EPIC TO ROMANCE TO NOVEL:  
PROBLEMS OF GENRE IDENTIFICATION

By IAN MICHAEL  
KING ALFONSO XIII PROFESSOR OF SPANISH STUDIES  
in the University of Oxford and Fellow of Exeter College

For more than a year now I have been asking myself why the signal honour of giving the first Ramsden/Gybbon-Monypenny Commemorative Lecture should fall quite undeservedly to me. It is true that with these two outstanding scholars, happily able to be present with us this evening, I was for more than thirteen years a member, like yourself, Mr Chairman, of the Hispanic team created in this Faculty by the late Professor J. W. Rees, who, from a single-handed beginning in 1926, left at his retirement in 1961 a large and impressive body of scholars.

Mr. Rees, as we invariably called him, and as he himself preferred to be addressed even after his elevation to the Chair of Spanish, saw to it that we were fully integrated into that wider body of classical, linguistic, literary and historical scholars who by then had made Manchester’s the leading Faculty of Arts in the country and a force to be reckoned with on the international scene, for he firmly believed in the indivisibility of humanistic study; he himself had trained first in German and the Classics at the University of Wales before reading Spanish and French at Exeter College, Oxford, where his influential moral tutor had been the classicist Mr. Eric Barber, later to become Rector of the College. Thus Mr. Rees encouraged his own students and those colleagues who joined him later to widen their studies as much as possible, and he naturally arranged for such an outstanding pupil as Herbert Ramsden to study abroad at Strasbourg and the Sorbonne as well as in Madrid.

1 The first Ramsden Gybbon-Monypenny Commemorative Lecture, given in the University of Manchester on 7 November 1985 under the Chairmanship of Professor R. C. Willis, Head of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies in the University.

Given this view of his, it is not surprising that, when the opportunity arose in 1954 of making two new appointments, he should have chosen, in addition to Herbert Ramsden, whose academic formation he could be said to have planned, another scholar, Gerald Gybson-Monypenny, who had been a scholar at Winchester and had later won a classical scholarship to Trinity Hall, Cambridge; after four years' war service in the Indian Army, however, on reaching Cambridge he switched to read Modern Languages. Mr. Rees watched over the development of these two new appointees with his customary unassuming, almost imperceptible method of supervision, which commonly involved supper parties at his house in Bowdon at which philological and literary debate would extend into the early hours of the morning, when the floor of his study would be littered with dictionaries and glossaries and rare German pamphlets on aspects of Romanische Philologie.

When it came to literary judgements, however, Mr. Rees would shrug his shoulders and giving his habitual smile, would say only, "I leave that sort of thing to you". For him, our task was to establish texts and elucidate textual problems, since a good edition might have a life of sixty to eighty years, whereas it would be unusual if a work of literary interpretation would have a currency of more than five to ten years before being modified, reassessed or overtaken by the latest fashion in literary criticism.

And that is what Herbert Ramsden and Gerald Gybson-Monypenny have since spent their time doing, in very different ways, for they emerged as very different kinds of scholar. Professor Ramsden, to whom fell the honour of succeeding his mentor in the Manchester Chair, exhibited from an early stage a very wide range of interests, starting with his masterly Madrid doctorate on the collocation of weak object-pronouns in the early Romance languages—a much under-read study among editors of medieval Hispanic texts, since it provides us, among other things, with keys to the approximate dating and to the quite close geographical location of early texts that lack indication of place or date in their manuscripts. Almost simultaneously Ramsden completed his Manchester M.A. thesis on Spanish Romanticism. His work since then has ranged from his Essential Course in
Modern Spanish to critical analysis of the writers of the Generation of 1898 and of the 1920s and '30s.4

Dr. Gybbon-Monypenny's published work, on the other hand, has essentially concentrated on one of the most outstanding medieval Spanish texts, the Archpriest of Hita's Libro de buen amor, although he has shown many other interests in, for instance, the Galician-Portuguese lyric and fifteenth-century Spanish poetry. For many generations of undergraduates, however, and for Hispanists throughout the world, his name is synonymous with careful elucidation of the many problems surrounding the fourteenth-century literary phenomenon that the Libro de buen amor represents; indeed, in his very first publication,5 stemming out of his Cambridge Ph. D. dissertation, he tackled the problem of genre many years before this became fashionable.

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In an article that appeared in Romance Philology thirty-eight years ago,6 Helmut Hatzfeld surveyed the changing trends in medieval literary scholarship and looked at their effect on the interpretation of certain key works in Italian, French, Provençal and Spanish. He pointed out how the old philological school had been succeeded by the newer stylistic method after the First World War and then it in its turn by the new aesthetic approach in the '30s and '40s. Hatzfeld's conclusion was:

the esthetic method is perfectly compatible with the historic method. For the latter is bound to control the former according to the rule that facts and experience have to check intuition and speculation. (p. 325)

Hatzfeld also declared that:

There is no doubt that medieval theory and philosophy of life have always to be consulted to make modern interpreters sure of themselves.

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4 For a full list of his publications up to 1982, see Frank Pierce (compiler), Repertorio de Hispanistas de la Gran Bretaña e Irlanda [Madrid], Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores [1984], pp. 167-69.
5 "Autobiography in the Libro de buen amor in the Light of Some Literary Comparisons", Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, xxxiv (1957), 63-78; for a full list of Dr. Gybbon-Monypenny's publications up to 1982, see Repertorio de Hispanistas ... (cited in previous note), pp. 138-39.
If there is disagreement between the medieval standards, so far as they are clearly recognizable, and the modern interpretation, then the modern interpretation is wrong. (ibid.)

We may think he went too far, however, when he added: “But there may be various possibilities where one may decide none the less in favor of modern intuition”. Although in his account of the work then recently done on a number of medieval texts the method of structural analysis is given much prominence, as well as the notion, so successfully propounded by the late Eugène Vinaver in this Manchester Faculty, that “any exploration of form is a search for meaning”?, there is very little mention in Hatzfeld’s article of genre, except in passing; for example, when he recounts recent studies on the Libro de buen amor, he tosses off the following statement without discussion of the terms he uses:

El libro de buen amor is a rhymed causerie with legitimate digressions provided for in the Artes poeticae of the Middle Ages, far from any concern for composition, a medieval intentional patchwork... it is a typical ejemplario, in which the analogies are heaped up like the legacies in Villon’s Testament, the calls in the Dances of Death, and the adventures in the rogue novel, the prototype of which the Archpriest’s book may rightly be considered. (p. 324)

There is no consideration of how the generic terms he employs—rhymed causerie, exemplarium, rogue novel—correspond to contemporary notions of genre, if indeed any such existed.

It is with no little trepidation that I approach this problem this evening, first because the topic is so vague that I suspect Mr. Rees would not have entirely approved of it, and secondly because the first time I risked using the word genre in an undergraduate essay on Góngora’s Soledades the late Professor R. O. Jones ringed it in red and wrote a query in the margin: “What kind of beast is this?”

