

Closure in *Don Quixote* I: A Reader's Canon's*

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My purpose in the following remarks is to examine one aspect of the “closural” pattern of *Don Quixote* I as it develops in chapters 47 to 52. In particular, I want to look at the role of the canon from Toledo and of the literary debate in which he engages with the curate and Don Quixote. I will not attend to the theoretical content of the debate as such, but rather to the relationships that can be established between the canon's theories and his development as a “reader” of Don Quixote's adventures. Also, I write “closural” in quotation marks because, in the strict sense of the word, there is no closure in the novel's first part. It leaves us in suspense with the promise of future adventures.¹ Yet, there have

* I am indebted to the comments and suggestions of my friends and colleagues Frederick de Armas, Helena Percas de Ponseti and Thomas A. O'Connor, who had occasion to read this article at various stages of its development. Remaining errors and weaknesses are my own.

¹ On closure (as ending) in the novel see Frank Kermode, Maria Torgovnick, D.A. Miller; *Nineteenth Century Fiction* (33); *Yale French Studies*, No. 67. Salvador J. Fajardo deals with aspects of the end of *D.Q.I.*, but without touching on the formation of the canon as a reader or with other readerly issues in the book's final chapters. Julio Rodríguez-Luis also addresses questions of closure in Part I but not those examined here. Armine Kotin Mortimer has a nicely compact description of narrative closure: “La conception [p. 42] de la clôture narrative dépend souvent d'un sentiment satisfaisant que toutes les données du récit ont abouti à leur fin plus ou moins nécessaire, que les problèmes posés par la narration sont résolus, qu'aucun bout de fil narratif ne reste flottant, que les signes composant l'univers narratif sont épuisés, en somme, que ce qui à été ouvert est clos” (15). This description applies principally to the classical *realistic* novel, but it sets a possible norm from which we can gauge the deviations notable in *Don Quixote*.

been other elements in the last chapters that suggest a pattern of recapitulation or even, to a degree, of completion.

My “reading” of the canon's formation as a nearly complete or nearly Model Reader takes as a point of departure the idea that *Don Quixote* is an “open” text. I base my notion of the “Model Reader” on Eco's definition of the same when he says that the open text “outlines a ‘closed’ project of its Model Reader as a component of its structural strategy” (9).² Eco explains further, in comments that are especially suitable to the canon's development in the novel's last pages, that “a wellorganized text on the one hand presupposes a model of competence coming . . . from outside the text, but on the other hand works to build up, by merely textual means, such a competence” (7-8). The text is open

with regard to its making available a range of interpretations, whereby the Model Reader is “free to reconsider the whole of [his/her] semantic universe,” but is bound by the necessary coherence of such interpretation, for “the reader is strictly defined by the lexical and syntactical organization of the text: the text is nothing else but the semantic-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader” (9-10). I propose that the canon, as he converses with the members of Don Quixote's homebound procession —and it should be noted that he does hear from *every member* of the group— receives partial, encoded “readings” of the circumstances that have led to the knight's present condition. These “readings” refer to codes that at first either contradict appearances (the “cuadrilleros”) or seem incomplete and

²The open form was one important characteristic of the Baroque in general, and Cervantes showed a special fondness for it. Giancarlo Maiorino comments: “At its paradoxical peak, boundary art marked yet another threshold, for the inherent dynamics of growth had to sacrifice product to process. Michelangelo had taught (*Florence and Rondanini Pietás . . .*) that creation could come out of incompleteness, and baroque artists steered this lesson toward parody and denial” (131). Besides *Don Quixote I*, *El coloquio de los perros* and *Rinconete y Cortadillo*, for instance, are open in form. In *Don Quixote I* this openness receives special emphasis in line with the text's own ludic/parodic character.

fantastical (Don Quixote, Sancho, barber, curate's first explanation). The curate's final explanation, though it purports to be a full account of Don Quixote's adventures, is also incomplete and one-sided. These various “texts” gradually form the canon into a temporary, almost-Model Reader, as he advances to the head of the procession and beyond (he and the curate move ahead) and enters the “heart of the matter,” so to speak. He begins to reach a full understanding as he witnesses Don Quixote's final adventures (the fights with Eugenio and the flagellants), but at the same time he is drawn into the knight's fabulating vortex, becomes a participant of sorts, and loses the distance necessary to gain an overarching view. As he becomes an actor in the final adventure, his own encoding of the “text” becomes as partial as that of the curate and, from the point of view of the reader proper, he recedes to the level of the other participants.

