

The World as Text: Visual and Verbal Dialectics in *Don Quijote* Part II

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The relationship between perceptions that in effect constitute experience and the interpretive narratives through which the content of those perceptions is made intelligible is constantly on display in *Don Quijote*. In particular, the relation between sight, what one sees, and a discursive account of that experience serves as a central thematic and structural component of Cervantes' text. On a very basic level, the episodic nature of the novel functions according to the repetition of a paradigm that involves both sight and narrative, as characters parse the experience of visual phenomena according to the narratives with which they are familiar.¹ This paradigm informs the dissonance that marks the central pair of characters of the text, Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, and underlies what are perhaps the novel's most famous episodes: those of the inn-as-castle, the windmills-as-giants, the flocks of sheep-as-armies, the wineskins-as-giants, etc. The attempt to narrativize, and thus to manage, by reconciling word and image, the epistemological doubt that accompanies perception in the age of *desengaño* is, however, far more extensive in the novel than these well-known and generally comical instances would suggest; that is, it is not simply a consequence of Don Quijote's well-publicized madness, which leads him to interpret the world he perceives according to an inaccurate or at least socially inappropriate code derived from the fictional world found in his cherished romances of chivalry. In fact, the dual structure of image and narrative, of the visual and the verbal, is present in the experiences of the secondary characters as well. The need to provide an adequate narrative for things seen motivates and serves to structure the extensive dialogue of the novel and determines the reception and interpretation both of texts and of other concrete visual phenomena throughout the two parts of Cervantes's work. Yet it is in the second part, published ten years after the first in 1615, that we find Cervantes engaging in a sustained literary reflection on the specific relationship between seeing and reading.

In chapter 25 of the second part of Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, the eponymous knight affirms that "el que lee mucho y anda mucho ve mucho y sabe mucho" (II, 25, 842).² In this asseveration, Don Quijote suggests that a condition of similitude bridges the different activities of reading, moving through space, seeing and knowing, thus linking the categories of discourse, empirical perception and knowledge as essentially related forms of experience. While Don Quijote's failure to discriminate between what he reads and what he sees serves as the basis of the knight's incongruent and thus comedic irruption in the Manchegan countryside, it also has a specular function, erecting itself as an agonistic counterpoint to the attitudes and behavior exhibited by the other characters in Cervantes's text, whose comprehension of what is perceived is similarly, if less dramatically, conditioned by their experience with texts. Although attention to the relationship between seeing and reading generally centers on the protagonist, Cervantes's work as a whole

¹ There are, of course, brilliant examples of the opposite scenario as well, in which narratives are provided without corresponding visual experience. This happens, for example, in Don Quijote's first sally in chapter 4 of the first part, when he demands of a group of silk merchants that "todo el mundo se tenga, si todo el mundo no confiesa que no hay en el mundo todo doncella más hermosa que la Emperatriz de la Mancha, la sin par Dulcinea del Toboso" (I, 4, 68). The merchant's response? They haven't seen said Dulcinea, and so can't confess what Don Quijote wishes them to confess, however if he would be good enough to show her to them, and if she is indeed as beautiful as he says, they will certainly confess the truth of what he asserts. Other notable instances include Sancho's invention of the enchanted Dulcinea, and the episodes of the Cave of Montesinos and Clavileño.

² All references to *Don Quijote* will cite part, chapter and page number.

engages in an examination of the interpenetration of seeing and reading as modes of knowledge production. Moreover, instances of this general project, which in Part I has as its axis Don Quijote himself, proliferate in Part II, where the incorporation of the first part into the textual world of Part II transforms Don Quijote into an object, rather than an agent, of the problematic cognitive affiliation between reading and seeing. More than merely conflating the verbal and the visual, however, Cervantes in the second part depicts a dialectical relationship between visual phenomena and texts, exploring the ways in which experience with narratives informs and conditions optical perception as well as the ways in which empirical experience and more specifically the act of seeing can necessitate a reconsideration of the narratives by which individuals make sense of the world.

Recent scholarship has paid special attention to the role of the visual in Cervantes's literary output, and with good reason.³ Cervantes was highly concerned with contemporaneous notions of imagery and its usage, and his writing presents the reader with a consistent and self-reflexive consideration of the relationship between the visual image⁴ and his own chosen artistic medium, the verbal text. In particular, much has been made of the role of the pictorial in Cervantes's fiction, or what has been called its "visually charged nature" (De Armas 2004, 25), and of the presence in his work of what one scholar recently called the "surrounding visual culture" (Laguna 5). Such statements range from speculation about the influence of Cervantes's time in Italy on his works, including comparisons of his fiction with the paintings of artists such as Botticelli, Raphael, Michelangelo or Giulio Romano (De Armas 2006), to descriptions of Cervantes's use of ekphrasis in his writing (De Armas 2004, 2005) and to analyses of the semantic use of particular symbolic images in Don Quijote such as the pomegranate in part I, chapter 8 (Graf), and the "carreta de 'Las Cortes de la Muerte'" in part II, chapter 9 (Braider). These studies focus on what Ana María Laguna describes as "coincidences between images and texts" (18), that is, they identify the presence of imagery within Cervantes's fiction in order to transport their own readers elsewhere: to, for example, the Italian Renaissance, or to Flanders, or to the socio-political context of Cervantes's own Spain. Little attention has been paid however to the function of the visual in Cervantes's writing in relation to language and, in particular to the written word. Cervantes construes optical experience in *Don Quijote* through dramatic representations of emblematic encounters and then by examining how this experience is transposed from the visual image to the verbal image in particular episodes. As I will show, Cervantes is less interested in representing symbolic images with an eye to exploiting their semantic value than he is in giving narrative form to the epistemological problems posed by images and the cognitive processes within which the interpretation of images are embedded. In this way, and despite the obvious differences between our approaches, I take as my point of departure Frederick de Armas's suggestion that "Don Quijote can be studied through the constant contamination and agon between the visual and the verbal arts" (De Armas 2004, 16).

