

1. The Narrators, the Reader, and Don Quixote

*From the Moors you could never hope for any word of truth, seeing that they are all of them cheats, forgers, and schemers.
Part II, Chapter III*

The relationships established at the outset of *Don Quixote* between the narrator, the reader, and the protagonist are not difficult to characterize. The narrator's humility, openness, and lack of pretensions seem genuine. The ingratiating and flatering invitation to shared irony is very attractive to the reader, and the relationship quickly becomes quite close ("dearest reader," "gentle reader").¹ We easily and naturally adopt the attitude of ironic detachment held by Don Quixote's "stepfather"—a term which suggests just the right mixture of distance and control. But these relationships change significantly in the course of Don Quixote's adventures, and this change profoundly affects the way we interpret the novel.

In *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* (Part I), I attempted to show how Cervantes shifts the reader's attitude toward Don Quixote from one of derision to one of sympathy, respect, and admiration. The shift derives in part from such changes as Don Quixote's increasing cognizance of reality, his loss of control over events, the increase in deception practiced upon him, the element of self-doubt, the change in the ethical status of his antagonists, and the shift from emphasis upon physical prowess to emphasis upon strength of spirit.² Cervantes guides the process throughout—not simply the changes in Don Quixote and his circumstances, but also the reader's judgment of these changes: we implicitly accept the existence of a Moorish enchanter in the

¹ *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote de la Mancha*, trans. Samuel Putnam, pp. 11, 16. Subsequent references are to this translation. Italics within quotations from *Don Quixote* are mine throughout, and departures from the Putnam translation, at times for accuracy, at other times for precision, are also mine, and are in brackets and identified by an asterisk preceding the page reference, e.g., (*665).

² *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* (Part I), p. 83.

world of the novel in Part II, Chapter II; chivalric archaism (a device used for the comic deflation of Don Quixote's rhetoric) disappears from his speech after Part II Chapter XXXII; the comic expectation of—and desire for—Don Quixote's defeat is consistently lacking after Part II, Chapter XLVIII.

Now, if the narrator and the reader begin the novel in close rapport, and both view the protagonist from a critical and ironic distance, and if in the course of the novel factors are introduced, as outlined above, which draw the reader nearer to the protagonist, one of two corollaries must follow: either the narrator accompanies the reader in the move toward the protagonist, or he does not, and the distance between narrator and reader correspondingly increases. Since in a coherent work of art the author and the reader must be assumed to share a common ethical perspective on the protagonist, this second alternative would seem to necessitate the introduction of a surrogate narrator. At least the alternative only becomes available when a surrogate narrator is introduced, or through some other process of authorial distancing.³

Ruth El Saffar has seen the character-author facet of this complex relationship most clearly: "Cervantes' tone in Chapter I is one of great irony implying an easy assurance of the profound gulf separating him, the storyteller, from Don Quijote, his clearly insane character. But as the outlines of this character begin to take on substance, Don Quijote begins to emerge as a threat to his author's integrity and distance. As Don Quijote becomes more sympathetic, Cervantes is threatened by assimilation with his character. The need to reassert control and distance is perhaps symbolized by the unexpected interposing of a fictitious historian."⁴ Without wishing to diminish the importance of her remarks, I must take exception to some of the implications of Professor El Saffar's analysis. First, the idea that it is Don Quixote who moves Cervantes, rather than the other way

³. "The literary work of art is a communication and ... the communicant is thereby guided and controlled, though not coerced, by its totality": Lowry Nelson, Jr., "The Fictive Reader and Literary Self-Reflexiveness," in *The Disciplines of Criticism*, ed. Peter Demetz et al., pp. 189–90.

⁴. "The Function of the Fictional Narrator in *Don Quijote*," p. 176.

around, threatens to revive, at a higher level of sophistication, the "lay genius" issue—the idea that Cervantes did not really understand what he had accomplished. And in any event, Cid Hamete is introduced long before I, at least, can detect any authorial activity in behalf of the shift in sympathies. Secondly, it seems to me that Cervantes need not have left behind a representative of the originally established distance as he and the reader begin to draw nearer to Don Quixote. That he did so is part of the uniqueness of the work compared to other novels of anagnorisis that involve a revised perspective on characters and events, such as those René Girard treats in *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*.

