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Harmony as Narrative in “La española inglesa”

Gregory Baum
Indiana University, Bloomington

At the end of “La española inglesa”, Cervantes offers a final exemplum with two key parts:

Esta novela nos podría enseñar cuánto puede la virtud, y cuánto la hermosura, pues son bastantes juntas, y cada una de por sí, a enamorar aun hasta los mismos enemigos; y de cómo sabe el cielo sacar, de las mayores adversidades nuestras, nuestros mayores provechos. (100)

The exemplum comes at the end of a long story full of upsets and reversals. It fulfills the promise of the title of the *Novelas ejemplares* by providing, much more directly than in other *novelas*, a straightforward articulation of the exemplarity that has been represented. Much criticism of “La española inglesa” has turned on this question of exemplarity, with some critics accepting Cervantes’s stated exemplum and integrating it into a larger account of the *Novelas*, and other critics rejecting both the exemplum and the potential exemplarity.¹

Rather than attempting to position Cervantes’s story along axes of idealism or exemplarity, this essay asks how the exemplum indicates larger thematic and aesthetic concerns within the *novela*. Examining the exemplum as the terminus to the thematic and narrative trajectory of the *novela* reveals a sustained preoccupation, throughout the *novela*, with the Renaissance connection of beauty to harmony. This connection provides a way of reading the *novela* as Cervantes’s attempt to imagine a text whose beauty is located in narrative harmony. This essay first argues that a reading of Isabela as the narrative source for the exemplum encounters insurmountable difficulties. Then the essay shows the importance of the story of Harmonia and the range of philosophical and aesthetic appropriations of that myth that Cervantes uses to shape the *novela*’s narrative structure.² To that end, the essay investigates beauty as a historically specific concept that, for this *novela*, has a structural and procedural role in the narrative, rather than simply being an aesthetic effect.

The essay concludes by arguing for the importance of narrative harmony to the thematic concerns raised in the exemplum.

In approaching this argument about the role of harmony as a structural and an aesthetic principle, this essay takes seriously Cervantes's claim that the *novela* can teach us how beauty and virtue can enamor enemies. To that end, the essay intervenes in critical trends that propose an ending full of discursive upheaval and ideological resistance.³ Cervantes's claim in the exemplum, contrary to much of the scholarship regarding this *novela*, is that the text should reveal harmony, an *enamorar* that changes *enemigos* into *amigos*.⁴ In the *novela*, this transformation of enemies to friends is linked to beauty and virtue. A primary question for this essay is how and why the experience of beauty might alter enemies into friends. The text begins by offering a clear candidate in Isabela for the type of beauty that might produce such transformations. As we shall see, though, this model of beauty fractures and falters under closer examination. It is only through the narrative, aesthetic, and thematic balancing of harmony that an alternative model of beauty can emerge and fit the claim in the exemplum.

Enamoring Enemies

"La española inglesa" begins after a battle. English soldiers, under the command of the Earl of Leicester, have sacked Cádiz. One of those Englishmen, a noble named Clotaldo, stumbles across a seven-year-old Spanish girl named Isabel. Smitten by her beauty (and the narrator is quick to assure us that Clotaldo's love is, of course, purely Christian), Clotaldo hides the girl and succeeds in smuggling her back to England, despite the efforts of her parents and the orders of his commanding officer. As the girl grows up alongside Clotaldo's son, Ricaredo, the two young people fall in love. Ricaredo is forced to prove his love for and loyalty to Isabela, while Isabela must prove her faithfulness and devotion by waiting for him. After numerous twists and turns, the story ends with their happy reunion only moments before Isabela is about to enter a convent.

The first section of this essay must consider how Isabela's beauty fails to fulfill the promise of the *novela's* exemplum. From the beginning of the text, Isabela's beauty is at the heart of the narrative's momentum: Isabela's beauty prompts Clotaldo to kidnap her. Indeed, Isabela's identity is bound up in her extraordinary beauty and virtue. When Clotaldo first sees Isabela,

for example, the narrator informs us that Isabela's beauty is "incomparable" (48). Problematically, this supposedly incomparable beauty is instantly compared to an object of wealth—Isabela is initially understood as one of Clotaldo's "despojos," but we learn that it is also an inner beauty. Isabela is not only physically attractive; she is intelligent, religious, faithful, linguistically gifted, and musically talented (47). The narrator informs us that Isabela excels not only at the household labor expected of a woman of her station but also at reading and writing (48-49). This introduction to Isabela's character, which opens and is framed by her "incomparable hermosura," is closed by the narrator's description of Isabela's "sin igual belleza" and her "infinitas virtudes" (48-49).

The *novela* establishes Isabela as the pinnacle of beauty, which suggests her link to the exemplum's claim of the unifying power of beauty. A closer examination of the text, though, shows the difficulty of identifying Isabela's beauty with the harmonious relationships that the exemplum describes. For a *novela* in which the transformation of enemies into friends is supposed to figure so prominently, it is surprisingly difficult to find any enemies at all.⁵ Clotaldo, for example, who begins the story as an English aggressor, is never clearly marked as an enemy. Although Clotaldo kidnaps Isabel, a lacuna opens in the text where Isabel's resistance or anger might be found. Isabela, with her new name, is seamlessly integrated into her English family, to the extent that when she leaves England to return to Spain, Isabela is so fully reconciled to her new family that she exchanges sorrowful goodbyes with her kidnappers (86).

