

Secular Spectacle? Cervantes, Hardy, and the Question of Religion

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THE QUESTION OF RELIGION

A LARGE CANVAS FEATURES PROMINENTLY the haunches of a horse. One of its front legs is raised, but the horse does not seem agitated; instead, it calmly looks down at a man on the ground whose arms are flailing but whose face we cannot see, while another, barely visible man in the background tries to take hold of the horse's reins. Would we know what we are seeing on such a canvas if we had not read the label that identifies the scene as Caravaggio's *Conversion of Saint Paul on the Road to Damascus* (fig. 1)? Saul, dramatically foreshortened underneath the horse, has fallen not only off his mount but off his own position as the painting's protagonist, to the extent that the art historian Howard Hibbard reports the anecdote of "one wag [who] has likened it to an accident in a blacksmith's shop."¹ Is holiness visible in this painting? Is religion at work beyond being a source of lively stories?

In this essay I am interested in the question of religion precisely from this point of invisibility, focusing on our blind spots in dealing with matters of religion in the early-modern period. More precisely, my aim is to trouble our certainty about the distinctions between "religious" and "secular" by studying one of Cervantes's more controversial stories, *La fuerza de la sangre* (1613) and its adaptation for the French stage by Alexandre Hardy a few years after its publication (printed in 1625). These texts are exemplary for the study of religion precisely because they

¹ Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 123.



FIGURE 1
Caravaggio, *Conversion on
the Way to Damascus*, Cerasi
Chapel at Santa Maria del
Popolo, Rome.

show us how difficult it is to trace clear demarcation lines between the religious and the secular. As Cervantes's deepest engagement with theodicy, *La fuerza de la sangre* has produced interpretations from the skeptical and ironic, in which the multiple references to Christianity are read in a critical light as the last resort of the poor and oppressed, to the Erasmist, which read the story as a secularized miracle. In contrast, there is critical consensus on the role of religion in Hardy's adaptation of this story: because the play substitutes classical mythology for Christian references, religion is deemed inconsequential. However, a close reading of Hardy's transposition of the story will show that it actually understands the importance of religion in the original, even if *La force du sang* then gives rise to a different form of imagining the relationship between humans and the divine.

Typically, attending to matters of religion in literary or visual early-modern studies has meant a turn to either iconography or sociology. In the first, religion is meaningful as a set of narrative topoi that provide content for artistic representations. This is particularly relevant in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, which not only reiterated the Catholic intellectual position on images but also led to a more programmatic approach to subject matter and its representations, first through local synods and the writings of clergymen such as Federico Borromeo and Gabriele Paleotti, and later by painters such as Francisco Pacheco, all of whom described and prescribed the proper ways of painting specific saints or episodes from the Bible. In the second approach, religion becomes one among many other cultural practices that play a role in the construction of an individual or group identity, through a focus on patronage networks, gender, or local and international politics, for example.

Both of these methods, the iconographic and the sociological, have yielded important insights into the artistic production of the early-modern period, but by assuming what religion is, they do not tell us much about how it works. I would like to try a different way into "the question of religion." I use this somewhat-awkward phrase here and in my title because it emphasizes

the methodological gambit of my essay, by which religion is not a definite, preassumed object of study, but instead, as Jacques Derrida argued in “Faith and Knowledge,” religion names above all the willingness to keep open to inquiry its very object:

To say things in this way and to believe that one knows of what one speaks, would be to begin by no longer understanding anything at all: as though religion, the question of religion was *what succeeds in returning*, that which all of a sudden would come as a surprise to what one believes one knows: man, the earth, the world, history falling thus under the rubric of anthropology, of history or of every other form of human science or of philosophy, even of the “philosophy of religion.” . . . If there is a question of religion, it ought no longer to be a “question-of-religion.” Nor simply a response to this question. We shall see why and wherein the question of religion is first of all the question of the question.² (emphasis in the original)

A skeptical reader might object that Derrida’s insistence on keeping the question of religion open as a question is simply a playful nonresponse of endless deferral inimical to religion’s certainty. Yet that would be to misunderstand completely what is at stake for Derrida in this essay, whose focus is precisely not on playfulness but on the urgency of maintaining the strangeness of religion as a subject of study that dialogues with ethics, theology, and poetry without being equated, subsumed, or explained away by these disciplines.³

More concretely, I follow the lead of Julia Lupton and Philip Lorenz, who map possible networks that connect theater, religion, criticism, and mystery by “turning” to religion as a form of thinking that is “always a question of *mediation*, of the metaphorical potentiality built into the construction of the ‘religious’ thing we are re-turning to.”⁴ Mediation speaks less to the certainty behind a neat transfer of content—the confident hermeneutic statement of “this is really that”—than to an activity. The focus on definition, on deciding ahead of time what religion is, necessarily has blind spots, and it is my contention that by paying attention to mediation, to the dynamic and sometimes-unexpected relationships forged between humans and the divine, we can begin to recognize as religious certain manifestations of bewilderment, of doubt and hesitation, of forgetfulness and retraction, as much as the more conventional acts of revelation, affirmation, and commemoration.

To return to Caravaggio, it would be to see religion present in paintings such as the controversial *Conversion of Saint Paul on the Road to Damascus* beyond the labels that identify their content and guarantee the stories told. Religion is not diaphanously visible in Caravaggio’s *Conversion of Saint Paul* (or in other early-modern artworks), but it is *legible* in the mediation of

² Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two ‘Sources’ of Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, trans. S. Weber (New York: Routledge, 2002), 76.

³ This is the basis for the critique Derrida makes of the linguist Émile Benveniste, who examined the two theories regarding the etymology of the word “religion.” Benveniste concludes that, linguistically, *religio* is linked to “*re-legere*, to re-collect, to pick as/for a new choice, to return to a previous synthesis to recompose it” (recollecter, reprendre pour un nouveau choix, revenir à une synthèse antérieure pour la recomposer), while the association of religion to *religare* understood as duty or obligation is a Christianization of the concept, which he deems “historically false.” Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, vol. 2, *Pouvoir, droit, religion* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974), 265. According to Derrida, Benveniste presumes an understanding of religion that makes him settle the question in favor of one option, while for the philosopher, the duplicity and doubleness implicit in the prefix *re* are vital to thinking about religion as an ongoing question.

