

## On the Rhetoric Within and Without *Don Quixote*<sup>1</sup>

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WITH DUE DEFERENCE TO Umberto Eco and Miguel de Cervantes, this brief amble through the fictional woods is divided into four parts. The first is a preamble; the second is a stroll through the text; the third is a foray into issues relating to the text but essentially extra-textual; the fourth and last summarizes some of my own commentary, focusing on the implicit rhetoric concerning the unreliability of oral and written transmission.

### PREAMBLE.

Stanley Fish makes the astute observation that the times in which it has fallen our lot to live are the age of a new form in the development of the species, a form of life that he calls *homo rhetoricus*. Truth is not only relative, therefore; it is whatever one can be convinced of by those who are gifted at manipulating the spoken and written word. The person who succeeds in this brave new world of words is the one who can prevail through the force of his or her rhetoric. Facts are less important than feelings; overstatement trumps understatement; cool, calm, and collected are upstaged by fiery, frenetic, and flustered. This is not a surprising insight for those of us in academe, of course, for we frequently see this

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<sup>1</sup> This is the slightly modified text of the lecture delivered at the meeting of the Cervantes Society of America during the convention of the Modern Language Association of America, on December 29, 2006. I want to thank my esteemed colleagues Frederick De Armas, Vice-President of the Society, for inviting me to deliver the lecture, and Daniel Eisenberg, editor of *Cervantes*, for publishing it. This lecture marked the end of my three-year term as President of the Society and it was immediately preceded by Barbara Simerka's presentation of an homage volume titled *Critical Reflections: Essays on Spanish Golden Age Literature in Honor of James A. Parr* (see Works Cited). It was a memorable day.

scenario play out at departmental and committee meetings.

It is easily verifiable, nevertheless, that the preponderance of intellectual endeavor since time immemorial has been dedicated to the search for a more stable kind of truth. This is, of course, a laudable enterprise. Who could question its merit? The problem arises when we find Truth and convince ourselves that we have found it, for then we become a true believer, and we stop searching. A sometime side effect is that this supposed enlightenment may lead not only to a closed mind but also to obsession or even fanaticism. If someone else has come to different conclusions about life, literature, or the universe, that person must be wrong. There can hardly be two versions of the truth about matters of consequence, and since I have achieved enlightenment, perhaps as part of a group, you and your group are surely misguided if you have come to different conclusions. One of us will have to shun the other, perhaps banish the other, or take even more extreme measures, because we see things differently.

The mindset that I have only begun to describe is one that we can gaze upon with dismay every single day by simply picking up the newspaper or turning on the TV. Sad to say, it exists also in academe, for who among the general populace is more devoted to the quest for truth than college and university professors? The word "*veritas*" is not unusual on our institutions' escutcheons. What happens when academics in our little corner of the universe reach illumination? They may bond in special sessions at the MLA, or they may establish a journal that will reflect and espouse their perspective, or they may publish a volume of essays that give voice to their version of the truth, or they may band together in their department in order to head that fossilized entity in a more enlightened direction, doubtless one that is interdisciplinary, transcending traditional boundaries and borders. It is paradoxical, certainly, that as knowledge expands dramatically in every field, there are nevertheless intrepid souls who do not hesitate to speak with authority about a variety of areas in which they may have no real expertise. You may recall that this posture was identified by Ortega y Gasset as one of the hallmarks of a certain type of *hombre masa*, the specialist in one area who tries to pass as a specialist in all areas (161-62). Be that as it may, I fully anticipate that, any day now, one of these interdisciplinary sages will achieve the grand synthesis of all knowledge that we have been questing after for centuries. In December 2006, my university announced a search for just such a person, who is to be burdened with the imposing title of the "Chancellorial Chair for Innovation in Teaching across Disciplines." I

wish the Chosen One every success.