This inexplicable lack of animosity is not particular to Isabela; her parents share it too. When they arrive in England, having been rescued by Ricaredo from the Turks, they are overcome by emotion when they are reunited with their daughter (74-75). This happy reunion precludes any rancor or lingering animosity. Isabela's parents do not demand reparation or justice. Rather, they settle into daily life in Clotaldo's household. When they leave with their daughter, they form an explicit part of the tearful farewell. Like their daughter, Isabela's parents are so overwhelmed with gifts at the end of their stay in England that they thank Clotaldo and his wife for their generosity (86).

For Spaniards reading Cervantes's story when it was first published, one expected enemy would certainly have been England's recently deceased queen.⁶ Here, again, Cervantes turns the *novela* against potential

expectations. The English queen is instantly struck by Isabela's beauty but she is also impressed by Isabela's virtue. When Isabela is denounced as a Catholic, the queen commends Isabela's steadfastness and faith. After Isabela is poisoned, the queen acts quickly to save Isabela's life and to punish the *camarera*.

These instances of defused, or absent, enmity are consistently tied to Isabela's beauty. To that extent, they present an initial opportunity to consider how the exemplum might actually apply to the model of beauty that Isabela offers. There seems to be good reason to think that Isabela does, indeed, represent the type of beauty that the exemplum praises. Clotaldo is, we are told, "aficionado [. . .] a la incomparable hermosura de Isabel" (48). The queen, too, is struck by Isabela's appearance, comparing Isabela to "un cielo estrellado" (55) and insisting that Isabela join her court. Beauty, specifically Isabela's beauty, can indeed enamor enemies.

At the same time, though, the *novela* problematizes this account of the effect of Isabela's beauty. Isabela's beauty provokes acts of enmity at the same time that it draws people to her. Clotaldo, struck by her beauty, does not set her free—in contrast, for example, to Don Fernando in Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, who finds his heart softened by Dorotea's beauty and virtue. Clotaldo's response, instead, is to do violence to Isabel, to kidnap her and take her back to England. Beauty produces discord, not peace.

Similarly, Isabela's beauty prompts the queen to perform another type of abduction. Pleased by Isabela's beauty and eloquence, the queen claims Isabela as her proper share of Clotaldo's spoils taken from Cádiz—thus replicating Clotaldo's own language of spoils from when he kidnaps Isabela (56). Beauty, although it initially seems to enamor an enemy, actually leads to further conflict that threatens to destroy Isabela. The queen, in her self-appointed role as Isabela's guardian, denies Ricaredo's plea for marriage until Ricaredo can prove himself worthy of Isabela. Isabela's beauty produces another relationship that, while superficially loving, is structured by social violence.

Perhaps the best example, though, of the power of Isabela's beauty is the effect it has on the English nobleman Arnesto. The arrogant lord is so enamored of Isabela and so full of despair that, like Ricaredo before him, he wishes for death (77). When the queen refuses to give Isabela to Arnesto, Arnesto arms himself and challenges Ricaredo to a duel. The duel is interrupted and Arnesto imprisoned. In an attempt to remove the source

of the problem, the *camarera* poisons Isabela. Like Clotaldo and the queen, Arnesto is overwhelmed by Isabela's beauty, but this beauty informs his position as an enemy.

Most shocking of all is that, out of the three times the term "enemigo" is applied to characters of the *novela*, once it is used to figure the relationship between Isabela and Ricaredo. After Ricaredo's successful defeat of the Turks and his triumphant return to London, the *novela* revisits the Spanish/English conflict. Having met with the queen, Ricaredo stops to speak with Isabela and the other ladies of the court. Cervantes, in a memorable description, makes it clear that Ricaredo cuts a dashing figure in his Milanese armor. The Lady Tansi takes Ricaredo's dress as an opening to speak and she asks:

¿Qué es esto, señor Ricaredo, qué armas son éstas? ¿Pensábadés por ventura que veníades a pelear con vuestros enemigos? Pues en verdad que aquí todas somos vuestras amigas, si no es la señora Isabela que, como española, está obligada a no teneros buena voluntad. (70)

Here, "enemigos" is not opposed to Ricaredo's relationship to Isabela; instead, for Tansi, it defines it. Tansi makes clear that the English women are all Ricaredo's "amigas" and that, in contrast, Isabela is constrained by her nationality to be an *enemiga*. National discord, one of the expected animosities that the *novela* aims to defuse, threatens to spill over into personal amity.

