pre-modern, or a mixture of both? How do our post-Enlightenment practices of friendship affect our judgment of this *novella*? Does the creation of professional literature markets affect the textual representations of male friendship?

In recent years, we have seen a full fleshed trend of studies on the “material world” in Cervantes and more generally in the early modern literature of Iberia. Works such as *Cervantes and the Material World* by Carroll B. Johnson, *Modernidad bajo sospecha: Salas Barbadillo y la cultura material del Siglo XVII* by Enrique García Santo-Tomás, *Cervantes’s Novel of Modern Times* by David Quint, *Writers on the Market* by Donald Gilbert-Santamaría, and *An Early Bourgeois Literature in Golden Age Spain* by Francisco J. Sánchez all illustrate how thought provoking the connections between literature and

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2 Regarding the qualities and capacity of women as friends, according to humanists, Montaigne sets one of the most paradigmatic examples: “The ordinary capacity of women is inadequate for that communion and fellowship which is the nurse of this sacred bond” (qtd. in González 214). Women intellectuals of early modern Europe would revolt against these disqualifications, but in this paper there is not room to develop this proto-feminist aspect of *amicitia*.

the marketplace can be. Although addressing the will of Cervantes's patrons would be an interesting undertaking to understand better the material world of Cervantes, this lies outside the scope of the present study, and in any case would be difficult to undertake given the absence of extant documents pertinent to such an inquiry. For our current purposes, I will assume, as Harry Sieber puts it, that Cervantes himself was dissatisfied with his patrons:

Whatever favor and protection he may have received from the Count of Lemos and the Archbishop of Toledo, Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas, in the end he may have found himself captured in a system which was—at least metaphorically—as constraining and frustrating as his imprisonment at Algiers. Freedom would come only in a marketplace in which readers—not patrons—provided the necessary ransom. ("The Magnificent" 109)

On the other hand, to recognize that Cervantes's intellectual property was unprotected by the laws and his patrons had neither an interest nor an obligation to support him, revalidate my purpose of proving that the lack of satisfaction in a given literary career can be detected through the analysis of the textual representations of friendship in connection with seventeenth century patronage economy.

After reading the extensive criticism on "El curioso impertinente," one realizes that exemplarity and fidelity in marriage,<sup>3</sup>

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3 Many critics propose that because they focus on the moralistic issues of the test of the wife and marriage, *Orlando furioso's* canti 42 and 43 are the main literary model for "El curioso impertinente." See Ayala (302-04), Barbagallo (208, 211), Hahn (133), Kaplan (285), McGrady (769, 771), Morón Arroyo (179-80), Wilson (16-17), and Percas de Ponseti (194). Nevertheless, McGrady proposes the *Novella* 14 by Gentile Sermini as the real and supplementary source for parts of "El curioso impertinente" (769-71). Other critics consider that a Spanish precedent such as *El Crotalón*—which for the purposes of this study will be considered a variation of the story from the *Decameron*—is creditable for parts of the plot. For Illades, who maintains the older tradition of proposing *Disciplina clericalis* as the fundamental turning point of this oriental story, the *Disciplina clericalis* would be

*curiositas*,<sup>4</sup> gender,<sup>5</sup> mimetic desire,<sup>6</sup> and psychoanalytic,<sup>7</sup> as well as literary history and theory,<sup>8</sup> have frequently been brought to bear on “El curioso impertinente,” though without addressing Cervantes’s textual representations of friendship in a satisfactory way in terms of the theory of friendship.<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that previous critics have not done a thorough job in examining the likely sources for this novella’s treatment of friendship; rather, the classical theories of friendship and the ways in which they were evolving in the seventeenth century have only occasionally been analyzed in relation to “El curioso impertinente.”

The serious work on the tradition of *amicitia* in “El curioso impertinente” began with Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce’s article “Una

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the real model for Anselmo, Camila and Lotario’s fates (*Tres*12). Percas de Ponseti has a more eclectic point of view: “Lo más probable es que Cervantes tuviera presentes las más de las mencionadas fuentes [Boccaccio, Ariosto, Villalón, Luciano, San Anselmo, entre otras]” (202). After Percas de Ponseti’s 1975 study, an increasing number of critics such as Wilson, De Armas, and Faliu-Lacourt, have acknowledged a variety of sources for different aspects of “El curioso impertinente.”

4 A number of critics interested in *curiositas* consider *The Histories*, by Herodotus, [De Armas (11, 13), Wilson (14)], and the *Golden Ass*, by Apuleius, (Scobie 75), as important sources. Hahn explains the relation between *curiositas* in Saint Bernard and Cervantes (130-33). For more critical information about the connection between the story of Candaules in *The Histories* and “El curioso impertinente,” see Arriola’s article.

5 About the homoerotic desire between Anselmo and Lotario, see Amat (81) and Wey-Gómez (173). On Camila’s character see Wilson (27-28), El Saffar (“In praise”), Jehenson, and Mancing (15-16, 18). On the traffic of women between the male protagonists see Wilson.

6 See Cesáreo Bandera and Diana de Armas Wilson’s works.

7 Sieber (“On Juan”), Cascardi, Illades (*El honor* 491), González, Wey-Gómez (172-78).

8 One thorny issue has been the “pertinence” of this *novella* for the interpretation of *Don Quijote*. The majority of critics are in favor of the unity of signification; a few of the many who take this position are Castro (128), Wardrop-Per, Immerwhar, Percas de Ponseti (188), Arriola (33-34), Bandera (“La novella”), Weiger, Wilson, Güntert (787), Brown (*El curioso* 797), De Armas, El Saffar (“On Praise” 205-06, 217), Quint (xii) and Flores (79).