If we have something to be greatly concerned about in this world, it is not so much the dilettante as it is the true believer, however. It is worth noting that the terrorists of recent vintage are all true believers. Following Miguel de Unamuno's take on religion, from his essay "Mi religión," and the instincts of a sometime editor, I have always found a certain diversion in questioning reductive readings or formulaic discourse thought to provide all the answers, or even to pose all the essential questions. My credo would be to search for the truth, yes, but to assume that the journey is more important than the arrival, and that the process is one of constant deferral. All truths are relative and provisional. As a corollary, I urge those who have miraculously reached some center of enlightenment to reconsider. To those who need facile, all-purpose answers, I would say, along with Unamuno, "que si quieren soluciones, acudan a la tienda de enfrente, porque en la mía no se vende semejante artículo" (14).

What does Cervantes offer us and our students in this regard? He gives us a main character who is a true believer of anything in print and a text that questions the authority of books, including his own. The main character reads secular texts as though they were sacred scriptures; he can quote chapter and verse from those scriptures, but when he adopts his new identity, he sets out not as a "soldado de Cristo" but as a "soldado de Amadís." In addition, Cervantes offers us narrators who undermine the authority of other narrators, pseudo-authors who do the same, and an editorial voice who subverts all of them, only to have his own discourse subverted by his loss of aesthetic distance and the egregious errors he makes at the end of both parts. This questioning of authority and of the printed page has obvious implications for all books, whether classified as poetry, history, or scripture. Not for nothing are the pseudo-author Cide Hamete and the mock-hero Don Quixote associated with two cultures of the book. Only the Bible is mentioned by name, but the ramifications of the untrustworthy scriptor of a certain culture and faith are surely transparent with regard to that other culture and faith and, more specifically, its foundational book, the Koran.

#### ON THE RHETORIC WITHIN.

There are a select few articles that may well be more important than some books. Within one of my own special interests, George Haley's pioneering piece on the narrative voices in a 1965 issue of *MLN* naturally comes to mind. This is an essay to which all of us who have dealt with the diegetic dimension of the *Quijote* are indebted. A lesser-known sta-

tement that opened new vistas to me in the matter of characterization is Mary Mackey's *Hispanic Review* article of 1974, titled simply "Rhetoric and Characterization in *Don Quixote*." Here the author makes a striking comparison between Don Quixote's peroration on the golden age and Marcela's soon-to-follow defense of her independence and freedom to choose. Mackey shows that the protagonist's ruminations on the fantastical days of yore are replete with rhetorical transgressions and reminds us that it is totally inappropriate to its unwashed audience. Marcela's defense, in contrast, is carefully structured according to the norms of classical rhetoric and is well suited to the audience assembled for Grisóstomo's burial. It clearly has a positive impact on Don Quixote, which is more than we can say about the soporific effect his own earlier speech had on Sancho and the goatherds. The *mago* who is manipulating this discourse does not do the main character any favor by assigning him a rambling and untimely speech, but he clearly presents Marcela in a positive and forceful manner by means of the carefully-crafted rhetoric he assigns to her.

Like biography, talk about characters is all too often gossip. The proper purview of the literary critic is characterization, not characters. Following this principle, it is worth noting how the narrator presents the resident ecclesiastic at the summer palace of the duke and duchess in a way designed to orient reader response, causing us to be negatively disposed toward this personage even before he opens his mouth to disparage Don Quixote. In addition to what the narrator tells us about him, which is also damaging, the insistent anaphora of "destos que" complements the negative content of the message, so that, as Joaquín Casaldueiro was fond of putting it, *sentido y forma* work together, in tandem.

The rhetoric assigned to characters and used to describe characters is not haphazard. When Don Quixote sets out for the first time and, as part of the process, attempts to influence his chronicler in the description of that momentous event, his rhetoric rises to the occasion, influenced, of course, by the style of his preferred reading material:

Apenas había el rubicundo Apolo tendido por la faz de la ancha y espaciosa tierra las doradas hebras de sus hermosos cabellos..., cuando el famoso caballero don Quijote de la Mancha...dejando las ociosas plumas, subió sobre su famoso caballo Rocinante y comenzó a caminar por el antiguo y conocido campo de Montiel. (I, 2)<sup>2</sup>

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2 Quotes from the text are from the edition of Salvador J. Fajardo and James A. Parr.