Ricaredo, however, immediately denies Tansi's claim. He insists that Isabela holds only good will for him, for as Ricaredo explains, "[N]o puede caber en su mucho valor y entendimiento y rara hermosura la fealdad de ser desagradecida" (70). Ricaredo's answer to Tansi acknowledges the possibility for enmity, but attempts to preclude it by focusing on Isabela's *virtud* and *hermosura*. This articulation of how the anticipated "enemigos," Ricaredo and Isabela, will overcome their national opposition bases itself in the power of Isabela's virtue and beauty. Ricaredo, however, is wrong, and the *novela* will require something far greater than Isabela's beauty in order to bring about the *discordia concors* that inheres in the title of "La española inglesa."

The model of beauty that the *novela* initially proposes, then, is one that does, indeed, enamor enemies. Clotaldo and the queen are so taken by Isabela that English animosity vanishes. At the same time, however, this

model of love is complicated and problematized by how these relationships play out. The *novela*, in proposing a specific model of beauty for Isabela, reveals another aspect to that version of beauty: beauty enamors, but those same instances of ‘enamoring’ lead to further violence and discord.

Discordant Beauty

Isabela’s beauty does more than provoke further violence, however. It disrupts the social world around it, precipitating the dissolution of critical relationships. Isabela’s beauty fragments and overturns the relationships that surround her. This effect is most visible in relationships of power, where Isabela’s beauty upsets the expected associations. Her beauty throws the *novela* into chaos, laying the groundwork for the unifying power of harmony.

The upheaval of society caused by Isabela’s beauty is visible from the beginning of the *novela*. “La española inglesa” begins with a struggle between nations, but this struggle, upon Isabela’s introduction to the story, is immediately played out again in the constrained social framework of the company of English soldiers. The very first sentence of the *novela* sets up this conflict, first identifying Isabela as one of the “despojos” taken back to London by Clotaldo but also marking the social disruption that his action caused: “y esto [the kidnapping] contra la voluntad y sabiduría del conde de Leste” (47). That second sentence locates this disruption in Clotaldo’s (Christian) desire for Isabela, as the narrator tells us, “[M]as ningunas penas ni temores fueron bastantes a que Clotaldo la obedeciese [. . .] aficionado, aunque cristianamente, a la incomparable hermosura de Isabel” (48). Clotaldo’s attraction to Isabela’s beauty forces him to act directly against his commander’s desire to return the girl to her parents. Clotaldo’s loyalty and obedience are compromised, and the corresponding relationship fractures through Clotaldo’s response to Isabela’s beauty.

Social disruption continues when Isabela returns home with Clotaldo. It is difficult to assign her a place within the family, as one might expect to be the case with the victim of a kidnapping. Although Catalina, Clotaldo’s wife, treats Isabela as a daughter, the men of the household are less able to articulate a stable relationship with the girl. Clotaldo initially turns her into a spoil of war, as well as an object of desire, but later she must move from

a prisoner to a potential daughter-in-law (54). Ricaredo seems equally troubled by Isabela's position in the household. At first a sister, she grows into an object of desire, and eventually into a future spouse. The narrator tells us about this problematic trajectory, writing that Ricaredo's response to Isabela's beauty consisted initially of "amándola como si fuera su hermana," but that "aquella benevolencia primera y aquella complacencia y agrado de mirarla se volvió en ardentísimos deseos de gozarla y de poseerla" (49). Here, as with Clotaldo at the beginning, something troubling lurks in the accumulated layers of Ricaredo's relationship with Isabela. The threat of incest, contained by the narrator's reminder that Ricaredo did not desire anything less honest than "ser su esposo," still rears its head—if only for a moment (49).

Ricaredo's love for Isabela leads him to reject the marriage that his parents have arranged for him, widening the arc of disrupted relationships. Instead of approaching his father, however, Ricaredo convinces his mother to intercede on his behalf by praising Isabela's virtues. Catalina, persuaded by her son, uses "las mismas razones" as Ricaredo to persuade her husband to put off the marriage with Clisterna (52). Ricaredo's relationship with his father becomes mediated through Catalina, so that Ricaredo's appropriate engagement in a relationship with his father is disrupted into two separate relationships—Ricaredo-Catalina and Catalina-Clotaldo.

Within the English queen's court, Isabela's beauty produces further discord. Upon Isabela's first appearance in court, when she arrives in response to the queen's summons, the other women of the court respond to her beauty with mixed emotions. Isabela impresses them with her dress and looks, but Cervantes is careful to note that even as the women praise Isabela's appearance, one comments, "Buena es la española; pero no me contenta el traje" (55). The comment, labeled by the narrator as arising "de pura envidia," marks another moment of social stress (55). Her beauty disrupts the previous court dynamics.⁷

That disruption, although it begins with envy, is best seen in the overthrow of the queen's *camarera*. The *camarera*, who begins the *novela* in a position of high favor, finds herself slowly forced to act against the queen's wishes. At the beginning of Isabela's stay in the court, she is put in the care of the *camarera*, whose son Arnesto then falls in love with Isabela (57). After the *camarera* has tried and failed, first to obtain Isabela for her son, and then to have Isabela sent back to Spain, she decides to take matters

into her own hands. The *camarera* poisons Isabela and, when the queen discovers this, is imprisoned to await further punishment (80-1). The English court is turned on its head as the queen's favorite loses her position.

