

Hearing Voices of Satire in *Don Quixote*

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JAMES PARR'S *DON QUIXOTE: A Touchstone for Literary Criticism*¹ offers a slightly revised and expanded version of his *Don Quixote: An Anatomy of Subversive Discourse* (1988) as well as two appendices devoted, respectively, to selected book reviews that Parr wrote before and after this book's original version.

The new title of this book expresses two large claims: one explicit, the other tacit. I predict that the explicit one, however large, will spark little controversy from readers of this journal: namely, that *Don Quixote* is a touchstone for criticism on narrative fiction. The tacit claim of Parr's title—never stated but developed throughout his text—strikes me as far bolder: namely, that both versions of Parr's book jointly represent a touchstone for criticism on Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. This inference follows not only from Parr's assertion that his *Anatomy* has become over the course of seventeen years "something of a classic in its own right" (8) but also his stated purpose to *enderezar* the exegetical *tuertos* of other critics, or to embark on a solitary "quest to re-orient the Quixotic Establishment" (x).

The first version or *sortie* of this ambitious quest is aimed, generally, at English-speaking critics, whereas the second one aims specifically at Hispanists. In both cases, Parr seeks to reorient criticism on *Don Quixote* toward an emphasis on the formal over the thematic, narratology over psychology, the playful over the solemn. This aligns with his concomitant emphasis on the achievement of the author as master storyteller and

1 James A. Parr, *Don Quixote: A Touchstone for Literary Criticism*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2005. x + 290 pp. ISBN: 3-937734-21-X.

master satirist in the Menippean or Varronian tradition over the mock-heroic adventures of Cervantes' mad protagonist. Parr therefore enlists a critical discourse that he describes as "more idealist than materialist," reflecting less interest in "superficial contradiction and struggle [within Cervantes' text] than in resolution of all the apparent tensions into a transcendent and atemporal *logos*" (3).

Parr pursues his argument in four Parts, between a preface that he calls an "Overture" and concluding remarks that he calls a "Coda." He devotes Part I, "The Diegetic Domain—Narration," to what has proved to be his influential ranking of narrative voices and narrative "presences" that he discerns in Cervantes' text. In "approximate descending order of credibility," according to Parr, these fictional constructs encompass 1) the extratextual or "historical author" (a presence); 2) the "inferred author" deriving from all textual voices (a presence); 3) the "dramatized author" of both prologues (a presence in the fictional text); 4) the "supernarrator" who intrudes openly in I, 8, though controlling the whole fictional narrative from the start (the chief narrator or "voice"); 5) the "fictive historical author," or a fictional analogue of the empirical Cervantes in his capacity as author of "El curioso impertinente" (a presence); 6) the "autonomous narrator" of "El curioso impertinente" (a narrator and voice); 7) the "archival historian" who collates the first eight chapters of the fiction until the intrusion, or "metalepsis," of the supernarrator (a narrator, voice); 8) the "translator" (narrator, voice); 9) Cide Hamete, both an emblem of writing and Cervantes' transparently absurd parody of chroniclers (a presence); 10) the "second author" (an ephemeral, transitional narrator, voice); 11) Cide Hamete's "pen" (a presence).

Besides introducing the major innovation of Parr's supernarrator, this scheme addresses what our critic thinks the untenable practice of dubbing Cide Hamete a narrator, a role that far exceeds his supernumerary "presence" within the text as a "red herring, [or] a joke played on unsuspecting readers in search of high seriousness" (34).

Further, if these voices and presences that Parr adduces underscore Cervantes' achievement in both their number and variety, they do so as well in the mutual interplay that leads them continually to discredit themselves and one another. Through them, Parr contends, Cervantes "subverts" the simulated "authority" of his fictional history. By extension, as Parr argues, our Spanish author subverts the authority of such spurious fictions as the romances of chivalry and, by further extension, all writing, including all histories and even the Bible. In this way, Parr recasts Américo Castro's thesis of "Cervantine hypocrisy" (49) to conclude

that the author of *Don Quixote* dramatizes his “revolutionary” view of sacred and profane writing with artful subtlety—accessible only to the “discreet” few—in a Spain “still basking in afterglow of the Council of Trent, with the Counter Reformation proceeding apace” (50).