By positing that Cervantes offers an exploration of the interplay between the experience of visual phenomena and the experience of texts, I do not mean to propose that Cervantes presents anything like a concrete theory of interpretation. Efforts to identify and explicate systematic theories of any sort in Cervantes's work, from the political to the religious, the philosophic to the aesthetic, have consistently proven themselves fraught endeavors. And though I will be discussing both reading and seeing in terms of cognition and knowledge production, I do not suggest that

³ See, for example, García Santo-Tomás, De Armas (2004, 2005, 2006), and Laguna, among others.

⁴ I use the term image here not only in the sense of a form intentionally created for the purposes of viewing, but also to refer to all phenomena insofar as they present themselves as objects of visual perception.

Cervantes presented any coherent theory of mind, nor do I apply any such theory to his texts, despite the valuable work in this arena produced in the last decade.⁵ However, Cervantes does seem to have been deeply cognizant of what has since been called “the influence of culture on visual perception” (Nisbett and Miyamoto) and presents in *Don Quijote* a literary exploration and representation of what this influence might look like.⁶ In this regard, the argument presented here seeks to situate Cervantes within the general context of epistemological insecurity and broadly conceived skepticism that characterized the early seventeenth century, identifying in his work the expression of a preoccupation with interpretive practices associated with a wide range of objects and experiences and with the possibility of connections between such practices.⁷ Cervantes manifests these concerns in specific instances when the text itself establishes a link between reading and seeing, demonstrates the potential failure of existing narratives to sufficiently explain the raw stuff of visual experience, dramatizes the superimposition of narrative onto the world of perceivable phenomena, and finally represents the need for producing new narratives that can adequately assimilate the content of unexpected perception, thus instituting a dialectic between seeing and reading.

That it is Don Quijote himself who most clearly invokes a relation of similitude between seeing and reading has, for some critics, limited the philosophical significance of the idea that seeing and reading might be analogous actions. Michel Foucault, for example, detects in the knight’s identification of language with both the content of perception and the content of cognition the mark of his madness, locating the origin of the knight’s insanity in his desire for the world to be other than it is. According to Foucault, Don Quijote’s insistence on similitude and resemblance as the governing conditions that unite discourse and the non-verbal world of objects and events makes him the anachronistic protuberance of an already outdated Renaissance mode of thinking within a landscape in which “les ressemblances et les signes ont dénoué leur vieille entente” (61) and in which “l’écriture et les choses ne se ressemblent plus” (62). Foucault envisions Cervantes’s novel as concretizing an epistemic rupture between the sixteenth-century conception of the world, expressed in the works of intellectuals such as Fray Luis de León (see Johnson 1985), and what Foucault refers to as the Classical age, in which what had been the natural relationship between words and the world of things no longer holds, and where “les mots errent à l’aventure, sans contenu, sans ressemblance pour les remplir; ils ne marquent plus les choses” (61). Foucault reads Part II as the culmination of Don Quijote’s encroachment of the past on the onset of modernity, noting that the 1615 volume is no longer a book about the failure of language in the face of the real, but is rather a book about a book, a book about words and textuality. “Le texte de Cervantes,” says Foucault, “se replie sur lui-même, s’enfonce dans sa propre épaisseur, et devient pour soi objet de son propre récit” (62). The result is a world consisting “cette mince et constante relation que les marques verbales tissent d’elles-mêmes” (62). Foucault’s interpretation of Cervantes’s text centers on Don Quijote himself, his relation to the world and, in the second part, his relation to himself as discursive construct. However, this reading elides the significance of the other characters’ experience of the relationship between words and things, and therefore reduces the reach of Cervantes’s novelistic reflection on the affinity between reading and seeing to the individual drama embodied in Don Quijote. As William Egginton has suggested, Foucault is interested in this affiliation “primarily as it concerns the relation Don Quijote holds to books,

⁵ See, among others, Simerka and the special issue of *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* dedicated to “Cognitive Cervantes,” Simon et al eds., 32:1 (2012).

⁶ See, for example, Segall, Campbell and Herskovit; Nisbett; and Nisbett and Miyamoto.

⁷ See, for example, Robbins; Irhie; Lorca; Rodríguez de la Flor.

whether the tales of chivalry or the text of his own tales.” It is, moreover, on this distinction between Don Quijote and the other reading and speaking subjects that inhabit his world that Foucault constructs his argument regarding what he calls “le discontinu” (64) of which Cervantes’s novel is an emblematic instantiation: “les aventures de Don Quichotte tracent la limite: en elles finissent les jeux anciens de la ressemblance et des signes; là se nouent déjà de nouveaux rapports” (60).