⁴ Philip Lorenz, “Introduction,” *English Language Notes* 44, no. 1 (2006): 143. See also Julia R. Lupton, “The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies,” *English Language Notes* 44, no. 1 (2006): 145–49.

what I would call a momentary communion of confusion shared among the characters in the painting, who experience something they do not understand, and the viewer, who also struggles to make sense of what is present before the eyes. In the words of the art historian Lorenzo Pericolo, Caravaggio's rhetorically equivocal religious paintings do not necessarily deny God, nor is their conceptual ambiguity "pursued for its own sake, for the pleasure of bewildering the viewer." Instead, it "serves to reassess the divine, to investigate its *modus operandi*."⁵ It is to this *modus operandi* that I want to pay attention in my reading of both Cervantes's and Hardy's engagements with religion.

THE NOVELIST AND THE PLAYWRIGHT

Outside specialist circles today, Miguel de Cervantes's fame rests largely on the merits of *Don Quijote*, widely recognized as the first European modern novel. Yet the writer himself declared in the prologue to the *Novelas ejemplares* (1613) that it was through this collection, published seven years after the first part of the mad knight's tale, that he wished to earn praise for being the first to "novelar" (write novels/novellas) in Spain.⁶ Acclaimed by Cervantes's contemporaries for the novelty of the collection's subject matter and for its style, the *Novelas* had gone through at least a dozen editions in Spanish by 1623. It was followed by multiple imitations and adaptations by Cervantes's countrymen, as well as translations into all major European languages, which in turn inspired other playwrights and fiction writers.⁷

The apparently nondescript collective title of Cervantes's twelve short stories, *Novelas ejemplares*, actually would have puzzled seventeenth-century readers. It brings together two realms of storytelling that would not have been thought together: the Italian novella, on the one hand, which was associated from Boccaccio onward with tales of moral indiscretion set in contemporary times, and, on the other hand, the tradition of the *exemplum*—the wide variety of narrative or descriptive material used by medieval preachers to didactic ends and to enliven their sermons. The relationship between the exemplary and the novelistic is often understood antagonistically, as an echo of the debates of "ancients" versus "moderns": didacticism in competition with narrative delight and the strictures of morality as opposed to the freedoms of fiction.

⁵ Lorenzo Pericolo, *Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the Istorica in Early Modern Painting* (London: Harvey Miller, 2011), 209. For a different interpretation of Caravaggio's dislocation of the figure of Paul, in light of confessional debates on grace, see Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60–67.

⁶ "A esto se aplicó mi ingenio, por aquí me lleva mi inclinación, y más que me doy a entender, y es así, que yo soy el primero que he novelado en lengua castellana, que las muchas novelas que en ella andan impresas, todas son traducidas de lenguas extranjeras, y éstas son mías propias, no imitadas ni hurtadas; mi ingenio las engendró, y las parió mi pluma, y van creciendo en los brazos de la imprenta." Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Harry Sieber (Madrid: Cátedra, 2000), 52. "So I have applied my imagination to the end to which my natural inclination leads me. And there is one more thing I would make clear, and that is that I am the first to write novels in Castilian, for the many novels which have appeared in print are all translated from foreign tongues, and these are my very own, neither imitated nor stolen; they were conceived in my imagination, given birth by my pen, and are being nurtured in the arms of the printing press." Barry Ife and Jonathan Thacker, eds. and trans., *Cervantes: The Complete "Exemplary Novels,"* Aris and Phillips Hispanic Classics (Oxford: Oxbow, 2013), xxix–xxxiii.

⁷ For a study of the fortunes of the *Novelas* on the Spanish stage, see Katerina Vaiopoulos, *De la novela a la comedia: Las "Novelas ejemplares" en el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Vigo, Spain: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2010). On their influence on French prose writing, see George Hainsworth, *Les "Novelas ejemplares" de Cervantes en France au XVIIe siècle: Contribution à l'étude de la nouvelle en France* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1933).

La fuerza de la sangre is among the shortest of the twelve novellas, and although one of its modern editors calls it in the first phrase of his introduction “un audaz experimento novelístico y un fracaso, al mismo tiempo” (at once a bold novelistic experiment and a failure),⁸ its story was popular enough that it gave rise to at least five stage adaptations in Spain, England, and France.⁹ Of the stage adaptations, Alexandre Hardy’s is by far the most faithful to Cervantes’s text, even though it was most likely based on the French translation by François de Rosset (1615).¹⁰ In the “Argument” that precedes the printed play and that declares the subject matter to be treated dramatically, Hardy goes so far as to claim that “the subject is represented using the same words as those of its first author”:

Ce sujet, représenté avec les mesmes paroles de Cervantes, son premier Auteur, ne contient autre chose sinon que Leocadie, jeune Damoiselle d’excellente beauté, fut en certaine promenade hors la ville de Toledo, ravie sur le soir entre les bras de ses pere et mere, par l’un des premiers et mieux apparetez Gentils hommes de là, qui l’emporte chez lui, toute évanouïe, et en jöüit au plus fort de sa pâmoison. Il luy band puis aprez les yeux, lorsqu’elle s’est reconnuë, et l’epose, de la sorte, au milieu de la ruë: elle retourne au logis paternel, emportant pour remarque du lieu où on l’a violée une image d’Hercule, et acoucha ensuite, au bout de neuf mois, d’un fils, aussi beau que la mere, qui sert finalement en sa reconnoissance miraculeuse à luy réparer l’honneur par un hereux et legitime mariage.¹¹

Represented in the same words of Cervantes, its first author, this subject contains nothing more than that Léocadie, a young lady of excellent beauty, was—during a certain promenade in the outskirts of the city of Toledo—ravished, in the evening, from the arms of her father and mother, by one of the principal and better-related gentlemen of the place, who took her to his place while she was thoroughly unconscious, and he enjoyed her at the height of her swoon. He blindfolded her when she recovered, and he exposed her in the middle of the street. She returned to the paternal lodging, having taken, in order to recognize the place where she was raped, an image of Hercules, and she gave birth after nine months to a son, just as beautiful as

⁸ Juan Bautista Avallé Arce, introduction to Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, vol. 2, ed. Juan Bautista Avallé Arce (Madrid: Castalia, 1982), 25. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁹ According to Vaiopoulos, *De la novela a la comedia*, those five adaptations are Middleton and Rowley, *The Spanish Gypsy* (1622); Guillén de Castro, *La fuerza de la sangre* (1625); Alexandre Hardy, *La force du sang* (1625); Alonso de Castillo Solorzano, *El agravio satisfecho* (1629); and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *No hay cosa como callar* (1662). All dates refer to the first known versions in print. For a comparison of the plots of three of these adaptations, see Kenneth Muir, “Hardy, Middleton, Calderón and Cervantes’ *La fuerza de la sangre*,” in *Elizabethan and Modern Studies Presented to Professor Willem Schrickx on the Occasion of His Retirement*, ed. J. P. Vander Motten (Ghent: Seminarie voor Engelse en Amerikaanse Literatuur, 1985), 181–89.