In Part II, “Point of View,” Parr draws on Susan Lanser’s *The Narrative Act* to ascertain Cervantes’ “authorial perspective” (53): the attitude and tone that our Spanish author expresses not only within his fictional text but also in such paratextual utterances as his two title pages, his two prologues, the preliminary verses of the *Primera Parte*, and the headings of all his chapters. From textual and paratextual utterances alike, readers come to perceive the “voice” of *Don Quixote*’s “inferred author,” a designation that Parr prefers to the “implied author” of Wayne Booth. For Parr, the inferred author of *Don Quixote* adopts a consistent attitude of festive mockery toward the foolhardy adventures of his knight and squire, the competing cacophony of his narrative voices and presences within their respective levels, the sequential incoherence of events within his tale, the haphazard division and headings of his chapters, and the transparent, self-referential artifice of his fictional history. Indeed, Cervantes’ authorial attitude translates into a self-conscious artifice of what Parr calls “dialectical discourse,” which delights in the mutual interference between such contraries as “inner-outer, subject-object, author-reader,” or Cervantes author of the real *Don Quixote*—Avellaneda author of the false sequel (91). This authorial attitude and its consequent artifice invite a corresponding response of “alienation” in the reader toward the objects of the inferred author’s festive mockery, even as it invites “affinity” for the empirical author and his artistic ingenuity (92).

Part III, “The Mimetic Domain—Characterization,” signals Parr’s preference for criticism that centers on the narrative aesthetics or rhetoric of Cervantes’ characterization instead of criticism that falls into the “mimetic madness” of inventing for Cervantes’ lunatic character a personal, familial, or psychological history. This is why Parr objects to Howard Mancing’s reconstructing what might have been the social milieu of Cervantes’ protagonist in the opening chapter of *The Chivalric World of Don Quixote*². And this is why Parr objects more strongly to Carroll Johnson’s thesis, in *Madness and Lust*, that Cervantes’ hidalgo

2 [Ed. note: Mancing and Parr recently exchanged views in this journal. Mancing: “Cervantes as Narrator of Don Quijote,” *Cervantes* 23.1 (2003): 117–40. Parr: “On Narrative and Theory,” *Cervantes* 24.2 (2004): 119–35. Mancing: “Response to ‘On Narration and Theory,’” *Cervantes* 24.2 (2004): 137–56. All three are available online at the journal’s Web site, <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~cervantes/bcsalist.htm>>.]

protagonist becomes the knight Don Quixote in a desperate, psychotic effort to suppress incestuous desires for his recently nubile niece. Both these works by prominent members of the "Quixotic Establishment" exemplify, for Parr, a hermeneutical move into a "topsy-turvy world" where "extra-textual speculation may pass for critical commentary" (96).

In keeping with what Parr deems a "more legitimate critical concern for characterization" (98), he analyzes information that Cervantes' readers receive about Don Quixote from other characters, narrative voices, and presences, the inferred author of both text and paratexts, as well as the lunatic protagonist himself. Don Quixote emerges from Parr's analysis as a "paradoxical polymorphous *pharmakos*" (111). Although Parr judges Don Quixote to be a crazed product of idleness, bad reading in the form of bookish literalism, and "utopian evasion"—hence "proudful, violent, cowardly, gullible, grotesque in both attire and action" (126)—he also finds him mildly "paradoxical," since the knight has "good intentions," even if they produce nothing good, acts with generosity "on occasion," and shows "a certain complexity" that Cervantes develops in the fiction's Part II (126). By contrast, Parr's Don Quixote remains utterly "polymorphous," not because he shows any transformation or psychological development, but only because he changes abruptly, whimsically, according to the satirical inventiveness of his creator. In short, Parr's Don Quixote remains a scapegoat, *pharmakos*, of his author, his fictional world and sufficiently "discreet" readers.

The high playfulness that Parr observes in Cervantes' merger of narration (diegesis), point of view and characterization (mimesis) follows from his conviction that *Don Quixote* belongs chiefly to the tradition of Menippean satire, also called either Varronian or Lucianesque satire. For this reason, "paradox, parody, irony, and subversion—collectively and cumulatively—constitute the logos of the text" (92). The three related targets of satire in this text, according to Parr, are the aesthetic, personal vice of bad reading, the social vice of idleness, and the political vice—typifying bad, idle readers—of seeking to impose simplistic schemes of utopian evasion, like Don Quixote's attempt to restore the Golden Age, as policy for all. Parr argues this point most forcefully in Part IV, "Genre." On the one hand, he agrees with Northrop Frye's assessment of *Don Quixote* as part novel, part romance, and part "anatomy" (Frye's alternative name for Menippean satire). Yet Parr adds that romance informs *Don Quixote* primarily as the object of parody. And although Parr denies that Cervantes' work represents an instance of the novel—there was no such genre in Cervantes' time and one text does not a genre make—he