9 For more information on related critical history, see Kenneth Brown (789), Hanh (128-30), and Percas de Ponseti (182-202).

tradición literaria: el cuento de los dos amigos," in which the critic sought to supplement Louis Sorieri's work on the early modern European imitation of the story of the two friends found in Boccaccio's *Novella* 10.8.<sup>10</sup> For Sorieri, the main plot of this tale follows these lines: the "rivalry between the two" male characters for the "beloved" is resolved peacefully thanks to the "voluntary sacrifice of the generous friend for the other" (5). Avallé-Arce, following and enlarging upon Sorieri's work, considers that Boccaccio's story is the main source for the many variations on this basic plot found throughout sixteenth and seventeenth century literature including "El curioso impertinente" (34-35). Chrisitane Faliu-Lacourt agrees with Avallé-Arce by asserting that "el paso determinante entre la tradición histórico-didáctica y la obra de arte atractiva se da en la octava novela del décimo día del *Decamerón* de Boccaccio, [un] verdadero cambio de perspectiva" ("Formas" 171).

Critics have noted that desire constitutes a fundamental aspect of friendship in its early modern European textual representations. It is well known that the popularity of the triangular desire, in the aforementioned mentioned Boccaccian plot, overshadowed the medieval model of the half-friend.<sup>11</sup> Here I will not address the medie-

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10 On the tale of the two friends, I have found the following works very useful: Arriola (1971), Avallé-Arce (1957), Ayala (1965), Ayerbe (1969), Cavallo (1993), De Armas (1992), Faliu-Lacourt (1985), Gimber (1995), Hyatte (1994), Johnson (2003), Kirkham (1993), Langer (1994), Percas de Ponseti (1975), Scholberg (1958), Sorieri (1937), Valli (1946), and Wilson (1987).

11 "The story of the Half-Friend is one of several 'test of friendship' tales that are found in medieval collections of fables and apologues. It first appeared in western European literature in twelfth century *Disciplina clericalis*... The plot, briefly, is this: An Arab, nearing death, calls his son and asks him how many friends he has acquired. The son says he has one hundred friends. The father, who has gained only a half-friend in his lifetime, suggests that they test the son's friends. He tells his son to kill a calf, cut it into pieces, and put them in a sack. Then he is to take the bloodstained sack to the homes of his friends, announce that he has killed a man, and seek their help. The son does as his father orders, but finds that none of his friends will aid him; instead they drive him away. Then he goes to the half-friend, who sends his wife and family out of the house, and buries the sack. The son tells the half-friend the truth and thanking him, returns home,

val versions and varieties of this topos, but rather the history of the two male friends, which Boccaccio built around triangular desire in the *novella* 10.8, and which would be imitated throughout Europe for centuries.<sup>12</sup> Not only “El curioso impertinente,” but *Don Quijote* as a whole has been analyzed in terms of mimetic desires. As Girard puts it:

Don Quixote, in Cervantes’ novel, is a typical example of the victim of triangular desire, but he is far from being the only one. Next to him the most affected is his squire, Sancho Panza. (*Deceit* 3)

Cesáreo Bandera has worked extensively on “El curioso impertinente” in relation to the concept of triangular desire. Diana de Armas Wilson published the most important work on the male desire of Anselmo y Lotario, whose friendship becomes a frame for the traffic of women between the males. I completely agree with Bandera and Wilson in their valuable interpretations; however, the focus of their work does not align well with the objectives of this current paper, which is to argue that pre-modern ideas of friendship in Cervantes are shaped by the realities of the patronage economy, as well as the market economy and the individual desires of the players. Additionally, I would draw a fundamental distinction between studies like those of Bandera and Wilson, which are based on triangulation of desire and the traffic of women, and the approach undertaken here. The foundation of this study lies in the classical theories of *philia-amicitia* and post-structuralist theories of friendship.

For instance, in *Don Quijote*, Anselmo, Lotario, and Camila perfectly represent the aforementioned triangle of desire. However, in his analysis of this phenomenon, Bandera takes the reader into a re-

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where he informs his father of the results” (Scholberg 187).

<sup>12</sup> “Girard calls desire ‘triangular’ because there is no straight line between the desire of a subject for an object; one desires only what is given value by another, who becomes part of the process of mimetic rivalry as both rival and double of the subject” (McCracken 338-39).

gion where jealousy between the characters becomes his main focus, and he values Cervantes as an "extraordinario and prolífico inventor de circunstancias individuales específicas" that might evolve into transcendental human problems ("Monda" 250). In fact, Bandera's emphasis on individualistic representations is the basis of the distinctive freedom of Cervantes's characters, as opposed to society's constrained ones:

Esta separación entre, por una parte, el individuo y sus circunstancias, y por otra, el problema mismo, no solo confiere al individuo cervantino su característica libertad, sino que hace posible al mismo tiempo una visión más clara del problema en sí; más clara que si la intención de Cervantes fuera la de presentar casos psicológicos específicos, interesantes por su singularidad (249).

I agree with Bandera that a characteristic of "El curioso impertinente" is that it calls attention to the problem of friendship. But I differ with him when he turns the plots of friendship in *La Galatea*, *Don Quijote*, *Novelas ejemplares*, and *Persiles y Segismunda* into mere intrigues on jealousy (251, 266), which results because his approach values post-Enlightenment views of friendship and the premium they place on love and affection. An example of such understandable post-Enlightenment views and the way they affect our interpretation of Cervantes can be seen in the following:

Resulta, por tanto, sorprendente observar que los celos no aparecen para nada en esta historia de los dos amigos que nos cuenta Silerio. . . la ejemplaridad del comportamiento de Silerio resulta bastante artificial. ("Monda" 266-67)

Because of Bandera's post-Enlightenment disposition, he finds the lack of Timbrio and Silerio's jealousy "surprising" and Silerio's "exemplary behavior" quite artificial. However, I argue that this puzzling artificiality is the crux of the story of the two friends.