Our first narrator or pseudo-author is not amused. He immediately bursts this bubble of high-sounding foolishness with his laconic summation: “Y era la verdad que por él caminaba.” Hereafter, this sort of rhetorical exuberance will be used very seldom and only for purposes of parody. Since it is a potential style introduced into the text, then rejected in favor of a more prosaic manner, we can say that it is effectively reassigned to the disnarrated (see Prince).

Disnarration is an important rhetorical recourse that has hardly begun to be studied in relation to the *Quijote*. My favorite instance of this technique occurs in Part II en route to Barcelona:

Sucedió, pues, que en más de seis días no le sucedió cosa digna de ponerse en escritura, al cabo de los cuales, yendo fuera de camino, le tomó la noche entre unas espesas encinas o alcornoques; que en esto no guarda la puntualidad Cide Hamete que en otras cosas suele. (II, 60)

This is far finer and more subtle than the classical configuration followed by Marcela in her speech. If she looks back to the five-part rhetorical structure advocated by Cicero (*exordium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio*, *refutatio*, and *peroratio*), our narrator at this juncture will look forward to Gerald Prince's two sub-categories of the disnarrated, namely the unnarrated and the unnarratable. The activities and dialogues of six entire days are left unnarrated, or elided, while the detail concerning the kind of tree under which they took shelter constitutes the unnarratable, which is to say a detail so insignificant that it does not rise to the level of narration. The irony implicit in this ordering and valuation of what finds its way into the discourse is doubtless transparent. We pass over six days' worth of happenings in order then to focus instead on an insignificant detail. This masterful juxtaposition of unnarrated and unnarratable—in a single sentence, let it be noted—looks forward to theoretical formulations of our own day rather than looking backward to the prescriptions of Cicero or Quintilian.

#### ON THE RHETORIC WITHOUT.

“Without” can mean outside the text, external, extra-textual, or it can mean without taking the text into consideration, except as a pretext. I mean for it to mean both. All criticism occurs outside the text, and is therefore without, but there are certain kinds of critical rhetoric that

seem to eschew the text in order to launch into discussions of whatever is of particular interest to the critic of the moment. It should not be necessary to cite instances of this latter phenomenon. Everyone knows what is involved and how the process proceeds, and we know that we are all guilty at times to some degree.

At issue here is the role and function of the literary critic. The notion that the critic is subservient to the text and that his or her role is essentially a parasitical one was eloquently refuted by Northrop Frye, among others. The critic is largely autonomous, inhabiting a conceptual universe that is limited only by knowledge of literature, literary theory, the pertinent accumulated criticism, and the practice of criticism. I hope we do not assume therefore that we are totally free to subordinate texts to ideology. We are constrained by the text and the discipline. If we show no discipline in our commentary, there will eventually be no discipline. Autonomy is liberating but it is not license.

One of the terms that certain critics bandy about with abandon is "novel." Even more rhetorically exuberant is "first modern novel." It comforts and consoles us, I suppose, to assure ourselves that we are dealing with a text of consequence, one that has had an impact in the world of fiction and one that belongs to, perhaps even initiates, the most prestigious literary genre of modern times. All of this serves to elevate us a notch in our own eyes and, we hope, in the eyes of others. Who would care to be associated with other literary forms when we can immerse ourselves in a panoramic form like the novel?

It would be tedious to belabor the point, but it has seemed to me for some time that the *Quijote* has more in common with postmodern narrative than with the modern novel. Like the postmodern novel, the *Quijote* experiments with narrative strategies and is multi-leveled; it largely disregards linear time, is replete with metalepses, and is highly self-conscious and self-referential, frequently baring its devices. It is fair to say that the postmodern novel focuses more on the diegetic, whereas the modern, realistic novel concentrated more on the mimetic.