asserts that its narrative innovations provide “a model for both the realistic and [especially the] self-conscious novel” of modern and postmodern times (155). On the other hand, Parr cites influential studies on satire by Frye as well as Mikhail Bakhtin, Sheldon Sacks, and Gilbert Highet to illustrate that Cervantes’ masterpiece reveals virtually all the formal traits that, for these critics, delineate the genre. Drawing on Bakhtin’s classification of the *menippea*, Parr asserts that *Don Quixote* conforms to a fourfold poetics of “carnivalization”: 1) a serio-comic representation of its subject, situated in a setting that contemporary readers identify with their own social circumstance; 2) an attachment to empirical experience that entails inventive scorn aimed at common assumptions based on legend; 3) a mixture of frequently contrary styles, tones, and inserted genres; 4) hidden or open polemic with prevailing social currents and trends (135–36). In light of Sacks’ observations, our critic insists that Cervantes creates a fiction more devoted to ordering ideas than to arranging or plotting action, with satirical characters that encourage feelings in the reader of ironic distance rather than care, identification or concern (140). Parr also finds in *Don Quixote* what Highet identifies as six marks of satire: 1) the work calls itself by that generic name, as the Prologue to *Don Quixote*, Part I, labels the subsequent tale an “invectiva” against chivalric romance; 2) *Don Quixote* loosens ridicule upon a contemporary target (i.e., utopian evasion of reality-based solutions to social problems); 3) Cervantes’ fiction abounds in comical, cruel and familiar language; 4) the fiction abounds, as well, in irony, violence, exaggeration, parody and paradox; 5) the work offends the sensibilities of readers, shocking them into awareness of reprehensible yet unquestioned beliefs that inform their society; and 6) the fiction elicits a response that balances aversion with amusement, thus avoiding the extremes of either invective or farce (141–45). From a formal standpoint, then, Parr argues that genre serves as a classificatory device, a “category.” But, more important, he also argues from a hermeneutic standpoint that genre serves as an interpretative device, as “communication.” Parr’s “competent consumer” of *Don Quixote* “remains alert to generic markers [parody, paradox, irony] as they materialize” and can therefore assimilate the complex message, or *logos*, of Cervantes’ “self-conscious, subversive anatomy” (161).

The appendices devoted to book reviews, which Parr titles “Meta-Critical Commentary,” are too numerous to summarize here without testing my readers’ patience beyond human limits³. Even so, I believe

3 The books reviewed in Appendix I, in their order of appearance in Parr’s text, are as fol-

it worth commenting on how Parr's reviews remain consistent with his mission, both before and after his *Anatomy*, to reorient criticism on Cervantes. In a review published in Appendix I, before the *Anatomy*, he criticizes Ruth El Saffar's *Distance and Control* for an "intrinsic analysis" of *Don Quixote*—an analysis that fails to discuss historical background, mode, genre, or literary conventions—which thus "offers an unfortunately truncated perspective" (183). What is more, Parr asserts that this critic "misreads" Cervantes' satire as a novel (183). Also in Appendix I, Parr writes that he would have preferred "to see more on characterization than on characters" in *Mimesis y cultura en la ficción* by Gonzalo Navajas (193); he faults *Theatrical Aspects of the Novel* by Jill Syverson-Stork for "an inconsistent critical discourse" arising from a failure to assimilate "basic concepts" of narratology (195); he finds unwarranted speculation not only in Howard Mancing's *Chivalric World* (188), as already discussed, but also in *Cervantes* by Manuel Durán, where that critic writes: "Miguel was by then a handsome youth of seventeen. He *must have enjoyed* life in Seville" (Parr's emphasis, 180). Parr has nothing but praise for *Utopía y contrautopía en el Quijote* by José Antonio Maravall, "more cautionary than romantic" (187), from which our critic draws the concept of "utopian evasion" that later appears in his *Anatomy* as an object of Cervantes'