¹⁰ Most critics agree that Hardy had access to the Cervantine texts with the intermediary help of the French translation. However, Michael G. Paulson and Tamara Álvarez-Detrell do not discard the possibility that Hardy read Spanish, although they do not go as far as to claim that he read the *Novelas ejemplares* in the original before their translation into French was available. See Michael G. Paulson and Tamara Álvarez-Detrell, eds., *Cervantes, Hardy and “La fuerza de la sangre”* (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1984), 26–30. On the relationship between Rosset’s translation and Hardy’s theater, see Rafael Ruiz Álvarez, “Rosset traductor e intermediario: De la novela de Cervantes al teatro de Hardy,” in *Teatro y traducción*, ed. Francisco Lafarga and Roberto Dengler (Barcelona: Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 1995), 339–48.

¹¹ Alexandre Hardy, *La force du sang*, in *Cervantes, Hardy and “La fuerza de la sangre”*, ed. Paulson and Álvarez-Detrell, 51. All further quotations from Hardy’s *La force du sang* are from Paulson and Álvarez-Detrell’s edition.

the mother, who serves in the end, through his miraculous recognition [by his grandfather], to regain her honor by means of a happy and legitimate marriage.

Theodore Braun's careful comparison of the French play and the Spanish story largely supports Hardy's claim of fidelity to Cervantes.¹² As becomes evident from this initial plot summary, the play maintains the symmetry of the novella's plot, where the first half focuses on the violation of Leocadia/Léocadie by a rich, illustrious young man (Rodolfo in Cervantes; Alphonse in Hardy), which results in her pregnancy and reclusion from society. Seven years later, the child born of this attack, Luisico/Ludovic, much beloved by all, suffers an accident that serves as a turning point of the story. His paternal grandfather (unnamed in Spanish; Dom Inigue in French), who witnesses the accident, finds himself inexplicably drawn to the boy and takes him back to convalesce at the house, in the very same room where his mother had been raped, thus leading to a series of recognitions and revelations that will culminate in the consensual marriage of Léocadie and Alphonse.

Modern critics have found the violence of Cervantes's story, which opens with a scene of rape and ends with the marriage of the rapist to his victim, morally appalling, even in "bad taste."¹³ Its characters, who often strike only one note, are deemed unconvincing, especially Leocadia's sudden love for a still-unrepentant Rodolfo; while the plot and its reliance on coincidence are deemed implausible.¹⁴ The tide turned on the critical reception of this story in the 1970s and 1980s when Ruth S. El Saffar and Alban K. Forcione, coming from different theoretical starting points and to different ends, both argued convincingly that this particular work should not be read in light of the realistic standards of novelistic fiction.¹⁵ In a masterful chapter of his book *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*, Forcione made the case that *La fuerza* wasn't to be read as "fiction" written in a Renaissance Aristotelian mold (with its emphasis on decorum, verisimilitude, and voluntary action by the characters instead of coincidence), but rather as part of the long tradition of miracle writing (e.g., the ever-popular collections of Marian miracles).

¹² Theodore E. D. Braun, "Cervantes and Hardy: From 'La fuerza de la sangre' to 'La force du sang,'" *Anales Cervantinos* 17 (1978): 167–82. Eugène Rigal, for his part, commends the playwright for judicious changes made to Cervantes's text and judges Hardy's words in this introductory summary a little too self-effacing, since this tragicomedy is, according to the critic, among the most successful. Eugène Rigal, *Alexandre Hardy et le théâtre français à la fin du XVIe et au commencement du XVIIe siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1889).

¹³ After criticizing everything in *La fuerza* except its gripping opening scene, Hainsworth concludes: "En un mot, nous ne connaissons pas dans l'œuvre cervantesque un plus frappant exemple de mauvais goût" (In a word, we do not know in Cervantes's works of a more striking example of bad taste). Hainsworth, *Les "Novelas ejemplares" de Cervantes*, 20.

¹⁴ Avallé Arce's introduction to his edition of the *Novelas ejemplares* makes explicit that the reason he considers *La fuerza* a failure is its carelessness with regard to verisimilar characterization. The editor laments that Rodolfo hardly even matters as a Don Juan figure: he is jettisoned to Italy and disappears for much of the story only to be summoned back basically unchanged. Conversely, Leocadia is atypical as a wise-beyond-her-years victim, whose long, articulate monologues after being raped are wholly unbelievable.

¹⁵ El Saffar's consideration of *La fuerza de la sangre* is embedded in a larger argument about a counterintuitive movement in Cervantes's career from the novel and its emphasis on gritty realism and individualistic characters to romance, a mode that exalts idealized characters who submit to fortune. She notes that *La fuerza* represents "Cervantes's most extreme affirmation of faith in the harmony which beauty and virtue can produce." Ruth S. El Saffar, *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's "Novelas ejemplares"* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 128–29. Although El Saffar does acknowledge the growing importance of "a transcendent reality" (13) in romance, religion as such is not her main concern. I will focus here on Forcione's work, which explicitly mobilizes the concepts of religion and secularization. See Alban K. Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: Study of Four Exemplary Novels* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

This would explain why the characters are psychologically underdeveloped by fictional standards (the perpetrator is a stock figure of evil; Leocadia is virtuous but self-effacing, passively and heroically submitting to the designs of God); why the title reflects, not a human agent, but an impersonal force; and why the plot is structured by a series of coincidences rather than decisive actions. Moreover, Leocadia, as Forcione reminds us, is also the name of the patron saint of the city of Toledo, where the story takes place, and the force of blood of the title would refer both to the genealogical calling that makes the central recognition scene possible and to the redeeming and sacramental blood of Christ. This argument is thoroughly convincing, and it also highlights the importance of considering the role of religion in Hardy's adaptation. If affiliation with the Christian genre of the miracle tale is the key to understanding Cervantes's novella, why does the Frenchman replace the references to Christianity with pagan mythology in his play?