For here is the first difficulty about genre: the word itself. Its borrowing into English from French is not documented by the OED until 1816, in the meaning of “kind, sort, style”. Before that the word gender, also deriving of course from Latin genus, seems to have been used, certainly before 1784, although the adjective generic in the meaning of “belonging to a genus or class” had been used as early as 1676, and the Latinism genus meaning “a kind,

class, or order” since 1649. The position seems somewhat more promising in Spanish, since género is documented about the year 1440, but in the sense of “linaje o especie”—“lineage or species”. Alonso Fernández de Palencia’s Universal vocabulario of 1490 also gives this meaning, and Nebrija in 1493 glosses genus as “género por linaje noble”, and secondly as “género de cualquiera cosa”—none of these examples, from English or Spanish, being applied particularly to literary works.

In her survey of Genre (with its excellent bibliography) in the Critical Idiom Series, founded by the late Professor John Jump of this Faculty, Heather Dubrow starts by giving an amusing example to illustrate the function of genre. It consists of the opening of a narrative describing a house that is quiet except for the ticking of a clock and deserted apart from the dead body of a woman lying on a bed in the front room; a silent figure is slipping out unseen and the wailing of an infant is heard. She points out that it is only the title given by the author to a novel beginning in this way that would enable the prospective reader to decide whether he had picked up a detective story or a Bildungsroman. Modern publishers, bookshops and public libraries make things easy for us, of course, by announcing or placing books in generic or sub-generic sections: science fiction, crime, westerns, historical novels, “romance” by which they commonly mean sentimental or erotic romance, and even what they are pleased to call “general literature”, which usually consists of the better sort of novel up to about 1930. This tendency appears to have begun in the eighteenth century and the classifications have become ever more specialized. Modern authors, unlike literary historians and the so-called “general reader”, show considerable reluctance to conform to such categories: the group of modern Spanish poets known as the “Novisimos”, for example, have considered that “the division of literature into specialized modules (poetry, prose, etc.) was a fallacy propagated by those who do not write”.

In a Taylorian Lecture delivered in 1966, the late Professor Edward M. Wilson complained that the placing of authors into

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categories related to genre or styles extrapolated from art history, while possibly being convenient for the literary historian, would give us a false picture of writers in the Spanish Golden Age:

... we forget that these terms are nearly always modern ex post facto catchwords. The contribution of the individual is made less than the style he is supposed to exemplify. The pigeon-hole is all. Can we not read Cervantes because he is Cervantes, not because he is (or is not) baroque?

Our literary courses and our periods of prescribed study, as well as the historians, make us think and specialize in centuries or reigns and neglect overlaps. We notice changes in moral intention, in sensibility, in imagery, in language, and we neglect the great continuities. If genre identification is problematic and dangerous in the Spanish Golden Age, it is much more difficult in the medieval period, as I shall try to show. Of course the physical presentation of a medieval book would generally have indicated to those few readers who existed what the content was going to be: the larger the format of the codex, the better the binding and the parchment, the more exquisite the calligraphy, the richer the historiaion and lamination, then the greater was the probability that he would discover it to be a psalter or other liturgical text, a commentary on the Psalms, the life of a saint—all, naturally, written in Latin. The smaller and meaner the format, the poorer the parchment, the hastier the bookhand and the more perfunctory the decoration of the capitals, then the higher was the likelihood of finding an heroic or narrative poem in the vernacular.

Most medieval recipients of literature, however, were illiterate and their genre expectations could only be confirmed by the place of recitation, the social class of the rest of the audience and the person of the reciter. It is here that our greatest difficulty lies, for lack of clear extratextual evidence on these matters. In his famous book on jongleuresque poetry published in 1924, Ramón Menéndez Pidal presented us with a picture of jolly Spanish inns and lively monastic hospices peopled with minstrels ever ready to perform anything from a scurrilous song to an heroic poem, a metrical life of a saint or a vernacular account of Apollonius of Tyre or Alexander the Great. It was Dr. Gybbon-Monypenny

12 Poesía juglaresca y orígenes de las literaturas románicas, Madrid, 1957 (rev. edn. of Poesía juglaresca y juglares, 1924).
who began to raise doubts about this scenario in his article of 1965 on "The Spanish mester de clerecia and its intended public";\textsuperscript{13} basing himself on textual evidence from these poems alone, he showed that catechistic use of phrases related to oral performance on the one hand and references to the actual pages of the manuscript on the other made it unlikely that all these medieval narrative poems had been diffused in the way Don Ramón had envisaged. Later, Professor Keith Whinnom suggested that it was a mistake to confuse the authors of the Poema de Mio Cid and other such works with the mimes, histriones et joculatores so often condemned by Councils of the Church, who could have been little more than tumblers, acrobats and bawdy actresses.\textsuperscript{14} In any case, the recommendation in the Alphonsine Partidas that those training to be knights should listen to heroic songs after the day's work was done to inspire themselves with the deeds of famous heroes of the past made it improbable that such poems were normally recited in low taverns rather than in baronial halls, even allowing for the chroniclers' condemnation of the lack of historical accuracy in the cantares e fablas of the jongleurs.\textsuperscript{15} The fact that the Spanish chroniclers made any use at all of such productions should alert us to the possibility that they held a rather up-market position within the vernacular literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

If it is wrong to impose modern generic divisions on medieval literature, the question that still faces us is: what other sort of classification did medieval listeners and readers make? One possibility is that the classical prescriptions still had some kind of validity. In her necessarily summary account of the historical evolution of genre theory, Heather Dubrow begins with the usual quotation from Book III of Plato's Republic, where Socrates asserted that there are three and only three methods of producing


\textsuperscript{14} In a debate at the annual conference of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland held at Birmingham in 1970.

a literary work: pure narration, in which a poet speaks in his own
voice, “narration by imitation”, in which one or more speakers are
bodied forth in the work, and thirdly a mixture of the two (p. 46).
Dithyrambic poetry, generally a kind of ode accompanied by the
lyre, is cited as an example of pure narration; drama, both tragedy
and comedy, represents the second method; the epic is an instance
of the third or mixed form (p. 47). Aristotle developed all this
much further, introducing the concepts of mimesis, decorum and
catharsis, as is well known to everyone.

The Roman authors, especially Horace and Quintilian, were
much more concerned with pragmatic issues, such as the use of
rhetoric and metre and the structure of individual compositions.
Quintilian was particularly concerned with oratorical techniques,
yet it is likely that the practice of dividing types of literature into
categories and establishing rules for each was brought about by
his epideictic distinctions, by which praise or blame could be
attached to literary works (Dubrow, p. 51).

It is clear that by the Middle Ages the concept of genres had
faded; Christianity had brought a problem in the sense that
classical authors had to take second place to the Bible, in which,
some early writers had claimed, most if not all literary genres were
to be found. Until the thirteenth century in Italy, the fourteenth in
England and the fifteenth in Spain, there can hardly be said to
have existed any literary theory, except for pale shadows of the
Roman artes poeticae, mainly represented by the Rhetorica ad
Herennium, which was fondly but falsely believed to have been
written by Cicero.16

A sign of this ignorance of theoretical matters is the almost
complete absence of precision in the terminology for the medieval
vernacular productions, which for the most part lacked even titles.
When we examine any history of Spanish literature we obtain a
misleading impression of early literary production. Firstly, most
of the titles of the works discussed have been imposed by modern
editors. The late twelfth-century fragment of a liturgical drama
called Auto de los reyes magos bears no title in its manuscript, and
could hardly have been called an auto by its anonymous author,
for the word in the sense of “a dramatic composition of Biblical
character” is not documented until much later, in the fifteenth

16 See Charles Faulhaber, Latin Rhetorical Theory in Thirteenth and
century. No doubt the modern editor had in mind the *autos sacramentales* of Calderón, rather than the act-divisions of *Celestina*. Likewise the *Poema de Mio Cid*, now commonly dated to the early thirteenth century, which some editors have entitled *Cantar de Mio Cid*, bears no title in its late fourteenth-century manuscript. In its text the anonymous poet uses the term *nuevas* or "news" on frequent occasions to refer to El Cid’s exploits or to an account of them. He also uses once the term *gesta*, the Latin word for "deeds", apparently in relation to his entire poem, and the term *cantar* ostensibly for only one section of it. The scribal explicits and scribblings at the end of the manuscript refer to a *razon*, and to a *romanz*, as though these too were words that described this heroic poem. But it is clear that the *Cid* poet could not have used the term *poema*, which is not documented in the language until 1442; nor could he have employed the words *épico*, or *épica*, which are not found in Spanish until 1580, nor yet the word *epopeya*, which does not seem to occur until c. 1650.

