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Jesús G. Maestro. *Crítica de los géneros literarios en el QUIJOTE: Idea y concepto de “género” en la investigación literaria*. Pontevedra: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2009. 540 pp. ISBN: 978-84-96915-41-1.

The premise of Maestro's meticulous study is simple enough: to first expound upon, in the most minute detail, the idea of *Materialismo filosófico* and then second, to base a study of the *Quijote* on its organizing principles. However, the execution is anything but simple. The book divides its more than five hundred pages into a mere four chapters. Being so intricately reasoned, it is virtually impossible to summarize, at least to the extent that it so rightfully deserves.

With that said, the first chapter, “Preliminares,” situates the work as the seventh in a series by Maestro entitled *Crítica de la razón literaria*, one which studies “El Materialismo Filosófico como Teoría de la Literatura.” Encompassing only a handful of pages, this prologue encapsulates the subsequent tone of the book. It is here where Maestro's disdain for the postmodern first manifests itself, a theme that will remain constant throughout. He contends that “las teorías posmodernas de la literatura se desarrollan en la medida

que la literatura desaparece” (18). It is also here where one first encounters Maestro’s predilection for lengthy footnotes; perhaps the most interesting, yet perplexing, of which consists of a tirade about “género,” although pointedly not “género como término de importación angloamericana e imperialista (*gender*) para apelar eufemísticamente al sexo de los seres humanos” (18). Still, Maestro’s footnote about literary genre turns into one about gender, and he concludes his discussion with an examination of the arroba (@) and its use in Spanish e-mail communication to refer to a mix of both male and female recipients (for example, “querid@s amig@s”).

Having established this agonistic tone, Maestro moves to his second chapter, “Teoría de los géneros literarios.” Maestro believes that the study of genre can be divided into two camps, the *caso porfiriano* and the *caso plotiniano*. Under the former, literature is viewed as a whole comprised of various parts, or genres, a view that all current theories of genre adopt, but one that Maestro dismisses. He prefers the *plotiniano* view, the one where the whole is not literature itself, but the genre. The genre is the totality of observable common characteristics. It is this view that informs Maestro’s *Materialismo Filosófico como Teoría de la Literatura*, one that examines

los géneros literarios desde la dialéctica entre el Género, la Especie y la Obra literaria, es decir, desde la confrontación lógico-formal y lógico-material, y por tanto gnoseológica, dada entre las partes determinantes (intensionales), integrantes (extensionales) y constituyentes (distintivas), de los materiales literarios de naturaleza verbal. (49)

Before embarking on the specifics, Maestro prepares the reader with an extensive vocabulary lesson, for he utilizes many technical words when presenting his ideas. Fortunately, he does include several well designed charts to help organize the material.

The word “caustic” best describes the beginning of chapter three, “Crítica de los géneros literarios.” If Maestro’s disdain for the postmodern had somehow escaped unnoticed, it is brought to the forefront with the opening line:

Cualquier interpretación racional que a día de hoy se haga del *Quijote* tendrá que enfrentarse, necesariamente de forma dialéctica, contra el irracionalismo que la posmodernidad ha implantado en las universidades contemporáneas, irracionalismo que, lejos de ofrecer un análisis del texto de Cervantes, sólo impone al lector a una declaración de intenciones con

la que se identifica, gremial e ideológicamente, quien la formula, con frecuencia, para justificar su posición moral en el mundo. (165)

From there, Maestro commences with his own analysis of *Don Quijote*, with the schemata he presented in the previous chapter as the foreground for his own study. He examines what he sees as the three parts or totalities: the genre, the species, and the literary work. And in this undertaking, Maestro will spend over three hundred pages analyzing *Don Quijote* based on the tenets of his *Materialismo filosófico*.

Maestro begins with a more global analysis of the *novela* as genre, with the narrator of the *Quijote* taking center stage; for, without a narrator, the story would not exist. Maestro is certainly well versed in narratology, and this particular section contains work previously published in *Cervantes* in 1995 under the title “El sistema narrativo del *Quijote*: La construcción del personaje Cide Hamete Benengeli.” In his narratological scheme, there are three entities that speak in the text: the voice that represents Miguel de Cervantes, the narrator, and those of the fictitious authors, such as the author of the first eight chapters, Cide Hamete Benengeli, the *morisco* translator, and the Academics of Argamasilla. The narrator acts as an anonymous editor who governs the voices of the fictitious authors. His is also the voice that steps in at the end of part one, chapter eight. However, Maestro commits the same *faux-pas* as he did in 1995, giving no credit where it is due. His elaborate analysis of the diegetic plane is reminiscent of the work published by James Parr in 1988. To his credit, Maestro does list Parr in the bibliography this time around, but never mentions him in the text proper.

Maestro continues with his study of genre as he moves to what he calls the *atributos* or the *metros* of the work. In this particular instance, he examines the characters in *Don Quijote*, paying particular attention to Grisóstomo’s and Marcela’s stories. He then moves to the final category in his generic analysis, the *potencia*, where he examines the idea of parody.

At this point in his study, Maestro turns to an examination of the species. As Maestro sees it, *Don Quijote* is a novel replete with genres and species, which he enumerates with great precision, citing the chivalric, the pastoral, and the picaresque, just to name a few. As before, Maestro moves from more global observations to an ever-narrowing focus. He thus moves from merely listing the genres present in the *Quijote* to seeing how they are integrated into the text, spending considerable time on theater and poetry. Maestro concludes this segment with a look at *locura* and how it relates to the pro-

tagonist. Specifically, he lauds the work done by Gonzalo Torrente Ballester who, according to Maestro, is the only critic to have noticed that the narrator shows how Don Quijote's supposed *locura* is really a design of the character's *cordura*. Maestro further contends that *locura* and *cordura* are not diametrical opposites, but in fact are complementary.

The final analysis of his *Materialismo filosófico* is the literary work itself. Just as each part goes from general to specific, so does the study of the three parts, commencing with the novel as a whole, moving to genre and species, and ending with the actual text. Maestro highlights how *Don Quijote* becomes a prototype for Avellaneda's spurious continuation, and then contrasts the two. From there, Maestro tackles politics and religion in the text and concludes with an introspective look at the humorous elements within the work, analyzing everything from laughter to the grotesque.

Chapter four, "Coda," brings the work full circle, taking one last jab at postmodernism, equating it to the Inquisition in its attempts at political correctness. Maestro does include an appendix entitled "Estado actual de la teoría crítica de la literatura en Europa"—an unpublished article that retains the anti-postmodernist tenor of his work.

While a few personal punches at scholars and their respective works could have been excluded from the text, Maestro's book is a meticulous wonder, one thoroughly researched and well written, a true *tour de force*. My only regret is that no review can really do it justice. It is one of those books that needs to be read to be completely understood. However, this book is definitely not for the faint of heart. It should be reserved for the serious Cervantes scholar ready for a challenge; for Maestro provides a worthy one indeed.

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