lows: *Cervantes* by Manuel Durán; *Distance and Control* by Ruth El Saffar; *Utopía y contrautopía en el Quijote* by José Antonio Maravall; *The Chivalric World of Don Quijote* by Howard Mancing; *Mimesis y cultura en la ficción* by Gonzalo Navajas; *Theatrical Aspects of the Novel: A Study of Don Quixote* by Jill Syverson-Stork. In their order of appearance in Parr's text, the reviews of Appendix II are as follows: *In the Margins of Cervantes* by John G. Weiger; *Cervantes the Writer and Painter of Don Quijote* by Helena Percas de Ponseti; *Principios y fines del Quijote* by Eduardo Urbina; *Cervantine Journeys* by Steven Hutchinson; *Don Quixote and the Poetics of the Novel* by Félix Martínez-Bonati; *Cervantes' Exemplary Fictions* by Thomas R. Hart; *Cervantes's Novelas Ejemplares: Between History and Creativity* by Joseph Ricapito; *A Marriage of Convenience* by Theresa Ann Sears; *La verosimilitud en el Siglo de Oro* by Rogelio Miñana; *Semiótica del Quijote* by José María Paz Gago; *Cervantes and the Material World* by Carroll Johnson; *Cervantes, entre vida y creación* by Jean Canavaggio; *Cervantes, the Novel and the New World* by Diana de Armas Wilson; *Adventures in Paradox* by Charles D. Presberg; *Critical Images: The Canonization of Don Quixote through Illustrated Editions of the Eighteenth Century* by Rachel Schmidt; *Cervantes, Raphael and the Classics* by Frederick De Armas; *The Crucible Concept: Thematic and Narrative Patterns in Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares* by E. T. Aylward; *Discordancias cervantinas* by Julio Baena; *A Facsimile Edition of the First English Translations of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's 'El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha' (1605–1615)*, compiled by Anthony Lo Ré; *Cervantes in Algiers* by María Antonia Garcés; *Myths of Modern Individualism* by Ian Watt; *Las Semanas del jardín de Miguel de Cervantes* by Daniel Eisenberg; *Cervantes and the Modernists* by Edwin Williamson; *The Novel According to Cervantes* by Stephen Gilman; *The Endless Text* by Edward Dudley; *La escena imaginaria. Poética del teatro de Miguel de Cervantes* by Jesús G. Maestro.

satire (185). But, to avoid a false impression, let me hasten to add that Parr expresses more praise than criticism for the other works as well. He offers reasons why the book by El Saffar provides “a valuable addition to *Quixote* criticism” (184). He does the same for Navajas’ “noble effort” (194), Syverson-Stork’s monograph “that deserves an attentive audience” (196), Mancing’s “careful analysis and thought-provoking discussion” (189), and Durán’s “excellent introduction to the author [Cervantes], his times, and his work” (180).

The reviews of the much larger Appendix II that Parr wrote as author of the *Anatomy* reveal the same core concerns and a similar, fair-minded blend of positive and negative evaluation, supported by reasoned argument, as found in the reviews of Appendix I. In *the Margins of Cervantes* by John Weiger provides further evidence, for Parr, of that book’s author as “one of today’s most close and competent readers of Cervantes” (197). The fictional voice that Weiger calls “the prologuist” and observes in the Prologue of *Don Quixote*, Part I, would supplant Parr’s supernarrator. To this Parr responds: “While this is a possibility, it would entail an extension of the extratextual into the textual” (197). In *Don Quixote and the Poetics of the Novel*, Félix Martínez-Bonati describes genres as “regions of the imagination” in a discussion that Parr thinks “indeed brilliant” (209). But Parr objects to Martínez-Bonati’s failing to identify the imaginary region or genre of Cervantes’ work, except to call it “rigorously *sui generis*” (208). *Semiótica del Quijote* by José María Paz Gago, as Parr writes, “contends from beginning to end that the *Quijote* is the first modern novel, and he presents good evidence for that assertion” (217). Despite Paz Gago’s disagreement with Parr about the genre of Cervantes’ work, he does subscribe to Parr’s supernarrator (218). But Parr criticizes Paz Gago’s narratology for a “facile and simplistic” dismissal of Cide Hamete as nothing more than a “pseudo-author” (220). In a review of my own *Adventures in Paradox*, Parr describes that book as “an excellent study of its kind,” “meticulously researched” and “written with wit and verve” (229). But the argument of that book indicates, for Parr, a failure “to realize that paradox is one of several components informing satire” (228)—to realize that paradox, like irony and parody, “are properly seen as markers that point to satire as the dominant mode or genre” (229). This study therefore belongs to what Parr sees as a deficient “kind”: one so bound to its “portion of the total picture” that it “invariably sacrifice[s] perspective” (229). Along similar lines, in a review that Parr writes in Spanish of Eduardo Urbina’s *Principios y fines del Quijote*, he concludes that, because of this book, its author “merece ya un puesto entre los más