The rhetoric of the text itself, in particular the self-deprecating irony of the first prologue; the festive, mock-heroic manner that permeates both the diegetic and mimetic planes, beginning with the 1605 title; the frequently stylized language, manifested in the recourse to anaphora, polysyndeton, bimembration, zeugma, Cesarean *veni, vidi, vici* constructions, and other devices; the malleable main characters, who can be adapted to whatever form the plot demands of them—all of these serve to set the *Quijote* apart from the modern, realistic novel and bring it clo-

ser to the postmodern free-form narrative of more recent times. Carroll B. Johnson (*Don Quixote: The Quest*), Edward H. Friedman, and José María Paz Gago have also addressed this matter, and I would refer you to them for a more detailed treatment.

Another insufficiently-examined critical term that some of us seem quite taken with is perspectivism. This is a notion that might add philosophical freight to the enterprise. If our author has significant insights into the nature of reality and if we are the purveyors of that wisdom, then, once again, we can feel both privileged and proud. Unfortunately, philosophically-based perspectivism in the *Quijote* is difficult to find. Only the mock-hero sees things differently from others, and that primarily in Part I. His reasons for seeing helmets instead of basins, giants instead of windmills, armies instead of flocks of sheep, castles instead of inns, and princesses instead of prostitutes are all easily explained and understood. When he spies his fantastical *yelmo de Mambrino*, Sancho is not fooled, nor is the narrator—who clarifies the situation expeditiously—nor, of course, is the barber in question.

Concerning the *baciyelmo* conundrum, it is Sancho who coins this clever hybrid as a way of resolving a conflictive situation. That certain critics should fasten upon it with such tenacity is quite remarkable, for the speaker is common sense personified, with no pretensions to philosophical insight. How seriously can we take an offhand remark aimed at maintaining harmony with his master and perhaps also restoring harmony at a very contentious moment when Sancho is not even privy to the joke being played on the aggrieved barber, indeed does not understand it (see I, 44-45)? Second, there is some question whether we should take seriously anything Sancho says, given his background and his role in the scheme of things. The sharp simpleton is a staple of carnivalesque literature, but will his words carry real philosophical freight? Finally, there is a context that must be taken into account, although it tends to be ignored. Don Quixote counsels Sancho about the relativity of things, telling him, for instance, that what Sancho perceives as one thing, he, Don Quixote, might see as something else, and someone else might see it as yet another thing. This outline of perspectivism would seem to be potentially profound—until we stop to consider that the speaker predicates it all on the evildoings of enchanters, who, he maintains, are loose among us and intent on transforming one thing into another to confuse us. So much for the philosophical underpinnings of perspectivism. There is linguistic perspectivism in *Don Quixote*, as Leo Spitzer demonstrated many years ago, but it does not rise, in my estimation, to the level of philosophical

insight.

The romantic approach was fine for its time and place, but Anthony Close is quite right in arguing that it has had an unfortunate effect on subsequent generations, including some in our own materialist moment, a time for which it is singularly unsuited. The cautionary approach has more to recommend it than either its perspectivist or romantic counterparts, but much depends on what we decide we are being cautioned against. Is it reading in general, naïve reading in particular, or reading certain kinds of literature? Is it the misguided attempt to live literature? Is it the pernicious influence that simulacra of reality can have, both then and now, on the naïve consumer? As you know, there are those today who write letters to soap opera and sitcom characters, thinking they are real people. The lessons of the *Quijote* have yet to be assimilated by the public at large.

THE IMPLICIT RHETORIC SURROUNDING THE UNRELIABILITY  
OF BOTH ORAL AND WRITTEN TRANSMISSION,  
OR THE RHETORIC OF ONE CRITIC IN PARTICULAR.

When we read or teach *Don Quijote*, there are two plots that should concern us. One is the mimetic-represented action, centering on the characters, their interactions and misadventures. The other is the diegetic plot, having to do with the confection, transmission, and narration of that mimetic action. It is this second and largely neglected plot that concerns me here. Since it is in fact a plot in its own right, with a full cast of characters, it seems quite proper to speak of the motivation or lack of motivation of these characters, just as we might with characters enmeshed in a mimetic action.