As Don Quixote "becomes more sympathetic," Cervantes *and* the reader of course move toward him, but Cid Hamete does not. Cid Hamete *is* an unreliable narrator, as it is indicated early in the novel that he may be, but not because he does not keep his facts straight. His essential reliability in that respect is definitively established in Part II.⁵ It is his perspective on Don Quixote that is unreliable, because it does not change as the character changes, and so Cervantes contrives to alienate the reader from him to counterbalance the movement toward Don Quixote. As Cervantes says: "Whenever he might and should deploy the resources of his pen in praise of so worthy a knight, the author appears to take pains to pass over the matter in silence" (73). An essential feature of the perspectivism of *Don Quixote* is the number of remarks that must be taken *both* ironically *and* literally, from different perspectives. This remark is quite properly taken ironically when it appears, but it acquires literal significance by the end of the novel.

Although Cid Hamete is Cervantes' predecessor in the fictional scheme of things, he is his successor in the actual narration, and he thus inherits the ironic perspective that is already clearly and solidly established by the time he first appears in Chapter IX. Cid Hamete's manuscript views Don Quixote from the same ironic

⁵ "No serious discrepancies emerge between [Don Quijote's and Sancho's] literary reputations [Part I] and their current selves in Part II": Edward C. Riley, "Who's Who in *Don Quijote*? Or an Approach to the Problem of Identity," p. 128.

perspective, although Cervantes is careful to dissociate himself from his successor by casting doubt upon his reliability.

Just as Cervantes speaks in the early chapters of "all the foolish things that Don Quixote said" (48), the Golden Age speech in Chapter XI is characterized by Cid Hamete as a "futile harangue" (82), and reference is made in the episode of Mambrino's helmet to his "mad, ill-errant thoughts of chivalry" (158). Since Cid Hamete's perspective on Don Quixote does coincide so exactly with that established by the implied Cervantes of Chapters I through VIII, and since there is usually no clear attribution to Cid Hamete or to Cervantes of the infrequent commentary after the introduction of the Moor, it might be supposed that it is Cervantes who comments throughout on Cid Hamete's text, but it is clear that a remark such as "Who would not have laughed at hearing the nonsense the two of them talked, master and man?" does indeed reflect the attitude of Cid Hamete, who calls Sancho and Don Quixote "[two fools]" (*964). The last characterization of Don Quixote directly attributable to Cervantes is made as Sancho sets out to take possession of Barataria, during the sojourn with the duke and duchess that marks the turning point in his career:⁶

And now, gentle reader, let the worthy Sancho go in peace and good luck go with him. You may expect two bushels of laughter when you hear how he deported himself in office. Meanwhile, listen to what happened to his master that same night, and if it does not make you laugh, it will at least cause you to part your lips in an apelike grin; for Don Quixote's adventures are to be greeted either with astonishment [*admiración*] or with mirth. (790–91)

This commentary maintains the original perspective which Cid Hamete has been shown to share, yet there is just enough ambiguity in the word *admiración* to allow for a shift in Cervantes' perspective paralleling the reader's change in orientation. The chapters that follow this passage are, in fact, among the most decisive in the shift in sympathies.

⁶. See chap. 2, below, pp. 25–26.

Assuming for the moment, then, that Cervantes and his character Cid Hamete do not share the same perspective on the protagonist throughout the novel, let us examine some of the characteristics of the narration which can be seen as contributing to the alienation of the reader from the narrator.

The order of exposition in the novel is clearly attributable to Cid Hamete, as can be seen in such remarks as: "Here we shall leave them for the present, seeing that Cid Hamete would have it so" (913), and: "At this point Cid Hamete leaves him and goes back to Don Quixote" (869). One of the most striking differences in this respect between Parts I and II of the novel lies in the way in which information about characters and events is delivered to the reader.

Typical of the exposition in Part I is the presentation of the episode of Mambrino's helmet. The narrator explains Don Quixote's self-deception before the encounter takes place: "The truth concerning that helmet and the horse and horseman that Don Quixote had sighted was this: ... [a] barber, ... a brass basin, ... an ass" (158). This is the pattern of all the adventures in Part I. There is no deception of the reader and very little mystery. In two episodes, the adventure of the fulling mills and the adventure of the corpse, the circumstances are not immediately clear, but things never seem to be other than what they are. In the whole involved introduction of Cardenio, Dorotea, Fernando, and Lucinda and the incremental advance of their relationships there is of course a great deal of mystery, but insofar as they participate in the deception of Don Quixote, the reader is always informed of the truth in advance.