The court returns to a more normal course when Isabela's looks are taken away by poison. Although Isabela survives the attack, her beauty is temporarily destroyed, leaving her as ugly as she once was beautiful (81). Upon her departure from the court, ready to sail for Spain forever, Isabela discovers that the ladies of the court, "como [Isabela] ya estaba fea, no quisieran que se partiera, viéndose libres de la envidia" (86). Only after Isabela's beauty is gone do social and personal discord vanish. In striking contrast to the exemplum's claim, here it is the absence of beauty that makes friends out of Isabela's former enemies.

Isabela's relationships, defined by her physical appearance, reveal the socially disruptive effects of her beauty. As the unparalleled example of female beauty, Isabela demonstrates the consequences of that beauty—a beauty that fails to produce the *amistad* that the *novela's* exemplum claims. The *novela's* representation of normal social relationships, which splinter under the immensity of Isabela's beauty, suggests how deeply problematic her beauty is within the world of the *novela*.

Harmony and Narrative

As the *novela* approaches the possibility of Ricaredo's marriage to Isabela—after his triumphant battle against the Turks and his successful recovery of the Spanish treasure—an alternative to the strife-ridden beauty of Isabela appears. It is this alternative, embodied in Ricaredo, that offers the potential for harmony instead of further conflict. Ricaredo's physical beauty manifests the *discordia concors* that underlies an important strain of Renaissance aesthetics and the consequent narrative upheaval of harmony that allows for ultimate reconciliation. Cervantes's remarkable description of Ricaredo's beauty invites a consideration of Renaissance ideas of beauty, as well as the important role that the story of Harmonia had in contemporary aesthetics.

Upon his return from sea, Ricaredo goes straight to the palace to inform the queen of his victory and to claim his promised reward: Isabela. His physical appearance, particularly his clothing, is described in great

detail—in the same way that Isabela is described when she is summoned by the queen. At first, Ricaredo’s good looks seem to be straightforwardly linked to his military accouterment. “Era Ricaredo alto de cuerpo, gentil hombre y bien proporcionado,” Cervantes tells us, “Y como venía armado [. . .] parecía en extremo bien a cuantos le miraban” (68).

This vision falls apart almost as soon as it is constructed. The narrator introduces a comparison that simultaneously divides and unifies the two elements of Ricaredo’s appearance: his beauty and his martial attire. As Ricaredo passes through London, the narrator informs us that “algunos hubo que le compararon a Marte, dios de las batallas, y otros, llevados de la hermosura de su rostro, dicen que le compararon a Venus, que para hacer alguna burla a Marte de aquel modo se había disfrazado” (68). The narrator’s claim is not that Ricaredo looked like both Mars and Venus. Rather, and importantly, the claim is that to some people, Ricaredo looked like Mars, and to other people, he looked like Venus. Ricaredo concurrently inhabits both positions, but in a way that appears different to spectators.⁸ His beauty is a *concor*s but also a *discordia*.

His beauty, in other words, is the beauty of harmony—a view of aesthetics popular in the Renaissance and linked to the myth of Harmonia, daughter of Mars and Venus. Harmonia offered Renaissance thinkers an important mythological example for explaining the confluence, agreement, and unification opposing forces. In this way, the Harmonia myth came to influence astrology, musical theory, Neoplatonist philosophy, the visual arts, and more.⁹

Although Harmonia appears in several classical sources, she would most likely have been known to Cervantes and other Renaissance humanists through Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, due to its vast popularity. Harmonia’s story is a relatively small part of the *Metamorphoses*. She appears only briefly, unnamed, in book four as Cadmus’s wife when they are both transformed into serpents. In spite of her lack of name, commentators did not fail to identify Cadmus’s wife as Harmonia, and early modern editions of Ovid that included allegorical readings took care to discuss her importance. Perhaps because of how influential Harmonia was for early modern thinkers, interpretations of her significance vary substantially. A brief glance at three Spanish allegorical readings of Ovid will show the range of interpretations available for Harmonia and how Cervantes, in “La española inglesa,” may suggest an additional reading.

One strain of interpretation, which appears in at least four different Spanish accounts of Ovid and which has even earlier sources, reads Harmonia only as wife to Cadmus.¹⁰ Such readings make nothing of Harmonia's divine parents or of her name or qualities. Instead, it is her transformation into a serpent, along with Cadmus, that offers allegorical truth. As Antonio Pérez Sigler writes in his commentary to Ovid in 1609, by their transformation “se entiende, que quanto mas el hõbre enuegece, tãto es mas prudente, porque estos animales (con el testimonio del Euangelio) son figuardos por la prudencia, diziendo Christo: Estote prudentes sicut serpentes” (sig. K1r). Such an interpretation does not lay any emphasis on Harmonia's unifying power, nor does it make anything of the common connection drawn between harmony and beauty.

