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James A. Parr. *Don Quixote, Don Juan, and Related Subjects: Form and Tradition in Spanish Literature, 1330–1630*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2004. 282 pp. ISBN: 1-57591-084-5.

James A. Parr has revised a number of articles he wrote in the 1990's and organized them into the present volume. The result is a sort of retrospective, in which a veteran *hispanista* surveys the field, fondly holding up his favorite works to an eclectic array of theoretical optics. Although a certain sense of cohesion and development is achieved through the even distribution of the twelve essays into three general parts, the individual chapters are unique, often containing a distinct primary work and theory. But the book is not a miscellany. The variety of theoretical approaches itself serves to illustrate one of Parr's underlying points: *praxis* precedes *theoria*, and therefore certain theories are more felicitously applied to certain works, the former having their genesis in the latter. Another unifying principle is the intermittent appeal for a return to "aesthetic" and "humanistic" approaches to literary study, along with illustrations—deconstruction and psychoanalysis not excluded—of what this might look like. Parr's prose is occasionally playful, in a few instances overwrought, but mostly plain and lucid. And while it certainly contains a few barbs, this book is less concerned with contention than with promoting scholarly dialogue. Along with his provocations, Parr offers a relatively accommodating overview of the canon, the theories we employ to form and elucidate it, and "related subjects" such as periodization and translation. In addition to being a fine read in preparation for a survey course, this volume should do much to cultivate appreciation of the literary works in question, and to foster critical debate amongst those who read them.

As the title suggests, *Don Quijote* and *El burlador de Sevilla* receive the most sustained attention, and their treatment contributes to the study's structure and cohesion: Cervantes' novel is the focus of Part I ("*Don Quixote* and Narrative Tradition"), and a comparison of the Manchegan knight and Tirso's outlaw initiates Part II, where the general subject shifts from narrative to drama ("*Don Juan* and Classical Spanish Drama"); building on the analyses of *El burlador*, the last chapter of Part II examines canonicity, thus setting the stage for the final section, on three works judged to be at the canonical center of their respective centuries (*Libro de buen amor*, *Celestina*, *Lazarillo de Tormes*). Parr deploys a striking variety of theoretical approaches, including narratology, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, structuralism, and formalism. These frameworks are applied more or less uniformly in their respective chapters, and Parr's promotion of the idea that the artwork itself does much to suggest the optimal theory is attractive: narratology is certainly relevant to an important characteristic of *Don Quijote*; a discussion of genre with self-styled *tragico-*

medias makes perfect sense. This theoretical heterogeneity is ordered beneath a general rubric of "aesthetics." One of the more provocative aspects of Parr's book is the contention that literary works are best studied as *literary* works, that is, not as political tracts, economic manifestos, artifacts of class, gender or racial consciousness, etc.: "It is essentially a newer new criticism, ...an approach focused primarily on the elucidation and enhanced appreciation of the text, one that recognizes the individual talent (which is to say "the author"), without diminishing the role of the reader, fully aware at the same time that literature is made from other literature" (42).

Part I begins with a review of the major translations of *Don Quijote*, and includes some nuanced observations about tone and linguistic register (including "oral" and "textual" ones), the importance of prepositions and the complexity of narrative structure. After giving the laurels to Rutherford over Grossman (and admonishing Raffel's creative liberties and occasional tone-deafness), Parr proceeds to discuss the history of *Quijote* criticism, including the above-mentioned exhortation to critics. He then demonstrates how the 1605 title deconstructs itself by constantly shifting the point of view the reader is encouraged to adopt vis-à-vis the protagonist: "ingenioso," "hidalgo," "don," "quijote," "mancha." This is followed by a commentary on the concept of genre, in which Parr claims that *Don Quijote* is more of a satire than a novel, and that satire and romance are more prevalent today, in fact, than the realist novel. Since, as Parr notes, "translation is, itself, a form of interpretation" (50), there is a certain coherence to this first chapter, in spite of the broad and varied terrain covered. Moreover, it functions well as an exposition of the issues he will treat in more detail later on.

Chapter 2 contains an account of the famously complex narrative structure of *Don Quijote*. In addition to the standard technical vocabulary of narratology (metalepsis, diegesis, focalization, etc.), Parr elaborates on some of his own terms: motivated and unmotivated *narrators*, narrative "voices" and "presences," and the "supernarrator" and "supernarratee." These last two may be characterized as the most sophisticated and far-seeing intratextual narrator and reader, the former in command of various texts and speakers, the latter capable of sorting out and appreciating what the supernarrator sets forth. The ideal reader, or "superreader," is able to grasp the interplay of the supernarrator and supernarratee in all of its subtleties. Parr concludes the chapter by pointing out that such meta-literary innovations came to preoccupy modern and postmodern narrative theory, thus reiterating his assertion that *praxis* comes before *theoria*. While the abundant terminology sometimes makes the head swim, it can be conceded that the multiple layers and figures of *Don Quijote's* narrative structure are more effectively sorted out if they are named. Parr's detailed narratological analysis contributes to our understanding of the way Cervantes exercises his authorial control and freedom while

offering to us a fine lesson in reading.