Cervantes must have enjoyed the game of wearing multiple masks: that is to say, the strategy whereby he distances himself from the festive, carnivalesque world inhabited by Don Quixote and Sancho, while simultaneously slipping in and out unobtrusively among the interstices of the text. Certainly he does it often and well. The authorial presence I infer upon completion of the reading and after due consideration of the generic dominant, point of view, characterization, the continuous questioning of authority, tone, texture, and stable irony, is a presence that can properly be called the inferred author or the author-in-the-text. The rules of the game dictate that the historical author, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, be relegated to the margins in any serious study of narratology. Such a move on the part of the commentator is only prudent if one is to enjoy the requisite autonomy, avoid the intentional fallacy and—Heaven

forbid!—biographical determinism. We do the author no good service, for instance, when we make the “Captive’s Tale” depend overly much upon lived experience, for such a linkage necessarily diminishes the powers of imagination upon which an author’s reputation must ultimately depend. The suggestion of biographical determinism is therefore limiting and, ultimately, unflattering to an author’s imagination and creativity.

As for the intentional fallacy, the strictures of Northrop Frye and Wimsatt and Beardsley have been challenged, needless to say, sometimes by clever coinages like “the intentional fallacy fallacy,” but sometimes more seriously, as occurred when Anthony Close brought to bear in 1972 Austin’s and Grice’s notions of speech acts and their contexts, taking this composite as a reliable indicator of Cervantes’s intention in the *Quijote*. One can certainly infer some aspects of intention, for instance that Cervantes intended to write parody, replete with irony, in a mildly satirical vein, but what troubles me is that some critics try to assign intended authorial meanings to the speeches of his characters. It is a dubious critical gambit to do that, or, for that matter, to sift through a work in search of related observations, whether by characters or narrators, and to infer from the evidence thus marshaled—usually without taking into account context, who is speaking and with what relative authority, or whether the comment may be ironic or untrue—then to conclude from this systematic rifling of the text that we now know the mind of the author (which would surely include his intentions), in the way Américo Castro did in *El pensamiento de Cervantes*. I shall never forget a conversation with José Luis Abellán in Barcelona in 2004 in which I made a similar comment, adding that I was not at all sure whether what was originally Castro’s doctoral dissertation at the Complutense would be accepted if presented today, precisely because of its lack of critical rigor. Suffice it to say, this remark created some consternation.

This historical author, who remains generally outside or on the margins of the text, comes closest to expressing himself directly in the titles assigned the 1605 and 1615 volumes and, to a somewhat lesser degree, in the two prologues, where he appears as a dramatized author. These paratextual structures, called *seuils* by Gérard Genette and *parerga* by Jacques Derrida, exist in a kind of narrative Limbo, neither fully inside nor fully outside the frame—a situation Derrida quite aptly describes in his inimitable style by pointing out that “il y a du cadre, mais le cadre n’existe pas” (*La Vérité* 93), or, in General American, there is a process of framing that we can identify and perhaps describe, but the frame in this case is porous, sometimes shifting, perhaps even illusory. The au-

thor I infer seems to thrive on these paradoxes. Certainly he created a fair quantity of them. Others of like nature are Sancho's clever coinage, the *baciyelmo*, and the antithetical coupling of "hidalgo" with "don" and "don" with "Quixote," the likely derivative of a surname, as part of the 1605 title. Beyond these ingenious but superficial juxtapositions, there is, nevertheless, a more substantive binomial around which much of the story is structured, and that is orality versus literacy. The dichotomy is beautifully personified in the two main characters, of course, but it also finds frequent expression in the continuing quest for grounding on the part of the written text. Often a "dicen que" or a formulaic expression such as "hay fama, por tradición de padres a hijos" (II, 12) is trotted out, whether in jest or in earnest is sometimes hard to say, as the ultimate authority for what we are reading. To my mind, the most interesting of these is the curious beginning of II, 44, where orality and literacy are inextricably conjoined and shown to be mutually dependent—to be, in fact, two sides of the same coin. It reads:

Dicen que en el propio original desta historia se lee que llegando Cide Hamete a escribir este capítulo, no le tradujo su intérprete como él le había escrito, que fue un modo de queja que tuvo el moro de sí mismo por haber tomado entre manos una historia tan seca y tan limitada como esta de don Quijote... (366)

This is, without doubt, one of the more provocative sentences of the entire book, for it is the most overt expression of the interdependence of the two forms of expression. What is called into question is grounding itself, whether in speech or in writing, and also, by implication, the quest for origins. Here, I submit, there are anticipations of both Genette and Derrida, but primarily the latter.

As I suggested earlier, the *Quijote* also presents what we might call motivated and unmotivated narrators. It does so early in Part I in the persons of the first and second pseudo-authors. It is noteworthy that these writers are in fact speakers—for that is what narrators do: they speak, in the sense that they imitate oral discourse, as they address their respective narratees. Here again, there is a suggestion that orality and literacy are inseparable. But what interests me at the moment is the negative attitude displayed toward the main character by the first author, which will find its counterpart in the effusive encomia of the second author in chapter 9. It is by no means clear what motivates the first author to undertake the story of a human subject for whom he clearly has so little use, since

he presents him invariably in a bad light, showing failures, gratuitous violence, confusions of identity, deflating the knight's literature-inspired rhetoric, and going so far as to suggest that he hasn't a brain in his head. Since no reason for taking up the story is given, and since his attitude is so negative, he can only be considered an unmotivated narrator. Why does he bother? And how might we characterize the intended recipient of his discourse, his narratee? Should we assume a conspiratorial pact between them, at the expense of the main character?

Elsewhere in the text we find three versions of pastoral presented sequentially, along with juxtaposed episodes suggesting the fallibility of two of the senses (hearing and sight), and, of course, the sequential conjoining of orality and literacy in the "Dicen que...se lee" noted previously. So it should not surprise us to find that the appearance of the second author offers the juxtaposition of a highly motivated narrator hard upon the heels of the abdicating unmotivated narrator. How is it that the second author is so favorably disposed toward the main character, in contrast to his predecessor? And what shall we say of his narratee? Apparently this speaker assumes a narratee who shares his enthusiasm and peculiar perception of events to this juncture. Of course, the next author and sometime speaker to appear on the scene is Cide Hamete, a seemingly unmotivated writer if ever there was one. Why would someone of a different faith, language, and culture be interested in an aging, monomaniacal *hidalgo* from a village in La Mancha? And to whom is he addressing a discourse in Arabic about that good Christian gentleman?

Carroll Johnson's new historical and "realistic" reading suggests that Cide Hamete's text was likely written in Spanish, using Arabic characters, or, in other words, in *Aljamiado* ("The Virtual *Don Quixote*"). This is quite plausible if we assume a materialized Cide Hamete living in Spain at that time (prior to 1609), for such a person would be more properly *Morisco* than Moor. However we decide the question of the "original" language—and it is ultimately undecidable—the points I have tried to make here would seem to hold, and, as E. C. Riley remarked quite rightly, Cide Hamete would remain a compelling example of *inverisimilitude*, in this as in every other regard (*Cervantes's Theory* 210). Of course, Cide Hamete's presence in Spain becomes even more *inverisimilar* in 1615. (Irrelevant speculation: possibly our "real-life" fictional historian had completed Part II prior to being expelled, or perhaps he returned, like Ricote.)