The social symbolic value of the sacrifices between male friends

must be understood from a perspective where artificiality becomes rhetoric, to reinforce individual behavior of fidelity, in order to enhance trust in social exchange.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the story of Anselmo and Lotario is as rhetorical as the one of Timbrio and Silerio. The latter reinforces, just as the former undermines, the same set of symbols. In Avallé-Arce's opinion, Cervantes composed two plots about the two friends: one in *La Galatea*, and the other in "El curioso impertinente" (18-24). For him, the crux of the Boccaccian story of the two friends is not jealousy, but that "un amigo se sacrifica para liberar a otro de una muerte segura, y los dos amigos se enamoran de la misma mujer" (19). Avallé-Arce posits this scenario in contrast to the medieval tradition of the test of friendship in the story of "a half-friend and a friend and a half" (Scholberg 187). His explanation for this difference draws on the concept of "displacement" from content into form:

La validez de la moral es lo esencial [en la tradición medieval del cuento], las filigranas artísticas lo de menos; de aquí la repetición de la materia sin variar casi la forma... Las propias circunstancias de nuestro cuento lo convierten en instrumento ideal de las ejemplificaciones éticas... para sus autores el verdadero interés no está en el contenido narrativo, sino en el contenido simbólico [de la gran cadena del ser]. (33)

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13 The repetition of the rhetorical stories of the two male friends seems to have been a pertinent tool to make true certain symbolisms: "Given the various characteristics of patron-client relations in general, and the various ambivalences built into them in particular, and also given their tendency to become institutionalized to reinforce in a way the very patterns towards which their attitude is ambivalent, it is no surprise that, in the societies in which these relations are predominant, other types of highly symbolic interpersonal relations tend to develop, partly in conjunction with and partly in opposition to them. These relations attempt, as it were, to overcome the ambivalences inherent to institutionalized patron-client nexus and to go beyond them into the realm of pure, undiluted meaning and trust, uncontaminated by exigencies of power or instrumental considerations" (Eisenstadt and Roniger, *Patrons* 218-19).

In Avallé-Arce's analysis of this long and complex tradition, there are two basic extremes: on the one hand, the moralistic medieval model, and on the other, the artistic variations of the Renaissance.<sup>14</sup> By the sixteenth century, he argues, the moralistic and the artistic versions coexist, but do not mix. During the early 1600's, the topic undergoes further modifications by virtue of a process of allusion to the original model.<sup>15</sup>

Though useful in its own right, Avallé-Arce's study of probable literary models and transformations does not account for Cervantes's decision to give a tragic twist to his version of the story; this is especially true if the majority of the critics are correct in concluding that the most likely models for Cervantes's version are *Orlando furioso*, the *Decameron*, and a variation of the latter in *El crotalón*, all of which end in a constructive fashion from the point of view of androcentric *amicitia*.

Examining the early modern tradition of the tale of the two friends, one realizes that the topic of the story—the triangulation of desire between two male friends and a woman—does not necessarily lead to either disappointment or calamity, since characters in other stories finding themselves in the same initial scenario of triangular desire negotiate it in a manner that ultimately leads to a non bloody outcome. Tradition teaches that for each major decision confronting

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14 The question of the morality and exemplarity of the tale has been the object of much discussion, as has its relevance within *Don Quijote*; these issues have given rise to highly disparate critical stances (Castro, *El pensamiento* 126-27, Wilson 9-10). Álvaro Molina asserts that Anselmo's "medieval" attitudes and actions within the framework of *amicitia* symbolize a rejection of the non-Christian spirit of the Renaissance (51). Nevertheless, until the mid-seventeenth century, the network of signifiers of friendship theory was grounded more in issues of ethics than of moral doctrine.

15 Avallé-Arce contends that towards the end of the sixteenth century, the tremendous popularity of the motif led to a flourishing "allusive process" whereby "the author knows he will be understood by all, given the popularity of the original [story]" (35). If the numerous and diverse variations on the theme of the two rival friends essentially allude to the "original," these Renaissance and Baroque texts may allude, in turn, to Boccaccio's tale of the two friends, or others, depending on various factors.

the main characters of “El curioso impertinente,” there are at least two options. First, Anselmo decides to test his wife. The object of investigation is inadequate, as it is said in *Orlando Furioso*’s test of the woman. Second, Lotario fails even when he tries to deter his friend from his plans. Anselmo then forces Lotario and Camila to spend so much time together that they eventually fall in love. In the *Crotalón*, for instance, the friend and the wife are not adulterous because the friend rejects the advances of the wife. In other cases, the wife rejects the friend, or both decide not to take advantage of the private space that the husband has created for them. Third, if adultery takes place, the husband could either remain unaware of it, as happens in Sermini’s *novella* 14, or discover it. In the last situation, the laws of honor lead to flight, disgrace, bloodshed, and death, as in “El curioso impertinente.” Perhaps the best counterexample to this scenario can be found in Guillén de Castro’s play, *El curioso impertinente*. In 1606, just one year after the publication of *Don Quijote*, Guillén de Castro, in his version of Cervantes’s story introduced a relatively happy ending in which the husband dies, leaving an appropriate social space for Lotario and Camila’s love (Arellano 79). In fact, throughout the play, we see Anselmo portrayed as an obstacle to the consummation of the preexisting love between Camila and Lotario.