Taken from a book by Moses Hadas, Parr's favorite analogy for his eclectic theoretical practice is the pouring of "old wine" (classics) into "new bottles" (theoretical frameworks). In Chapter 3 ("Framing, Orality, Origins") the bottle is deconstruction, and the notion that old humanist types are filled with anxiety at the prospect of supplementarity, scapegoats, shifting frames, and elusive origins is given the lie as Parr gallops through the perilous textual field astride his Derridean mount. This follows naturally enough from the previous chapter's attention to narrative framing in *Don Quijote*. Moreover, Parr's emphasis on the potential for successful interaction between supernarrator and narratee, and thus on the idea of *communication* between author and reader, is consistent with his rejection of the "freeplay" varieties of deconstruction (74). But one sometimes wonders whether Parr is more intoxicated by the artwork or the theory, as in the following ruminations on orality and literacy: "Is the immediacy of speech, the direct discourse of dialogue, attenuated and displaced as diegesis intervenes to compete with and indeed coopt its simulacrum of reality? Is the transcription of diegesis and mimesis through the medium of writing a poison, a cure, a necessary evil, or all of these simultaneously?" (85). At any rate, the deconstructive exercise serves to emphasize the ludic subversion of systematized thought in Cervantes—although the system that comes under the most scrutiny is, to allude to Claudio Guillén's book, the literary one.

The first part closes with a comparison of *Don Quijote* and Furetière's *Le Roman bourgeois*. Here the focus is on genre, including some observations on the confusion that can result from the common insistence on calling Cervantes' masterpiece "the first modern novel." Parr's contention that *Don Quijote* is more accurately understood as a *satire* (of the Mennipean and Horatian tradition), and that we currently live in a "postrealistic times" (102), in which satire and romance predominate, is a useful counterpoint within the resurgence of such discussions at the 400th anniversary of *Don Quijote* I. A work can be satirical in a referential and/or a linguistic sense, and Parr asserts that *Don Quijote* is both. The frequent rhetorical flourishes are examples of the latter; with regard the former, Parr subscribes to Maravall's thesis that Cervantes satirizes the nostalgic mentality: "it is simply the notion that there was once a pristine past, a national sociopolitical agenda, which seventeenth-century society can somehow recapture" (107). With his concern for the importance of "kind" in the categorization, appreciation and creation of art, the absence of Rosalie Colie's important study of genre in the period under question (*Resources of Kind*) is somewhat surprising. Nevertheless, Parr makes good use here of Bakhtin's studies of Menippean satire, of Frye's modes, and of the narratological work done in previous chapters to underscore the fact that Cervantes' satire will have different levels of meaning for different readers,

as suggested by the multiple narratees: the *vulgo* will recognize the folkloric elements and the jabs at the moribund chivalric romances; the *discreto* will pick up on the more pointed allusions to the contemporary milieu and mentalities.

Chapter 5 contains a primarily Freudian examination of easily overlooked similarities between Don Quijote and Don Juan. As elsewhere, Parr seems aware of the limitations and potential abuses of theory—in this case, the dubious practice of psychoanalyzing the author or the character (not to mention the critic, advisable as that sometimes may seem). Under the premise that “poets in all times and places have demonstrated intuitive but profound insights into the human condition” (121), Parr discusses how the works in question illustrate social aspects of psyche formation. I hope it doesn’t seem prudish to wonder what became of theoretical discipline when Parr goes on to assert that our protagonist’s selection of the name “Quixote” over “Quijano” represents an attempt to shift from the anal to the genital (the *quijote* covers the front of the thigh, away from the *ano*). For good measure, Parr suggests that the name may also express Don Quijote’s castration anxiety (125). The sequence is speculative and a bit forced, but it serves Parr’s larger assertion that Don Quijote and Don Juan both reveal an “anal-sadistic” relationship to society, and follow a pattern away from the feminine (*eros*), toward a desire for death (*thanatos*).

After bringing his considerable research to bear on the authorship debates surrounding *El burlador de Sevilla* and siding with Tirso over Claramonte (an annotated list of editions is included), Parr returns to dramatic genre theory in Chapter 7. Here he productively calls into question a number of potential misconceptions: the notion that an audience steeped in a redemptive, Christian belief system would be affectively immune to tragedy; the tendency to assign moral (e.g. *hamartia*) rather than aesthetic (e.g. *admiratio*) criteria to analysis of tragic plot; and confusion regarding the subject matter and structure of comedy (169). Parr gives some order to this chaos by examining *Celestina* as a foundational *tragicomedia* that commingles the worlds of the upper and lower classes while combining elements of Plautus and Terence with the tragic model of Seneca. He then goes on to describe how such elements play out in the Spanish *comedia*. *Fuenteovejuna* combines social classes, and includes the tragic isolation of the *comendador* with comic integration of Frondoso and Laurencia (171). *El caballero de Olmedo* is generically ironic, anticipating but ultimately frustrating integration. Parr suggests that rather than looking for a moral defect by assigning some sort of *hamartia* to Alonso, one can more plausibly explain his death as a result of *areté*. *El caballero de Olmedo* thereby illustrates the social and psychological drama of the “dangers inherent in standing out from the crowd” (173).