Clearly the *Poema de Mio Cid* is not epic in the strict Aristotelian sense, but then most medieval heroic poems are not either. It is a long way from this qualification to considering the work as little more than a propaganda piece intended to boost the fortunes of a monastic house, or Alfonso VIII’s military recruitment or even an important Aragonese family’s interests against those of its Leonese rivals. It is almost to be regretted that so many recent studies of the *Poema* have concentrated on such matters: even a cursory examination of Francisco López Estrada’s bibliography of *Cid* criticism up to 1982 reveals that, of his 290 pages of excellent commentary on the work of the critics, only fifty-three deal with studies on the unity and composition of the poem, while thirty-five cover problems of dating and authorship.


18 See Corominas and Pascual, *DECH*, s.v. "épico".

eighty-two concentrate on its literary presentation of historical personages, sixty more on its "literary configuration", i.e. possible sources and antecedents, language, metre and style, and forty-three on its literary descendants and influence. Thus we may assume that far more than half the published criticism deals with extratextual matters. It seems urgent that we should return to intratextual criticism of the Poema as a cantar de gesta, and in this regard one of the trail-blazers was Herbert Ramsden, with his Alcocer article published in 1959, in which he undertook a subtle analysis of the structure of one episode.

The Poema de Mio Cid can, of course, only be approached as an heroic poem in the generic sense that it presents us with a hero whose prowess is demonstrated in action and who represents the aspirations of a clan, tribe or class. But instead of having a single action, it has two overlapping ones, different in nature from each other. The epic should maintain a grave tone throughout, yet this poem has at least three comic incidents. It also contains elements perhaps more appropriate to late classical romance than to early classical epic: a separated family, ill-treated daughters left for dead but restored to life and later vindicated. It seems certain that the ancients would have regarded it as a faulty epic, but it is no more faulty in this generic sense than many French chansons de geste of the period.

This raises the question of genre overlap or genre merging: some of the thirteenth-century Spanish metrical lives of saints contain features we associate with epic, others ones we think of as belonging to romance. The Libro de Alexandre actually merges at least two genres: Gautier de Châtillon's imitation of a Latin epic, recently categorized as a mocking epic, and an old French roman.

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20 Francisco López Estrada, Panorama crítico sobre el "Poema del Cid", Madrid, 1982.


22 For two opposing views on the meaning of "por muertas las dexaron", see Colin Smith and Roger M. Walker, "Did the Infantes de Carrión intend to kill the Cid's daughters?" Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, lvi (1979), 1-10.

23 See D. M. Kratz, Mocking Epic: "Waltharius", "Alexandreis" and the Problem of Christian Heroism, Madrid, 1980; on the conjunction of epic and romance, see my Treatment of Classical Material in the Libro de Alexandre, Manchester, 1970, esp. caps. II and VII.
If the Cid poet really thought of his poem as a *romanz*, a word found among the scribal or other jottings on the last folio of the extant manuscript, then he was starting a long process of terminological confusion: *romanice*, as you will remember, meant at first “en lengua romana, sermo romanus”, which is to say “in the vernacular tongue of the Romans”. Gonzalo de Berceo uses it in this sense in the 1230s, while calling some of his metrical lives of saints *prosas*, just to confuse matters further. *Prosa*, from the feminine of the Latin adjective *prorsus* or *prosus*, meant something that went in a straight line, as opposed to *versus*, that which was “turned”. Thus Apuleius had talked of “prorsa et vorsa oratio”.24

In the *Libro de Alexandre*, dating probably from the 1220s, in the works of Berceo and in Juan Ruiz’s *Libro de buen amor*, *prosa* seems to have meant “a religious text in verse intended to be sung”, but it also had a specialized meaning in Church ritual of a hymn sung after the gradual and before the gospel in the Mass at major feasts.

The word *romanz* or *romance* is one of the best examples of generic haziness: it is still glossed by Nebrija in 1493 as a “*cantar: carmen heroicum*”, but quite soon it was to take on the sense of a popular Spanish ballad, a sense it still commonly bears, while in French *roman* came to mean first a novelesque story in verse, then a prose romance and finally a novel, so that it did not seem very extraordinary to us when Professor Vinaver used to offer a course in this Faculty entitled “The French roman from Chrétien de Troyes to Proust”. But in modern Spanish America, and recently in Spain itself, *romance* has taken on a new and unwelcome sense; Corominas comments: “la acepción ‘novela’ y especialmente ‘historia de amor’ corriente en América es anglicismo grosero e inadmisible”,25 though we now meet the word daily in the Spanish popular press describing, for example, the extramarital affair of an ex-minister, and even in a learned Hispanic journal used in inverted commas to represent the English critical concept of a romance as an early form of the novel,26 a distinction that

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24 Quoted by Corominas and Pascual, *DECH*, s.v. “prosa”.
25 *DECH*, s.v. “romance”.
26 Cf. “Inútil insistir en que el sentido de la evolución sería muy distinto si no nos detuviéramos en ese estadio y pensáramos, en cambio, en la transición desde la novela del siglo XIX hasta la plural narrativa de nuestros días, con su recuperación de la alegoría, el romance, el mito, la visión ...”, Francisco Rico, “Puntos de vista. Posdata a unos ensayos sobre la novela picaresca”, *Edad de*
Spanish, in common with French, Italian and German, has up until now apparently never attempted to make. There has been a valiant attempt by Professor Alan Deyermond\textsuperscript{27} to bring into Hispanic literary criticism the ostensibly useful distinction between “romance” and “novel” made by a number of eighteenth-century English writers such as Clara Reeve, in which the former is seen as “an heroic fable which treats of fabulous persons and things” and the latter as “a picture of real life and manners and of the times in which it was written”,\textsuperscript{28} but these distinctions seem doomed to failure by the improbability of encountering a suitable word in Spanish for “romance”; “libro de caballería” could only refer to the chivalric romance, and Professor Deyermond’s suggestion of “libro de aventuras”\textsuperscript{29} appears to fit the picaresque better than any kind of romance, especially since the word “aventuras” has long been appended to title-pages by the Spanish printers to advertise imaginary lives of low-life characters.\textsuperscript{30} It is probable that worse difficulties would be encountered in finding neologisms in French, Italian and German to divide up the terms roman, romanzo and Roman. But the problem goes much deeper than the terminology: the critics in those countries have long had a much wider concept of the main European fiction category, subdividing it by adjectival means: thus le roman courtois, il romanzo neorealista, la novela sentimental, Bildungsroman, etc.