I

The end of *Don Quixote I* may be considered a critique of the possibilities of narrative conclusion: first, because it provides another occasion to parody the books of chivalry, notoriously reluctant to end their proliferating matter.³ Secondly because, in a broader sense, it pursues the critical foregrounding of the traditional assumptions of narrative. Thirdly, because the closing moments of a narrative provide a special locus for the manifestation of the structures of authority that opened it and have underpinned it. One would expect such authority to assert itself anew and at least as decisively to close a tale. In a novel that seeks to highlight the unreliability of many traditional forms of authority, among them that of authors and of their language, the decision to end seems especially

vulnerable to ironic treatment.⁴

In the last chapters of the novel, the “idle reader”⁵ welcomes the appearance of the canon, who arrives to see “. . . don Quijote

³ On this topic see Daniel Eisenberg and Edwin Williamson.

⁴ Cf. Parr, Ch. 2.

⁵ The “desocupado lector” addressed in the Prologue. On the complexities of the narratorreader axis, I follow James Parr's excellent analysis: “The 1605 prologue begins by addressing an “idle reader” (. . .) It is important to realize that this initial gesture, serving to establish immediate although deceptive rapport, is addressed to an interlocutor explicitly encoded within this pre-text, the plot of which revolves around the quest for a prologue. An encoded entity such as this is customarily called a narratee. [p. 44] This entity may be dramatized, although this one is not, but will always be spoken to directly, by a narrator—in this case the narrator is the dramatized author—unlike the ideal reader of the text, whose presence is ordinarily not acknowledged overtly” (46). At the end of Part I the “idle reader,” if s/he has been attentive to the text, has become the fully formed, sophisticated “inferred reader,” corresponding to the “inferred narrator” who stands behind the whole array of narrative voices deployed in the text (Parr). I take this “inferred” reader to correspond to Eco's Model Reader. The Cervantine text calls for a re-reading. My notion of this re-reading is that it generates a self-division in the reader who observes his/her own formation as an “inferred” reader, or Model Reader, as s/he re-reads. Only then will s/he become the truly Ideal Reader of Cervantes' text.

(. . .) sentado en la jaula . . .” (560). The canon and his men, riding “mulas de canónigo,” of course, easily catch up with our procession. Here is a representation of the power of the church, prosperous and of higher rank than the curate. The canon is a forward-looking man, conversant with modern (Aristotelian 6) literary theory. The contrast between the energy of his party and the easygoing gait of the cortege is an indication of the new intellectual vigor that arrives on the scene—after all,

⁶ On this topic see Bruce W. Wardropper, E. C. Riley, and Alban Forcione. The applicability of Aristotelian theory to *Don Quixote* is undercut by the novel's parodic thrust. In “El discurso . . .,” Hugo Rodríguez-Vecchini says: “Significativamente *Don Quijote* halla su perfil en la parodia, es decir, en la mimesis crítica de otros discursos, el histórico y el poético indistintamente. En efecto, la re-escritura paródica no respeta el deslinde genérico de esos dos tipos de discurso, que origina la *Poética* de Aristóteles” (177). In the conclusion of his enlightening and anticipatory review of these problems (“Cervantes' Theory of the Drama”), Wardropper states: “Cervantes, as on most questions of his day, straddled the fence. His enormous toleration saved him from siding with one particular faction in the polemics of the dramatic estheticians” (221). Martínez Bonati has some pertinent comments on the canon's theories, whose inconsistency, he points out, “lies (. . .) in the fact that the canon, in order to condemn the books of chivalry, takes the point of view of the ancients of sixteenth-century polemics, urging rigorous unity of action in the narrative work, strict verisimilitude and moral exemplarity; and then, in his praise of the possibilities of the genre, he assumes the position of the moderns of that century (. . .). Can it be doubted that Cervantes would be well aware of the incompatibility of these points of view? Can we, then, legitimately maintain that Cervantes deliberately confuses the poetological doctrines of his time? The more or less subtle introduction of inconsistencies into his characters' critical discussions not only ensures the novelistic verisimilitude of the dialogue and the subordination of theory to image but also underlines the ironic distance of the narrator and, a fortiori, of the author” (20). This ironic undercutting of the “theory” is dramatized by the canon's participation in the free-for-all of chapter 52.

“mulas de canónigo” are “poderosas mulas— (on which the curate and the barber ride) *par excellence*. The cloak of critical authority, worn until now by the curate, easily passes on to the canon's shoulders. The canon, after inquiring about this curious group of travellers, moves ahead with the curate in order to hear the latter's explanation. The two ecclesiastics engage in a dialogue on books of chivalry and other literary matters.