Alexandre Hardy (1572?–1632?), one of the first French playwrights to earn his living from his craft, was a very prolific author whose works found favor with both popular and courtly audiences and dominated the Parisian scene in the first decades of the seventeenth century.¹⁶ Although the later triumph of classicism in French drama made Hardy seem barbarous in retrospect, late nineteenth-century critics justly reclaimed him as “the father of French theater.”¹⁷ In those accounts, Hardy is credited with developing in seventeenth-century France a “theater of action” in which characters onstage act out situations and respond to them rather than declaring and proclaiming their thoughts while only describing events. Although Hardy claims to have written hundreds of plays, only the thirty-four he managed to get printed survive. Of these, three borrow their plot from Cervantes's *Novelas*: the tragicomedies of *Cornélie* (based on *La señora Cornelia*), *La belle égyptienne* (*La gitanilla*), and *La force du sang* (*La fuerza de la sangre*). The French literary historian Eugène Rigal regards the last one as a more successful adaptation since his countryman has made the material his own, especially in the third act, where “Hardy fait preuve de sens dramatique et d'originalité” (Hardy proves his sense of drama and originality).¹⁸

¹⁶ Hardy initially became famous as a dramatist for hire (*poète aux gages*) for an acting company that toured outside Paris. When he returned to Paris at the end of the sixteenth century, his experimentations with new genres such as tragicomedy, which often drew inspiration in form and content from novelesque sources, made Hardy's works popular in a capital that had grown weary of the heavy erudition of academic theater and the moralizing of the religious mysteries put on by the confreries. Eugène Rigal, *Hardy et le théâtre français à la fin du XVIe siècle* (1889; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), 83–97.

¹⁷ On the repudiation of Hardy's poetics, see Bérengère Parmentier, “Une langue inacceptable? Le cas du Théâtre d'Alexandre Hardy,” in *Les dossiers du Grihl (Groupe de recherches interdisciplinaires sur l'histoire du littéraire)*, ed. Jean-Pierre Cavaillé (December 23, 2011), <http://dossiersgrihl.revues.org/261>. For a more nuanced appreciation of Hardy's aesthetics, see Rigal, *Hardy et le théâtre français*; and, more recently, Timothy Reiss, *Toward Dramatic Illusion: Theatrical Technique and Meaning from Hardy to “Horace”* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971). On the transitional theater of this period in general, see Fabien Cavaillé, “La tragédie en journées: Le drame à l'épreuve du roman,” in *Iconographie théâtrale et genres dramatiques*, ed. Gilles Declercq and Jean de Guardia (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2008), 173–82. On Hardy's parental role in French dramaturgy, see Ludwig Hochgeschwender, “Alexandre Hardy: Comment le spectacle vint au théâtre en France,” in *L'âge de la représentation: L'art du spectacle au XVIIe siècle (Actes du IXe Colloque du Centre international de rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle, Kiel, 16–18 mars 2006)*, ed. Rainer Zaiser (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2007), 25–38.

¹⁸ Rigal, *Hardy et le théâtre français*, 475.

HERCULES IN PLACE OF CHRIST: SECULARIZATION?

Many of the changes Hardy introduces are dictated by the requirements of a theatrical performance. For example, in contrast to Cervantes's story, in which the narrator is very circumspect about assigning names, every character, however minor, is named in the play. The narrator in *La fuerza* demurely states at the beginning of the story that he will change the name of the perpetrator "por buenos respetos," out of respect for the fact that he belongs to a well-heeled, noble family.¹⁹ Leocadia's name, while symbolically important, as Alban Forcione has shown, given that it is eponymous with Toledo's patron saint, is also literally a given name, attributed to her by those "que así quieren que se llamase la hija del hidalgo" (who thus wish the daughter of the hidalgo to be called).²⁰ In contrast, Hardy assigns names to all Cervantes's characters. In trying to keep the Spanish ambience, for example, he names the two (down from four in the novella) friends of Alphonse Roderic and Fernande. Sometimes, Hardy's renaming of characters conveys a whiff of exoticism, as in the case of Pizare, Léocadie's father (named Luis in Spanish), whose name evokes ironically that of the famous conquistador of Peru.²¹

Critics have noted that Hardy also tries to individualize each character by giving them more opportunities to speak and show their character. For example Léocadie's mother, Estéfanie, attempts to ease her daughter's distress upon learning that she is pregnant. This tender maternal scene substitutes for the diminished role of Alphonse's mother (Léonore), who plays a central role in the dénouement in *La fuerza* but is relegated to the sidelines by Hardy in favor of paternal intervention. More significantly, as Clifton Cherpac notes, Alphonse's trip to Italy gives the young man an opportunity to reflect on his past actions, and in act 3, he delivers a soliloquy in which he expresses remorse, thus preparing the audience for the "happy and legitimate marriage" that will turn the play from tragedy to comedy.²²

But the most striking change that Hardy effects upon adapting Cervantes's material for the French stage has to do precisely with the question of religion. Hardy systematically erases

¹⁹ *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Avallé Arce, 147.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

²¹ It would be tempting to read Pizare's representation in light of the constant conflict between Spain and France in the early-modern period, especially since his first appearance onstage is not too flattering: without provocation, he speaks harsh, misogynist words to his wife. This lack of gallantry could be of a piece with the stereotype of the braggart, bullying Spaniard, especially when read ironically as a *failed* conquistador: this easily irate father is tough against women but is unable to protect his own family or to take vengeance on the mocking perpetrators. However, even Rigal, who lamented the crass initial characterization of Pizare, must admit that after Pizare's daughter has been attacked, his words take on a warmer, more caring paternal tone (*Hardy et le théâtre français*, 476). This nuanced representation is in keeping with Hardy's sober depiction of Spain in *La force du sang*: Spain is clearly a contemporary place, and although the setting of Toledo is nominally maintained, there is very little effort to add any local color or specificity of place that would mark it as radically different from France, except through the names. Moreover, the plot emphasizes mercy and forgiveness rather than strife and vengeance (this is true even in the more exoticizing *La belle égyptienne*; see Karen Newman's contribution to this volume). In this sense, *La force du sang* stands as quite a contrast to Pierre Corneille's later take on Spanish material (*Le Cid*, 1637), which focuses on a *medieval* Spain that is portrayed as decidedly different—in its battles against Moors, obsession with matters of honor, bloodthirsty revenge plots, etc. Although a full exploration of the political implications of the construction of Spanishness abroad would require a separate article, one should note that Hardy's "Spanish" plays coincided with the hopes raised by the royal marriage that united Louis XIII of France to Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III, in 1615, whereas Pierre Corneille was writing while the two countries were engaged in war.