\textsuperscript{27} A.D. Deyermond, “The Lost Genre of Medieval Spanish Literature”, \textit{Hispanic Review}, xliii (1975), 231-59; the weakness of his argument about foreign critics’ failing to recognise “romances” if there was no term to distinguish them from “novels” is revealed by his statement that “The linguistic difficulty is serious, but it need not have been insurmountable: French, after all, lacks a specific term for romance, yet French scholars have been able to recognise and study the genre; they seem in practice to treat roman ‘medieval romance’ and roman ‘modern novel’ almost as homographs” (244-45). Could not scholars such as Menéndez y Pelayo have been doing the same with the Spanish term novela?

\textsuperscript{28} See Miriam Allott, \textit{Novelists on the Novel}, London, 1959, for this and many other similar statements from the period.

\textsuperscript{29} Cf. his use of the term in his \textit{Historia de la literatura española}, ed. R. O. Jones, I. \textit{La edad media}, Barcelona, 1973, cap. VII, and his defence of it in “The Lost Genre ...” (cited in note 26 above), 244.

\textsuperscript{30} “Aventuras” was commonly added to the title in later printings of Mateo Alemán’s \textit{Guzmán de Alfarache}, see Edmond Cros, \textit{Protée et le gueux: Recherches sur les origines et la nature du récit picaresque dans “Guzmán de Alfarache”} (Paris, 1967), p. 52.
Many of our Spanish literary works of the Middle Ages have in modern times been called by the more innocuous title of Libro, referring only to the physical object of the codex in which they were copied, and many more were entitled estoria, which I believe to be a key word for the implication of this discussion. The Latin historia deriving from the Greek and originally meaning “a search” was already employed in a sense close to the modern one in a few twelfth-century Latin works such as Historia Roderici, and in the following century was employed by the Alphonsine compilers for their two large histories, La estoria de España and La general estoria, although annalistic histories were normally entitled Crónicas or Corónicas in that and later periods throughout Europe.31 But estoria was first used in the vernacular in the Libro de Alexandre, in a number of different contexts that suggest the meaning of “an account” or “a narration” or even a scene that is witnessed or its depiction in art;32 the latter sense is recalled by Milton’s “storied windows richly dight” and Gray’s “storied urn or animated bust”.33 In the works of Gonzalo de Berceo composed between 1230 and 1260 we find a similar state of affairs.34 But, as far as I know, only the Alexandre poet throws

31 St. Isidore had defined history as “the narration of deeds done, by means of which the past is made known” and distinguished it clearly from fable and myth; see Beryl Smalley, Historians in the Middle Ages (London, 1974), p. 23; while Gervase of Canterbury “began his chronicle by emphasising the difference between chronic and history in point of style. ‘Historicus diffuse et eleganter incidit, cronicus vero simpliciter graditur et breviter...’ The historian may ‘audientes vel legentes dulci sermone et eleganti demulcere’; the chronicler’s business is to recount a succession of event under accurate dates”, H. J. Chaytor, From Script to Print (Cambridge, 1945, repr. 1950), p. 56.
32 For the sense of “an historical account”, cf. sts. 294c, 334c (“la estoria de Troya”), 1517c, 1871a, 2106a, 2286c (“la estoria troyana”), 2696c etc.; for “a scene depicted in art”, cf. 851a (P MS), 990a, 993b, 997a, 1240a, 1245a, 2552a, and the adj. estoriado, 2549c (P MS); all refs. to R. S. Willis’s edn., Elliott Monographs 32, Princeton and Paris, 1934, repr. New York, 1965.
34 La vida de Santo Domingo de Silos, 3abc: “Quiero que lo sepates luego de la primera, / cuya es la istoria, meter vos en carrera: / es de Santo Domingo toda bien verdadera”; La vida de San Millán de la Cogolla, 1ab: “Qui la vida quisiere de sant Millán saber, / e de la su istoria bien certano seer”; Duelo que fizo la Virgen ..., 171d: “farien de la mentira istorias e sermones”; Vida de Santa Oria, 10ab: “Avenos en el prólogo nos mucho detardado, / sigamos la estoria, esto es aguisado”; 35: “Respondió la reclusa que avíe nombre Oria: / ‘Yo non sería digna de veer tan grant gloria, / mas si me recièbiessedes vos en vuestra memoria, /
doubt at two moments on the veracity of his estoria. The first is a reference to what some sources say about Alexander’s treatment of Porus of India, which he suppresses, and the second occurs when he is incorporating fantastic material from the French Roman d’Alexandre about Alexander’s descent into the sea.35

Spanish scholars have lately dedicated a number of studies to the problem of the so-called mester de clerecia, or “clerkly craft”, which often occupies a chapter in histories of Spanish literature.36 There is some dispute among them as to whether or not it constituted a new literary genre that arose, some have alleged, at the University of Palencia in the second decade of the thirteenth century during the brief and uncertain life of that institution, when French teachers of the “new” Latin arrived to give instruction in this learned method.37 Whatever the truth of that, it is hard for us to see the many disparate works composed in the cuadernia via metrical form, from the Alexandre via Berceo, Apolonia, Fernán González to Juan Ruiz’s Libro de buen amor, as having much

allá serié complida toda la mi estoria”; 172: “Conjuróla Amuña a su fijuela Oria: / “Fija, si Dios vos diese a la su sancta Gloria, / si visión vidiestes o alguna istoria / dezitmelo demiente a vedes la memoria.” 35 Alex., 2216d: “otras cosas retrayen que non son de creer”, on Alexander’s treatment of Porus; 2305: “Unas fačianas suelen las gentes retraer; / non iaz en escrito & es graue [MS: malo] de creer; / si es uerdat o non yo non he y que ueer, / pero no lo quiero en oluido poner” before Alexander’s descent into the sea in a bathysphere.


37 This view was first propounded by Professor Brian Dutton, “Some Latinisms in the Spanish Mester de Clerencia”, Kentucky Romance Quarterly, iv (1967), 45-60, and “French Influences in the Spanish Mester de Clerencia”, in Medieval Studies in Honor of R. W. Linker (Madrid, 1973), pp. 73-93, and was later developed by Roger Wright, Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France, (Liverpool, 1982), pp. 245-52. I share Francisco Rico’s doubts about Palencia having been, at best, much more than a short-lived staging-post; see his “La clerecia del Mester” (cited in previous note), at p. 10.
generic unity. The Alexandre has been regarded as a learned epic, or a speculum principis, or as a moral romance, and depending on the generic classification given it by the critic, so runs his or her interpretation of its meaning. There is perhaps less dispute about the hagiographic and liturgic poems of Berceo, though recently Francisco Rico has, in my view, rightly attacked Brian Dutton's notion of a close connection of most of his poems with the monastic culture of the abbey of San Millán de la Cogolla.

