Unusual Conduct: Novel Narrative Strategies, and Readership in The Fortunate Fool
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The author of The Fortunate Fool (1621), Salas Barbadillo, led a life fraught with a search for recognition. Examples of both his struggles, and his resourcefulness, can be found in this book, where the author addresses his prologue to “the foolish and presumptuous reader.” Salas intends to gain the attention of his readership from the beginning; by doing so, he is not only acknowledging the surging importance of casual readers and buyers to the literary circles, but he is also simultaneously departing from traditional notions of aristocratic patronage and status. This presentation argues that Salas is purposely setting to engage the reader in novel ways, not only by means of the paratext’s apostrophe, but also with direct and indirect narratological references within the text proper, and finally with his inclusion of different figures of the reader at key moments of the plot. These strategies are part of the innovative way Salas is framing the reception of his text, meanwhile putting it at odds with Stoic ideas about success through social renunciation, and with prevalent narratives of conduct literature.

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