Cervantes’s deviation from previous literary models in “El curioso” stands in stark contrast to his earlier use of the tale of the two friends. In his first published book, *La Galatea* (1585), Cervantes rendered his first *imitatio* of the classical topos. In that work, the author portrayed the connections between friendship, generosity and desire through an idealized tale of *amicitia perfecta* in which the two male friends choose to forgo the fulfillment of their desire for the same woman in order to remain faithful to one another. Therefore, neither the philological nor the comparative approaches offer much help in understanding the social meaning of Lotario’s betrayal and Anselmo’s obsession in connection with the symbolism of generosity and control of desire in friendship.<sup>16</sup> Cervantes’s highlighting of un-

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16 For Kathy Eden, at the base of the theory of friendship lie a number of

faithfulness and disloyalty—rather than nobility and virtue—among males undermines the tradition of *amicitia perfecta*.

As we have already seen, scholars from a variety of critical schools have exhaustively considered the topic of friendship in the literary sources Cervantes probably used in creating "El curioso impertinente." However, for the most part, these scholars have chosen not to examine the work's broader philosophical implications vis-à-vis the classical and early modern traditions of *amicitia perfecta* and the Enlightenment tradition of *cool friendship* and *sympathy*. It is between these two different notions of virtuous friendship that "El curioso impertinente" is situated. Within the symbolic economy of the classical concept of *perfect friendship*, friends must be politically attuned, socially equal, and virtuous. Such an ideal of human interrelationship is often expressed as a willingness to die for one another during feats of military heroism and to live in partnership—sharing all material wealth<sup>17</sup>—as well as to share the same education.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, friends are supposed to possess everything in common (*koinonia*).<sup>19</sup>

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proposals to coordinate personal desires and community life. Therefore, we may consider the representations of perfect and imperfect friendship in Cervantes from the point of view of how they portray the issue of the individual's desires within social constraints.

17 Regarding the central role of property and education in ancient friendship and political theory, see Kathy Eden (109-42). On the connections between the military, politics and friendship, see Bray (2003), Derrida (1998), and Hutter (1978). A non-exhaustive list of other important works on friendship from a variety of approaches used for this article includes: Fraise (1974), Hill (2004), Lager (1994), MacNamara (1958), Meilaender (1981), El Murr (2001), Neili (1986), Nygren (1982), Pizzolato (1993), Remer (1999), Rorty (1980), Schwarzenbach (1996), Silver (1990), Wandell (1991), and Zetzel (1972).

18 On the characteristics of idealistic models of friendship, there exists an extensive literature. I have found very informative the works by Bray (2003), Burke (1999), Charlier (1977), Fraise (1974), Follon (2003), Green (2004), Halperin (2002), Hutter (1978), Hyatte (1991, 1994, 1999), Johnson (2003), Kelly and Rosemann (2004), Langer (1994), Lohuizen-Mulder (1977), Morford (1991), and Smith (1935).

19 Regarding the connection between friendship, property and justice in Plato's *The Republic*, Kathy Eden notes: "In taking friendship as its model, the *koinonia* or partnership formed by the guardians evokes both our proverb that

Numerous scholars have interrogated our notions of friendship throughout the ages, but one voice that especially deserves consideration in our discussion of this subject belongs to the eighteenth century economist and moral philosopher, Adam Smith. Since Adam Smith rejects the practice of friendship as described above, he usually prefers to discuss the concepts of commerce and sympathy rather than friendship, it can be difficult to identify a succinct definition of the latter in his work. However, the following statement—one of the very few in which Smith directly addresses the characteristics of a proper friendship—gives a good indication of how he conceives this aspect of interpersonal relationships should manifest itself in human nature:

The prudent man, though not always distinguished by the most exquisite sensibility, is always capable of friendship. But his friendship is not that ardent and passionate... It is a sedate, but steady and faithful attachment to a few well-trying and well-chosen companions; in the choice of whom he is not guided by the giddy admiration of shining accomplishments, but by the sober esteem of modesty, discretion, and good conduct... He rarely frequents, and more rarely figures in those convivial societies which are distinguished for the jollity and gaiety of their conversation... The prudent man is always sincere... But though always sincere, he is not always frank and open... His conversation... is always perfectly inoffensive... [he] is not a meddler in other people's affairs... He is averse to enter into any party disputes, hates faction, and is not always very forward to listen to the voice even of noble and great ambition. (Smith, *The Theory* 214-15)

To this reassignment of meanings of friendship corresponds a shift on the virtues on amicable exchanges. A good rendering of the virtues that Adam Smith considered necessary among prudent men to the operation of a commercial society is as follows:

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friends hold all things in common and also the traditional source of this proverb—Pythagoras” (83).

Forbearance and mutual non-interference are Smith's favourite virtues. The 'impartial spectator' monitors our 'passions and appetites', constantly judging 'how far' each of them was 'either to be indulged or restrained' (Smith, Adam III.5.5, 165; Hill and McCarthy, "Hume" 41).

