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Manipulating Genre and Gender: the Novella in Early Modern Spain

The novella was one of the most popular literary genres in seventeenth-century Spain: without a firm theoretical foundation in Greco-Latin thought and thus highly adaptable to the tastes of a growing number of readers, often without a formal education, it can be seen as an arena where different and new ideas about the interaction of readers and writers and the social function of fictional texts are tested. The issues at stake - going public with tales mostly situated in the private domain, the problem of authorisation, the value and morality of reading for pleasure - are central to the developing literary system as well as closely linked to assumptions about gender roles, thus forcing the authors to negotiate, consciously or not, a gendered discourse in order to position their texts in a favourable light.

This paper will focus on the discursive strategies (such as use of traditional *topoi*, imagery, construction of the reader figure) in the paratexts and, to a much lesser degree, in the narrative body of novella collections by Miguel de Cervantes (*Novelas ejemplares*, 1613), Tirso de Molina (*Cigarrales de Toledo*, 1621), Francisco Lugo y Dávila (*Teatro popular*, 1622), Félix Lope de Vega (the so-called *Novelas a Marcia Leonarda*, 1621/24), María de Zayas y Sotomayor (*Novelas amorosas y ejemplares*, 1637, *Desengaños amorosos*, 1647) and Mariana de Carvajal (*Navidades de Madrid*, 1663) in order to show how the different authors shape themselves, the novella and their readers by manipulating genre and gender in Golden Age Spain.