

José Ángel Ascunce Arrieta. *El Quijote como tragedia y la tragedia de don Quijote*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2005. 295 pp. ISBN 3-935004-98-2.

Caveat lector. Do not base your selection of this work solely on the title, for if you anticipate a book-length study on tragedy in *Don Quixote*, you will be disappointed. A quick glance at the table of contents reveals the misleading nature of the title. Yes, Ascunce Arrieta's study does examine tragedy in the first, and only the first, of four chapters, but what dominates is a 120-page examination of narrative voices in *Don Quixote*. The introduction further confirms the text's eclectic nature—a hodgepodge of previous essays, "trabajos nacidos en contextos diferentes y con finalidades distintas" (x).

The first chapter, "La tragedia de don Quijote y el *Quijote* como tragedia," pro-

vides the obvious inspiration for the collection's title. The initial premise of the essay is valid—*Don Quixote* is more than just parody, entering, also, into the realm of tragedy. However, the manner in which Ascunce Arrieta arrives at this conclusion is suspect. Reaching beyond the scope of textual evidence, he speculates about Alonso Quijano's life, both past and present, along with his road to dementia, concluding that the mediocrity of the *hidalgo's* monotonous daily existence pushes him into his *locura*. The books of chivalry provide his escape because the *hidalgo* "vive la trágica uniformidad de una existencia sin alicientes ni expectativas" (18). The fictional reading material provides the two key elements missing from his life: love and action. However, Alonso Quijano's demented state is not so clear-cut, for the knight does demonstrate moments of lucidity. For example, Don Quixote accepts Sancho's advice to abscond to the Sierra Morena to stay under the radar of the Santa Hermandad. This lucidity, according to Ascunce Arrieta, provides the key to our tragedy. This reenactment of the chivalric tales allows a *cuerdo* Alonso Quijano to recapture the love and action not experienced during his younger years. The true tragedy is the realization that time cannot be reversed. Therefore, when Don Quixote is defeated and must return to his mundane existence as Alonso Quijano, he has to die to prevent a return to his former boring self.

The idea of presenting the work as tragedy is intriguing, but I quibble with the process of characterizing the *hidalgo*. For example, even though we are told that Alonso Quijano and Don Quixote are two separate entities, the author tries to recreate the former's life via the knight's adventures. The author concludes that Alonso Quijano had never ventured beyond his small village when, after a day of traveling, Don Quixote must search for a place to rest. If the knight were familiar with the area, he would not have to search. At another point, Ascunce Arrieta concludes that Alonso Quijano is autodidactic. The idea of the *hidalgo* dying in order to avoid returning to his former monotonous life negates the historical context of the work—the accepted theory that Don Quixote had to die at the end to prevent any further spurious sequels. Such scrutiny of a character, where the author goes beyond the scope of the text to create a psychological profile, seems untoward at this late date.

In the second chapter, Ascunce Arrieta continues with the character analysis, focusing his attention on the knight's squire in "Sancho Panza: el héroe posible de la aventura quijotesca." Unlike the first essay, this one seems more soundly rooted in textual evidence, that is, until we reach the conclusion. After a lengthy examination of heroes and heroism, we study Sancho's path toward becoming a true hero. His transformation has a monetary beginning. While Don Quixote goes off to search for what is missing in his life, love and action, Sancho follows as he seeks food and money. Sancho accompanies Don Quixote in search of material gain. The prospect of a salary motivates him, and even when he does obtain his riches in the Sierra Morena, he still continues on with the knight, monetarily gaining along the way. However, Sancho's requests for a fixed salary are continually denied, and yet he stays with the knight. According to Ascunce Arrieta, this working relationship has become a friendship, a friendship that now motivates Sancho to stay with Don Quixote. In the end, Sancho comes away from this

relationship with more than he first anticipated. He gains both money and a friend. Therefore, he is the true winner in these adventures, making him a true hero.

Moving beyond character analysis, the third chapter, "Las *Novelas ejemplares* en el *Quijote* y el *Quijote* como novela ejemplar," studies the composition of Cervantes' masterpiece. As the title indicates, the chapter is divided into two distinct parts. The first analyzes the influence of the *Novelas ejemplares* on the *Quijote*. The author provides a detailed summary and analysis of "El celoso extremeño" to exemplify his working definition of a *novela ejemplar*—"narración breve de composición ternaria con un fin moralizador" (123). The tertiary structure includes the initial presentation of a case, the development of said case, and a moralizing conclusion. He then shows how this tertiary structure appears in "El curioso impertinente." While I doubt that any critic would ever refute the classification of this interpolated tale as a *novela ejemplar*, Ascunce Arrieta's examination does leave us with a structural model that could prove useful to teaching the *Novelas ejemplares* to undergraduates.

Reminiscent of Luis Murillo's and Menéndez Pidal's search for an ur-*Quijote*, Ascunce Arrieta embarks on a similar quest with his third chapter, the goal being to isolate a *Don Quijote* in *novella* form. He contends that the knight's first outing, his *primera salida* encompassing the first six chapters and part of the seventh, is what we can call the first *Don Quijote* written as a *novella*. The length corresponds with that of Cervantes' other *novellas* and the plot exposes the obligatory tertiary structure. The case in this instance is Don Quijote's madness. The knight's adventures provide the development of said madness, all of which concludes in the infamous *escrutinio*. Again, the author provides a nice synthesis of a well-discussed topic.