After the seventeenth century, a similar change took place in France and Germany. The definition of friendship in the *Encyclopédie* is as follows: "*L'amitié n'est autre chose que l'habitude d'entretenir avec quelqu'un un commerce honnête & agréable*" (1:361). In his *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant stresses the same idea of distance and communication: "*L'amitié (considérée dans sa perfection) est l'union de deux personnes par un même amour et un respect réciproques. On voit facilement qu'elle est un Idéal de sympathie et de communication*" (El Murr 193). All in all, Adam Smith is one of the most important theorists contributing to this shift of the notion of friendship during the transition from pre-commercial to commercial societies:

For Smith, market society dramatically transforms friendships by deintensifying them and making possible more ubiquitous and pacific forms of cool friendship. Because the stable and organized commercial state provides adequate internal and external security, commerce flourishes; such security also facilitates the domestication and general radiation of *necessitudo*. (Hill and McCarthy, "On Friendship" 12)

Profound social changes resulted in a transformation of the institution of friendship, whose original values were no longer necessary. For Allan Silver, the Enlightenment Scots "understand solidaristic and heroic forms of friendship in pre-commercial society as pervasively shaped by calculations of interest, in contrast to the personal and civic friendship possible in commercial society" (1482, 1486).

Adam Smith and the Enlightenment Scots were not the first to theorize about these social changes. The discussion about idealistic

and practical models of friendship must have been a reality in early modern intellectual circles as we can see in Alberti (247-317), and Castiglione (135-38).<sup>20</sup> This type of discussion about the usefulness of the discourse on *amicitia* for banking families and court officers led to the appearance of what Faliu-Lacourt refers to as the “formas vicariadas.” We see this “formas vicariadas” in the Boccaccian tale of the two friends, such as “El curioso impertinente” by Cervantes and the play by the same title by Guillén de Castro. In literature:

plasmaciones íntimamente emparentadas de un mismo tema aparecen vicariantes según varios parámetros: el momento y el lugar de su difusión, el enfoque literario, el género elegido, y las convenciones de este género en una época determinada. (“Formas” 169)

Even though Faliu-Lacourt defends the use of this biological vocabulary in terms that recall Propp’s formalist theories, in the conclusion this critic recognizes the importance of subjectivity: “las formas vicariantes de un mismo tema corresponden a factores objetivos, pero también, en última instancia, a factores subjetivos, más importantes aún” (179). During the seventeenth century one of the most famous “formas vicariadas” of the formulae of *amicitia* appeared in print and was read in many countries: “El curioso impertinente.” In this *novella*, Cervantes responded to the subjective and objective factors at play in the evolution of both economic systems and understandings of friendship during the early modern period in Europe.<sup>21</sup>

#### FRIENDSHIP AND PATRONAGE

It has been said that fidelity is the common point between the rhetoric of friendship and the rhetoric of patronage (Lytle 48). This

<sup>20</sup> See the informative articles by Christensen and Wootton on friendship in Alberti, Erasmus, and More.

<sup>21</sup> Some philological works on the influence of “El curioso impertinente” on British literature are Rosenbach (1902), Peery (1946); and in French literature, Kaplan (1953).

rhetorical insistence on the purity of human relations serves to mitigate the ambivalences of the patron-client relationships and tends to develop highly symbolic institutions of friendship (Eisenstadt and Roniger 218-19). This leads us to ask if descriptions of fraught friendship might be read in terms of uncommitted or problematic patron-client relationships. As loyalty is equally important in both of these notions, the expressions of friendship and patronage in pre-modern societies have much more in common than not, since the exchange of goods—or gifts, and services—is a fundamental part of both institutions. On the other hand, the difference between patronage and friendship would be that patrons and clients form a voluntary or compulsory vertical association, in which some form of exchange is mandatory, while friendship is a horizontal and voluntary association in which barter or exchange is not a requisite (Kettering, *Friendship and Clientage* 145-46). Friendship, nevertheless, could still respond to vested family interests grounded in historical or occasional alliances (Christensen 18, 22).

In order to frame the concept of friendship, I will focus on representations of male *perfect friendship* in relation to the rhetoric of patronage in early modern Europe. The connection between patronage and friendship derives from the fact that each practice mirrors the other as a complementary or dual reality. Patronage is a fundamental element of early modern economic exchanges, whereas friendship is the language of these economic exchanges when they must not be explicit (Bourdieu 177-82). This rule of silence about certain exchanges of goods between kin, families, and friends makes the study of friendship extremely difficult. When we read about friends, then, could the language of friendship be the sign of an asymmetrical association between kin and/or neighbors? Might clients such as writers and painters seek the benefits codified in the language of *amicitia* when that language is used in the context of unequal patron-client relationships?

Patronage, being a "permanent structural characteristic of all early European material high culture, based as it [was] on production by specialists" might be transformed in certain instances into

an apparently non-economic relationship through the language of friendship.<sup>22</sup> I will argue here that this transformation can go both ways: from the materialistic exchanges of patronage to the symbolic tokens of friendship. Conversely, the literary representations of friendship—either fraught or loyal—reflect the healthiness of the patron-client association. In pre-capitalist societies, this transformation of economic relationships into altruistic ones is a key part of the movement between an economy of material goods and its counterpart, the economy of symbolic goods (Bourdieu 175, 183).