Anthony Cascardi, like Foucault before him, suggests that “the *Quixote* stands at the limit of Renaissance experience and projects the need for a new conceptual order of things” (46). The absence that *Don Quijote* incarnates, the need that it projects, is that of the representing and interpreting subject, which remains “invisible” within the work itself (48):

The reader who organizes the multiple perspectives of the *Quixote* is thus like the viewer of Velázquez’ *Las Meninas*, invisible to the perspectives of the world which he projects. The figures in Velázquez’ painting, like the characters in the *Quixote*, are thus made present to us, while we are not at the same time present to them; or to phrase it in another way, the function of representation is radically concealed from the world which it controls. If Foucault’s reading of *Las Meninas* is correct, then the subject of the painting is itself representation. Yet what is interesting about *Las Meninas* is the fact that the integral act of representation, its unified temporal development, cannot itself be represented; the discrete functions of representation have been captured on the canvas (in the spectators, the models, and the artist-maker), but not the singular act of representation itself. This is what Foucault means by the “invisibility” of the activity of representation and also by the invisibility of the subject-spectator, and it is what I mean by saying that the *Quixote* projects the need for a theory which it cannot itself supply (Foucault: “In this picture, as in all the representations of which it is, as it were, the manifest essence, the profound invisibility of what one sees is inseparable from the invisibility of the person seeing —despite all mirrors, reflections, imitations, and portraits,” *The Order of Things*, 16). (Cascardi 48)

This extended quote shows how Cascardi elucidates Foucault’s positioning of *Don Quijote* at boundary or threshold while simultaneously gesturing to the limits of such a reading. For both Foucault and Cascardi read the two parts of the *Quijote* as a single, unified text. Nonetheless, while the dislocation of what Foucault calls the “lisible” and the “visible” (60) permeates both parts of the novel, in Part II at least, Cervantes’s is less interested in positioning Don Quijote as a disruptive force in a changed world than he is in demonstrating just how much like Don Quijote the other characters are. As Maureen Ihrle points out, this is partially accomplished through a transformation in Don Quijote in Part II, where his sense perceptions “now operate unimpeded,” while in the first part they “were actually controverted by his emotions and beliefs with some frequency” (59). In the second part, then, Cervantes seeks to overcome what Cascardi, following Foucault, identifies as the representational limit reached by the first part of his novel and its concomitant “problem of the subject” precisely by incorporating the representing subject, and thus the act of representation (and interpretation), within the novel itself through the insertion into the second part of characters who have read the first part. If, according to Foucault’s paradigm, Part I represented the arrival at the epistemological limit of language’s referential capacity, Part II in turn explores the function of the visual and the legible in “the singular act of representation itself” as a constitutive moment in

subject formation.⁸ In this way, we can see how Part II of Cervantes's novel articulates the dialectic of the verbal and visual by providing a model for the representing subject.

As the quote that opens these pages suggests, the Cervantine subject is above all a reading and seeing subject. His protagonist is remarkable due to his aberrant confusion of these two modes of interacting with the world. Much of both Parts I and II consist of other characters' attempts to correct Don Quijote's miscomprehension of the nature and significance of his beloved romances of chivalry, as well as of his reading of reality. Yet Cervantes's narrative eludes this simple characterization, as the unfolding of events in the two parts works to contradict any reading founded on easily distinguishable binaries, producing what critics have referred to as an effect of "perspectivism" in the novel.⁹ As Carroll Johnson describes, in *Don Quijote*, "everyone reads, everyone assigns meaning to what he reads, and everyone is affected by what he reads" (2000, 90). In the first part, the accretion of perspectives centers directly on the interpretation of texts, on the relative value and significance, for example, of fictional and historical texts and on their relationship to the world of lived experience. Narratives and their defining characteristics and elements are scrutinized (to a greater or lesser degree), and judgments are directed at the texts themselves and at those who are determined to read and see incorrectly, from Don Quijote himself to the innkeeper, Juan Palomeque. In the second part of the novel, however, Cervantes extrapolates from the reading of specific texts to a more abstract depiction of reading, a representation which centers on a configuration of perception and interpretation and which emphasizes the mechanisms by which characters reconcile the content of immediate experience with the narratives by which they come to know the world. In fact, these processes underwrite much of the first part as well, though they remain overshadowed by the text's insistence on Don Quijote's madness. Rather than continuing to pursue perspectival multiplicity in the second part of the novel, Cervantes inverts the distinction between Don Quijote and the other characters by drawing out the manner in which the other characters' reading conditions the way they perceive the world. He does this, in part, by making the other characters in Part II readers of Part I, inserting his own novel into the fictional world of the 1615 volume. In doing so, Cervantes transforms his protagonist's mad manner of reading into a generalized behavior and turns to the nature of perspective as such, not from a physical or merely discursive standpoint but from an epistemological and cognitive one, exploring how meaning is made in a moment of perception through an exposition of a concrete dialectic between seeing and reading grounded in contemporary preoccupations with the nature of verbal and visual signs.

John J. Allen recently stated that things themselves are only rarely transformed in Don Quijote Part II. Whereas many of the episodes in Part I hinge on the difference between the way Don Quijote and the other characters perceive the world, Allen, describing what we might call the imposition of the real in the 1615 text, pointed to the fact that, increasingly, Don Quijote's accounts of his perceptions coincide with those of the other characters. Part II can be read, then, as the narrative of Don Quijote's ascent out of madness, a process that culminates in the repudiation of his earlier beliefs just before his death. Ruth El Saffar describes this shift in mood, which she sees as extending beyond the *Quijote* to Cervantes's later texts, as a consequence of "Cervantes's

⁸ Though the insistence on his madness overshadows his claims, it is possible to locate evidence of this process of this text-based subject formation in Don Quijote's claim that "yo sé quién soy [...] y sé que puedo ser, no solo los que he dicho, sino todos los Doce Pares de Francia..." (I, 5, 73). See Matzat (49) on the manner in which this is suggestive of the origins of the modern subject.