Fortunately, there is encoded within the text a generally dispassionate editorial voice that serves to show the limitations of each point of view,

the unmotivated and predominantly negative as well as the highly motivated and overly effusive. This voice, that of the editor figure, addresses his narratee in quasi-oral fashion, as narrators are wont to do, in contrast to Cide Hamete, who is a writer almost exclusively, and who, when he infrequently resorts to direct address, does so in reference to a reader. Cide Hamete is a surrogate writer for the real author, not a surrogate speaker. The Moor represents all the dangerous deferral inherent in the supplement we call writing (that is, considering writing as a supplement to speech), along with the equally real risks of indiscriminate dissemination (see Derrida, *Dissemination*). The fact that it is difficult to identify a proper audience for his discourse serves to emphasize that the dissemination of stories, made possible by writing, is fraught with risks and dangers, because one can never know who will come upon that piece of writing, perhaps have it translated, perhaps misconstrue it as badly as the second author seems to have done with the first author's text.

It is a commonplace nowadays to say that the *Quijote* is a book about readers and reading. It is also true that it is a book about writers and writing. Cesáreo Bandera remarks that "the first great modern novel is a warning against the reading and the writing of novels—which, at first sight, is indeed a most unlikely inauguration" (3). The affinity between Don Quixote and Cide Hamete is that the former is a decoder of texts, while the latter is an encoder. In a very real sense, they are mirror images of each other. Cide Hamete's "foreignness" is highly appropriate, for he stands for an alienated medium of expression that has traditionally been suspect, since Plato at least, and his alterity is therefore the perfect complement to that supplement to orality called writing. Cide Hamete is a part of a larger whole, writing, while Don Quixote is a whole character closely connected to a much smaller—but not insignificant—part, the piece of defensive armor that protects the thigh, called the *quixote*.

The quasi-historical mode employed in *Don Quijote* derives largely from the books of chivalry Cervantes is parodying, but its roots reach back to late Classical times, as William Nelson maintains:

A great mass of medieval narrative, both religious and secular, is in this quasi-historical mode. From late classical times and throughout the Middle Ages storytellers assert, often with great energy and circumstance, that their narratives are historically true, based on the most reliable of authorities. (22)

In order to parody this quasi-historical mode, he invents a menda-

cious Moorish historian as his “most reliable of authorities,” then complicates further the notion of *verdadera historia* by having the Arabic (*aljamiado?*) text translated (transliterated?) into Spanish by an unnamed *Morisco* of dubious qualifications. Several other intermediaries—first pseudo-author, second pseudo-author, third pseudo-author (Cide Hamete), an editor (or supernarrator), the pen itself, to say nothing of the much-put-upon typesetters—further attenuate authority and reliability, leading to the logical inference that *auctoritas* is not to be found in either story or history. Riley is quite correct in observing that “todos estos autores, fuentes y autoridades sirven para borrar la claridad de la historia en cuanto se refiere a ciertos datos, algunos de ellos fundamentales” (“*El Quijote* en 1992” 30)—such as, shall we say, the first and family names of the main character, his village, and the correct name of Sancho’s wife.

A parlor game of years past was called “How the Story Grew,” and it began by having someone whisper a very brief anecdote to the person seated to the right, who then did the same for the person to his or her right, and so on around the room. The story that reached the end of the line, after being relayed by several intermediaries, had invariably grown to be almost unrecognizable. The ironic commentary we find on all this in *Don Quijote* has to do with the friendship between Rocinante and Dapple, which, we are told, was handed down by oral tradition from father to son. *Don Quijote* makes light of the quest for origins with some frequency, beginning with the place of origin of the main character, continuing with the pedantic obsessions of the *Primo* who shows the way to the Cave of Montesinos, and culminating in II, 44 with the amusing attempt to ground writing in orality, the infamous “dicen que...se lee que” construction mentioned previously.