The concept of the symbolic economy has to do with the exchange of gifts—such as wives, services, or art—which seemingly have no price. As Bourdieu says:

L'économie des biens symboliques repose sur le refoulement ou la censure de l'intérêt économique (au sens restreint du terme). En conséquence, la vérité économique, c'est-à-dire le prix, doit être cachée activement ou passivement ou laissée dans le vague. L'économie des biens symboliques est une économie de la floue et de l'indéterminée. Elle repose sur un tabou de l'explicitation. (209)

In the conversations about Sancho's salary, Don Quijote insists on the fabulous prize that awaits Sancho at the end of one of their adventures. Sancho, though, has doubts about the security of his time

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22 The definition is from Werner L. Gundersheimer, who adds that in pre-industrial Europe "[t]he effects of patronage are also pervasive in such diverse areas as appointments to secular and religious offices; the conception and creation of the structures and spaces within which people work, pray, and live; the execution of the artifacts of material and intellectual culture; the systems of transactions into which the behavior of social groups—families, clans, guilds, classes (whether economic, social, occupational, or sexual)—is organized, and through which the relationships of such groups to one another are expressed... it is important to recognize that particular patrons, and individual acts of patronage of all kinds and degrees, should be understood not only within their own immediate cultural context. They may also be subsumed within a more encompassing theory concerning the systemic effects of patronage in European social and intellectual history" (3-4).

investment in his job:

Sancho clearly manifests his preference for the security of a salary when he states simply that he does not believe in nor expect the insula... Sancho's request poses a threat to his [don Quijote's] personal authority and to the old order on which it is based. It has a revolutionary potential to destabilize and then transform the entire relationship between the two men. And indeed, Don Quixote declares the relationship in crisis. (Johnson, *Cervantes and the Material* 29)

This crisis, in fact, is put in terms of the end of their friendship, as well as their client-patron relationship.

The taboo on explicitness can be found elsewhere, for example in Velázquez's and Lope de Vega's self-representations as creative gentlemen whose works are not for sale, but rather exist to be offered as gifts (Brown, *Velázquez* 250-52; Wright 22). In these examples, creativeness refers to the aristocratic symbolic economy, while craftsmanship belongs to the material market. Gifts, according to the taboo of explicitness, mask other transactions. Friends exchange gifts. But the inequality of the value of the gifts might make them become master and servant, or patron and client, in what is called symbolic alchemy (Bourdieu 184). Complementarily, the inequality of these associations might be masked by purposeful gestures of friendship. Artists, clients and servants can become public friends by virtue of a ritualistic expression of solidarity, or they might attempt to fashion a public image of friendship through images, dedications, and texts. Consequently, textual representations of friendship, such as the emblematic story of the two friends, will be studied as a linguistic repository of economic and productive bonds.

DON QUIJOTE DE LA MANCHA:

A THORNY REPRESENTATION OF FRIENDSHIP

Of course, these remarks underline the utilitarian aspects of the relationship between Sancho and Don Quijote in such a way that the

idealistic portrait of the heroes is ruined.<sup>23</sup> In fact, the publication of Cervantes's masterpiece constituted a significant break with the narrative tradition in which fictions of friendship were characterized by idealized, heroic pairs of male friends.

Matthew Alan Wyszynski goes so far as to state that, according to the Aristotelian concept of friendship in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, friendship does not exist between Sancho and Don Quijote:

Though... utility is not anathema to true friendship, whose foundations are rooted in virtue, Don Quijote and Sancho have no such virtue upon which their association is based, and so this can only be interpreted as a strict accounting of favors or services. (172)

Many readers would reject Wyszynski's sound analysis, since the knight and the squire alternately need, miss, and even love each other. Nevertheless, the opposition of these two extreme interpretations—of Quijote and Sancho as either ideal friends or not as friends at all—is less extreme than it seems. Our difficulty in comprehending why Sancho and Don Quijote are not perfect friends, as described in the classical theories of friendship, points to a break in the notion of friendship which took place during the early modern period. Keeping those classical theories in mind as we shift our attention away from the broader narrative of Sancho and Don Quijote to consider the catastrophic friendship of the “perfect” friends Anselmo and Lotario in “El curioso impertinente,” Cervantes's reassessment of the obsolete classical model becomes strikingly clear.

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23 Elsewhere, I have interpreted *amicitia perfecta* in *La Celestina* as a pre-modern system of protection against misfortune and tyranny. In this sense, Sancho and Don Quijote act as real friends who help and complement each other in moments of distress—but only sometimes. In this sense, their relationship would follow Perkin's definition of friends as “all those who expected or, reciprocally, from whom one could expect, the benefits of patronage” (46-51). In a so-called modern society, however, interested and disinterested commerce can be differentiated, since in theory, the law, the state, and the market provide protection to the citizen against tyranny, and sometimes against misfortune, as well.

## ANSELMO'S IMPERTINENT CURIOSITY

The text of "El curioso impertinente" initially presents the male protagonists, Anselmo and Lotario, as "tan amigos, que, por excelencia y antonomasia, de todos los que los conocían 'los dos amigos' eran llamados" (375). Furthermore—as two young, single men "de la misma edad y de unas mismas costumbres" (376)—the pair ostensibly possesses the characteristics of social equality and shared values inherent to both the classical model and its later variants. Nevertheless, the subsequent narration reveals this "perfect friendship" to be anything but exemplary. Following his marriage to the beautiful noblewoman Camila, Anselmo ultimately explodes the social constructs of heterosexual marriage and male friendship by violating the boundaries of both. Having originally secured Camila's hand on Anselmo's behalf and negotiated the terms of their marriage, Lotario begins to distance himself from his friend's home following the marriage on the grounds that:

por parecerle a él (como es razón que parezca a todos los que fueren discretos) que no se han de visitar ni continuar las casas de los amigos casados de la misma manera que cuando eran solteros, porque aunque la buena y verdadera amistad no puede ni debe de ser sospechosa en nada, con todo esto es tan delicada la honra del casado, que parece que se puede ofender aun de los mismos hermanos, cuanto más de los amigos. (376)

Despite his good intentions, Lotario's prudence backfires. Anselmo takes offense at his friend's absence, objecting that he never would have gotten married at all had he known it would negatively affect his friendship (376-77). Insisting that Lotario continue to visit him daily, Anselmo soon conceives a plan to test his bride's faithfulness by instigating Lotario's feigned seduction of her, and the tale ends in tragedy. Through Anselmo's own written apology, composed shortly before his death, we learn that he is aware of having acted wrongly. He recognizes that his obsession was greater than his respect for the sacred bonds of both friendship and marriage. His

last will is to write about his “necio e impertinente deseo” (422). He pardons Camila for her unfaithfulness on the grounds that she could never have resisted temptation, given the unreasonable circumstances which he forced her to endure. Furthermore, he had no right to ask so much from her: “sepa que yo la perdono, porque no estaba ella obligada a hacer milagros, ni yo tenía necesidad de querer que ella los hicese” (422).