⁹ The now classic statements on this aspect of Cervantes's text are those by Castro and Spitzer; for more recent treatments, see, for example, Castillo 73-75; and Bobes Naves.

emergence beyond despair and alienation in his own life to acceptance of an integrating totality the ultimate truth and perfection of which, though impossible to grasp in human terms, serves to obliterate the distinctions in this life which make such questions as individual vs. society, and truth vs. fiction appear irrelevant” (xiii). El Saffar, citing Casaldueiro, goes on to suggest that “the mysteries of Part I, many of which befuddled not only Don Quijote and Sancho but the reader as well, dissolve in Part II into a series of mechanistic distortions of reality carried out by their various perpetrators and carefully explained by Cide Hamete,” the novel’s purported author (5). This would seem a nice tidying up of the problem of reading and interpretation depicted throughout the two parts, as, according to this account, Cervantes deflates the potential ontological instability gestured to in various episodes in Part I by deemphasizing the problem of perception and by focusing attention on the ethical dimensions of interpersonal relationships. If El Saffar is correct, this shift in Part II would serve as a confirmation of the suggestion throughout Part I, through direct assertions and commentary by the various narratorial voices or other characters, that Don Quijote’s condition does not represent any ontological or epistemological threat, thus reaffirming that what is at stake is never truly a question of what, in truth constitutes reality, but rather a question of the conditions of insanity.

However, in the latter stages of Part I, Cervantes, insistently and progressively, if subtly, undermines the authority with which other characters make judgments regarding both texts and visual phenomena. While this process begins in the ambiguous disposition of the innkeeper from Don Quijote’s first sally (I, 2-3), and continues through the infamous scrutiny of Don Quijote’s library (I, 6), it attains a more express significance beginning with the pastoral episode of Marcela and Gristóstomo (I, 12-15) and with Don Quijote and Sancho Panza’s subsequent journey through the Sierra Morena where they encounter Cardenio and Dorotea. In these episodes, the knight and his squire, and their story, are juxtaposed with other characters who each have their own stories, yet the way other characters respond to them are quite different.

The first of these are Marcela and Gristóstomo, characters whose narratives seem to justify the fears of Don Quijote’s niece when she worries that pastoral tales may give rise to the same sort of behavior that the romances of chivalry have in Don Quijote (I, 6). Unlike Don Quijote, who provokes disdain and censure, Marcela and Gristóstomo elicit admiration (I, 14, 156). This discrepancy becomes more profound with the appearance of Cardenio, whose depiction in Cervantes’s narrative is particularly remarkable given the difference, and not the similarity, between the way other characters react to him and the way they react to Don Quijote. While Don Quijote’s madness is viewed as threatening and in need of curing, Cardenio’s madness, and the story behind it, produces pleasure, compassion and a desire to console.¹⁰ As with Don Quijote, whose appearance generates in those who see him a desire to hear his story, the figures of Dorotea and Cardenio provoke curiosity in other characters; however they are not rejected or criticized as Don Quijote is. Instead, they are objects of sympathy, presences that bring others together in communal experience. This is despite the fact that their own stories themselves hinge on pivotal instances of misinterpretation, or misreading, much as Don Quijote’s does.

The differing responses to Don Quijote on the one hand and Cardenio and Dorotea on the other are compounded when it becomes apparent that their stories are inexplicably intertwined. None of these circumstances prove worthy of the other characters’ incredulity; only one of them, a judge who arrives at the inn shortly after the others, registers as much amazement at the sight of

¹⁰ As Cardenio tells his story, the narrator informs us that the priest and barber “no solo no se cansaban de oírle, sino que les daba mucho gusto las menudencias que contaba” (I, 27, 311), and, once he has finished, the priest “se prevenía para decirle algunas razones de consuelo” (I, 27, 316).

this gathering as he does at the sight of Don Quijote himself, ending up “confuso, así de lo que veía como de lo que escuchaba” (I, 42, 495).¹¹ This brief recognition that the other characters in the first part are no less incredible than Don Quijote himself quickly gives way to the judge’s own implication in a remarkably coincidental reunion. The inn, which will be the site of the unlikely solution to the problem of Don Quijote at the end of the Part I also provides the stage for the even less likely disentangling of Cardenio’s and Dorotea’s stories.

Dorotea and Cardenio, like Don Quijote, present enigmatic figures with improbable narratives, but it is the inconsistent reactions to them provided by the other characters that Cervantes subtly foregrounds, rather than the nature of their narratives themselves. That is, one way of coming to terms with the inserted tales in the first part is to think of them as opportunities for other characters to comment on them, occasions which more often than not reveal their criteria as wanting. This becomes especially clear in the opening pages of Part II, when the reader learns that most of the other characters in the text have read the very same Part I that the reader has. What this means, of course, is that when they first encounter Don Quijote and Sancho Panza in person, those other character’s perceptions of physical reality have been shaped by their interpretation of textual reality. Just as it was for Don Quijote in Part I, so the world has become a text, and a text the world, for those readers of Part II. They look for and inevitably identify in the flesh and blood knight and squire the same Don Quijote and Sancho of whom they have read and most of them are actively engaged in constructing a world that matches that of Part I. The irony, of course, is that in doing so they replicate Don Quijote’s own “mad” behavior, accepting as true an implausible text and registering no surprise when the characters of such a work appear before their eyes.