Berceo's Milagros de Nuestra Señora, for example, is a general miracle collection in vernacular verse and is drawn from earlier such collections in Latin. What is of particular interest is its introduction or prologue, which takes the form of an autobiographical allegory. Now the cuaderna via poets, unlike the author of the Poema de Mio Cid, commonly address the listener or reader in the first person when they comment on their sources or the act of composition, otherwise they narrate in the third person, just as the chroniclers did: there is no concept of ars celandi artem, but only Berceo refers to himself by name in all his hagiographical poems, and in his Milagros prologue becomes the protagonist of the religious allegory, which he takes good care to explain in every detail. No exact source has yet been found for this passage, but one probably existed, since he is not otherwise inventive. This type of pseudo-autobiography presented in first-person address is common in medieval allegorical or dream poems, such as the Roman de la Rose and Langland's Piers Plowman. All the rest of the narrative in the Milagros and the other thirteenth-century narrative poems is invariably in the third person, and even in his lives of saints, Berceo is certainly conscious of the notion that he is writing an estoria or history; in La vida de Santa Oria the protagonist herself is presented at times as dictating her estoria or narration of her religious experiences in the first person to her mother and to a scribe called Munio.

39 See his ‘‘La clerecia del mester’’ (cited in note 36 above), at p. 147, n. 115.
Some hold that the *mester de clerecia*, being intellectually and artistically superior to the shoddier productions of the *juglares* or minstrels as some of the learned poets themselves proclaimed, just like their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, supposes a generic concept of didacticism or moralising, but this categorisation is somewhat belied by the *Apolonio* poem which has an immoral element in its plot,\(^{42}\) and certainly by Juan Ruiz’s poem, which is seen by many as a burlesque. This generic identification by verse-form also excludes, apparently, the group of so-called octosyllabic poems, mostly drawn from French sources; these include *La vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, so beloved of Professor Rees.\(^{43}\) Some of these shorter poems have a content or plot similar to the poems composed in the *cuaderna via* metre, which could be seen as no more of a feature characterising genre than *arte mayor* was in a later period.

What really unites all these narrative poems written before Juan Ruiz’s time is that their authors appear to have thought they were composing an *estoria*; whether that corresponds to the modern meaning of “a history”, or simply to that of “a story” we cannot tell. And here we have some help from the late Greek novel, otherwise known as the Alexandrian romance or, more misleadingly as the Byzantine novel. In his excellent account of *The Novel before the Novel ...*,\(^{44}\) the late Arthur Heiserman explored the varied types of long stories written usually in Greek prose between the third century B.C. and the fourth century A.D. In Aristotelian terms these formed a bastard genre, not allowed for in the three classical types or kinds. Acutely aware of the terminological problems concerned with *romance* and *novel*, Heiserman decided, he tells us, to adopt “the Continental usage, wherein *roman*

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\(^{42}\) Cf. “With *Apollonius* we have sailed into a new era. True, like some earlier romances, it seems to be generated by a kernel fantasy. That is, we cannot avoid noticing, when we ask questions about its unifying principles, that all of its principal episodes touch upon a single basic experience—the desire older men feel for younger women and vice versa” (Arthur Heiserman, *The Novel before the Novel* ..., (cited in note 44 below), p. 215).

\(^{43}\) J.W. Rees’s critical edn. of this text was set up in page-proof by Manchester University Press in 1938, but two items in the glossary still needed elucidation at the time of his death. I hope to publish the text of his edn. in the near future.

denotes any long fiction, realistic or fantastic, and *nouvelle* denotes a short one" (p. 4). Pointing out that whereas ancient Greek epics and dramatic tragedies customarily dealt with traditional stories and well-known heroes, as Aristotle recommended, Heiserman adds: "the Greek romances work with 'novel'—that is, untraditional—stories drawn from the realities of ordinary life, while some of them also deal with the idealizations of love, adventure, and heroism we associate with romance" (ibid.).

Heiserman asks a very pertinent question: did the Greeks have a word for the Greek romances? He points out that Chariton of Aphrodisia, the author of the earliest extant romantic novel, called his work a story of *erōtica pathēmata*—a story of erotic sufferings, and that this term gained some currency among the Hellenes. What is most interesting for our purposes is that this type of Greek romance can, in Heiserman's words, blend ... elements drawn from the old "serious" genres with elements drawn from the New Comedy. Its protagonists can be much more admirable, for their fidelity and courage, than the protagonists of comedies and even more admirable, or worthy of emulation, than those of epic and tragedy; but like comic characters, and unlike tragic ones, they are purely fictive, neither legendary nor historical. (pp. 5-6)

He also observes that they suffer the direst threats to their lives, but usually survive all their perils to live happily ever after. This kind of romance, as Northrop Frye puts it, "is the nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream", which clearly accounts for its longevity, extending right into the modern period.

One is also struck by the number of such romances—especially the foundation-myths—that bore the word *Historia* in their title: the *Historia Ephesiaca* and the *Historia Babylonica* survive only in epitomes of c. A.D. 150 and 165 respectively, but the most famous of them, Heliodorus' *Historia Æthiopica*, composed in the 230s A.D., survives in its entirety. These titles were commonly translated into English as *Story* rather than *History*, yet another genre distinction that is not commonly made by Continental translators or critics. Others bear only the names of the pairs of protagonists, such as *Charus and Callirrhoë* written by the lawyer called Chariton c. A.D. 50, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloë* and Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, both dating from the 160s.

A.D. Many of these were to be translated into Spanish, usually via Latin or French, in the later Middle Ages or Renaissance, but one of the later and somewhat atypical Latin romances, the Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri was to enter Spanish narrative poetry very early, and it is interesting to note that its Spanish adaptor calls it a *roman*z, presumably in the meaning of “a poem in the vernacular”, making this one of the very few cuaderna via poems so to be described in the text.46

Generally speaking, we may conclude that all the thirteenth-century Spanish narrative poets thought they were composing histories in verse and, with the two exceptional comments in the Libro de Alexandre I have already mentioned, believed them (or gave the reader or listener the impression that they believed them) to be true and not fictitious accounts. In this they behaved little differently from most modern novelists, except for their frequent references to their materia as their authority for what they were relating.47 It is obviously misleading, then, to break down these learned narrative stories into non-medieval genres such as learned epics, romances and the like.

When we come to the early fourteenth century, and the first Spanish prose romance, El libro del cavallero Zifar, nothing has really changed. This, too, is presented as a history of personages who really existed and events that are supposed to have occurred.48

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47 Cf. Alex. 342a, 817a, 1476b, 1533d, 2098c, 2324c; Berceo, *Santo Domingo*, 33b; *Santa Oria*, 90a.

48 “E porque la memoria del ome ha luengo tiempo e non se pueden acordar los omes de las cosas mucho antiguas si non las falló por escripto, e por ende el trasladador de la estoria que adelante oiredes, que fue trasladado de caldeo en latin e de latin en romançe ...” ed. Joaquín González Muela, (Madrid, 1982), p. 56. This text also appears to present some generic problems; Professor González Muela comments: “... es la primera novela de caballerías que se conserva escrita en castellano ... Pero sería de orden secundario intentar definir
It is with Juan Ruiz's *Libro de buen amor* that we find our first example of the merging of more than two genres. As Dr. Gybbon-Monypenny and other scholars have shown, the Archpriest parodies and makes a burlesque out of established literary forms in a highly original way, so original that the critics have disagreed on how to classify the work and each does so according to the way he or she interprets its meaning: the moral exegetes tend to see it as a somewhat tongue-in-cheek moral and philosophical treatise, while others take it to be an *ars amatoria* or a Goliardic burlesque. Their views on its intended public also vary according to their interpretation of it: for Menéndez Pidal it was a composite of tavern pieces, for others it has been thought to have had a more learned audience. Recently Dr. Jeremy Lawrance has shown that the subtle parody of scholastic argumentation and terminology suggests an audience of fellow clerics rather than *hoi polloi*, and I should find this the more convincing if he would let in some of the clergymen's doxies, whom the Archpriest appears to be addressing directly at a number of points.