²² Clifton Cherpac, *The Call of Blood in French Classical Tragedy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), 22–27. One should note that in French as in English, "*hereux*/happy" denotes a sense of happenstance, or good fortune, implicit in the success of a venture.

the most overt references to Christianity in favor of allusions to a pagan pantheon and appeals to an abstract concept of fate, including astrology. Theodore Braun numbers the allusions to Christianity in *La fuerza de la sangre* as “somewhat more than thirty,” and he notes that “in *La force du sang*, although the number of religious allusions (32) is about equal to that in the Spanish novela [*sic*], there are twice as many allusions (64) to classical history and mythology compared to none in *La fuerza de la sangre*.” He points to the Counter-Reformation context of the works to conclude that “this makes the contrast between the two versions all the more remarkable, underlining as it does the dechristianization or secularization of the source material in *La force du sang*.”²³ As becomes clear in the rest of Braun’s article, and is implicit in many accounts of this alteration of the source material, “secularization” is taken to mean a loss of significance. In other words, the transposition of Christian matter into mythology is often treated as Hardy’s way of keeping to the letter of Cervantes’s text but not the spirit, as it were. But what if these mythological references were more than just ornamental? This substitution, I will argue, does not represent an evacuation of religion or the elimination of the divine; instead, it points to a different position vis-à-vis the presence of the divine.

Let us look at a telling example that is instructive in its banality as a manifestation of how religious allusions are more than cosmetic expressions, even when they are present in commonplace locutions. In *La fuerza de la sangre*, when Leocadia describes to Rodolfo’s mother Luisico’s happy accident as the incidental conduit for her identification of her rapist, she uses the common phrase “cuando Dios da la llaga, da la medicina” (when God gives the wound, he sends the cure).²⁴ Hardy renders the same idea in the first scene of the play, in the context of a premonitory dream that Pizare shares with Léocadie’s mother. Estéfanie responds to her husband’s anguish by referring to “le fer qui la fait guerira sa blessure” (1.1.65; the iron that made it will heal its wound). This is an allusion to the sword of Achilles, which according to mythology had the power to heal the wound it had inflicted previously on Telephus.²⁵ This allusion is entirely Hardy’s contribution: it is obviously not found in Cervantes, but it is also absent from Hardy’s most likely source, François de Rosset’s translation of the *Exemplary Novels*, which by and large keeps the Christian God in the picture. Thus, Rosset translates Leocadia’s words directly: “Mais comme l’on dit, Dieu qui faict la playe, donne encores la guerison” (161; As one says, “When God gives the wound, he provides the cure”).

The expression in Cervantes appeals to a widely accepted wisdom, an aspect highlighted by Leocadia when she prefaces the common saying with the qualifier, “Mas como *decirse suele*, cuando Dios da la llaga da la medicina” (but as *it tends to be said*, God who gives the wound provides the cure [my emphasis]). The comfort offered by this phrase comes both from faith that it is so, that it articulates the truth that God provides relief, but also, and as importantly, from the sense of community in this world implicit in the commonly held assumption that the saying is

²³ Braun, “Cervantes and Hardy,” 176–77. In addition to Braun, see Henry C. Lancaster, *A History of French Dramatic Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, pt. 1, *The Pre-classical Period, 1610–1634* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1929), 57. Lancaster finds Hardy’s translation of Christian references into classical mythology ineffective. Muir concludes, “A modern reader, deprived of the religious atmosphere of the original story, is liable to find Léocadie’s humble vows of homage and submission [to her new husband] even less acceptable” (“Hardy, Middleton, Calderón and Cervantes’ *La fuerza de la sangre*,” 182).

²⁴ *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Avallé Arce, 161.

²⁵ “Telephus,” in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology*, ed. William Smith, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>. The sword that wounds and heals in *La force du sang* refers to the rapist/groom Alphonse and may suit a Freudian phallic reading that would be out of place in the classical material.

true. The words of Estéfanie move in an entirely different direction: they risk perplexity, rather than ensuring cohesion. At the level of enunciation, the relatively obscure mythological reference carries the risk of not being understood, and thus possibly invalidating some of the reassurance that the phrase is supposed to offer. Indeed, Estéfanie's words of comfort seem to fall on deaf ears, as Pizare hopes that through prayer he may be able to shift the anger of the universe away from him. Moreover, the focus of the reference would seem to be on the contingency of the material world, the *fer*—both iron and sword—that seemingly by chance will either harm or heal.²⁶ In the mythological material, we read that Achilles wounded Telephus when the Greeks invaded Mysia on their way to Troy. When the wound festered and would not heal, Telephus consulted the Oracle at Delphi and received in response the following declaration: “he that wounded shall heal.” Helped by Clytemnestra, who suggested he kidnap baby Orestes to put pressure on the Greeks to help him, Telephus eventually got the wrathful warrior's attention, but Achilles protested that he was no healer. Odysseus, in the end, reinterpreted the oracle to reveal that the subject of the declaration, “he that wounded,” did not refer to Achilles but to his sword, and by shaving metal from it onto the wound, Telephus was healed.

This example of the cause of a misfortune revealing itself later also to be the cure differs in two ways from a similar pun in Cervantes's *Las dos doncellas*. In the novella, Teodosia takes a dagger (*hierro*) and offers it to her brother as the future remedy of her past sexual mistake (*yerro*). First, Teodosia's zeugma is deliberate, a conscious expression of both her guilt and her will, while I argue that what matters in *La force* is the accidental or contingent nature of both injury and antidote. Second, these two instances differ significantly in the role assigned to the material world: while in Telephus's story and its deployment by Hardy, the sword is identified with action (*fer/faire* in the play, and the sword's displacement of Achilles as subject of the oracle's declaration), in Teodosia's play on words, the *hierro/yerro* remain static, nouns that she deploys at will.

The significance of this seemingly minor change of register becomes clear if we now consider the dramatic context of Estéfanie's use of the Telephus myth. Léocadie's mother offers Léocadie words of cold comfort in response to Pizare's narrative of a troubling dream he had. In the dream the family's beloved pet dove is torn from their arms by an eagle that takes it away. The dove returns, sad and injured, but with time it regains its previous gaiety and gives birth to a beautiful chick. In other words, the mother responds to an unsettling enigma (her husband's dream) with reference to another enigma (what will cure Telephus's wound). The couple cannot agree on whether to give credence to the dream, but the reference to Telephus would seem an attempt to offer an explanation for the mystery of Pizare's dream. Indeed, the very lesson of the oracle is that relief comes with the correct deciphering of the oracular enigma; just as at the end of the play, Pizare rejoices that he (and, by extension, we, the audience) now understands the meaning of the dream, retroactively turned into prophesy: “Ma fille, tu dits vray selon ma prophetie / Que contre notre espoir la chose reüssie / Ce naufrage honteux te pouvoit reparer” (4.5.1529–31; You speak the truth, my daughter, according to my prophesy / that the matter has come to a successful end against our hopes / This shameful wreckage could compensate you). Although I have just now used the verb “reveal” to refer to Odysseus's clever reading, it is worth keeping in