Thus in Part II, the focus of Cervantes’s narrative shifts from the particular madness of Don Quijote to a more general consideration of the relationship between reading and seeing, as well as to the interpenetration of these two modes of addressing the world. Cervantes’s emphasis on the relationship between seeing and reading in Part II is highlighted when, at the outset of Don Quijote’s third sally, the translator says that the Moorish author, Cide Hamete Benengeli, praises Allah three times “por *ver* que tiene ya en campaña a don Quijote y a Sancho, y que los lectores de su agradable historia pueden hacer cuenta que desde este punto comienzan las hazañas y donaires de don Quijote y de su escudero; persuádeles que se les olviden de las pasadas caballerías del ingenioso hidalgo y *pongan los ojos en las que están por venir...*” (II, 8, 686; emphasis mine). This identification of reading and seeing is reinforced by the very next chapter, which, according to its heading, “Donde se cuenta lo que en él se verá” (II, 9, 695). Seeing here stands as a sort of metaphor for reading, an activity that in the time of Cervantes was intended to offer instruction and entertainment, the latter engaging the mind in order that the former might occur.¹² Implicit in this depiction of reading as seeing is the idea that seeing, like reading, offers an opportunity for meaning to be had, for knowledge to be derived from the experience. Cervantes sets the stage for this comparison, which will become manifest in the second part of his novel, in the latter stages of the first part, where the role of textual authority in shaping the interpretation of visual phenomena is first introduced as a problem that extends beyond the confines of Don Quijote’s pathology and is represented as a basic condition of cognition.

¹¹ Félix Martínez-Bonati describes the lack of verisimilitude in this passage by pointing to the fact that not even Don Quijote responds to the implausible goings on in the inn: “Can we imagine within a verisimilar frame that this individual who generally notices everything (though he misinterprets it), who gives full attention to the world about him so that it can provide him with adventures, is going to ignore the torrent of extraordinary events that rains upon the inn” (58).

¹² This according to the canon, who gives voice to the dominant, neo-Aristotelian notion of reading in the period (I, 47-48, 547-555). See Forcione 91-104.

Insofar as reading and seeing are increasingly linked in Cervantes's novel, the particular nature of their interrelatedness plays out over the course of the two parts. In the final chapters of Part I, the relationship between reading and knowledge is made explicit in certain comments by the canon, who, in conversation with Don Quijote, urges him to employ "el felicísimo talento de su ingenio en otra letura que redunde en aprovechamiento de su conciencia y en aumento de su honra" and to read, in particular, "la Sacra Escritura" and texts about historical figures, "cuya lección de sus valerosos hechos puede entretener, enseñar, deleitar y admirar a los más altos ingenios que los leyeren" (I, 49, 563-564). The canon continues, saying that from such readings, Don Quijote "saldrá erudito de la historia," and "enseñado en la bondad" (I, 49, 564). These sentiments are echoed by Don Quijote himself when, as he lies on his deathbed at the end of Part II, he expresses his regret at not reading "otros que sean luz del alma" (II, 74, 1217). While much of the criticism directed at Don Quijote throughout both parts of the novel concerns the manner in which he reads, that is, as Bruce Wardropper puts it, his inability to differentiate between history and story (147 and n22), at other times in the text the issue seems to be his choice of reading material. The canon, who admits to having read at least the beginnings of several romances of chivalry, summarizes this position in the late stages of Part I:

De mí sé decir que cuando los leo, en tanto que no pongo la imaginación en pensar que son todos mentira y liviandad, me dan algún contento; pero cuando caigo en la cuenta de lo que son, doy con el mejor dellos en la pared, y aun diera con él en el fuego, si cerca o presente le tuviera, bien como a merecedores de tal pena, por ser falsos y embusteros y fuera del trato que pide la común naturaleza, y como a inventores de nuevas sectas y de nuevo modo de vida, y como a quien da ocasión que el vulgo ignorante venga a creer y a tener por verdaderas tantas necedades como contienen. (I, 49, 562-563)

Much has been written about the material and historical context of readers and reading in Cervantes's time, as well as on the notion of verisimilitude and its importance in both in Cervantes's aesthetic context and in the pages of his own texts (see Ife; Miñana). However, it is not my intent here to analyze the validity of the canon's statement, particularly as regards his assurances about what is true and what is not, but rather to elicit the relationship between reading and the acquisition of knowledge to which the canon alludes. In this passage, the canon explicitly refers to a problem that recurs throughout Cervantes's narrative: the attribution of knowledge to the written text. Already in the prologue to the first part, Cervantes addresses, with his customary irony, this problem (see Martínez-Bonati 59). If "el vulgo ignorante" has a tendency to accept as true what they find written in texts, it is not alone. In his reading of *Don Quijote*, Jacques Rancière asks, within the context of Cervantes's fictional world, "what permits us to say whether a book is true or false?" In answer to his own question, Rancière suggests the following:

The world is not just made of perceptible, experienced equalities; it is also made of books, not of a conventionally shared 'imagination,' but of a continuum of books and attestations to the existence of what they discuss. How can one slice into this continuum without drawing out the entire chain...? For Cervantes' time is one when the great proof of truth, incarnation, is in the process of vanishing into the system of traditional attestations. (89-90)

Textual authority becomes a crucial concern precisely at the time that the production, availability and variety of texts grows exponentially. Certainty arises in the face of uncertainty, but competing accounts, or attestations, to use Rancière's term, proliferate. The potential universality of textual authority confronted with the particularities of empirical experience and perception result in an exponential genesis of narrative. Don Quijote's consciousness of himself as the hero of his own intertextual story is symptomatic of this tension.