Their comments, which have frequently been understood to represent an approximation of Cervantes' own views, would at first glance offer an alliance of almost impregnable authority. But here, as in other instances in *Don Quixote*, we should be wary of assertive certainty. A number of critics consider that the canon's point of view may be too narrow. Forcione suggests that the debate as a whole expresses “Cervantes' suspicion of the fundamental direction of sixteenth-century critical thought, which would institutionalize an esthetic doctrine based on an empirico-historical interpretation of Aristotle's concept of imitation” (125). The same opinion is expressed by Riley, who further points out the difficulty of evaluating the reactions of readers of romances, as Don Quixote himself strikingly illustrates, because “el placer no es una cualidad existente en el libro, sino una reacción nacida en el lector, y por tanto dependiente de él” (300).

Doubtless, there is much of Cervantes' own thought in the canon's exposition. It has been argued that the latter's theories anticipate the general plan of the *Persiles*.⁷ But it is only necessary to show that the authority brought to bear at this point directly on Don Quixote's limitations as a reader, indirectly on all levels of the novel, becomes, in context, vulnerable. Furthermore, this vulnerability of the canon's (and the curate's) authority is but one aspect of the indeterminacy that affects the decision to reach an end.

The canon is a considerate man. After all, he listens to Don Quixote attentively and with some kindness, trying to separate in the knight's speech the “disparates” from the “concertadas

⁷ Alban Forcione sees the general plan of the romance in the canon's theory, and points out that there is in the *Persiles* a continuing engagement with the neo-Aristotelians “as an undertone sustained in a dialogue within the narrative voices, but on two occasions as an undisguised literary debate. (. . .) [T]he literary debates which it contains, like those on the *Quixote*, generally move toward the assertion of an *anticlassical* position on literary theory” [(169) Italics in the text]. Avallé-Arce also quickly relates the canon's theories to the *Persiles* in “Los trabajos . . .”

razones.”⁸ He is distressed at seeing the deterioration of such a keen mind. The text, however, does not paint the canon in altogether unmixed colors, though to the reader, who has learned to see in Don Quixote something more than a buffoon, the canon emerges at this point slightly ahead of the curate. Nevertheless, his failings, such as they are, are not failings of character but of perception, for he, too, like the curate, the barber, Sancho, and Don Quixote, is an incomplete reader.

How does the canon actually enter the narrative? When he first sees the cart and its company, “iba primero el carro guiándole su dueño; a los dos lados iban los cuadrilleros . . .; seguía luego Sancho Panza sobre su asno, llevando de rienda a Rocinante. Detrás de todo esto iban el cura y el barbero sobre sus poderosas mulas, cubiertos los rostros (. . .) don Quijote iba sentado en la jaula . . .” (560). At this point the canon, we are told, “ya se

había dado a entender, viendo las insignias de los cuadrilleros, que debía de ser algún facinoroso salteador, o otro delincuente cuyo castigo tocase a la Santa Hermandad” (560-561). This is a reasonable assumption. The reader will recall that the Santa Hermandad had been charged with Don Quixote's capture ever since the incident of the galley slaves. On the other hand, whether we agreed or not with the forces of law and order, it was possible to bear some sympathy with Don Quixote's initial impulse to free those prisoners. As usual, it is in its application that the impulse derails. When the demands of the Santa Hermandad and of the ‘baciuelmo’ barber result in the free-for-all at the Inn of Juan Palomeque, the characters who have become familiar to the reader (Don Fernando, Dorotea, the curate, and so on) gain the upper hand and settle the matter. The curate indicates that Don Quixote is mad and therefore must not be held accountable.⁹ He and his friends have a greater knowledge of the situation, as does, of course, the reader. But the canon arrives with the same limitations as the Santa Hermandad did before. His understanding of the situation is incomplete. Furthermore, the language used to describe his first assumption (“algún facinoroso salteador, o otro delincuente”), while partly true —there is a sense in which don Quijote is all this, the nar

⁸ On this matter cf. John G. Weiger, *The Substance . . .*, Ch. 1 in particular.

⁹ The curate had persuaded the *cuadrilleros* that, owing to his madness, even if don Quijote were arrested he would have to be released as not responsible for his actions.

rowest sense— creates an ironic gap between him and the reader for it is disproportionate to the facts.

The canon's first reductive deduction will now be gradually modified through a series of steps that will approximate his understanding to that of the reader. However, because the canon's first impression puts him at a disadvantage with regard to the reader, the authority of his statements and of his role with respect to other characters (including the curate), will remain vulnerable.

The canon first asks one of the “cuadrilleros” why Don Quixote is thus caged; and the man refers him to Don Quixote: “Señor, lo que significa it este caballero desta manera, dígalo él, porque nosotros no lo sabemos” (561). This answer is a contradiction of the canon's original guess. Since the “cuadrilleros,” who represent the Santa Hermandad, profess ignorance of the reasons for Don Quixote's situation, it cannot be that he is a “facinoroso salteador.” Our ecclesiastic must now start again from the beginning, and one imagines the fellow's bewilderment as he enters the ‘tangled skein’ of progressively more complicated and at times contradictory explanations.