The fourth chapter, "Los puntos de vista en el *Quijote* o el narrador paradójico," dominates the work, with over one-third of the book dedicated to the delineation of narrative voices. The initial presentation can be perplexing, for Ascunce Arrieta continually assigns different names to narrative entities as the complexity of the diegetic plane increases. If one can keep the titles straight, his final proposal provides yet another incisive study of narrative voices.

As with many before him, the author takes the end of I, 8 as his point of departure. One reads:

Pero está el daño de todo esto que en este punto y término deja pendiente el autor desta historia esta batalla, disculpándose que no halló más escrito destas hazañas de don Quijote de las que deja referidas. Bien es verdad que el segundo autor desta obra no quiso creer que tan curiosa historia estuviese entregada a las leyes del olvido, ni que hubiesen sido tan poco curiosos los ingenios de la Mancha, que no tuviesen en sus archivos o en sus escritorios algunos papeles que deste famoso caballero tratasen, y así, con esta imaginación, no se desesperó de hallar el fin desta apacible historia, el cual, siéndole el cielo favorable, le halló del modo que se contará en la segunda parte.

This interruption introduces two distinct voices: that of the first eight chapters, the *primer autor*, and the introduction of the second author, the *segundo autor*. The first is a historian figure whose composition terminates when the second author emerges with the previously cited passage. The second author functions as an extradiegetic narrator who filters the first author's manuscript and interrupts the text when deemed necessary. This second author is an investigator, inserting comments about what other authors have written about the knight and his adventures. However, attributions to this second author in the first eight chapters seem arbitrary. The first line of the work, "En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme" (I, 1), is attributed to him because supposedly only he uses a first-person construction and references to other authors of Don Quixote's tale belong to him since he poses as an investigative figure.

The shuffling of titles commences with the introduction of Cide Hamete Benengeli and the *morisco* translator in I, 9. Cide Hamete becomes known as the first author while the translator becomes the second author. The author previously identified as *segundo autor* now shifts to the third author, and his voice represented in the text is the *narrador presentador*. Cide Hamete pens the original manuscript that is translated and commented upon by the *morisco*. The *narrador presentador* filters both versions, inserting his opinions throughout the course of the text.

Ascunce Arrieta's dissection of the diegetic plane does provide a unique viewpoint, but it concerns me that the majority of these ideas are presented as his own. There definitely seems to be some influence from pioneers in the field. He does tip his hat to José Manuel Martín Morán, but any acknowledgment of James A. Parr is glaringly absent. The bibliography does indicate that two works were consulted, but no reference is ever made. Ascunce Arrieta's ideas are reminiscent of Parr's studies. The depiction of the first author as a historian figure and the idea that the extradiegetic narrator, Ascunce Arrieta's *narrador presentador*, an omniscient and omnipresent figure who functions as an editor, editing Cide Hamete's manuscript as he goes along are just two examples of Parr's influence. Other key figures remain absent from this study, most notably, José María Paz Gago. But, as the author notes, this may just be my personal quibble since "como sucede con la casi totalidad de temas que ofrece el Quijote [sic], el lector se queda siempre con cierto grado de insatisfacción por no hallar en estos trabajos todo lo que busca o, por lo menos, todo lo que espera encontrar" (162).

After a detailed analysis of the various diegetic levels, we are entertained with a detailed analysis of the three narrative figures: Cide Hamete, the translator, and the *narrador presentador*. The most surprising assertion deals with Cide Hamete's faith. After discrediting the Moor as a historian and a philosopher, Ascunce Arrieta attacks his faith, proclaiming that Cide Hamete was not a good Muslim either. The lengthiest part of the chapter enumerates the various hats this *narrador presentador* dons. He is characterized as a *narrador despiñado*, *impertinente*, *mentiroso*, *burlón*, *arrepentido*, *creador*, and *paradójico*. The depiction of this extradiegetic narrator as a *narrador creador* is where Ascunce Arrieta sets himself apart from other narratological studies. In his

model, this narrator is more than just a voice; he is the true creator of the text, proven by the last lines of *Don Quixote*: “Para mí sola nació don Quijote, y yo para él; él supo obrar y yo escribir; solos los dos somos para en uno” (II, 74). The feminine form “sola” is a reference to the narrator’s *pluma*. Cide Hamete Benengeli provides the original manuscript that the *narrador presentador* appropriates and rewrites, infiltrating the text at every turn.

The ideas presented by Ascunce Arrieta’s collection of essays are thought-provoking and meticulously supported through textual evidence; however, there are two areas in need of attention: a more relevant title and better editing. Titles should accurately reflect the content of a work. In this instance, critics interested in narrative voices might completely overlook the text because, at first glance, the book focuses on tragedy, and those desiring a book-length work on tragedy are sure to be disappointed. Secondly, errors abound, beginning with the title. The title on the cover does not correspond with that on the title page, *La tragedia de don Quijote y el Quijote como tragedia*; a simple reversal, but an error nonetheless. After discovering that the publisher advertises the work with the cover’s title, I assume that is the work’s true title. Limited mostly to the footnotes, the errors become increasingly distracting as the text progresses. Italics appear haphazardly and at times they are completely absent. In one footnote, for example, close to twenty works are enumerated with not a single citation italicized (78). The author fluctuates with the capitalization of Don Quixote’s name. Spanish would dictate a lower-case letter, “don Quixote,” but Ascunce Arrieta flip-flops between the two. Unfortunately, the accumulation of errors distract from an otherwise worthy study.

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