If we ask ourselves what would have been the contemporary reaction to such an unusual work cast in authorial first-person narration almost throughout (the first such work in Spanish literature apart from Berceo's religious allegory in the *Milagros*), it may be that the late classical position is of some assistance. Heiserman, in his discussion of Antonine Comedy and the three romances he places in that category, notes that they have one extraordinary feature in common: they are all narrated in the first person. He observes that

In antiquity this technique signaled that the story depicted contemporary life as it was shared by author and reader. Paradoxically, this contemporariness in turn signaled that the story was invented; that is, the story was drawn from neither history nor myth and must therefore be a fiction of ordinary life. Being neither serious fable nor serious history, the

ahora lo que es ese género y hacer su historia. *Zifar* presenta muchos más problemas interesantes: es una vida de un santo, es una traducción del árabe, tiene que ver con la 'matière de Bretagne', es un tratado de educación de principes, es una 'novela' realista, es un 'romance' fantástico, es una novela bizantina, es un 'sermón universitario', y mucho más” (pp. 9-10). In its text, however, it is always called an *estoria* or *cuento* (cf. edn. cit., pp. 58-60).

material was the sort normally treated by comedy. Second, the characters and events of the three works are like those that would in antiquity have been associated with comedy. The principals are foolish, naive, or ridiculous. They are not godlike, and we can neither admire nor emulate them. Their loves are rooted in overtly physical eroticism, and they are not inhibited by the anxieties of chastity. And these characters pass through perils that are so much more serious to them than they are to us that their sufferings are funny. It does not seem ludicrous to call them all ... comedies. (p. 118)

I have quoted Heiserman at some length because of the striking similarity of this genre-description to the case of the Libro de buen amor, given the clear differences of period and religious background. Two of these comic romances were Greek, Tatius' Clitophon and Longus' Daphnis and Chloë, and I am not suggesting that there is the slightest possibility of Juan Ruiz or his audience having known either of them. But the third is a Latin romance, Apuleius' Golden Ass, which dates from about A.D. 160, and was very popular, surviving in over forty manuscripts. Of it Heiserman comments:

The comedy of the Golden Ass ... has long been lovingly acknowledged. But when led to define the genre of what seems to be a sport of literary history, critics have usually argued that the work as a whole is a profound allegory of salvation, a bitter satire on society, a piece of propaganda for Isis, and so on. (ibid.)

The prologue to the Golden Ass is just as tantalizing as Juan Ruiz's; it reads as follows:

I shall string together for you various tales in the Milesian style, and charm your kindly ears with a magical murmur—provided that you do not scorn to peruse an Egyptian papyrus scratched with a sharp reed from the Nile—so that you might marvel at the forms and fortunes of men changing into alien configurations, then duly back again.50

The Milesian tales, a collection drawn on by Apuleius, were infamous for their obscenity, but are unfortunately lost, yet they were forerunners of the novelle and fabliaux, at least two of which were exploited by the Archpriest of Hita. And the stringing together mentioned by Apuleius is achieved by the autobiographical account given by the likeable fool of an anti-hero, Lucius, of

his progress through and beyond assinification or asshood, just as
the foolish Archpriest as protagonist recounts his ridiculous and
disastrous love-affairs. Is it just a coincidence that Juan Ruiz
should warn foolish lovers not to behave like the ass, which has
large ears and yet cannot take in good advice? Furthermore, in
the prologue that is generally taken to be a parody of a prose
sermon, found only in the Salamanca manuscript, the text is taken
from Psalm 31, verse 8 (AV 32:8): "Intellectum tibi dabo ..."—"I
will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I
will guide thee with mine eye". Not only is this Psalm eminently
appropriate for the autobiographical confessions of an archpriest,
dealing as it does with confession and the remission of sins, but the
very next verse, not cited directly by Juan Ruiz, mentions equine
foolishness: "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no
understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
lest they come near unto thee". It does not seem unlikely that Juan
Ruiz and his clerical readers would have this verse in mind at later
points in the Libro. Now Félix Lecoy in his Recherches did not list
Apuleius among the Archpriest's sources, except as a distant one
for the tale of the Fox and the Crow. But it does not seem
impossible that such a rich centre as Toledo could have held a
copy of the Golden Ass, even if its relative obscenity meant that it
was kept in the infierno section of one of the libraries there. In any
case, Dr. Gybson-Monypenny is much more qualified to pursue
the matter than I, should he think it worthy of consideration.

* * *

In later Spanish literature we shall again observe that it is those
works in which a merging of genres has occurred that have caused
the biggest problems of interpretation for the critics, as well as
being regarded as the greatest masterpieces. I make no apology for
passing quickly over the rest of the fourteenth century and most of
the fifteenth—scholars far more competent that I have tackled the
period in great detail—except to note that it is in that period when
Spanish writers began to be concerned with literary theory and to

51 Cf. Libro de buen amor, 892.
52 Recherches sur le "Libro de buen amor" de Juan Ruiz Archiprêtre de Hita,
Paris, 1938, repr. with a New Prologue etc. by A. D. Deyermond, Farnborough,
Hants., 1973, p. 136: "... ainsi que le début emprunté certainement à Apulée, de
deo Socratis, Prologus, par qui la fable est également racontée".
become conscious of generic nomenclature, fertilized as many of them now were by Italian views on these matters. The chief proponent of these ideas was the Marquis of Santillana, in whose work we find the first occurrence of a number of new literary terms; thus in his *Comedieta de Ponza* of 1436, as well as the use of the term *comedia* as an allegorical poem in its title, there is a reference to *novellas* among the works being listened to by royal ladies in a garden. The next occurrence of the word appears to be in *El siervo libre de amor*, where *novella* is used, again with the Italian spelling, for one of the sections of that curious work. It is probably being employed in the sense of a short prose narrative, a good century and a half before it is take up by Cervantes in a similar way.

The next work which shows clear signs of being the result of genre disintegration and merging is *La comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, which appeared in its sixteen-act version at Burgos in 1499. Fernando de Rojas' sources were very varied: humanistic comedy, sentimental romance, in particular *La cárcel de amor*, the Archpriest of Talavera's *Corbacho*, Petrarch, the *florilegios* and the law-books he used professionally. To these Dr. Jeremy Lawrance has proposed in a recent paper we should add the Donatus commentaries on Terence, as well as Senecan tragedy. In the twenty-one-act version that Rojas published in 1502 he altered the title to *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, and later printers inserted the name *Celestina* before this changed title.

In his interesting account of *Tragicomedy* in the Critical Idiom Series, David Hirst does not appear to be aware that Rojas was the first to use or re-coin this generic term since Plautus had...
employed the compound *tragico-comedia*, and it was not used in England in a technical literary sense until Sydney's *Apologie for Poetrie* of 1581. It is apparent, however, that all three writers meant different things by it. Rojas introduces it in his prologue after noting that readers of the first version of his work had pointed out that the deaths of most of the characters made the title *Comedia* bestowed on it by the anonymous author of the first act somewhat unsuitable; it is clear that it was not the additions he made in the second version that provoked the change. But he soon forgets about this compromise solution and again refers to his work as a *comedia* later in the prologue, as well as an *historia o ficción*.