destacados críticos del *Quijote*" (203). Although Urbina asserts that *Don Quixote* belongs to the genre of romance, he argues that the structure and figuration informing Cervantes' text owe their uniqueness less to that genre than to parody, a mode already central to medieval romance, which Cervantes refashions and enlarges to an unprecedented degree. In this context, Parr contends that parody "es ante todo un 'indicador genérico,'" or a generic marker of satire (202). So, in light of Urbina's position that all satire in *Don Quixote* remains subordinate or incidental to parody, Parr insists: "para mí, todo lo contrario" (202).

As I hope is clear from the forgoing synopsis, both the main text and appendices of Parr's book repay his readers' attention with critical insight on almost every page. Because this is so, I think it unfortunate that Parr should blunt his insights—more in the main text than in the appendices—through what I perceive as a penchant for rhetorical excess at the level of both diction and argument.

Regarding diction, I think that an author achieves an effective *captatio benevolentiae* if he refrains from assuming the role of his reviewers or, in particular, from referring to his own book, however rightly, as "something of a classic in its own right." I find more decorum in a critic's endeavor to contribute to a field than to reorient an "Establishment." I find no yield of surplus meaning to justify such over-priced terms as "Overture," "Coda," or "Meta-Critical Commentary" when terms like "Preface," "Concluding Remarks," or "Book Reviews" at the standard lexical price provide readers the same service or, sparing them the cost of needless puzzlement, serve them better. A discourse that, as described by its author, seeks "resolution of all the apparent tensions into a transcendent and atemporal *logos*" seems less suited to critical than to mystical contemplation. In my view, such diction interrupts the argument of a fine critical intelligence and justifies invoking the only advice that Mark Twain presumed to address to other writers: "Murder your darlings."

In Parr's critical argument about *Don Quixote*, I perceive an excess of formalist abstraction that leads in some instances to schematic inflexibility. This needlessly weakens, without invalidating, his discussion-with-explanation of narratology in Part I ("The Diegetic Domain") and his discussion of Menippean satire in Part IV ("Genre"), which together shape discussion in the middle chapters that belong to Part II ("Point of View") and Part III ("The Mimetic Domain").

Although Parr and I are in substantial agreement on the issue of narrators in *Don Quixote*, my position also incorporates insights from John Weiger's *In the Margins of Cervantes*, already summarized in refer-

ence to Parr's review of that book. In my reading, Weiger's "prologuist" in the Prologue to Cervantes' Part I as well as Parr's "supernarrator" and "archival historian" in Cervantes' fiction ultimately designate a single voice which I simply call "narrator." I understand this voice to be a fictional analogue (a complex figment) of the empirical Cervantes in his capacity as author of the fiction *Don Quixote*. Now, it is true that, according to convention, one begins reading the Prologue to *Don Quixote*, Part I, assuming that the voice of that text belongs to the empirical author. But this assumption justifiably changes, I believe, when the subject of that voice threatens to leave the "history" of *Don Quixote*—already completed and less difficult to write than the Prologue—buried forever in the "archives of La Mancha." With this verbal act of what Borges might call partial magic—or a uniquely Cervantine example of what Parr might call extratextual metalepsis—the uttering subject that we assume to be the empirical author implicitly claims to occupy the same ontological plane as the fictional protagonist, earlier dubbed "tan noble caballero." In this way, Cervantes, as author of the fiction, becomes artistic material from which the same author creates a festive, mocking alternative "Cervantes," fictional author of the "true history" about *Don Quixote*.

This alternative "Cervantes" created in the first Prologue, the chief narrator, is the one who intervenes, I believe, at the close of *Don Quixote*, I, 8, to inform us about a certain "autor desta historia." By inference, this "autor" is the narrator's primary source until now, who in turn ran out of source material. This leads to what is indeed the complex joke involving the surprise appearance of a "second author," the nearly miraculous appearance of Cide Hamete's manuscript, and the translator hired by the second author to render that manuscript into Spanish. The resulting proliferation of voices and fragmentary versions that suppress, embed, contradict, or claim to contradict other voices and versions combines with an endless swirl of hearsay about the protagonist to create the central joke of the text: the text itself as "true history," or Cervantes' fiction transparently masquerading as history.