In Part II, however, there are a number of exceptions to the pattern. The withholding of information begins very early: "Carrasco went to hunt up the curate and make certain arrangements with him which will be duly narrated when the time comes" (550). The reader is given no advance indication of the reality behind the abrupt appearance of the actors of *The Parliament of Death*:

Don Quixote was about to make a reply but was interrupted by the sight of a cart crossing the highway, filled

with the most varied and weird assortment of persons and figures that could be imagined. He who drove the mules and served as carter was an ugly demon.... The first figure that Don Quixote beheld was that of Death himself, with a human countenance. (575)

The most significant examples of subsequent, as opposed to prior, revelation are the two encounters with Sansón Carrasco, as the Knight of the Mirrors (II, XII) and as the Knight of the White Moon (II, LXVI), and the episode of Maese Pedro (II, XXIV). There should be no question that this kind of limitation on the reader's knowledge brings him closer to Don Quixote, for do we not condescend to and stand aloof from him precisely to the extent that we know, or think we know, more about reality than he does? At the same time, we begin to move away from the narrator, who knows in advance how each episode turns out, is aware all along of the reality which these deceptions hide, and chooses to exclude us from what was formerly our privileged position beside him by means of "a '*presentación ilusionista*,' through which the reader replicates the experiences of the character and, like him, is fooled or confused...."⁷

It is more difficult to assess the effect of the two cases of misinformation in Part II. (I am aware of none in Part I.) On the one hand, we know that Cid Hamete is introduced with doubts about his reliability, doubts that are echoed in Don Quixote's reaction to the news of the appearance in print of Part I:

He was a bit put out at the thought that the author was a Moor, if the appellation "Cid" was to be taken as an indication, and from the Moors you could never hope for any word of truth, seeing that they are all of them cheats, forgers, and schemers. (526)

On the other hand, we have the confirmation of the reliability of Part I in Part II, the contrast drawn between Cid Hamete's "true" Don Quixote and Avellaneda's false character, and Cer-

⁷ Francisco Rico, *La novela picaresca y el punto de vista*, p. 43. The translations from this and other cited critical works in Spanish are my own. "*Presentación ilusionista*," as Rico notes, is Maria Rosa Lida de Malkiel's term. Cf. Edward C. Riley, "*Don Quijote*," in *Suma cervantina*, pp. 65–71.

vantes' repeated insistence on the completeness and accuracy of the Moor's account:

Cid Hamete Benengeli was a historian who was at great pains to ascertain the truth and very accurate in everything. (117)

Really and truly, all those who enjoy such histories as this one ought to be grateful to Cid Hamete, its original author, for the pains he has taken in setting forth every detail of it, leaving out nothing, however slight, but making everything very clear and plain. He describes thoughts, reveals fancies, answers unasked questions, clears up doubts, and settles arguments. In short, he satisfies on every minutest point the curiosity of the most curious. (764)

Yet we discover two instances of deception in Part II. First, Cid Hamete tells the reader, of Countess Trifaldi, "that the lady's right name was the Countess Lobuna and that she was so called on account of the many wolves in her country" (756), though she is, of course, as he himself later reveals, a majordomo of the duke's. The second deception occurs during the governorship of Sancho, when a farmer, who is presented to us with the comment that "it could be seen from a thousand leagues away that he was a worthy man and a good soul" (813), later turns out to be a "rogue [who] knew how to play his part very well" (815).

It is true that both cases involve the introduction of minor characters and that the thrust of the first example probably goes outside the book, as a reference to the Osunas, but the second example certainly involves the same kind of withholding of information of which I have just spoken, compounded by deliberate deception.

Another contribution to the alienation of the reader from the narrator is made by the instances of "authorial" insensitivity which have led some readers to feel that Cervantes "hardens his pen" against his hero. Judgments here become more subjective, but an early example which seems to bother many readers comes near the end of Part I when Don Quixote is felled by one of the penitents and "Sancho ... [flings] himself across his master's

body ... weeping and wailing in the most lugubrious and, at the same time, the most *laughable* fashion that [can] be imagined" (456). I have myself suggested before that the reader rebels against Cid Hamete's comment at the close of the episode of the enchanted boat: "Don Quixote and Sancho then returned to their beasts and to [being] beasts" (*703).⁸

Is there not also perhaps a note of this insensitivity in the gratuitous clarification at the very end of the novel: "Don Quixote, ... amid the tears and lamentations of those present ... gave up the ghost; *that is to say, he died*" (987)?