Another reading of Harmonia offers two historical explanations for her name but fails to engage in the same types of connections we might expect. Juan Pérez de Moya, in his exhaustive allegorical reading of mythology, the *Philosophia secreta*, describes Harmonia in this way: “Dizen ser Harmonia hija de Venus, porque con su hermosura incito el libidinoso apetito de Cadmo, lo qual es propio de Venus por el desseo [. . .] Dize ser hija de Marte atento que fue causa de guerra” (sig. Hh1r). Pérez de Moya's reading of Harmonia is surprisingly historical rather than allegorical. And, rather than being an emblem of harmony, her identity is the exact opposite of harmonious. For Pérez de Moya, Harmonia is not a *discordia concors*, but rather she is best understood by her discrete parts that are never reconciled. Like Ricaredo, she is both Mars and Venus, but unlike Ricaredo, she plays those roles at different times and places.

Nevertheless, Pérez de Moya's treatise does show the influence of Harmonia in Renaissance aesthetics—if only indirectly. Later in the *Philosophia secreta*, when offering a variety of readings of the Sphinx, Pérez de Moya includes Harmonia as one way of understanding the mythical monster. Pérez de Moya juxtaposes the beautiful *discordia concors* of Harmonia to the horrifying hybridity of the Sphinx. Underlying this explanation is the reading of the Sphinx-as-monster with Cadmus's first wife Sphinx (in Spanish, Sphinge). Pérez de Moya writes: “Otros declaran esta historia, diziendo. Que Cadmo tenia consigo vna muger Amazona llamada Sphinge, quãdo vino a Thebas, y como alli matasse a Dragon, y ocupasse aquel reyno, tomando a Harmonia hermana de Dragon por su prisionera” (sig. Kk3v). In this account, Harmonia's name, and her

connection to the aesthetic principle of *discordia concors*, becomes much more significant juxtaposed against the Sphinx's horrifying *discordia* of parts, which Pérez de Moya goes on to elaborate and explain.

The most compelling account of Harmonia, though, comes from Sánchez de Viana's translation and allegorical commentary on Ovid. An important change in Sánchez de Viana's translation is his decision to introduce Harmonia into the poem itself. Cadmus's unnamed wife, in the Latin text, becomes an explicit "Harmonia" at the moment of their final transformation into serpents (sig. E8v). Unlike other translations and commentaries on Ovid, in which Harmonia was named only in the commentaries, Sánchez de Viana makes Harmonia an explicit part of the Cadmus story.

In the commentary on Harmonia, Sánchez de Viana does include the standard reading of the transformation as an allegory for the wisdom of old age but he also introduces several important alternative possibilities that are specific to Harmonia. In his commentary to the second book of the *Metamorphoses*, Sánchez de Viana writes that "[a] este lugar pertenece lo que falta de la fabula de Cadmo," and he then proceeds to give Harmonia's story—the piece that, for Sánchez de Viana, is lacking in the *Metamorphoses*. He explains the historical sources for reading Harmonia as daughter of Mars and Venus (citing Ovid and Hesiod versus Diodorus) and how Cadmus and Harmonia were wed (sig. I2v).

More importantly, Sánchez de Viana then goes on to explain the significance of Harmonia's name. He writes, "Fue fingida Harmonia hija de Marte y Venus, porq̃ la melodia dla [sic] musica significada por armonia no solamete leuãta los animos pstrados [sic], y oprimidos cõ la muchedubre de desgracias [. . .] pero aun inflama los varoniles pechos para la guerra" (sig. I2v-3r). In this section of the allegorical reading, Harmonia's identity is linked to musical harmony, and specifically, to the power of that music to achieve very different effects: soothing troubled spirits but also inciting men's hearts to war.

In another section of the commentary, however, Sánchez de Viana goes on to explain the link between harmony as a principle of music and visual beauty. In explaining beauty as a component of love Sánchez de Viana writes:

[E]ste nombre belleza tiene dos significados, vno comun, y otro proprio, segun el comun qualquiera cosa que cõsta de diversas

cosas bie~ proporcionadas, se llama bella, y aquella proporcion, templança, y armonia que resulta de la bien proporcionada mystura, se dize belleza, de manera que de los contrarios reducidos a vnidad, y su discordia concorde, sale la belleza, y de aqui dixo Heraclyto, que la guerra, y la paz, eran padre y madre de las cosas, Y Empedocles, que la discordia juntamente con la concordancia principio de las cosas, entendiendo por la discordia la variedad, y por la concordia la vnion dellas. Esta es la comun y larga significaciõ de belleza, en la qual communica con ella este vocabulo Harmonia. Pero ansi como Harmonia comunmente se toma por la deuida templança y medida proporcion de toda cosa compuesta, y propiamente significa el temperamento de muchas voces diferentes, que todos cõuerdan en una melodia. Sig. E8r-v.

The passage quoted contains the key elements of the Harmonia myth as it shaped Renaissance aesthetics. Harmony is, in this account, the definition of beauty—it is the union of discord, the joining of opposites, the combination of variety into singularity that yields the beautiful. This visual beauty is linked to the concord of sounds in music. Beyond this brief account of harmony as an aesthetic principle, though, the text also makes a claim to the connection between harmony as aesthetics and the Harmonia story. Although it is impossible to say who was responsible for the significant shift in the text from the initial use of “armonia” to the two repeated uses of “Harmonia,” a careful reader of Sánchez de Viana’s commentary would have immediately seen the link between the mythological personage and the aesthetic principle in question.