Consequently, "credibility" becomes part of Cervantes' central joke. This eliminates the possibility of ranking Cervantes' voices and presences, as Parr does, "in descending order of credibility," within a careful hierarchy, according to an unspecified standard. If, as I have described here, Cervantes' self-conscious discourse is what Parr calls "subversive," that discourse also subverts its own subversions. It is discourse for, against, and about itself. By undermining its own authority, it proves its own authority to do so. In equal measure, this discourse denigrates and cel-

brates its own artifice. By seeking to fit Cervantes' "dialectical discourse" within a taxonomical hierarchy, Parr tries to stop Cervantes' continuing carnival, or to bring that dialectic to a semiotic halt. In this light, Parr's claim that Cervantes simply subverts the authority of the written word and, in that way, all history and the Bible, tells less than half the story of the "true history." Besides, reversing Parr's argument, one can just as plausibly claim that Cervantes' skepticism toward the written word, as put forth in his fiction, advances a critical rather than hypocritical argument against the Protestant theology of *Sola Scriptura*. In that case—and I find no reason to believe it is so—Cervantes' subversive history brightens Spain's Tridentine "afterglow" and hurries the pace of the Counter Reformation. Consequently, I would contend that Parr's argument on this subject goes too far, beyond what the textual evidence will bear, in a linear rather than dialectical direction.

From my perspective, Parr's scheme of voices and presences suffers from an excess of taxonomical abstraction, which leads him to multiply unduly the number of Cervantes' narrators. It also leads him to generate a series of "presences" for reasons that he fails to specify and that, in my opinion, remain unclear. How does it enhance our understanding of *Don Quixote* to learn that the "historical author" as well as Cide Hamete's pen figure as presences in Cervantes' work? What is the function of a presence in the text? What makes the "fictive author" of "El curioso impertinente" a separate entity (or presence) from, say, the "dramatized author" of the Prologues? Is it not more economical and more grounded in empirical fact to acknowledge that the historical person Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra acts in a social capacity as author of *Don Quixote*, in a related social capacity as author of "El curioso impertinente," and in what amounts to the same social capacity as author of such extratextual utterances as the Prologues? If so, Cervantes' text sometimes alludes to its own author, thus creating a fictional analogue of him in that specific authorial capacity, but without creating separate presences of him (whatever that may signify) as a result of such allusions. Does the allusion to "un tal Saavedra" in the Captive's tale convert Cervantes as "fictive soldier" into another presence within the text? Is Cervantes also a presence as "fictive friend" of the priest? And what about the unnamed sources of hearsay in the "true history," as evidenced by such phrases as "dicen que" or even "dicen que dicen que"? Are they also presences akin to Cide Hamete's personified pen? In short, since Parr offers no criteria by which one can identify a narrative presence or its function within Cervantes' work, his use of this term constitutes either an act of non-reference or

an act of reference pointing to such a disparate class of objects as to serve no critical purpose.

Along similar lines, Parr's preference for "inferred author" over Booth's "implied author" results in a distinction without a difference. Readers *infer* the authorial presence or authorial perspective that the text *implies*. "Implied author" and "inferred author" therefore denote the same imaginary referent, though from different perspectives. Likewise, it seems that attachment to established categories of contemporary narratology leads Parr to balk at "an extension of the extra-textual into the textual," and to look for an instance that matches the concept "metalepsis" solely within the "textual" fiction. By contrast, I would argue that, both within and from the first Prologue, Cervantes dramatizes the mutual interference between such apparent contraries as textual and extratextual or, in less formalist terms, between historical and poetic discourse. In less anachronistic terms, our Spanish author dramatizes—self-consciously and playfully—in both his Prologue and subsequent text the dialectic between contraries that Aristotle calls historical and poetic "truth." This dialectic forms part of the larger, Aristotelian dialectic between nature and art, which Cervantes refashions and varies inventively in all rhetorical domains of his work: diegetic, mimetic, point of view, genre.