Don Quixote, who has overheard, begins by saying that unless the canon is well versed in the traditions of chivalry, he will not bother to enlighten him. The canon reassures him on this point, and Don Quixote then explains that he has been restrained by an evil enchanter. The curate, who with the barber has approached the cart, confirms Don Quixote's statement while setting forth the knight's renown. The canon is astounded: “Cuando el canónigo oyó hablar al preso y al libre en semejante estilo, estuvo por hacerse la cruz de admirado, y no podía saber to que le habia acontecido” (562). Three individuals, all of whom can claim some knowledge of the matter, have left the canon in a state of

complete ignorance. As a sensible man, he cannot accept the explanations of the last two, while the first had none to offer: “no podía saber to que le había acontecido.” It is interesting to note that for now the curate simply repeats Don Quixote's own peroration, if somewhat more succinctly. At this point both the knight and his ‘enchanter’ (the curate) function at the same fictionalized level so that for the canon the fact that one is caged and the other free offers no clues. Neither his ears —language— nor his eyes —appearances— can help him.

Now it is Sancho's turn to join in with his own interpretation. Though it seems as if the squire might provide a no

nonsense view of the facts, his judiciousness is only apparent. Whether you like it or not, he says, Don Quixote is not enchanted. The evidence he adduces is quite factual and such as Sancho's literal-mindedness would take in: Don Quixote's bodily functions have not ceased (so far so good); therefore, he is not enchanted. This incongruous deduction of fantastical fact from the concretest evidence lets the cat out of the bag, so to speak, about Sancho's equally profound delusion, since he does not question the notion of enchantment. It is this possibility, which Don Quixote, the curate —so far— and Sancho take for granted, that astounds the canon.

As Sancho's argument veers toward personal concerns, he ascribes Don Quixote's condition to the manipulations of the curate —whom he identifies behind his mask— and to his envy. The situation stands in the way of the squire's own advancement, but his advancement depended on Don Quixote's feats. Thus the whole “máquina” of fictional chivalry is again introduced as factual and legitimate.

The barber intervenes at this juncture. Rebuking Sancho for being as mad as his master, he wonders whether the squire should not join the knight in his cage. He throws some light on the situation by referring to Don Quixote's madness and implying Sancho's own. On the other hand, his authority is undermined by his disguise —he is still wearing a mask— and by the lack of restraint of his personal attack on Sancho. Sancho's response is equally personal and implicates the barber in the ongoing manipulations, as if their origin were some devious expression of selfinterest. As a result, one must imagine the canon still confused, realizing that some of these people are mad, but unsure of who is and who isn't: Don Quixote plainly seems to be; the curate also, so far, since he is disguised and has repeated the chivalric nonsense; Sancho, probably, since, though not masked, he makes little sense; the barber perhaps, because while referring to the madness of others, he is also masked and seems intemperate in his speech.

The curate will now set the canon's mind at rest. They both ride ahead of the group so as not to be overheard. The curate's explanation should represent the final *mise au point* of the situation with respect to what the canon can see. Actually, in order to make these events clear, the curate has to recount the whole story of Don Quixote. He gives a complete summary of Don Quixote's adventures, or of those that he knows —for his information

is not as complete as the reader's. There are four main elements to the summary: 1. the causes of Don Quixote's madness; 2. his adventures [(“todo el progreso de sus sucesos” (564)]; 3. the caging; 4. the purpose of this very deception.

After expressing his amazement at the “peregrina historia de don Quijote” (564), the canon embarks on a literary disquisition on books of chivalry. It is worth noting that this discourse parallels in a general way, and from the point of view of a critique of the romances, the curate's summarized account of Don Quixote's career. Thus we have: 1. the harmful effects of such romances; 2. their fantastical subject matter (which Don Quixote tried to reproduce in ‘real life’); 3. the need to banish them, for they are “dignos de ser desterrados de la república cristiana, como a gente inútil” (566)¹⁰.

This first part of the canon's discourse deals with the matter and form of the books of chivalry. Its corresponding component in the book as a whole —the curate's summary— would be Don Quixote's and Sancho's “andezas.” The curate then recounts his “escrutinio” of Don Quixote's library, referring to the beginning of the present text and the origin of all that has followed until now. The canon proceeds to an estimation of the potential for good writing, varied and worthwhile subject matter that such works offered, concluding “que la épica también puede escribirse en prosa como en verso” (567). The reader will refer these statements to the manner of presentation of *El ingenioso hidalgo* . . . and to the variety and interest of its material: “por [. . .] querer resucitar [. . .] la ya perdida y casi muerta orden de la andante caballería, gozamos [. . .] no sólo de la dulzura de su verdadera historia, sino de los cuentos y episodios della” (344).