If harmony, in the Renaissance, was both a visual and auditory principle for beauty, how might it have manifested narratively? I believe that this is one of the questions that Cervantes sets out to answer in “La española inglesa”, and one that is directly linked to Ricaredo’s identification as both Mars and Venus and to the *novela*’s exemplum about the harmonious reconciliation of enemies. The story of Cadmus and Harmonia contains the seeds for the narrative enactment of harmony that Cervantes also puts forward—a harmony that consists of inversion and chiasmus until the narrative is fully resolved.

There is good reason to believe that, beyond the visual and musical significance of harmony and Harmonia for Cervantes, the Harmonia / Cadmus story itself offered an important example of what we might call

the narrative model of harmony. Ovidian scholarship has long noted the structural parallels of the Cadmus story. Walter Ludwig, arguing for the cohesiveness of books three and four of the *Metamorphoses*, describes the layers of embedded frames that center on the Bacchus story.¹¹ For Ludwig, Cadmus and—importantly—Harmonia form the outermost frame of these stories. The serpent, which marks the beginning and the end for Cadmus, also provides a narrative skeleton for the poem itself. As in the description given by Sánchez de Viana, beauty consists of the discordant parts coming into a unified whole; Harmonia's story in the *Metamorphoses* ends with the harmonious reconciliation of beginning and end.

Ovid himself is careful to mark the thematic and narrative parallels of the Cadmus story as it is stretched across the two books. Near the beginning of Cadmus's story in book three of the *Metamorphoses*, a divine voice pronounces Cadmus's fate after he kills Apollo's serpent. The Latin text, with its careful syntax, displays the link between grammatical and narrative chiasmus in the fate that is declared for Cadmus. Ovid writes, “unde, sed audita est: ‘quid, Agenore nate, peremptum / serpentem spectas? et tu spectabere serpens’” (III.97-8). The second line, with its careful parallels of *serpens* and *spectare* and its reversal of voice and subject, connects the larger, inverted parallelism of Cadmus's life to the harmonious structure of language.

This model of narrative parallelism and inversion found in Ovid offers Cervantes a way to bring about the harmonious resolution that the *novela's* exemplum describes. Ricaredo, already linked to conceptions of aesthetic harmony through his simultaneous identification with Mars and Venus, becomes the object of this narrative chiasmus. Indeed, it is directly after Ricaredo's return to England, when he is described as both Mars and Venus, that the narrative inversion begins. From this point forward, Ricaredo starts to inhabit the narrative positions previously held by Isabela. The *novela's* plot replays itself, but it is through this repetition that the discordant positions of nationality, religion, gender, and beauty are aligned and brought into harmony.

The first instance of this narrative inversion brings Ricaredo back to the beginning of the *novela*, with the narrator's insistence on Clotaldo's purely Christian attraction to the child Isabela (48). This moment, in which Clotaldo disobeys his commanding officer because of his attraction to Isabela, has already been discussed, but it is important to recall here. The

scene is rife with sexual undertones—but sexual undertones that the *novela* immediately seeks to dismiss by affirming that Clotaldo was attracted only “cristianamente” (48).

Ricaredo’s inverted equivalent of this episode occurs after his report to the queen. Still dressed in his armor, Ricaredo stops to speak with the ladies of the court. As Ricaredo talks to the women of the court, a *doncella* approaches, drawn by his beauty. The narrator tells us that she was “de pequeña edad,” and—as with the earlier insistence on Clotaldo’s Christian purity juxtaposed to Isabela’s young age—this comment on her age reproduces in this scene the same sense of the sexually asymptotic (71). The scene is brief. Speaking of the *doncella*’s interactions with Ricaredo, the narrator tells us, “Alzábale las escarcelas, por ver qué traía debajo dellas, tentábale la espada, y con simplicidad de niña quería que las armas le sirviesen de espejo, llegándose a mirar de muy cerca en ellas” (71). It is a strange scene. The young girl approaches Ricaredo and lifts his *escarcelas*—the piece of armor that falls from the waist to the thigh—to see what he has beneath them. Her curiosity satisfied, both text and *doncella* move immediately to Ricaredo’s sword, a symbolic progression that is clearly weighted with meaning. Through it all runs the childish simplicity upon which the narrator insists, which culminates in her self-examination in Ricaredo’s armor.

What is strangest about this scene is that, to an even greater degree than the opening scene with Clotaldo and Isabela, the erotic is marked for the reader as an inappropriate response at the same time that the text clearly anticipates it as an effect. Despite the inordinately charged depiction of a young girl examining a handsome young man to discover what is hidden between his waist and his thighs, despite the patent significance of the sword, the text produces these possibilities only in order to expose them as non-existent threats. The erotic, never fully activated, is defused before it even begins.