Finally, allied to this insensitivity, there are authorial judgments—all in Part II—with which it seems to me the reader simply cannot agree. In the episode of the lions, for example, the encounter is introduced by Cid Hamete with fulsome praise for Don Quixote:

O great-souled Don Quixote de la Mancha, thou whose courage is beyond all praise, mirror wherein all the valiant of the world may behold themselves, a new and second Don Manuel de León, once the glory and the honor of Spanish knighthood! With what words shall I relate thy terrifying exploit, how render it credible to the ages that are to come? What eulogies do not belong to thee of right, even though they consist of hyperbole piled upon hyperbole? (615)

But all this must be seen as ironic in the light of his later characterization of the encounter as a demonstration of "the extent of his unheard-of madness," and of Don Quixote's challenge to the lion as "childish bravado" (616). I do not believe that the reader accepts this characterization of Don Quixote's challenge. And he must also take exception to a remark in Chapter LXXI: "Dismounting at a hostelry, the knight recognized it for what it was and did not take it to be a castle ... ; *for ever since he had been overcome in combat he had talked more rationally* on all subjects..." (972). Don Quixote has not taken an inn for a castle in all of Part II, and Cid Hamete himself notes the change twice: "His master took it for a real inn this time and not for a castle

⁸. *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?* (Part I), p. 45.

as was his wont" (671), and: "I say inn, for the reason that this was what Don Quixote called it, contrary to his usual custom of calling all inns castles" (893).

Perhaps the most striking example of reader disagreement with an authorial judgment involves the crucial episode of the Cave of Montesinos. Don Quixote had been hauled out of the cave,

and when they had him all the way up they saw that his eyes were closed and that, to all appearances, he was sound asleep. They laid him on the ground and untied him, but even this did not wake him. It was not until they had turned him over first on one side and then on the other and had given him a thorough shaking and mauling that, after a considerable length of time, he at last regained consciousness, stretching himself as if he had been roused from a profound slumber and gazing about him with a bewildered look. (655)

After recounting the adventure, Cid Hamete makes the following comment in the margin of the text, explicitly addressed to the reader:

I cannot bring myself to believe that everything set down in the preceding chapter actually happened to the valiant Don Quixote. ... And so, without asserting that it is either false or true, I write it down. You, wise reader, may decide for yourself; for I cannot, nor am I obliged, to do any more. It is definitely reported, however, that at the time of his death [they say] he retracted what he had said, confessing that he had invented the incident because it seemed to him to fit in well with those adventures that he had read of in his storybooks. (*665–66)

The choice which Cid Hamete offers us, then, is to take the events of the cave either as actual fact or as a conscious lie on the part of Don Quixote. But the reader knows that it was neither. It was a dream. The terms of the novel as a whole preclude, of course, the possibility that the event was "real," and the lie option is definitively ruled out by the references during the rest of Part II to

Don Quixote's being "unable to make up his mind as to whether what had happened to him in the Cave of Montesinos was real or not" (739). The best commentary on Cid Hamete's lack of perception and sensitivity, and the judgment of the knight and his squire which ought most to offend the reader, is his characterization of the Don Quixote and Sancho of Chapter LXX of the Second Part as "[two fools]" (*964).

Cid Hamete, then, has kept the reader in the dark about a number of things, excluding him from the intimacy which Cervantes had established in the early chapters. He has occasionally misinformed him concerning the facts. He reveals an insensitivity to the changes in Don Quixote which have deepened the reader's attachment to the knight, and he makes judgments and conjectures about him which conflict with the facts of the account or with the reader's clear sense of what is appropriate.

Are we justified in insisting upon this distinction between Cervantes and Cid Hamete? Cervantes has told us not to trust Cid Hamete. E. C. Riley says that "the reader who seeks to pursue the intricacies of Cervantes' game with fact and fiction must try to keep a cool head—and on no account confuse Cid Hamete's story with the novel *Don Quixote* by Cervantes."⁹ Geoffrey Stagg suggests that "Benengeli . . . , like the marabouts, though reputed 'sabio,' is to be charged with mendacity, fraud and deception."¹⁰ And what happens if we do not make the distinction? If the reader identifies Cervantes with Cid Hamete in the latter's insensitivity, he must either cleave to the "author" and forsake the protagonist, in the manner of an Auerbach or perhaps even an Efron, or reject the author and embrace the protagonist in the manner of Unamuno, who is in fact an almost perfect model for the type of reader who refuses to make the distinction, because his refusal is thorough, wholehearted, and relentlessly pursued to its logical conclusions.¹¹

⁹. "Three Versions of Don Quijote," p. 810.

¹⁰. "El sabio Cide Hamete Venengeli," p. 224.