²⁶ The pun on the metal as action, *fer/faire*, is not unknown in French drama. As John Lyons has shown, in fact, this all-too-active stage property is an example of what he calls “the drama of chance,” where the plot moves forward by accident or coincidence. John Lyons, “Material Fatality: Props and the Baroque Drama of Chance,” *Yale French Studies* 124 (2013): 45–47.

mind Michael Wood's warning with respect to oracular ambiguity: "it does not deliver a dark or as yet unrevealed truth, it conceals, often very ably, the fact that nothing is being revealed."²⁷ The oracle, then, does not act in any significant way in order to change the circumstances, but this emptiness, like the momentary confusion in Caravaggio's depiction of Saul's conversion, rather than deny the presence of the divine, invites us to take a closer look at the unexpected ways it does manifest itself.

Thus, the gods in Hardy are not absent, irrelevant, or evacuated of meaning. Rather than secularizing the Christian traces that structure *La fuerza de la sangre*, Hardy transfers them into a different system of communication with the divine. Yet the gods in Hardy's world speak in the absurd language of riddles. Hardy read and understood the importance of mystery in Cervantes's novella, the unexplainable twists of fortune and enigmatic changes of heart, and recognized this mystery as the source of the novella's power. However, in his transposition of the story from the page to the stage, from the legible and imaginable to the visible and spectacular, faith is somehow replaced by explanation. Instead of allowing the conjunction of the divine, the human, and the world of objects to bring the reader into its ultimately inscrutable world—the world of mystery, the world where, as it is said, the God who wounds, heals—the play aims for plausibility, for engaging the audience's rational belief by including the premonitory dream and Estéfanie's oracular explanation.

One of the most remarkable elements of Hardy's desire to make mystery believable focuses, as we saw, on the development of the psychology of the characters. We can see this most notably in the scene Hardy added to Cervantes's material in which Alphonse, the rapist, begins to feel remorse:

O que la volupté sorciere de nos sens,
 Circé qui les transforme en lions rugissants,
 produit de peu de joye une longue tristesse.

 Assurez de nourrir dans l'ame bequetée
 L'aigle perpetuel du hardy Promethée,
 Depuis que sa fureur brutale en cruauté
 Au rapt **m'**emancipa d'une chaste beauté,
 Ne [**sçai**] quel aiguillon maniaque **me** reste
 Peu s'en faut compagnon du parricide Oreste.
 (3.3.703–14, my emphasis)

Oh, that voluptuousness, enchantress to our senses,
 Circe, that transforms them into roaring lions,
 produces from little joy a long sadness.

 Assured to feed on a starving soul
 The perpetual eagle of steadfast Prometheus,
 Since its furor, brutal in cruelty,
 allowed **me** the seizure of a chaste beauty
 Who knows which maniacal sting remains in **me**
 almost like the companion of parricide Orestes.

²⁷ Michael Wood, *The Road to Delphi: The Life and Afterlife of Oracles* (New York: Picador, 2004), 15.

Critics have looked at this speech as proof of a budding sense of character psychology that would depart from the static characters of Cervantes's novella. Kenneth Muir writes, for example, "Instead of the workings of Providence, we are shown the operation of conscience in Alphonse, so that the marriage will not offend the audience."²⁸ It is fascinating that even here, where scholars like Clifton Cherpach have wanted to see an autonomous and redeemed Alphonse, "capable of conceiving a sense of shame and responsibility for the act he has committed," Hardy's play is still uncomfortable with what we would recognize as agency.²⁹ We are far from a drama of character where volition is at stake, that is to say, far from tragedy. After all, the scene of contrition I just quoted takes place almost literally without a subject. The crime itself is represented as the result of Circean magic that turns the senses into roaring lions, and it is they who "allowed [Alphonse] the seizure [rape] of a chaste beauty." The boldfacing I have added to the quotation highlights this strange lack of agency throughout the speech. There is no "I" claiming either guilt or responsibility; Alphonse is present in this speech almost exclusively as the direct or indirect object of actions, not their sovereign grammatical subject.

Hardy's so-called secularization of language and character thus still reveals a profound engagement with the ways in which the divine interacts with the realm of human affairs. This is why Hardy's substitution of a statue of Hercules for the silver crucifix in Cervantes's story (the play's potentially most significant stage property) is not a sign of the play's failure. Instead, it points to a different way of understanding the play's conflict and its ultimate conclusion. The night Leocadia is abducted, she wakes up momentarily alone in Rodolfo's room, and she proceeds to take stock of her surroundings, trying to find a way to escape. Unable to find an exit, she decides to take a small object from the room, a crucifix, with the hope of being able to use it to identify her attacker: "En un escritorio, que estaba junto a la ventana, vio un crucifijo pequeño, todo de plata, el cual tomó y se le puso en la manga de la ropa, no por devoción ni por hurto, sino llevada de un discreto designio suyo" (On a writing table near the window she saw a small silver crucifix, which she picked up and put in her sleeve, not for devotion, or as a theft, but inspired by a clever plan she had).³⁰

As Alban Forcione's work has carefully and elegantly shown, this token is meaningful in three ways: it functions as a symbol (of undeserved suffering and the promise of redemption), as an icon (a material object that represents the divine and to which the protagonist and her family address themselves in prayer), and as a clue (which one way or another will corroborate Leocadia's story, her identity, and Rodolfo's). Among these three, the last gives witness to Leocadia's wits and the fact that, even in the deepest distress, she is able to act rationally. Indeed, Forcione inventories all the verbs of cognition used in the scene in order to show that, in contrast to hagiographical expectations, Leocadia thinks, plans, and reasons: she is not a passive martyr but rather an agent seeking ways of retribution. In Hardy, the crucifix is dropped, and in its stead Léocadie picks up an "image" (which could mean a painting or a statue) of Hercules as a child strangling two serpents that in a fit of jealousy Juno sent to kill him. Although one could imagine that the erudite members of Hardy's audience would have been aware of the tradition that

²⁸ Muir, "Hardy, Middleton, Calderón and Cervantes' *La fuerza de la sangre*," 182.

²⁹ Cherpach, *Call of Blood*, 25.