In Chapter 8 Parr invokes the generic subtlety of *El burlador de Sevilla* to

argue for its central place in the dramatic canon, although there are additional justifications: "it is the foundational text for all subsequent versions of the archetypal character it introduces to world literature...as well as being the source of the myth of *donjuanismo*" (185). The subtitle of this chapter—"The Canon and the Culture Wars"—puts one on guard, ready to pounce into the polemical fray. However, apart from an amusing spoof on canon-formation according to the logic of identity politics, Parr's notion of the canon, as the comments on the *Burlador* above indicate, is quite empirical, pragmatic, and accommodating. The chapter includes a thoughtful discussion of aesthetic and cultural considerations, of the process of myth-formation, and of measures of a work's "adaptability" (187). Most importantly, Parr makes an appeal against sectarianism, and points out that the canon is not absolute, that "we have tremendous freedom to modify that central core by proposing other candidates" (179). This is consistent with the book's recurring advocacy of dialogue and negotiation.

The final part focuses on the *Libro de Buen Amor*, *Celestina*, and *Lazarillo de Tormes*, and Parr brings to each work an approach that further illustrates the theories incorporated and discussed in the preceding chapters. Returning to the principle employed to identify similarities between Don Quijote and Don Juan, Parr examines the "deep structure" of *Libro de buen amor* in order to trace a fundamental continuity between its two seemingly opposing concepts of love. Lévi-Strauss and the flexible and opportunistic process of "bricolage" provide clues to the unity beneath the mythic, generic, and narrative variety of the work. All conspire, in Parr's analysis, to form an elaborate "myth of desire" (209), in which elements from the vegetable and animal world cohere with Platonic and Augustinian Christian traditions to articulate a negative view of celibacy and a celebration of *all* manifestations of love: *Cupiditas* and *Eros* can develop into *Agapé* and *Caritas* (211). In the chapter on *Celestina* ("*Ut Pictora Poesis*") Parr bemoans the lack of rigor in most inter-media comparisons, discusses some of the dilemmas of comparative aesthetics, and appeals for a focus on structure over content. By way of illustration he identifies perspectivistic representation, symbolism, spatial shifts, and triangles in *Celestina*, and offers comparisons with works by Rubens, Van Eyck, Bruegel the Elder, and Picasso. As Parr admits, this is a tentative exposition of a method, far from an exhaustive study. It may well serve as a stimulus and an admonition in this popular area of inquiry. David Castillo's recent book on *anamorphosis* in Cervantes and the picaresque (*Awry Views*) may sin, in Parr's view, by its permissive importation of terminology, but its attention to narrative structure and perspective could qualify as a development of the method advocated here. On the other hand, some of our technologically gifted colleagues embracing hypertext to link words and images might take note of Parr's cautionary remarks. In the midst of such inter-media, cross-disciplinary, cultural

studies zeal, we should keep in mind the possibility that literary texts have unique properties—as “texts” and as “literary.”

Parr returns to a focus on genre and reader reception in his treatment of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Chapter 11). This section contains an informative review of the major theses applied to the *Lazarillo*, and a reminder of the distortions that can result from an inaccurate genre assumption (e.g. “the novel”). Parr asserts that *Lazarillo de Tormes*, like *Don Quijote*, is best understood as a satire, although this is not intended to diminish the anonymous work’s importance or complexity. According to Parr, the satire of *Lazarillo de Tormes* involves an intricate rhetorical structure as well as subtle historical allusion that, as the prologue intimates, will be appreciated at different levels according to the sophistication of the reader: “...the vast majority of readers will focus on the hypocrisy and the anticlerical jabs but will be in beyond their depth in trying to grasp the real butt of the satire, Charles V’s ruinous imperialist politics” (234). Parr then proposes that the rhetorical framing techniques combined with historical reference in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Don Quijote* constitute an approach to fiction and history that is later developed to the point of inversion by the likes of Simon Schama, Gore Vidal, and Natalie Zenon Davis. While the former are fictions that engage with history, the latter are “imaginative histories” (240). The comparison is another suggestive indication of how the works under questions anticipated later concerns, although the “postmodern” works, like the paintings in the previous chapter, receive little elaboration.

The final chapter offers a useful discussion of periodization, with particular attention to the problems of applying art history terms to literature, and to the uniqueness of Counter-Reformation Spain. The currently fashionable “early modern” is critiqued as a democratic attempt at “leveling” that nevertheless privileges “modern” and “postmodern.” Parr’s modest proposal is that we simply use “sixteenth century” and “seventeenth century.” This seems like a straightforward and practical solution, although it is, of course, another type of “leveling.” Faced with the astounding artistic production of the period that gave rise to *Don Quijote*, *Don Juan*, and “related subjects,” many of us, racked with guilt and oppressed by elitism, will continue to utter, in muted tones, *Golden Age*.

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