Parr's discussion of Menippean satire as the "dominant" genre of *Don Quixote*, with paradox, parody, and irony functioning as "markers," offers another instance, I think, of an excellent point taken to untenable extremes. Our critic's emphasis on the formal traits of the anatomy—his effort to rank genres and markers in a hierarchy of dominants and subordinates—gives short shrift to thematic features of the genre and to relevant literary history. This leads his argument about the genre of *Don Quixote* in several places to resemble a theory in search of the facts.

From a formalist, semiotic perspective, it is true that paradox, parody, and irony are *markers* of Menippean satire. But to accept the artificial limits of the italicized term is to accept the limits of a single critical perspective. A marker seems an object unworthy of critical attention. And these markers receive more mention than attention in Parr's study. From a rhetorical perspective, however, paradox, parody, and irony together constitute the governing tropes of many, not all, instances of Menippean satire. Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, for instance, rightly cited by Parr as an example of Menippean satire, shows only token commitment to paradox, a commitment insufficient to understand that trope as a marker or governing trope of the work's genre. Moreover, from both a rhetorical and historical perspective, paradox becomes with parody and

irony a defining trope of anatomies *in the Renaissance*. To discover why this is so requires yet another perspective that studies Menippean satire within a tradition of paradox as both trope and, occasionally, genre.

In Cervantes' time the genre of paradox sometimes receives only the straightforward name "paradox," as in Gutierre de Cetina's praise of cuckoldry: *Paradoja: trata que no solamente no es cosa mala, dañosa ni vergonzosa ser un hombre cornudo, mas que los cuernos son buenos y provechosos*. Most often, however, works in this genre receive the name paradoxical encomium or mock encomium, signifying their status as rhetorical exercises that aim at praising the lowly or officially base. But not all works in this genre are satires, as Gutierre de Cetina's is not. The paradoxical encomium reaches unprecedented complexity, refashioned as a short form of Menippean satire, in Erasmus's doubly titled *Stultitiae laus* or *Encomium Moriae*, traditionally rendered into English as *In Praise of Folly*. In his Preface to that work, dedicated to Saint Thomas More (thus the pun in the second title), Erasmus cites sources of the paradoxical encomium from Classical antiquity to the Middle Ages as well as sources of Menippean satire from the same periods. Most important for my purpose here, he cites Lucian. Erasmus translated Lucian's satirical works in collaboration with Saint Thomas More, author of the *Utopia*. This work by More also constitutes a Menippean satire with a paradox for its title, but it is not a paradoxical encomium and lacks a rhetorical commitment to paradox that finds expression in the *Folly*. This fusion of Lucianesque satire and paradoxical encomium by Erasmus invests Renaissance satire after him with a novel degree of paradox, as in works by Rabelais or Burton and, of course, Cervantes.

If this novel degree of paradox justifies Parr's calling that trope and assimilated genre a "marker," his critical method obscures how paradox functions in Cervantes' text. It obscures especially Cervantes' complex dialectic between praise and censure (including praise in censure, censure in praise) and between wisdom and folly (including wisdom in folly, folly in wisdom). Hence the three objects of satire that Parr sees in Cervantes' work: 1) bad readers and bad literature; 2) idleness; 3) utopian evasion. These are all wholly negative objects of censure; in much the same way that, for Parr, Cervantes' imagery of narration in the "true history" aims at the denigration without celebration of writing, in a dialectic that artificially stops at "subversion."

As Northrop Frye observes, though Parr does not cite him in this connection, themes in Renaissance anatomies center on "mental attitudes." In my view, there is one mental attitude that Cervantes subjects

to both praise and censure as wisdom and folly, which differs in important respects from Parr's threefold object of Cervantine satire. I would summarize that attitude in this way: "life on the aesthetic principle." This phrase, unlike Juan Bautista Avall-Arce's "la vida como obra de arte" in reference to Don Quixote as "forma de vida," encapsulates a central tenet of Renaissance humanism, especially the rhetorical basis of humanist educational reform. In Cervantes' text, this attitude takes the specific form of life as a work of verbal art. Not all characters in Cervantes' text are or remain bad readers or readers of bad literature. Not all Cervantes' characters misuse their leisure time. Only Don Quixote, especially when he plays the *arbitrista* at the start of Cervantes' Part II, indulges in utopian evasion of a political kind. Thus, in my view, the three vices listed by Parr fail to qualify as sustained targets of satire or Cervantes' satirical theme. Yet Cervantes dramatizes and thematizes how all characters, with varying degrees of wisdom or folly—deserving varying degrees of praise or censure—make themselves out of language. More specifically, they imitate other models of verbal art, especially models found in books that they have read or heard about. In part II, of course, these models include Cide Hamete's history. This jointly ethical and aesthetic endeavor of all Cervantes' characters—a merger of moral and artistic exemplarity—is, in my view, the "folly" that remains the consistent, universal object of Cervantes' mixed "praise." As Menippean satire, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is also a sweeping paradoxical encomium of how human beings, individually and together, fashion their "true histories" and their poetics of history, how they negotiate the dialogue between nature (including human nature) and art.