The drama of this interplay between what is read and what is seen plays out dialectically in scene after scene in *Don Quijote* II. Whereas reading text offers potential access to existing knowledge, sight represents either the possibility of obtaining new knowledge (and thus refuting existing knowledge) or the opportunity to confirm what is believed to be known. During his time as governor of the fabricated "ínsula" of Barataria, Sancho so surprises his deceivers that the duke and duchess's steward, who plays a key role in the ruse, is forced to admit to Sancho that "cada día se veen cosas nuevas en el mundo" (II, 49, 1025), confirming the manner in which immediate experience refutes the expectations generated by textual sources, in this case *Don Quijote* Part I. Yet more often than not in Cervantes's text, what is seen is forcefully reconciled with existing epistemological paradigms. When what is seen exceeds the constraints of what is known, or of what is believed to be known, explanations, in the form of narratives, are sought in order to overcome the cognitive disruption produced by "the proliferation of particulars" that characterizes the early modern experience (Batsaki, Mukherji and Schramm 6). The most obvious example of the generation of narrative in response to unexpected and incomprehensible visual input is offered by Don Quijote himself through his recourse to the figure of the enchanter. As he says in chapter 26 of Part II, "estos encantadores que me persiguen no hacen sino ponerme las figuras como ellas son delante de los ojos, y luego me las mudan y truecan en las que ellos quieren" (II, 26, 852). Part I is dominated by Don Quijote's construction of this type of narrative, and by other characters' reactions to the knight; when they are confronted by him, they are unable to comprehend what they are seeing and ultimately turn to a narrative of madness to explain his appearance and actions. In Part II, Cervantes demonstrates that there is a more generalized disconnect between the perception of visual phenomena and their transformation into cognitively intelligible matter. Thus, when the bachelor Sansón Carrasco, dressed as the Knight of the White Moon, confronts Don Quijote on the beach of Barcelona, the other characters present, which include the viceroy of Barcelona and Don Antonio Moreno, Don Quijote's host in the city, are utterly bewildered. The narrator states that the viceroy, "viendo, pues, el visorrey que daban los dos señales de volverse a encontrar, se puso en medio, preguntándoles qué era la causa que les movía a hacer tan de improviso batalla" (II, 64, 1159). The answer he receives, however, is unsatisfactory, as it does not conform to his knowledge of reality, so he in turn questions Don Antonio about the matter:

Llegóse el visorrey a don Antonio y preguntóle paso si sabía quién era el tal Caballero de la Blanca Luna o si era alguna burla que querían hacer a don Quijote. Don Antonio le respondió que ni sabía quién era, ni si era de burlas ni de veras el tal desafío. Esta respuesta tuvo perplejo al visorrey en si les dejaría o no pasar adelante en la batalla; pero no pudiéndose persuadir a que fuese sino burla, se apartó [...]. (II, 64, 1159)

Because what he is seeing inhabits a realm outside the explicable, the viceroy first searches for an account that either conforms to or reasonably extends the horizon of his sense of the known or knowable, and, when faced with the lack of such a narrative, he accepts the closest possible option, despite its apparent, though also ironic, inadequacy.

If the experience of visual phenomena at times presupposes its cognizability (that is, that what can be seen can be known), at other times the empirical experience of phenomena through sight is presented either as repudiating knowledge or, alternatively, as a precondition of knowledge. Early in Part II, when Don Quijote and Sancho Panza set out once more in search of adventures, they travel first to Toboso so that Don Quijote may call upon “la sin par Dulcinea” and solicit her “bendición y buena licencia” (II, 8, 687). They arrive at night and, as they search for Dulcinea’s “palacio,” Don Quijote points out the profile of a large building in the darkness, suggesting that it may be the edifice they are looking for.¹³ Sancho, who has lied about seeing Dulcinea in her home, suggests that his knowledge, or rather lack of knowledge (a known unknown, as it were) supersedes any empirical input, visual or otherwise: “Pues guíe vuestra merced, -respondió Sancho-: quizá será así, aunque yo lo veré con los ojos y lo tocaré con las manos, y así lo creeré yo como creer que es ahora de día” (II, 9, 696). A few lines later, in order to maintain the fiction of his encounter with Dulcinea, Sancho questions the possibility of attaining knowledge through sight. When they are unable to locate Dulcinea’s castle, Don Quijote urges patience; Sancho answers by describing the fallibility of his own capacity for seeing, while intimating that Don Quijote’s own knowledge of Dulcinea must itself be based on the knight’s having seen her:

“Yo me reportaré -respondió Sancho-, pero ¿con qué paciencia podré llevar que quiera vuestra merced que de sola una vez que vi la casa de nuestra ama la haya de saber siempre y hallarla a media noche, no hallándola vuestra merced, que la debe de haber visto millares de veces?” (II, 9, 697)

Both seeing and reading are at once implicated in diverse epistemological processes and shown to destabilize or confound those very processes. This complex depiction of reading and seeing in the 1615 *Quijote* is further problematized through the manner in which the novel relates the two practices to one another.

Unlike the picture beginning to develop here, the relationship between reading and seeing in the 1605 volume appears fairly evident. After all, the novel opens with an account that explains that what Don Quijote sees and experiences as reality is in fact a function of what he has read. Aside from being a parodic embodiment of very real contemporary concerns about the dangers of reading in early modern Spain, this manner of seeing what has been read, or the identification of the content of visual perception with the content of textual imagery, seems to be presented as the manifestation of Don Quijote’s particular psychological condition. Yet, as we have already attested, other characters, too, see what they have read; the critical difference would be, as the canon suggests, the texts which each considers to be authoritative.¹⁴ In Part II, it is precisely the transformation of other characters into readers of Part I that which elicits the role of reading in shaping their comprehension of visual experience. Through this inversion, according to which “las burlas se vuelven en veras y los burladores se hallan burlados” (II, 49, 1025), as the duke and duchess’s steward says, Cervantes demonstrates how readers of all sorts exhibit the same

¹³ The building Don Quijote is in fact just making out in the dark is of course the town church, which, when he discovers his error, leads the knight to his now famous declaration that “we have come to the church, Sancho.”