The canon filters the story of the mad “hidalgo” through two more interpretations, both times modifying the series of approaches that began when he first saw the procession. But we have, metaphorically, yet another telling transformation of the story, one that would illustrate the views that the canon has so far expressed (matter to be treated and manner of treatment). He has written in over one hundred sheets the beginning of his own version of a book of chivalry and has asked the opinion of “hombres apasionados desta leyenda, doctos y discretos, y con otros ignorantes, que solo atienden al *gusto* de oír disparates, y de

¹⁰ Don Quixote also is being withdrawn from society.

todos he hallado una agradable aprobación” [(567-68) my emphasis]. The distinction between “discretos” and “ignorantes” implies that Don Quixote would belong to the second category. In fact, later on, when Don Quixote offers the canon his own evaluation of the romances of chivalry, he insists: “léalos, y verá el *gusto* que recibe de su leyenda” [(584) my emphasis]. Nevertheless the canon, after Don Quixote's story of the “Caballero del Lago,” must reexamine his opinion: “Admirado quedó el canónigo de *los concertados disparates* que don Quijote había dicho” [(588) my emphasis]. Don Quixote, despite all evidence to the contrary, could not belong to those “otros ignorantes” who read the incipient book, nor is he among the “doctos y discretos.” He is, rather, both at once. Like his “concertados disparates,” with their mixture of fiction and history, Don Quixote bewilders the canon. But principally the knight's response affords him yet another reading of the situation which, when joined to the curate's explanations, brings him closer to our

own.

At this moment the canon reaches his level of keenest understanding yet. His first assumption turns out to be not so much wrong as entirely beside the point. In some ways he admires Don Quixote's singular madness, and now his evaluation of the knight's character is the exact opposite of his earliest one. He exhorts him to abandon his fantasy, for “[no] es razón que un hombre como vuestra merced, *tan honrado y de tan buenas partes, y dotado de tan buen entendimiento*, se dé a entender que son verdaderas tantas y tan estrañas locuras” [(583) my emphasis].

To recapitulate, the various interpretations of the events have been so far: 1. the canon's first unqualified assumption; 2, the “cuadrilleros” professed ignorance, which already modifies 1; 3. Don Quixote's bewildering (to the canon) tirade that introduces the topic of chivalry; 4. the curate's initial concurrence with Don Quixote; 5. Sancho's incongruous combination of the down-to-earth and the fantastic; 6. the barber's expostulations to Sancho: the squire is as mad as his master; 7. the curate's general summary of events to this moment (a view of the action); 8. the canon's own comments arising from the curate's summary or the ‘theory’ as parallel to the tale; 9. Don Quixote's response or ‘counter-theory’ to justify his endeavors. In effect, over these few pages we witness the formation of a nearly complete ‘reader’ of this text, i.e., of these events. The task is all the more carefully carried out since the canon is already a strong ‘reader,’ armed with impressive theories of his own.

Next to Don Quixote, whom we qualify as a misreader, the curate has been the ‘reader’ inside the text. His good sense and generally good intentions were a touchstone for us, the readers outside the text.¹¹ He has been an intermediary, offering a not unsympathetic middle ground between Don Quixote and a world that remained intractable to his fantasy. In fact, he was instrumental in the beneficial impact of Don Quixote on the lives of the characters whose paths cross at the inn of Juan Palomeque —Dorotea, Cardenio, and so on. But since the Sierra Morena, as the curate became increasingly an actor in the events, so his distance from the action naturally diminished and his role as ‘reader’ —so clearly established at the outset in the “escrutinio”— diminished as well.¹² Of course, the curate's opinions often tend to the ethical rather than the esthetic. An indication of his reduced authority was his actual evaluation of the tale of Anselmo and Lotario —“El curioso impertinente.” His critique of the tale was less in tune with the reader's than had been his “escrutinio.”¹³ He speaks more as a moral arbiter than as a critic. In addition, he is the actual creator of the enchantment that will bring Don Quixote home, i. e., of his caging. He brings about, finally, the plan that he had discarded in the Sierra Morena (at that point he was able to enlist the help of Dorotea as Princess Micomicona in order to extricate Don Quixote from his assumed penance for Dulcinea). His participation in, and invention of, Dorotea's fiction affects, ultimately, his distance from the action. His merging with the events is signaled by the need for him to wear a mask. When the canon appears, the curate's role is that of a character in the fiction he invented, and it is the canon who will take over as intermediary, who will gradually gain, at first, some distance from the events.

It should be pointed out that the canon is now needed precisely because the curate, when he becomes part of the fiction that he invents, can no longer fulfill his mediating role. The

¹¹ The curate is a graduate of Sigüenza, one of the then more recent and definitely “minor” centers, of learning; thus, such critical authority as he may represent has been heavily laced with irony from the earliest pages of the book. I thank Frederick de Armas for reminding me of this.