This scene with the *doncella* provides a model for thinking about the narrative practice that makes possible the final exemplum. As it reworks the earlier Clotaldo/Isabela scene, but to a different purpose, the *doncella* scene indicates the narrative doubling at work in the *novela*. More than a thematic reinforcement, though, such doubling returns to the events of the first part of the *novela* as a way of rethinking them. Rather than a man attracted to a child, here it is a child attracted to a man. Ricaredo comes to

inhabit the narrative and discursive space previously occupied by Isabela—although to very different ends.

The same pattern of narrative inversion is visible in the ending of the *novela*. The beginning of the *novela* sees Isabela come into England through her capture at the hands of Clotaldo, who is struck by her beauty. It seems telling, then, that Ricaredo's arrival in Sevilla, as the *novela* approaches the possibility of marriage and reunion for the third and final time, is brought about by his capture at the hands of the Turks. Caught off the coast of France, Ricaredo is stripped by the Turks, his possessions are taken, and he is carried to Algiers and held for ransom. Like Isabela, Ricaredo is identified by his captors as a material good gained through their activity; for Clotaldo, Isabela is a spoil of war, while for the Turks, Ricaredo is identified as a "galima," a theft, which Ricaredo, in his account of his capture, immediately glosses as a "despojo"—the same word used for Isabela in the first line of the *novela* (97).

While Ricaredo is being held in Algiers, one of the Turks freed by Ricaredo identifies him as the corsair who captured the Portuguese ship. Here, Ricaredo expresses his gratitude that the Turk did not reveal Ricaredo's identity (a reward for Ricaredo's earlier kindness), when Ricaredo explains that if the other Turks had learned his identity, "[O] me presentaran al Gran Turco o me quitaran la vida; y de presentarme al Gran Señor redundara no tener libertad en mi vida" (98). The parallel, of course, is Isabela's capture and her removal to England, and the English queen's determination to take possession of Isabela. Ricaredo finds himself reenacting Isabela's narrative process, but from the other side (and gender) of the story. Already a captive in Algiers, the threat of the "Gran Turco" is the threat of total cultural, linguistic, and political alienation and immersion as Ricaredo faces the fate that Isabela has already undergone.

In the end, Ricaredo is freed and he makes his way to Sevilla. As Isabela approaches the convent for the final time, he interrupts her procession and claims his rights as her husband. Although discursively Ricaredo self-identifies as her husband, the narrative reveals the hierarchical upset that accompanies this transition. Like Isabela at the beginning of the story, Ricaredo is a former captive. Isabela is identified numerous times at the beginning of the *novela* as a "prisionera," and for Clotaldo and his family, the only alternative to this label of "prisionera" is "esposa" (54). Ricaredo, in the same way, is described as a "cautivo"

immediately before he identifies himself as “esposo” (92-93). Ricaredo’s efforts to define himself as “esposo,” and the binary alternative identity of “cautivo,” invert the former social and gender hierarchies of his relationship with Isabela. The contrast between Ricaredo’s self-identification as husband and his narrative position as “cautivo” reveals the overturned social roles that both Ricaredo and Isabela have occupied.

After Ricaredo presents himself, Isabela acknowledges him as her husband. Ricaredo is also fortuitously identified by a man in the crowd as the same English corsair who had given the Spaniards their freedom. Ricaredo’s identification by both Isabela and the freed Spaniard, however, is predicated on Ricaredo’s physical beauty. The narrator, for the final time in the *novela*, devotes a full paragraph to describing Ricaredo. Among other details, we read that Ricaredo had “una confusa madeja de cabellos de oro ensortijados y un rostro como el carmín y como lo nieve, colorado y blanco” (92-93). The effect of this beauty, then, is revealed when the narrator explains that these traits “le hicieron conocer y juzgar por extranjero” (93). Again, his position mirrors Isabela’s earlier experience. Isabela, when she is presented to the English queen, is elaborately described by the narrator. Strikingly like Ricaredo, she also has “cabellos, que eran muchos, rubios y largos” (54). The most important element of her appearance, though, is that she is dressed “a la española,” which simultaneously highlights her beauty and her foreignness, in the same way that Ricaredo’s beauty is immediately seen as “extranjero” (54). The harmonious chiasmus of narrative allows for the reunion of Ricaredo and Isabela as captives and spouses, foreigners and citizens. In a final culmination of the *novela*’s narrative promises, prisoners become spouses—but, in a Cervantine twist, it is Ricaredo, not Isabela, who moves from prisoner to spouse.

As the *novela* concludes, Ricaredo enters Isabela’s household and forms part of it, overturning the anticipated union of Isabela with Clotaldo’s family that the first half of the *novela* envisions and toward which it works. More than this, though, Ricaredo’s decision to form part of Isabela’s family allows Ricaredo to invert his father’s original act of violence; Ricaredo, who is identified over and over as a *cautivo* in his reunion with Isabela, becomes quite literally her captive. He cut himself off from his parents who, like Isabela’s parents long before, have now lost their only child. More than symbolic, Ricaredo’s final decision to cede the narrative

of his capture and rescue to Isabela reflects the complete upheaval of hierarchies—sexual, national, and linguistic—that frame the opening of the *novela*.