The ironic treatment of oral transmission, based on memory (for instance, in Sancho’s tale of the 300 goats that have to be taken across a river one by one), in conjunction with the equally ironic presentation of the record offered by writing, has implications for other printed texts—especially texts that derive from oral tradition—and it resonates well beyond the boundaries of the work that is our primary focus here. In my 1988 *Anatomy of Subversive Discourse*, I suggested that another significant book is implicated in the questioning of authority, and that is the Bible. One basis for this assertion is the use of the tag line “no puede faltar un átomo en la verdad,” applied first to the Bible in reference to giants (II, 1), but then applied to the fabrication we have been reading, the story of *Don Quixote*, a few chapters farther on (II, 10) in these terms: “sin añadir ni quitar a la historia un átomo de la verdad.” These

are the only times that tag line appears in the two volumes, so there is clearly an insinuation that the two books are similar in terms of their reliability. It is Don Quixote, that paragon of naïve readers, who applies the line initially, referring to Goliath, and it is the narrator who subsequently applies it to the story we are reading. What I did not mention in the 1988 *Anatomy* was the even more obvious implicating of the Koran. The oral substratum is what links the two sacred scriptures, plus the telling fact that our resident historian is a representative of that particular culture of the book and, furthermore, that he is said to be somewhat less than truthful. The problem with the transmission of the Old and New Testaments and the Koran is that all three have their origins in orality. Less time passed between the preaching of Mohammed and the transcription by his disciples than is the case for the Old and New Testaments, but there is nevertheless room for doubt about accuracy and authenticity in all three. There is, of course, no way to verify oral tradition. One takes it on faith or one does not.

Raymond Willis was on the mark when he made the following observation in 1953:

In Arabic historiographical works, many of which the Westerner would deem semi-fictional, at the beginnings of portions of text, call them chapters or what we will, there recurs an expression, *qāla*... which we might render "Says the historian," or "Says the narrator." This is no mere stereotype: it has an important traditional function, for it is the vestigial form of the *isnād*, the chain of authorities that introduces and authenticates the text of a *hadith*, or record of an action or saying of the Prophet. (101)

Of course, the phrase "dice la historia" is found also in the books of chivalry, as Willis himself is careful to point out, but it seems to me that it has a peculiar resonance in the *Quijote*, since the written text is attributed to a Muslim historian. What I find to be characteristic of the *Quijote* is its questioning of authority in all its dimensions, but specifically the reliability of the oral and written transmission of deeds and discourse from the past. The implications for the three cultures that coexisted in Spain for several centuries are fairly evident, but this is particularly so for Islam, because of the recourse to Cide Hamete Benengeli and all the cultural baggage our *puntualísimo historiador* brings with him. One item of that baggage that might add a final stroke to our verbal portrait is the pen mentioned at the very end. Luce López-Baralt offers the in-

sightful comment that the words assigned the pen in order for it to assert its unique relationship to the main character necessarily conjure up the "Supreme Pen" (*al-qalam al-a'lā*) of the Koran (68:1), which writes on the "Well-Preserved Tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz.*), inscribing "the inexorable destiny of human beings" (506). Carroll B. Johnson, to whom I am indebted for this reference, has remarked that: "López-Baralt explains the disconcerting phrase 'somos para en uno,' which normally refers to a betrothal, by observing that 'the Supreme Pen and the Well-Preserved Tablet constitute in Islam an inviolable "spiritual marriage" (511)" ("The Virtual *Don Quixote*" 184). That all of this allusiveness is supremely ironic is surely clear, for it serves to underscore the undeniable relationship established in Cervantes's text between Cide Hamete's spurious manuscript and the Koran.

In conclusion, Cervantes offers us in the *Quijote* a guide for the perplexed in matters of aesthetic distance and the unreliability of oral and written transmission. Some implications have been presented here. The lesson in reading offered by the *Quijote* aligns nicely with Horace's advice to aspiring poets: "Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, / Lectorem delectando pariterque monendo" (*Ars Poetica* 343-44). By Cervantes's day, *deleitar enseñando* had become a moral imperative, as is well known, and there can be little doubt that our author took that dictum seriously. If we would adopt the distanced and questioning attitude implicit in the rhetoric of the *Quijote*, there might be less tribalism and sectarianism based on supposedly authoritative written texts, whether sacred or secular, and, as a consequence, there might one day be a chance for peace on earth, and perhaps even a truce in the culture wars.

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