³⁰ *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Avale Arce, 153; *The Power of Blood*, trans. R. M. Price, in *Exemplary Novels, II* (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1992), 109.

since the Middle Ages had viewed Hercules as a figure of Christ, the play does not pursue the numinous aspect of the statue. Braun thus concludes, “The Frenchman has stripped [the token] of its primary meaning: divine justice gives way to a simple reparation afforded by destiny.”³¹

Hercules does not provide the comfort of a redeemer, and he certainly does not respond to Pizare’s pleas earlier in the play that the hero should return and avenge the violent affront against Léocadie. The image/statue of Hercules is shown onstage once, at the end of act 2 when Léocadie returns to her parents, and she laments that the luxury of the room where she was raped gives witness to her assailant’s wealth and this privilege will most likely also protect him. Upon producing the statue she hopes will help identify him, her father addresses Hercules as avenger:

O Heros Immortel qui [nettoias] la terre
De monstres, de tirans, sainte et loüable guerre,
Sy tu fuis quelques fois, hé de grace revien
T’acquérir un renom qui passe l’ancien,
Vengeur, exterminant ces monstres qui renaissent
Et de l’honneur des bons devoré se repaissent.
(2.2.449–54)

O immortal hero who cleansed the earth
of monsters, of tyrants—holy and laudable war—
If you did exist once, oh, graciously return
To earn fame that will overshadow the ancient one,
Avenger, exterminating these monsters who are reborn
and feast on the devoured honor of the good.

Hercules is here represented in heroic fashion, fighting tyrants like Geryon, “tyran des Espagnes,” and thus seemingly at his most secular. However, one should also note how, in the same breath, the desperate father cannot help but deploy Christian language in his appeal to this heroic Hercules through references to a holy, or saintly, war (l. 450) and especially the use of the term “grace” in reference to a desired second coming of the savior (l. 451).³²

Surprisingly, from a theatrical perspective, this potentially powerful stage prop is also physically absent—though she does mention it—in the scene when Léocadie reveals to her future mother-in-law the reason for her distress upon recognizing the room where she had been raped. Part of the reason has to do with narrative efficiency. Hardy has Léocadie speak to Léonore, the

³¹ Braun, “Cervantes and Hardy,” 178. Although he does not treat *La force du sang*, Timothy Reiss also attributes to Hardy a fatalist dramaturgy, where humans are playthings of unpredictable deities. Timothy Reiss, *Toward Dramatic Illusion: Theatrical Technique and Meaning from Hardy to Horace* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).

³² The expression “de grace” is, of course, a convention of politeness, a way of saying “please”; however, in this context, the full range of meaning of the word “grace” as an unmerited divine assistance is also at play. On the relationship of Hercules and Geryon, Jean Seznec quotes the Jesuits’ response to a critique of flattery of Henry IV under the guise of “Hercule Gaulois” by inventing a mythical origin for the Bourbons of Navarre: “The illustrious house of Navarre issued from the ancient Hercules, son of Osiris, who, having fought and overcome the Lominians, the three children of Geryon, the tyrant of Spain, and having freed the people of that country from their servitude, established as head of that monarchy his son, Hispalus, whose descendants later succeeded to the crown of the kingdom of Navarre.” Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Library (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 23.

mother of her attacker, as soon as she recognizes that she is in the same room as on the fateful night, instead of waiting thirty days for the right occasion, as it happens in Cervantes. This means that it is unlikely that she can produce the statue as corroborating sign, the way that Leocadia does. But within the logic of Hardy's world, the *image* is also no longer relevant because its power to avenge the victims or identify the assailant has been supplanted by a living stage prop: Ludovic. When Léocadie presents the Hercules to her parents, she refers to it as a "token" she hopes will speak for her (as stage props do): "Or ce gage emporté le va mieux exprimer" (2.3.444; Yet, this token will declare it [the identity of her attacker] better). And again, when she responds to Léonore's vengeful outrage upon learning of her son's crime, Léocadie uses the word "token" to refer this time, not to what she took from Alphonse (the statue/picture), but to what he gave her:

L'excez commis voudroit un remede plus doux
 A me guerir l'honneur que ce bouillant couroux,
 Ores qu'issu de luy me reste infortunée,
 Un gage precieux que donne l'hymenée,
 Que je ne puis haïr mon mortel ennemy
 (4.1.1051–54)

The excess committed would call for milder redress
 To recover the honor that this boiling rage
 Which now, born from it [the rage], leaves me wretched,
 A precious token that marriage brings
 Is such that I cannot abhor my mortal enemy

In contrast to Leocadia, who maintains her integrity in the act of searching, planning, and hoping to instrumentalize the found token, Léocadie recovers hers here in a declaration of mercy, if not forgiveness, toward Alphonse, a "vile billy goat" in the words of his own mother.³³

And yet, even in this most dramatic moment of intimacy between the two women when Léocadie is at her most vulnerable, her character falls short of heroic; she does not "have a design of her own" as Leocadia did. As we saw in Alphonse's soliloquy, Léocadie's speech also avoids placing her in the active position of an active subject:

Lasse de tournoier et ma peine frustrée,
 Une image d'Hercule à tastons **rencontrée**
Me demeure en depost, chez qui la verité
 De son Soleil esteint pareille obscurité
Me demeure tesmoin qui prouve irreprochable,
 Tant le lieu que l'Auteur de l'acte abominable,
 Inconnu jusqu'icy ...
 (4.1.1029–36, my emphasis)

Tired of turning and my endeavor frustrated,
 An image of Hercules, **found** (while) groping around,
remains with me entrusted, in whom the truth
 of its Sun extinguishes such darkness.

³³ Léonore refers to Alphonse as "Bouc infect" after learning of his crime (4.1.1046).

It **remains for me** an irreproachable witness
of both the place and the author of the abominable act
unrecognized until now...

Léocadie's speech reveals a lack of active protagonism, and yet, she is not completely helpless. Through the use of a convoluted grammar that avoids active verbs, she subtly suggests an affinity between herself and Hercules. First, the *image* of the god—gendered feminine in French—which she found (“rencontrée”) as she groped around the room, recalls the way Alphonse found her still body the second time he tried to rape her. Second, the purpose to which the image of Hercules strangling the snakes is put—to identify “the author of the abominable act”—also calls to mind the fact that it was through an act of violence that the hero is recognized by Tiresias as a future god. Finally and more significantly, the repetition of “me demeure” marks the intertwining of both image and Léocadie and recalls the Stoic choice of finding Hercules's heroism not in his Twelve Labors but in his endurance of the pain that followed his murderous rampage against his family caused by the madness that a vengeful Juno wrought upon him. His decision to live despite having intimate knowledge of the pain of unmerited suffering thus parallels Léocadie's decision to bear her affront quietly. Whether through Christian association or through an appeal to Stoicism, passion, not action, defines Hardy's theatrical heroism in this play.