¹² Ruth El Saffar explores the problem in her now classic *Distance and Control* An important component of this paper arises from her views.

¹³ Cf. Avallé-Arce's comments on this item in “El ‘Curioso’ y el ‘Capitán’” in *Nuevos deslindes* See also John G. Weiger, *In the Margins* . . . , Ch. 3.

canon is an ‘untainted’ copy of the curate, with the greater authority that is needed in order to generate an overall judgment at one remove from the action.

The parallel development of the various roles in the last chapter delineates the distribution of authority according to the characters' ability to ‘read’ or suffer the power of fabulation. Don Quixote constitutes the heart of the fiction in his role as misreader and re-creator of his own life. His involvement with fiction is absolute. There is no gap between reading and living. The curate, at this point, stands at one remove from this center. He *assumes* a role in the action that he elaborates, though he does not remain invariably impervious to the effects of this action. The canon, when he has all the information available in hand, stands separate from the fiction. He expounds a theory of reading and has created, in correspondence to this greater objectivity, the beginning of a book of chivalry. The links of this ‘creation’ with the story of Don Quixote are those of its subject, chivalry; but the presumed ‘events’ in the canon's fiction stand in a comparable relationship to the life of Don Quixote, as do the canon's theories to the text that we are now reading *about* the life of Don Quixote. Within this widest gap yet, reflection penetrates and judges. Sancho and the barber, in this context, are but slightly modified instances of their respective counterparts Don Quixote and the curate:

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|--------------------------------|--|
| Don Quixote (misreader) —> | lives his fiction |
| the curate (incomplete reader) | makes up a fiction involving himself and Don |
| —> | Quixote |
| the canon (not quite complete | writes an almost complete chivalric fiction (which |
| reader —> | he decides <i>not to end</i>) |

Beyond the canon, in terms of their distance from Don Quixote's “andanzas,” are situated Cide Hamete, the translator, and the various “author” figures (inferred author, archivist, second author, dramatized author of the prologue). And beyond them we, the original “idle readers,” now Model Readers who have been formed to this new fiction gradually (as was the canon) but whose distance from Don Quixote's level of the action would be greatest and whose evaluations contain all these levels. To further underline the various distances, in these last chapters we will encounter other ‘misreaders’ with whom Don Quixote will

clash: Eugenio, also living his 'fiction' as a spurned lover (of the beautiful Leandra), the flagellants, other incomplete readers acting out an extreme form of their belief.¹⁴

II

The introduction of literary theory at this point in the novel can be considered a closural move for several reasons. It encourages the reader to form a totalizing evaluation of the text, i.e., to reflect in parallel manner to the characters (canon, curate, Don Quixote). It stands in retrospective correspondence to the parody of chivalric material at the beginning of the novel, to the "escrutinio" of chapter 6, and to the events of chapters 8 and 9 (emphasis on various narrative and authorial levels). There is some conclusive force to this hint of circularity. Also, the thrust toward a totalizing perspective is present in the canon's gradual acquisition of an inclusive understanding of the fiction/life of Don Quixote. Finally, this growth of the canon towards understanding represents, within the text, the parallel, more inclusive, appreciation that the perceptive reader has reached to this moment.

But the novel does not end here, and in fact the canon's authority, which is linked to the objectivity that his distance from the action affords him, diminishes as he participates in the events. During the fight between Don Quixote and Eugenio: "Reventaban de risa el canónigo y el cura, saltaban los cuadrilleros de gozo, zuzaban los unos y los otros, como hacen a los *perros* cuando en pendencia están trabados; sólo Sancho Panza se desesperaba, porque no se podía desasir de un criado del canónigo, que le estorbaba que a su amo no ayudase" [(597) my emphasis].¹⁵ Here the canon is clearly set next to the curate, in the same relationship to the action, a fact that is underlined by

¹⁴ Cf. René Girard, Cesáreo Bandera and Salvador J. Fajardo. It is interesting to note that, in Don Quixote's last adventures (Part 1), we have the same correspondence between acting out a role: flagellants, curate (there is a link between the curate and the flagellants through their mutual relationship to religion and also because our curate knows the leading ecclesiastic among the flagellants), and living a role: Eugenio, Don Quixote.