The problem of how to classify *Celestina* generically has greatly exercised the work's critics and, in my view, has led them into unwarranted interpretations of it. In a recent article, Professor Dorothy Sherman Severin has asked whether it is a play or a novel, coming down on the side of a novel in dialogue form. As early as 1971 Professor Alan Deyermond commented:

> We can be sure that neither Rojas nor his predecessor thought of the book as a novel; the term had not been introduced. This, however, does not matter. Medieval literary terminology is imprecise and inconsistent, and we must take our own decisions on the categories to which medieval works belong. *La Celestina* has the qualities that we look for in a modern novel: complexity, the solidity of an imagined but real world, psychological penetration, a convincing interaction between plot, theme, and characters.

We might comment that these qualities are also to be found in other dramatic works, such as *Othello*, and are certainly not confined to the modern novel.

In fact *Celestina* could not have been play or novel in Professor Severin's terms: in 1499 there were as yet no public theatres in Spain, and apart from popular liturgical drama the only performances consisted of masques and pastoral verse comedies performed before royal and noble patrons. Some of these works of the 1480s and '90s bear the title *Comedia*, but *Egloga* was much commoner. There were also occasional readings in Latin of classical comedies at the universities, such as the annual competition

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in these, attested in 1538, by the colegios mayores at Salamanca. The only literary products that could have been termed novels (but were not) consisted of the sentimental romances of Diego de San Pedro and Juan de Flores.

In the case of Celestina, it would be much wiser to accept the terminology adopted by the author and regard the work as a type of comedy meant to be read aloud among small groups or read by individual purchasers of the printed editions. What is then of interest is to see how Rojas subverts the reader’s expectations. Any contemporary glancing at the small wood-cuts in the first edition printed at Burgos might be lulled into thinking he was obtaining a translation of a humanistic comedy; when he started to read the text he would begin to modify his view of the genre it belonged to, and think it a sentimental romance in dialogue form, but quite soon, on reaching the bawdy comments of Sempronio and the servants, the silly behaviour of the hero Calisto and the obscenity and witchcraft of Celestina herself, he would realise that he was being plunged into something very different from what he was used to in earlier literature. The violent murder of the old bawd, the flight and execution of Calisto’s servants, the hero’s ludicrous fatal fall from a ladder followed by Melibea’s suicide would grip him in the way a Senecan tragedy gripped.

The interpretative penalties for getting the genre wrong are severe. In this generic hybrid the listener or reader is not made omniscient by an omniscient author as so often he is in the novel and in many Golden Age comedias; the characters always know more about themselves and one another than the listener or reader does; and their tendency to lie and cheat, to keep silent about important matters, and to reveal facets of their own or others’ personalities only very slowly as the drama unfolds, means that the reader has constantly to be on guard. Thus Maria Rosa Lida, followed by Marciales, was puzzled by the apparently abrupt character-change in Areúsa in the additional acts, and speculated that Rojas had inadvertently switched the personalities of Elicia and Areúsa. But this now fully revealed hardness and maturity of Areúsa, adumbrated by her harsh criticism of noble ladies in Act IX, causes the listener or reader fundamentally to reassess his

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59 María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, La originalidad artística de “La Celestina” (Buenos Aires, 1962), p. 662; Miguel Marciales (ed.), Comedia o Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea ... (Mérida, Venezuela: privately circulated, 1977), i. 121.
previous view of her apparent childlike innocence and now see her to have been a consummate actress in the earlier scenes. Likewise Professor Deyermond’s recent suggestion that the abrupt opening of the first act, when Calisto and Melibea immediately address each other by name, indicates that they had met on earlier occasions, is simply to ignore the technique frequently used by the author of inserting stage-directions into the dialogue in this play that could not be performed. Later there are references to the coup de foudre effect of that first-act initial meeting—so common in the Antonine comedies—so that we should not be justified in taking them as stemming from some earlier undescribed meeting.

A further and related example of what I take to be incorrect decoding of the text occurs in connection with Act XII (Cejador edn., ii. 82): how can one explain the fact that Lucrecia recognizes Calisto’s voice when he is outside in the darkness? Miss Eaton has put forward two suggestions: Lucrecia either knew him through a supposed love-affair with his servant Tristán which is not to be even hinted at until Act XIX (ibid., ii. 185), or, more staggeringly, that she had been Calisto’s mistress before the beginning of the work. Professor Deyermond thinks it more probable that this indicates that the protagonists’ meeting which opens the work was not the first but the last in an earlier unsuccessful courtship (art. cit., p. 7) at which, presumably, Melibea’s maid would have been present. Again these interpretations seem more appropriate to a romantic novel than to Rojas’s unplayable drama; Lucrecia is simply being made to speak a stage-direction. Another scene that appears to have led to faulty decoding comes in the additional Act XIX: in what is to be the last of Calisto’s thirty consecutive nightly visits to Melibea’s garden, we deduce from her first long speech that he is greeted with over-enthusiastic embraces from her servant Lucrecia, driven into a lustful frenzy by her month-long scopophilic role. Miss Eaton naturally ties this in with the speculation about Lucrecia’s alleged former involvement with Calisto at some previous time (art. cit., p. 224). Although there is much dispute among the critics on how to interpret this scene, it appears to me to be a case of the usual uppity maid-servant of the

62 See Alan Deyermond, art. cit., Celestinesca, viii, at pp. 7-8.
old comedies, who takes advantage of her mistress’s unconventional behaviour and the illicit situation in order to copy her greaters and betters.

One notices that male readers nowadays tend to empathize with Pármeno, the idealistic young servant who becomes corrupted, as though he resembled a likeable but feckless undergraduate who goes off the rails, while female readers feel for Melibea, who seems to them more human than the rest. Sixteenth-century readers, however, showed no such tender inclinations, as Professor Russell has demonstrated. All the characters are presented as worse than we are, and certainly not as figures to identify with or emulate. Occasionally Celestina may seem almost endearing in her perverted maternalness, especially when she begins to lose her grip on the other characters, but López Pinciano surely got it right in 1596 when he commented:

... ansi las muertes trágicas son lastimosas, mas las de la comedia, si alguna ay, son de gusto y passatiempo, porque en ellas mueren personas que sobran en el mundo, como es una vieja zizañadora, un rufián o una alcahueta.

We must try to curb our anachronistic humane tendencies and beware of misreading texts by misjudging the signals that genre provides.

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If the modern novel cannot be said, therefore, to start with Rojas’ Celestina, when do literary historians see it as beginning? The First Part of Don Quixote published in 1605 is often taken as the watershed, though some critics put that event as late as Richardson’s Pamela of 1740 or Fielding’s Tom Jones of 1749, yet the same critics will commonly talk of “the Spanish picaresque novel”, which began in 1554 with Lazarillo de Tormes.