RETURNING TO THE QUESTION OF RELIGION

Hercules, in the end, is more than an empty, dumb image. But the question remains, why does the French playwright translate Christian references using a pagan vocabulary? I hope to have shown that the changes made to the matter of religion by Hardy do not constitute, as most critics claim, a simple secularization of Cervantes's work. Religion does not disappear from the play. Instead, the changes effected by Hardy point to a very different way of representing the presence of the divine in the realm of contingency. For Hardy, it is a matter of belief as an enigma that must be worked out, a mystery that will ultimately be explained. This means that his work straddles, on the one hand, the realm of the miracle ruled narratively by the decisive moment that plunges the protagonist into abjection and then elevates her into salvation and, on the other hand, the realm of fiction ruled by verisimilitude.³⁴ It may also help explain why, in this play where “action” is supposed to predominate, there is rarely a subject that takes responsibility for it. Action remains the realm of the gods; interpretation is the task of the creatures below.

It would be easy to assume that this transposition is nothing more than the pragmatic choice of not offending theatergoers, Catholic or Protestant, made by one of France's first playwrights whose earnings depended on the popularity of his craft.³⁵ And yet it is remarkable to note that Cervantes's story has very few significant and direct references to a distinctively *Catholic* religiosity. In fact, there is only one, and it appears in the ghostly mode of the subjunctive, as that which is not the case but could have been. At the end of the story the narrator explains that the hasty marriage of Leocadia and Rodolfo by a priest without the necessary wedding bans prescribed by the Council of Trent is nonetheless valid because the story takes place before the

³⁴ See Forcione's description of these terms in his *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*, 354–78.

³⁵ Hardy's work in Paris coincides with the last decade of Henry IV's reign, the regency of Marie de' Medici and the hopes of a Franco-Spanish alliance through a double royal marriage uniting both countries in principle. The worst of the French Wars of Religion was past, but zealotry, combined with political alliances, still would have made religion a sensitive subject.

council had been convened and, by metonymy, the promulgation of the Catholic Church's doctrine.³⁶ In other words, there would have been very little said or done in the play that would have proved objectionable to a mixed audience. Rafael Ruiz Álvarez proposes, instead, that Hardy was responding to what the marshal of France, Antoine de Gramont, in his account of his diplomatic embassy to Spain, noted as the country's "indévotion," or the privilege of spectacle in everyday religious practice.³⁷ Ruiz Álvarez is interested in the (mis)representation of Spain and Spaniards in Hardy's theatrical adaptations of Cervantes's texts, so the question of religion is dropped as soon as it is raised. However, I surmise that the French suspicion of religion's proximity to theater is at the heart of Hardy's decision to deploy a pagan pantheon better suited for the representation on a public stage of an almost-tragedy. Working out the implications of this suggestion would merit treatment on its own. My intervention here is instead of a methodological order: to insist on keeping open the question of religion as a matter of inquiry rather than a topic to master. It implies attending to the religious relevance of Hardy's pagan gods, not because they escape religion, but rather because they point to a distinctive way of representing the presence of the divine in the realm of contingency.

The power of Cervantes's tale is that it refuses to choose between immanence and transcendence. That was the great insight of Alban Forcione's study of *La fuerza de la sangre*, tracing how the crucifix was at once a link to the designs of an inscrutable God, a symbol of the hope for redemption, and an instrument—an object—that would serve Leocadia's purpose of identifying her attacker and making it possible for her to claim justice. Forcione argues that the negotiation of these multiple realms in the novella marks Cervantes's innovation vis-à-vis medieval miraculous tales. In his account, the focus on human agency, in contrast to the medieval emphasis on the intervention of a *deus ex machina*, deflects the reader's attention from the transcendent and marks Cervantes's text as a "secularized miracle."³⁸ Forcione writes that "for all its evocations of miraculous elements and its structural and thematic affinities with a genre that traditionally celebrated the purest spirituality, *La fuerza de la sangre* is directly concerned with the claims of the secular world."³⁹

This approach rightly recuperates the religious intertexts of *La fuerza de la sangre* that make this troubling story intelligible. However, the implicit assumption that a work that is concerned with and acknowledges the active presence of the divine is somehow unconcerned with the here-and-now of the secular world (the supposition of a medieval realm of "pure spirituality") is a

³⁶ "El [el cura] lo hizo así, que por haber sucedido este caso en tiempo cuando con sola la voluntad de los contrayentes, sin las diligencias y prevenciones justas y santas que ahora se usan, quedaba hecho el matrimonio, no hubo dificultad que impidiese el desposorio" (*Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Avallé Arce, 169). "He [the priest] did so, because all this happened in the time when marriages could be performed at the will alone of both the persons concerned, without the just and holy precautions which are required today, and so there was nothing to prevent the marriage" (*Power of Blood*, trans. Price, 125).

³⁷ Rafael Ruiz Álvarez, "La transferencia de géneros, modelo de interpretación de otra cultura: A. Hardy," in *Traducción y adaptación cultural: España-Francia*, ed. María Luisa Donaire and Francisco Lafarga (Oviedo, Spain: Universidad de Oviedo, 1991), 245–46. Ruiz Álvarez quotes Gramont from Alexandre Cioranescu, *Le masque et le visage: Du baroque espagnol au classicisme français* (Geneva: Droz, 1983), who glosses Gramont's neologism "indévotion" with reference to other seventeenth-century accounts that privilege the reproach made to the Spanish believer who exhibits a "propension aux rites qui rapellent le théâtre, et qui font douter si leur foi est une superstition ou une hypocrisie" (102; penchant for rituals that recall the theater and that make one suspect the believers' faith of superstition or hypocrisy).

³⁸ That is the title of the chapter.

³⁹ Forcione, *Cervantes and the Humanist Vision*, 386.

fiction of modernity that takes religion as a definite object and forecloses “the questions” it raises. It is typical of a conflation of religion with the sacred, understood in an anthropological sense of setting apart or dedicating those persons and things that are removed from common use. Faced with this restrictive mystification, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben productively proposes that the opposite of sacralization is not secularization (denying the sacred) but profanation: a return to circulation, of making available for other uses and meanings, of those entities that were once unavailable.⁴⁰ Paradoxically, it is in this profane realm where the relations among divinities, humans, and the created world are far from being set, that it becomes most fruitful to think about religion in the early-modern period. A

⁴⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* (New York: Zone, 2007).