¹¹. Erich Auerbach, "The Enchanted Dulcinea," in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, pp. 293–315; Arthur Efron, *Don Quixote and the Dulcinea World*; Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*. Subsequent references in parentheses in the text are to Unamuno.

Let us consider briefly Unamuno's responses at some of the critical points in the alienation of the reader outlined above. On the reference to "childish bravado" in the episode of the lions: "Oh, damned Cid Hamete Benengeli, or whoever wrote this episode, how inadequately you understood it! It seems that Sansón Carrasco must have been whispering in your ear as you narrated it" (p. 132).

On the Cave of Montesinos: "On coming to this visionary adventure, the historian thinks himself obliged to doubt its authenticity! ... Oh, simple-minded historian, how little you understand about visionary experiences!" (p. 137).

On the characterization of Don Quixote and Sancho as "[two fools]": "Here the historian is as right as he can be, when he says that it is his personal opinion that the jesters were as crazy as their victims, and that the duke and duchess were not two fingers' breadth removed from being fools, when they went to so much trouble to make sport of two fools.... But stop right there, for neither Sancho nor Don Quixote can be called fools, and the duke and duchess can, because that's what they were" (p. 211).

Unamuno, who passes without comment over the transfer of the authorial mantle from Cervantes to Cid Hamete in I, IX, does not shrink from the inescapable consequences of the refusal to make a distinction: "Must we not consider that the greatest miracle accomplished by Don Quixote was his having had a man like Cervantes write the story of his life, a man who revealed in his other works the poverty of his genius, and how far he was, in the natural scheme of things, beneath what was required to narrate the deeds of the *Ingenioso Hidalgo* in the way in which he did, in fact, narrate them?" (p. 226). He rejects the "author" in order to embrace the protagonist. But Unamuno did not always feel this way about *Don Quixote*, and his earlier reaction to the novel illustrates the other possible consequence of the refusal to distinguish Cid Hamete's perspective from that of Cervantes— support of the author and rejection of the protagonist: "Some years ago, in a weekly of some authority and renown here in Spain, I shouted this war-cry: 'Death to Don Quixote!' ... And today I confess to you, my lord, that that cry of mine was a cry

inspired in me by the one who vanquished you, Sansón Carrasco..." (p. 197). Such unwillingness to dissociate Cervantes from Cid Hamete is at the very heart of the remarkable polarity which has characterized *Quixote* criticism for two hundred years. It has also contributed significantly to the disproportionate difficulty with which the "lay genius" position has been finally (?) discredited.

The identification of Cid Hamete with Cervantes is fostered by the final fusion of the two in the concluding paragraphs of the novel when Cervantes remarks as follows: "Such was the end of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha, whose birthplace Cid Hamete was unwilling to designate exactly..." (987). This recalls, of course, the initial phrase, "In a village of La Mancha the name of which I have no desire to recall" (25), which, as Riley points out, must be ascribed to the implied Cervantes.¹² The final paragraph begins with Cid Hamete addressing his pen, then quotes the words which he puts in the mouth of the now personified pen: "Hands off, o'erweening ones!/Let it by none attempted be ..."—words which are addressed to "presumptuous and scoundrelly historians." The pen is still speaking in the lines which follow the ballad: "For me alone [*sola*] Don Quixote was born and I for him" (988), but there is an almost imperceptible shift in mid-sentence to Cervantes addressing the reader: "I shall be the first one to enjoy the fruit of his own writings as fully as he desired [*quedaré satisfecho*] ..." (988).

Now although Cervantes obliterates the distinction between himself and Cid Hamete at the end of the novel, when the masks are put away and the box of fiction closed, he does not thereby invalidate the distinction nor imply a retroactive ratification of the Moor's perspective on the characters and the events he narrates. Cervantes never allows his own awareness of the subtle changes he has wrought in his protagonist to alter the perspective of his obtuse and therefore unreliable narrator Cid Hamete. It is true that he never suggests that he himself might have a different perspective, except, ironically, before any difference has developed: "In this work, I am sure, will be found all that

¹² Edward C. Riley, *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel*, p. 209.

could be desired in the way of pleasant reading; and if it is lacking in any way, I maintain that this is the fault of that hound of an author rather than of the subject" (73). But the whole complex structure of the novel leads the reader to increased identification with the protagonist and a corresponding estrangement from the narrator, and it is this structure that reveals Cervantes' own perspective.

If one is forced to choose between the assumption that Cervantes misunderstood the essential thrust of his own novel, as Cid Hamete's perspective seems to indicate, and the assumption that the two view the characters and events from different perspectives, can one but choose the latter?