What of beauty then? What of its enamoring power? Isabela's beauty, the perfection of female beauty, certainly enamors; but its enamoring holds within itself the seeds of violence. Her beauty disrupts at the same time that it enamors. On the other hand, Ricaredo's beauty is the beauty of harmony. In part, this is the harmony of physical reunion that is marked by his appearance in Sevilla. More than this, though, Ricaredo's beauty is a beauty that, by its nature, is a *discordia concors*, a union of incongruence; it is the beauty of Mars and the beauty of Venus, and therefore the beauty of Harmonia, their child. His beauty marks the moment when the Harmonia myth, with its influence on Renaissance aesthetics, begins to shape the *novela*.

The *novela's* exemplum, which proclaims the enamoring power of beauty and virtue, is most fully evidenced not in Isabela's beauty, which produces strife in the bonds it creates. Rather, it is the beauty and virtue of harmony itself—the beauty and virtue of both Ricaredo and Isabela who, through the narrative inversions and parallel structure of the *novela*, enact harmony as a narrative technique. The aesthetic, astrological, mythological, and philosophical discourse of *discordia concors* and the story of Harmonia become, in Cervantes's hands, a narrative structure, similar to what Ovid had proposed. As that narrative structure takes shape, the ultimate result is a leveling of anticipated hierarchies and binaries. Enmities—gendered, linguistic, and national—are brought into harmonious concord as Ricaredo enters the narrative spaces—material prize, prisoner, spouse—that the *novela* sets forth with the capture of Isabela at the beginning of the story. At the end, the *novela* imagines a harmonious projected future—the house that Ricaredo and Isabela buy from Hernando de Cifuentes. Only after the discursive and narrative shift into harmonious beauty and virtue can the *novela* culminate in exemplarity.

Notes

¹ Among others on this, see Cascardi (57), Costa Fontes (742-43), El Saffar (151-53), and Mancini (233). Both Cascardi and Mancini see, to differing extents, a crisis of exemplarity in the *novela*, while Costa Fontes and El Saffar read the *novela* as modeling social and spiritual ideals.

² Certainly the mirrored structure of the narrative has been noticed before. See, for only a few examples, Avallé-Arce (12); Aylward (145); Lowe (290); and Pini (147-51). The essay takes this observation as a starting place to investigate the link between the Harmonia myth, harmony as an aesthetic principle, and the *novela's* exemplum. Although the Harmonia myth is dealt with in greater detail in the second part of this essay, I include here a brief summary of the myth: Harmonia was the goddess of harmony and concord and the daughter of Mars and Venus. She was also wife of Cadmus, founder of Thebes. Later, when Cadmus left Thebes, Harmonia accompanied him to Illyria. At the end of their lives, both Cadmus and Harmonia were transformed into serpents.

³ See, for example, Güntert (261-63) and Johnson, both of whom read the *novela* as investigating a disjunction between different and competing social and economic discourses.

⁴ Substantial work has been done recently on the question of friendship in the early modern world. For a consideration of friendship in Cervantes, see Gil-Osle "Early modern illusions" and *Amistades imperfectas*. See also Gilbert-Santamaría for another account of friendship in early modern Spain.

⁵ This lack may suggest certain generic expectations for the *novela*. For a more recent reconsideration of the influence of fairy tale and romance, see Clamurro (108), who locates these elements in the female characters, and Zimic (142-44), who discusses questions of genre and the literary traditions that may have shaped the *novela*.

⁶ A point made by, among others, Amezúa y Mayo (132-33). Questions about the date of composition for *La española inglesa* continue; a standard view is articulated by Lapesa (378-80), who places the text between 1609-1611.

⁷ For a different reading of how these gender dynamics play out, see Martínez-Góngora (31-33), who explores the role of androgyny in representations of female rulers and how this affects the court of women.

⁸ This type of beauty is not new or particular to Cervantes, by any means; it is a motif of romance as well as classical literature in which the heights of male and female beauty approach the androgynous. The description has produced a range of interpretations. For more on this particular moment of the *novela*, see Alcázar Ortega (43); Casalduero (123); and Fuchs (109). Alcázar Ortega reads this as a commentary on the generic material of the *novela*, with its martial and amorous sections. Casalduero is interested in the implications of this moment for masculine identity. Fuchs considers it in a more abstract social sense.

⁹ Among other sources on the influence of the Harmonia myth, see de Armas (96-97); Moore; and Wind.

¹⁰ For example, this reading also appears in the anonymous *Las transformaciones de Ovidio* (1595). In addition to this anonymous volume, Sánchez de Viana includes this reading and attributes it to Orologio and also mentions Natal Comite as a previous commentator (sig. M7v-8r). Sánchez de Viana attributes this reading as well to Dante (sig. I3r). Pérez de Moya also includes this reading in his work (sig. Gg8v).

¹¹ See Ludwig, cited in Solodow (11-12).

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