It is striking that in his last will Anselmo does not mention Lotario at all. His unfaithful friend’s behavior does not merit a single remark; since the moral for Anselmo is that only his own “impertinente deseo” has provoked his dramatic change of fortune. In his own words, he was the “fabricador” of his own dishonor (422). Nevertheless, the absence of recriminations against his former friend Lotario must have some significance; the theory of friendship has offered alternately philosophical, political, or religious reflections upon human desires and their control within a given society. Anselmo takes responsibility for all the unethical decisions that he has made and forced upon his wife and friend. The lack of ethical decision-making in all critical points of the story makes “El curioso impertinente” an emblematic example of “imperfect friendship” and therefore a fascinating case study of the Renaissance evolutions of *amicitia*. The question here is, how do we analyze these ethical issues?

#### FRIENDSHIP AS SYMBOLIC ECONOMY OF PATRONAGE

We are in need of a theoretical frame that explains why Cervantes sometimes frustrates the “reader’s desire for textual stability” by significantly altering his literary models (El Saffar 206)<sup>24</sup> In an attempt to provide this frame, I will link the theory of friendship to studies of patronage through the sociological concept of the “economy of symbolic goods.” According to modern sensibilities, the pairing of a patron-client relationship with friendship may seem abusive and/or opportunistic; such relationships might be described as involving

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24 El Saffar refers to *Don Quijote* as a whole, but it is also true of “El curioso impertinente.”

"nepotism" or "servility." However, in early modern culture, the rhetoric of patronage and the rhetoric of friendship were two sides of the same coin.<sup>25</sup> Alison Weber has argued that "participants in the early modern patronage system developed a highly codified language... clients... declared themselves variously to be children, servants, slaves, and abject lovers of their benefactors" (404). Alan Bray goes so far as to state that "all [the] world knew [that] the language of 'friendship' was also part of the language of 'service'" (199).<sup>26</sup> Both the language of friendship and the language of service represent negotiations between the individual's desires and the constraints of his or her social network. When Cervantes represents unfaithful friends in his works, he thus undermines the "economy of symbolic goods" that was so important to the patronage system.

There exist two complementary levels in social exchanges: the symbolic layer and the economic layer (Bourdieu 175-211). Symbolic goods (friendship) and economic goods (favors) are different, but they collaborate in the process of symbolic domination and violence. During the Renaissance, authors consistently expressed their relationships with their patrons in terms of idealized friendship, accepting the terms of an unwritten contract between unequals. Therefore, I argue that the dramatic shift represented by Cervantes's take on the tale of the two friends may be understood as a function of the author's growing frustration at his own failed patron-client relationship.

In *La Galatea*, invoking the same rhetoric of patronage, Cervantes represents himself as surrounded by friends. Keeping in mind the pervasive language of friendship in the textual expression of patron-client relationships, the vast number of representations of friends-

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25 Cicero claims that patron-client connections are not real friendships (Hill and McCarthy, "On Friendship and *necessitudo*" 9-10).

26 "But it was only in Thomas More's land of *Utopia* that the adages of male friendship could be embodied... [Fulke Greville's] triumphal distinction of friendship from service and from the role of a counselor was possible only in rhetoric: as he and all his world knew, the language of 'friendship' was also part of the language of 'service'" (Bray 199).

hip in *La Galatea* may be regarded as an expression of Cervantes's aspirations to a perfect patronage network. In fact, the *imitatio* in Timbrio and Silerio's *novella* is so exact in its rendering of male *amicitia perfecta* that the story provides very few surprises (Sorieri 237). As dictated by the tradition of "the tale of the two friends," family bonds unite two youths. They are schoolmates, travel together, and love each other deeply. As usual in the Boccaccian model, the plot moves two males in a safe relationship into a dangerous triangle by adding a woman to the equation.<sup>27</sup> To a great extent, the challenges to perfect male friendship are presented as the result of the desire for the female character. Heterosexual love and duties disrupt the social script of masculine *amicitia* that should govern the acts of Timbrio and Silerio. When the two young men fall in love with the same woman, Nísida, they trigger the dangerous mechanics of a triangle of desire. As a result, guilt, doubt, and lies are brought to the fore. Even if, in *La Galatea*, the potential for tragedy is great, the *novella* of Timbrio, Silerio, and Nísida has a happy ending because the two friends do not betray each other. On the contrary, they both sacrifice their desire for Nísida in order to respect "las leyes de la amistad" (Cervantes, *La Galatea* 289).<sup>28</sup> Timbrio and Silerio stage, once again, the traditional contest of generosity that made a symbol of friends such as Orestes and Pylades, Scipio and Laelius, and Anselmo and Lotario in Guillen de Castro's version of *El curioso impertinente*. However, it is well known that Cervantes's patron-client aspirations, as expressed both metaphorically and explicitly in *La Galatea*, never became a reality: Ascanio Colonna, to whom he dedicated *La Galatea*, left for Italy; Cervantes dedicated only one book, *Don Quijote I*, to the Duke of Béjar; and the Count of Lemos, to whom he dedicated the bulk of his production, was far away in Sicily

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27 For an analysis of "El curioso impertinente" in connection with Freud's Oedipal triangle and René Girard's theory on triangular desire, see Diana de Armas Wilson (13) and Cesáreo Bandera ("La novella").