¹⁵ Only if the reader has remained totally impervious to Don Quixote's "buenas partes" adduced as well by the canon — will he not find this description somewhat humiliating for the knight. The humor is no longer unmixed for the modern (Romantic?) reader. Of course, realist (Close, Russell) [p. 54] critics point out that the 1605 reader was not so inclined. For a response to the "funny book" critical point of view, see John Weiger's *The Substance . . .*, and Lowry Nelson.

his servant's restraining of Sancho. The objectivity that he had gained and which allowed him to evaluate both Don Quixote's madness and his "buenas partes" is replaced by amusement; for now, the action itself must be allowed to pursue its course to the end. Don Quixote's fight with Eugenio and his attack on the flagellants are as the last spasms of his chivalric madness. Thereafter, he is again caged and arrives home utterly defeated. The canon, with his servants, and the "cuadrilleros" leave: "En fin, todos se dividieron y

apartaron, quedando solos el cura y barbero, don Quijote y Panza y el bueno de Rocinante, que a todo lo que había visto estaba con tanta *paciencia* como su amo” [(602) my emphasis]. There is in this passage the suggestion of a coming to rest, after the preceding commotion, and in this subsidence only those ‘characters’ remain—including Rocinante—who saw the beginning of Don Quixote's adventures. Don Quixote arrives battered and immobilized, a condition that recalls that of his first return in chapter 5, when he was stretched across the back of his neighbor Pedro Alonso's mule. Unlike Pedro Alonso, however, the curate has not waited until night to make his entrance, unconcerned to spare Don Quixote any humiliation.¹⁶

Other elements point to retroactive circularity, a typical closural pattern, and to a further thrust beyond it as well. We recall that Don Quixote, after being ‘armed’ knight, decided that, together with a few shirts and some money, he was in need of a squire in order to pursue his adventures. The first thing that he does, as he prepares his second sally, is to enlist Sancho. Thus, the scene between Sancho and his wife which, in the last pages, follows the curate's delivering of Don Quixote to his household, has a twofold purpose. It confirms the circular pattern through Sancho in a quite specific manner: near the end of chapter 7, as Sancho anticipates the future gains of his enterprise with Don Quixote, he envisions his wife, Juana Gutiérrez, or Mari Gutiérrez (or Juana Panza, as below), as his consort in some high estate, his children as princes. In the last scene, Sancho explains to his wife—who wants to know what he has to show for his employment—that he will obtain some title or governorship soon

¹⁶ The curate's inconsiderateness has been variously noted; see, for instance, Manuel Ferrer-Chivite.

after he and Don Quixote start out again: “¿Qué es lo que decís, Sancho, de señorías, ínsulas y vasallos? —respondió Juana Panza” (603). The analogy between Don Quixote and Sancho at this stage of the development of the characters is obvious and suggests that the circularity of the pattern noted in Don Quixote's return is also reflected through Sancho and his own circumstance.¹⁷ The second effect of this scene, however, is to open up the text anew in a perspective of further adventures. The circular pattern seems at first closed with respect to Don Quixote's return and open with respect to Sancho's. Finally the “historia” comes to a temporary rest with openness toward another sally in the anticipation of Don Quixote's niece and housekeeper: “[E]llas quedaron confusas y temerosas de que se habían de ver sin su amo y tío en el mismo punto que tuviese alguna mejoría, y *sí fue como ellas se to imaginaron*” [(604) my emphasis].

At this point those metafictional levels that the literary debate had introduced are taken up again. With the reappearance of the author/archivist, we are treated to the ironic manipulation of sources and transcriptions in a chain of transmission closely reminiscent of that in chapters 8 and 9: 1. “el autor” seeks further documentation; 2. he finds it, by sheer luck (“un antiguo médico que tenía en su poder una caja de plomo, que, según él dijo, se había hallado en los cimientos de una antigua ermita” (604),¹⁸ 3. there is a need for a retranscription (“unos pergaminos escritos con letras góticas, pero en versos castellanos” (604); 4. the “author” asks that *the reader* give proper credit to his effort: “es digno nuestro

gallardo Quijote de continuas y memorables alabanzas, y aun a mí no se me deben negar, por el trabajo y diligencia que puse en buscar el fin desta agradable historia; aunque bien sé que si el cielo, el caso y la fortuna no me ayudan, el mundo quedará falto y sin el pasatiempo y gusto que casi dos horas podrá tener el que con atención la leyeré” (142). These words should be compared with: “El cual autor no pide a los que la leyeren, en premio del inmenso trabajo que le costó inquerir y buscar todos los archivos manchegos, por sacarle a luz, sino que le den el mismo crédito que suelen dar los discretos a los libros de caballerías, que tan validos andan en el mundo; que con esto

¹⁷ Note also that the ludic treatment of names, characteristic of the novel's opening, is again engaged in with regard to Sancho's wife.