¹⁴ It should be noted here that Sancho Panza is one of the few explicitly illiterate characters in both volumes of the novel. However even Sancho is depicted as locating epistemological authority in textual or discursive models, such as his beloved proverbs, which he assimilates and deploys wholesale, even when there are not especially to the point at hand.

psychological and cognitive tendencies that in the earlier volume appear confined to an elderly reader's madness.

Rancière proposes that in the novel, the experience of the perceptible is itself a form of writing. "The event of flesh," he says, "is first of all an event of writing, a production of writing by itself" (76). Evidence of the explicit role that reading plays in shaping how and what characters see comes early in the second part of the Cervantes's text. In the third chapter, Sansón Carrasco tells Don Quijote how avidly the first part of the novel is being consumed by a broad audience: "los niños la manosean, los mozos la leen, los hombres la entienden y los viejos la celebran; y, finalmente, es tan trillada y tan leída y tan sabida de todo género de gentes, que apenas han visto algún rocín flaco, cuando dicen: 'Allí va Rocinante'" (II, 3, 653). Reading not only permits a kind of knowledge in and of itself, it provides a model according to which the raw material of perception can be assimilated and, specifically, recognized. When, in chapter 25 of the second part, Master Pedro, the puppeteer who appears at the same inn at which Don Quijote and Sancho have stopped for the night, recognizes Don Quijote, calling him the "rsuccitador insigne de la ya puesta en olvido andante caballería" (II, 25, 841-842), Don Quijote responds with the quote with which we opened this analysis, assuring the crowd of baffled bystanders that "el que lee mucho y anda mucho ve mucho y sabe mucho" (II, 25, 842).¹⁵ The cognitive and discursive process at work here is not unlike that which marks the earliest *crónicas de Indias*, in which writers like Cristobal Colón (Columbus) persistently use Old World images to describe the New World sensory data for which they had no other language to express. In each case we find at work the imposition of existing concepts and beliefs in moments of perception. The result, of course, is, as Jeremy Robbins puts it, the transformation of the world of empirical reality into a world of fiction, a circumstance that Cervantes explores at length in the second part, particularly in the episodes in the ducal palace and on the 'island' of Barataria (55).

While the sight of the utterly new might suggest the possible destabilization of existing epistemological frameworks, it can also be used to adjudicate among competing beliefs or interpretations. In chapter 59 of the second part, Don Quijote and Sancho, once again taking their rest in an inn, meet a pair of gentlemen who are engaged in a discussion about Avellaneda's apocryphal 1614 *Second Part of Don Quijote of La Mancha*, published a year before Cervantes's own. The two men, Don Juan and Don Jerónimo, are comparing the spurious second part to the 1605 text when Don Quijote interrupts them from another room. "The two men, for that is what they seemed to be, came in through the door of the room, and one of them threw his arms around Don Quijote's neck and said":

Ni vuestra presencia puede desmentir vuestro nombre, ni vuestro nombre puede no acreditar vuestra presencia: sin duda vos, señor, sois el verdadero don Quijote de la Mancha, norte y lucero de la andante caballería, a despecho y pesar del que ha querido usurpar vuestro nombre y aniquilar vuestras hazañas, como lo ha hecho el autor deste libro que aquí os entrego. (II, 49, 1111-1112)

¹⁵ It should be noted that, informing both Master Pedro's recognition and Don Quijote's response, is a monkey that purportedly speaks to Master Pedro and tells him "de las [cosas] pasadas [...] y de las presentes" (II, 25, 841); Master Pedro actually recognizes Don Quijote both from his reading of the first part and due to the fact that he himself appears in the first part, Master Pedro being none other than Ginés de Pasamonte, one of the galley slaves freed by Don Quijote in chapter 22 of the first part.

The sight of Don Quijote does not give the lie to his identity, but it does give the lie to the “false” Don Quijote of 1614. Here, first-hand visual experience is found to correspond to a particular textual authority (the first part of Cervantes’s novel), while simultaneously refuting the authority of another text. As Jeremy Robbins points out, “what these juxtapositions of texts and people explore are the ways in which fiction impinges upon and often substantially actually shapes reality by providing the mental framework by means of which reality is experienced, understood and interpreted” (58). Upon seeing the knight, Don Juan and Don Jerónimo ‘read’ him as one Don Quijote and not the other. In this instance, what is seen proves the validity of what has been read, while what has read informs and conditions the experience of visual perception.

The emblematic interplay between the verbal and the visual in such episodes marks the tendency, now extended in Part II of the novel beyond the limits of Don Quijote’s madness, to see the text as if it were the world, and to read the world as if it were a text. Emblems are characterized by a specific complementarity between the written word and the image. But they also belie a certain interdependency that has its source in insufficiency and indeterminacy. If the first part of Cervantes’s novel playfully interrogates the relationship between words and images, the second part insists, over and over again, on their inseparability, to the degree that textual elements physically appear in the Cervantine landscape and the distinction between what is seen and what is read is erased. The two most prominent examples are Don Quijote and Sancho themselves; however, as they make their way home from Barcelona, the knight and squire come face to face with a character out of Avellaneda’s 1614 *Second Part*, Don Álvaro Tarfe. When Don Quijote asks him if he is indeed a character from that text, the man responds affirmatively and claims to be a “grandísimo amigo” of Don Quijote’s. Surprised, Don Quijote asks him, “Y dígame vuestra merced, señor don Álvaro, ¿parezco yo en algo a ese tal don Quijote que vuestra merced dice? - No, por cierto –respondió el huésped-, en ninguna manera” (II, 72, 1206). After Sancho convinces Don Álvaro that he is speaking to the real Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, Don Quijote requests that he sign a statement swearing “que vuestra merced no me ha visto en todos los días de su vida hasta agora, y de que yo no soy el don Quijote impreso en la segunda parte, ni este Sancho Panza mi escudero es aquel que vuestra merced conoció” (II, 72, 1207).