In his useful account of this new sub-genre, Professor Peter Dunn comments:

One might characterize *Lazarillo de Tormes* as a Bildungsroman, that is, a novel which traces the growth and formation of the mind and personality of the chief character. (p. 28)

Soon afterwards he refers to its total originality:

The novelty of the unknown author in creating the autobiography of a character who commands no admiration, enjoys no social preeminence, and has no profound thoughts to deliver, was absolute (pp. 32-33),

though later he makes what seems to me to be a most significant comparison: "The original *Lazarillo* doubtless owes something to the pseudoautobiography of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius" (p. 36). When Dunn comes to discuss Mateo Aleman's *Guzmán de Alfarache* of 1599, he observes that it "has something of a distorted mirror structure":

In heroic narratives like the *Odyssey* or the *Æneid* the wanderings and encounters serve to test and to temper the hero ... Guzmán de Alfarache by his acts merely reiterates his unworthiness, going from shame to shame. (p. 60)

But how have the critics reacted to these picaresque works? An ideological critic, such as A.A. Parker in his *Literature and the Delinquent*, gives us a thematic interpretation, based upon the Tridentine view of the nature of man and the problem of original sin and individual freedom. Professor Parker points out that there had been

countless allegories in which man enters into the world along what he thinks is the path of freedom, only to find that it is the road of enslavement to passion and the senses. This is exactly how Aleman presents the problem of delinquency in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and this is the cultural and literary context into which the rise of this type of realistic fiction should be put. (pp. 18-19)

But do these works constitute "realistic fiction"? Domínguez Ortiz has observed that

... the picaresque flourished in the period of Castile's maximum prosperity, when there was a demand for labor and wages were high. It is wrong, therefore, to see in it the reflection of an economic and social

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order: rather it is the description of urban outcasts who exist in any affluent society.\(^{67}\)

Earlier critics, such as Fonger de Haan, defined the picaresque succinctly as "the autobiography of a *picaro*, a rogue, and in that form a satire upon the conditions and persons of the time that gives it birth".\(^{68}\) Professor Dunn draws out its essential features: autobiography ("real or imagined"), the antiheroic character of the protagonist and his actions, the various classes of society, and the satirical or critical observation (p. 134).

It we take a long view of genre, it is apparent that the confessional tone, first-person narration and the contemporary setting put the picaresque stories into a category which the late classical reader would at once assume to be comic and untrue, and its personages as fictitious beings worse than he was. It is this generic coding that unites Apuleius, Juan Ruiz and the anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and points to the expected interpretation.

If, then, the modern novel did not begin with the picaresque, did it begin with *Don Quixote*? Miguel de Cervantes as poet, playwright and prosist wrote in all the genres available to him and experimented in newly imported ones, such as the Italian *novella*. An addict of romances from Heliodorus to *Amadis de Gaula*, he was, as Professor Russell has just put it so well in his new monograph on *Cervantes*, "Faithful to the dualistic attitude so frequently to be found in his writing", so that, "while writing his parody of chivalric romance, [he] had concurrently been working on his attempt to compete with Heliodorus" in his *Persiles y Sigismunda*, which had a certain amount of success on its posthumous publication,\(^{69}\) obviously among a much more learned and limited readership than *Don Quixote*. But the latter's connection with the forms taken by the novel in later times is, as Russell points out, elusive: "A parodic or even a more generally comic stance is hardly the norm in the modern novel" (p. 106), though perhaps we should look more to its direct line of descent through Fielding to Sterne rather than to the nineteenth-century


novelists; the ambiguity, the deliberate uncertainty Cervantes creates about the authenticity of the text of *Don Quixote* and of the veracity of its alleged authors were to be taken up again by a number of novelists who cannot be said, though, to be the norm, if such could be thought to exist in such a wide-sweeping genre that needs constant adjectival prefixation in critical discussion. Professor Russell is surely right to emphasize "the liberating laughter that echoes through the greater part of *Don Quixote*", which should not "be allowed to obscure the fact that the book is an assertion of the power of literature as an art form" (p. 109).

Cervantes' masterpiece is, above all, the outstanding example of genre-merging; it is an extremely intertextual book in that it contains and exploits every genre known to its author. *Don Quixote* may well have started out as an exemplary *novella*, possibly as one more in the series Cervantes was to write; just as in his story of the Glass Licentiate, here he may have intended to deal with another kind of madness, one induced by literature. This first draft may now occupy Chapters 1 to 5 of the First Part. This gave Cervantes the opportunity not only to parody the chivalric romances but also to intermingle them with the world of the picaresque, which he had also earlier dabbled in. Then, with Don Quixote's second outing after he is knighted and has acquired a squire, the work is transformed. Cervantes now introduces another dimension with the wealth of proverbs and rustic sayings put in the mouth of Sancho Panza, and through the digressions he incorporates the sentimental romance, the Italian psychological *novella*, the pastoral romance and the Moorish tale. The dialogue form used so fruitfully for the protagonists reanimates the technique used by Erasmus and earlier by Italian and classical writers, and there are examples of many poetic forms: old Spanish ballads (which provide, for instance, the very first line of the text proper: "En un lugar de la Mancha", with its strong hint of comicality in the toponym), Renaissance aristocratic verse, sonnets, *canzone*; it is a dazzling display. But it is much more complicated than this: by his use of the Chinese-box technique (the various chroniclers, the Arab historian, the discovered manuscript)—all the interplay between the interior book and its frame—Cervantes takes the narrative techniques well beyond those elaborated in the *Amadís*. The master-touch was the

exploitation of the false Part II published in 1614 in the genuine Part II of 1615: not only are the leading characters aware that their Part I adventures have been read widely all over Spain and discussed and criticized, but the intervention of the false *Don Quixote* causes a diversion in Don Quixote's third sally to Barcelona, rather than to Zaragoza, and there to the climax: the reception at the Duke and Duchess's court, the mock flight on Clavileño, Sancho's governorship of the island, and the desengaño or disillusionment that overcomes them both, leading to the falling cadence of the book's ending and Don Quixote's renunciation of his mad acts and his reversion to being the obscure *hidalgo* Alonso Quijano who had no past and is shortly to have no future.

The public reception of the published First Part intervenes in an active way in the composition of the Second, from which Cervantes derives great ironic effects. Américo Castro put it very well when he commented that:

> The work is powered by an original impulse through the continuous tension of the former gentleman aiming to maintain in existence his own being as Don Quixote, brought to life by his own will. The route taken by the Manchegan knight is not the product of his madness, but stems from the necessity of maintaining himself as the person he has decided to be.\(^7^1\)

Castro went on to claim that no hero of fiction earlier had felt this necessity to affirm for himself a new existence, to take on a new being. And he regarded this as the nexus between the life of the author and his personage: "the lack of conformity of the personage with his social state corresponds in some decisive way with Cervantes' own nonconformity with the ideology and social usage of his time and country."

The daring of Cervantes' invention resides in the down-at-heel rustic gentleman—a comic type—acquiring through his madness a new and effective existence in a literary form which is as unforeseen as it is gratuitous with respect to earlier narrative modes\(^7^2\). We are witnessing the birth of a new genre, but one which was to have no direct descendants in Spain, and at first only quite sickly infants in England and France.

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\(^7^1\) *El pensamiento de Cervantes*, Madrid, 1925; new enlarged edn. by the author and Julio Rodríguez Puértolas, Barcelona-Madrid, 1972, pp. 335-36 (the English paraphrase is mine).

\(^7^2\) Cf. Luis Andrés Murillo (ed.), *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Madrid, 1978), i. 27.