¹⁸ On the hoax of the “plomos granadinos,” see Francisco Márquez Villanueva, 314-316.

se tendrá por bien pagado y satisfecho, y se animará a sacar y buscar otras, si no tan verdaderas, a to menos de tanta invención y pasatiempo” (604-605).¹⁹

This coda-like reference to the basic relationship between source, transmission, and recipient, which returns us to the text's opening concerns, rather than bringing about the expected end, serves to introduce the level of the “historia” by means of the epitaphs. The closural impact which these verses would ordinarily convey has already been undercut by the gap that separates them from Don Quixote's last moments in the just concluded action, since another sally was anticipated. These adventures being, for the moment, indecipherable, the epitaphs are given in their stead.²⁰ But their effect is to create more anticipation on the part of the reader, a desire to see that gap between the knight's temporary quiescence and his final rest. The lines that introduce the epitaphs seem to stress their paradoxical incompleteness; among the verses that could be read, “Las palabras primeras que estaban escritas en el pergamino . . . eran . . .” [(605) my emphasis].²¹ What were then the rest of the words, after these first ones? Before we learn anything of them, the clearly burlesque tone which the metafictional complications may have led us to forget for a moment is reintroduced through the epitaphs. Through them the ‘author's’ stated intent to put an end, through laughter, to the sway of the chivalric romances is re-emphasized, as our knight and all his knightly “máquina” (squire, steed, beloved, etc.) are compared to the heroes they were meant to surpass (Amadís, Belianis, etc.).

After the epitaphs, which end without ending, but which recall to the reader the satirical intent of the book, the last lines

¹⁹ In a personal communication Helena Percas de Ponseti reminded me of the double meaning of “el mismo crédito que suelen dar los discretos a los libros de caballerías,” indicating that : “1. los discretos dan poco crédito a los libros de caballerías; 2. los discretos admiran el sentido subtextual cervantino de este libro de caballerías.”

²⁰ The epitaphs complete the circle initiated by the introductory poems. On this and other points pertinent to the gap between the end of the adventures of Part I, and the epitaphs, see Dian Fox, “The Apocryphal Part One of *Don Quijote*.”

²¹ In his analysis of the “sub-genre of Arthurian romances in Spain,” Williamson suggests that “The two basic features of this subgenre are the device of the historian-narrator in the guise of a wise magician, and the absence of an inherent principle of structural necessity” (69). Both notions are given a recapitulative satirical turn in the last lines of Don *Quixote I*.

promise a continuation, but, curiously, they point to another's efforts, an “académico” who, like those verses we have just read, is no more, or less reliable: “Tiénese noticia que to ha hecho, a costa de muchas vigiliyas y mucho trabajo, y que time intención de sacallos a luz, con esperanza de la tercera salida de don Quijote” (608). The final line, approximately recalled from Ariosto, “Forsi altro canterà con miglior plectio,”²² further seems to defer to other hands the authority to conclude. The same retroactive circularity seems implicit at this metafictional level, creating an effect parallel to the action—for the action is its echo of both closure and openness.

What can we make of this apparent refusal of the ‘author’ to assume the responsibility for ending? In fact, what can we make of the systematic undermining, or at least questioning, of all forms of authority, both within and without the “historia,” fictional, metafictional? A character on whose judgment we had learned to rely most of the time—if with some reservations—the curate, cedes his prerogatives to another, the canon, who possesses much stronger theoretical claims to them. He, in his turn, will be able, it would seem, to give the adequate summarizing overview needed to situate Don Quixote's activities in their proper perspective. But he too is overcome by events, by a fabulating impetus of the text that seems not to want to end, and incorporates such a perspective as part of its fiction. The ‘author’ himself, instead of ending, surrenders this responsibility to other voices who promise a continuation.

But this elusiveness is no longer surprising, or unexpected, not only because it has been characteristic of much of the novel, but also because we met with it as early as in the Prologue, to which the end leads us. For he/she who “con atención leyere,” the Prologue generates a two-level reader: the one who responds

²² Cf. Karl-Ludwig Selig: “The quote (. . .) is a tribute, homage, and evocation, a reminder to alert us once more at the very end of Part I to the significant creative function and paragonic centrality of Ariosto-author-opus for our narrative (look back, and reflect once more on that critical matter, the author-artificer seems to say); and formally, topically, the quote is suitable at the very end of the open-ended text (Part I); the citation fits and is pertinent formally and topically as it fits the open-endedness of Part I and/ or what is or will be the simulacrum of open-endedness of the book at this point or stage of the narrative” (70). The quotation is, as well, an “openended” invitation to “another” to take up the pen and write a sequel, which is precisely what Avellaneda did.

to the rhetorical strategies of the text, and the one who, upon re-reading, observes himself/herself *responding* to such strategies. As the reader goes back to the Prologue, he/she will be able to re-read the novel with the increased distance that it has taught him/her to assume. Unlike the canon, he/she will know how to gauge the fabulating power of the adventures and to enjoy the knight's mixture of wisdom and folly and the text's “concertadas razones.”

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