Eso haré yo de muy buena gana –respondió don Álvaro-, puesto que cause admiración ver dos don Quijotes y dos Sanchos a un mismo tiempo tan conformes en los nombres como diferentes en las acciones; y vuelvo a decir y me afirmo que no he visto lo que he visto, ni ha pasado por mí lo que ha pasado.” (II, 72, 1207)

Like the emblem, which incorporates text and image in a tripartite formula including the verbal *inscriptio*, or motto, the visual *pictura* and, finally, the verbal *subscriptio*, the world-made-text in *Don Quijote* Part II necessitates a retextualization, a rewriting. However, unlike emblems, which theoretically operate according to a principle of semantic plenitude, the transformation of world into a text in Cervantes’s novel consistently gestures to the inadequacies, as well as the inescapability, of this epistemological procedure. In the encounter between Don Quijote, Sancho Panza and Álvaro Tarfe, texts are transformed into the world, which then must be rewritten. Cervantes’s novel itself performs just such an act, as it first recounts Don Quijote’s imposition of textuality on the world in Part I and then relates in textual form the endeavors of other characters as they navigate (and narrate) the tension between verbal and visual experience. As Mercedes Alacalá Galán puts it, Cervantes “convertirá la literatura en vida, para que esta se convierta en libro” (44).

As has been noted throughout this discussion, the method by which Cervantes elucidates the manner in which the world is read as a text is the inclusion in Part II of specific texts. The first part, too, includes interpolated tales, a fact that, as Cervantes himself notes, has not always been well received by readers and critics.¹⁶ Don Quijote wonders “qué le movió al autor a valerse de novelas y cuentos ajenos, habiendo tanto que escribir en los míos” (II, 3, 653). In the second part, however, Cervantes inserts texts that are entirely about Don Quijote and Sancho, including the apocryphal second part, the letters exchanged between the knight and the squire and the squire and his wife, and even Cervantes’s own first part. The result is the creation of a concrete matrix of experience that is simultaneously visual and verbal. Cervantes’s characters oscillate so frequently between reading the world and visualizing texts that it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. The closes system of the emblem here finds itself in an endless cycle of the visual and the textual, and this despite Cervantes’s stated claim, in the prologue to the second part, to leave the reader with a “don Quijote dilatado, y finalmente muerto y sepultado, porque ninguno se atreva a levantarle nuevos testimonios, pues bastan los pasados” (II, prólogo, 621). The history of the iconography, adaptations and re-imaginings associated with *Don Quijote* shows just how much of a failure this aspect of Cervantes’s project proved to be. One need only think, once more, of Borges’s Pierre Menard. Nonetheless, in the immediate context of early seventeenth century Spain, it is possible to see the 1615 text as itself a kind of *subscriptio* to the image of the world as text constructed within its own pages and as a result of the reception of the 1605 volume. Don Quijote suggests as much when, in the early pages of the second part, he claims the following:

No ha sido sabio el autor de mi historia, sino algún ignorante hablador, que a tiendo y sin algún discurso se puso a escribirla, salga lo que saliere, como hacía Orbaneja, el pintor de Úbeda, al cual preguntándole qué pintaba respondió: ‘Lo que saliere’. Tal vez pintaba un gallo de tal suerte y tan mal parecido, que era menester que con letras góticas escribiese junto a él: ‘Este es gall’. Y así debe ser de mi historia, que tendrá necesidad de comento para entenderla. (II, 3, 652)

With his second part, published in 1615, some 10 years after the first part, this is precisely what Cervantes has done, offering a commentary on his own first part. However, the *subscriptio* in an emblem responds to the *pictura*, or image, and also seeks to mitigate, while simultaneously instantiating, the complex forces that hold textual interpretation and visual perception in suspended tension. As David Quint has suggested, Cervantes’s 1615 volume is in fact a “specular” rewriting of the earlier text, in which the earlier work is both read and seen (95-99). The precarious and seemingly inescapable interplay between reading and seeing explored by Cervantes in *Don Quijote* Part II registers the experience of what Kathryn Murphy has called “the anxiety of variety,” that is, “the doubt that the human mind is capable of reducing the complexity of this teeming world to general and universal truths” (111). Cervantes presents an explicit literary reflection on this issue, one that self-consciously takes as a condition of the anxiety Murphy describes its own medium: the written text. Cervantes explores intertextuality as a mode not only of literary composition, as Michael Gerli has shown, but also of the composition of the self; rather than offering a representation of a new world defined by a new form of subjectivity, then, *Don Quijote* Part II

¹⁶ In II, 3, Sansón Carrasco tells Don Quijote of the reception of the first part that “una de las tachas que ponen a la tal historia [...] es que su autor puso en ella una novela intitulada *El Curioso impertinente*, no por mala ni por mal razonada, sino por no ser de aquel lugar, ni tiene que ver con la historia de su merced del señor don Quijote” (652).

explores one aspect of the subjects' discursive self-formation by depicting, but not resolving, the complex cognitive interrelatedness of what it means to see and what it means to read.

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