28 Silerio describes his internal struggle in these terms: "A vuestra consideración discreta deixo el imaginar lo que podía sentir un corazón a quien de una parte combatían las leyes de la amistad y de otra, las inviolables de Cupido" (289).

and Napoli as Cervantes wrote.<sup>29</sup> In fact, *La Galatea*—Cervantes's earliest publication—is the only work in which the author includes a representation of *amicitia perfecta* that truly conforms to the classical model. In subsequent works, his representations of friendship become increasingly problematized.

Despite his failed patron-client relationships, Cervantes nevertheless continued to use the language of friendship in dedications to his patrons (or potential patrons), and to write extensively about friendship in his work. His persistent use of the friendship motif, however, is typical of the inequality inherent to patron-client relationships and their literary expressions. An "alchimie symbolique," in which servants and their masters become friends, corresponds to a well-known "hypocrisie structurale," which is to say a relationship in which the patron plays a dominant role and the artist abets his or her own domination (Bourdieu 183-85). The writer accepts the patron's acts of symbolic domination, while portraying the nexus as friendship, love, service, and even parenthood (Weber 404). However, for the symbolic exchange to work, both sides must have identical categories of appreciation and perception (Bourdieu 185). The key concepts of this codified language are loyalty and generosity between unequals.

Loyalty and ostentatious acts of generosity are essential to representations of perfect friendship, as well as to public demonstrations of patronage. Self-sacrifice among friends and lavishness on the part of patrons are complementary and often described with terms such as *virtue* and *magnificence*. In order to maintain the loyalty of clients, patrons must render payment in the form of *mercedes*; in response, the artist-client must increase the patron's social credit by publicly using the highly codified rhetoric of friendship. However, if the categories of appreciation and perception of the roles of friends and servants do not match in the literary expression of a patron-client relationship, this might lead to subversions of the codes of *amicitia*, such as betrayal or infidelity. Hence the representation of unfaithful

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29 See Sieber ("The Magnificent"), Fernández (417).

friends such as Anselmo and Lotario implicitly undermines the language and structure of one of the symbolic economies of early modern societies, that of the idealized—though always unequal—patron-client relationship.

#### CERVANTES AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF FRIENDSHIP

The changes in the representations of friendship from perfection to imperfection, such as those that we may observe throughout the literary career of Cervantes, are related to drastic changes in the systems of production of works of art in early modern Europe, and in particular with the weakening of the patronage system. Commerce and the growing market economy played a major role in the weakening of the patronage system, which in turn affected the definition of friendship. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, changes in social structures altered the lifestyles of writers. The author became more a professional and less a creature of courtly life and pomp. Even though the existence of a larger professional and artistic network meant that writers could choose for whom they wrote—the patrons, the market, or both—Cervantes was not a successful player in a new milieu where artists were gradually freed from the restrictive rhetoric of loyalty proper to traditional patronage-friendship relationships. This evolution affected the nature of the link between artists and patrons, and the literary story of the two friends evolved from the exaltation of male *amicitia* into depictions of the depraved exploitation of the other.

In “El curioso impertinente,” Cervantes pointed at the weaknesses of the idealized theory of male perfect friendship. The undermining of the social script of friendship in “El curioso impertinente” amounts to a declaration of the death of the symbolic values conveyed by classical constructs of *amicitia* as a mask of the declining economic system of patronage. This dramatic shift in Cervantes’s treatment of friendship is symptomatic of the fact that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, traditional representations of idealized friendship were either on the verge of disappearing, or of

adapting themselves to the representational needs of the new commercial societies of the 1700's.<sup>30</sup> Soon Hume, Ferguson, Smith, Voltaire, Diderot, and Kant, among others, would assign new meanings to the social practice of friendship.

To speak properly of friendship in the work of Cervantes we must first frame his representations somewhere between early modern and modern ideas of friendship; and we must evaluate the evolution of the matter during the lifetime of Cervantes himself. As Helena Percas de Ponseti puts it, Cervantes's characterization of Anselmo "equivale a la evaluación renacentista de Cervantes del concepto medieval del mundo, inoperante en la sociedad del 1600" (191). A consideration of some of the historical processes at play in patron-client relationships during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries clarifies the way in which Cervantes's work reflects a sea change in the social institutions of both friendship and patronage, as well as the socioeconomic changes that made that shift a reality. Long before eighteenth century thinkers began to reflect upon *amicitia*, sympathy, commerce, and communication, Cervantes, from the realm of literature, showed Europe that the shift was already taking place. His characters are imperfect human beings; their acts are dominated by passions, which lead them to disregard their duties. Because of this, characters like Anselmo and Lotario, as imperfect individuals, cannot create and sustain the illusions of the classical, aristocratic, and male *amicitia perfecta*.

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30 In fact, friendship is not included as a component of modern conceptions of state; liberal thinkers do not consider *amicitia* or *philia* as a political tool to fight against tyranny and misfortune: "One searches in vain, for instance, through the writings of the founding fathers of the American republic... for any discussion of friendship between citizens... no theorist of the modern period explicitly argues that furthering relations of *philia* is a primary function of the modern state. Instead, shared interests in security and a commodious life, the protection of property and individual freedom, or the establishment of law, order and justice are normally invoked" (Schwarzenbach, "On Civic" 108-9).

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