Lastly, Parr's methodological inattention to paradox in *Don Quixote* at the level of genre causes him, in my opinion, to undermine the paradoxical quality of Cervantes' protagonist. One example will suffice to illustrate my point. According to Parr, Cervantes' knight inhabits a "degraded world suggestive of satire" (103). Claims about Don Quixote's moral superiority with respect to other characters—for example, the duke and duchess or Sansón Carrasco—reveal, for Parr, a Romantic misunderstanding of Cervantes' work. The same holds for claims that Don Quixote shows nobility and courage when he refuses to denounce Dulcinea under threat of death by Sansón Carrasco, disguised as the Knight of the White Moon: "Aprieta, caballero, la lanza, y quitame la vida, pues me has quitado la honra" (II, 64).

In Parr's reading of this episode, the mock-hero's nobility and courage are only apparent: "It seems obvious that Cervantes is here using his

character, as he has throughout, to suit the need of the moment, and that need now is to continue the refutation of Avellaneda" (124). Obvious? This line of argument invites a *tu quoque* from scholars whom Parr criticizes for unfounded, extratextual conjecture like Howard Mancing, Carroll Johnson, and Manuel Durán, since Parr's speculations here about Cervantes' motives have supplanted critical analysis of textual evidence. It would seem that a restricted view of Cervantes' satire makes it necessary to explain this passage by explaining it away.

As I read this passage, it brings to a climax the paradoxical quality of Don Quixote, especially as he tries in the second volume to adjust his deluded life-poetics to demands of both his physical and human environment. Of course, for as long as our protagonist fancies himself the knight Don Quixote, he remains mad by definition—trapped within the laughable lunacy of his chivalric dreamland. But madness differs from malice. Here, Sansón Carrasco succeeds in a plan motivated by vengeance, as we read earlier in the text. And vengeance in the prevailing faith and morals of Cervantes' time, to paraphrase Parr, is a clear marker of sinful wrath: indeed, one of the seven deadliest. Despite the intellectual folly that afflicts the protagonist from the moment he lost his wits ("perdió el juicio"), he shows the virtue of courage in this episode to a heroic degree, facing what he believes to be certain death. More important, he shows heroic virtue within and because of the chivalric folly that inspires his thoughts, words, and deeds. His actions therefore contrast favorably with the *moral* folly of his imagined adversary. Indeed, Cervantes' paradoxical encomium aims primarily at his protagonist: lunatic model and laughable hero of humankind's "life on the aesthetic principle."

To be sure, a heroic Don Quixote, especially a Don Quixote who playfully exemplifies the blend of wisdom and folly in every human being's quest for a life-narrative with heroic meaning, undermines Parr's thesis that satire remains the "dominant" genre of Cervantes' narrative or that our fiction "incorporates anatomy as its very backbone" (156). If maintaining this thesis requires dismissing an example of the protagonist's heroism as Cervantes' refutation of Avellaneda, and reducing that refutation to surface changes of plot, it also requires dismissing Cervantes's portrayal of his own art and disregarding relevant comments by critics whom Parr cites in support of his own thesis.

In a famous passage of *Viaje del Parnaso*, Cervantes has an allegory of himself speak these words to Apollo: "Nunca voló la pluma humilde mía / Por la región satírica" (Chapter IV, vv. 34–35). For Parr, such disclaimers by the author in a work other than *Don Quixote* "do not mat-

ter" (158). But Parr fails to point out that, in the *Parnaso*, the character Cervantes expresses this claim almost immediately after referring to himself as author of *Don Quixote* and his *Novelas ejemplares* (Chapter IV, vv. 23–27).

As to Parr's authorities on satire, Frye refers to *Don Quixote* as a blend of romance, novel and anatomy but nowhere refers to Cervantes' work primarily as an anatomy (*Anatomy* 313). In this regard, Frye observes: "The picaresque novel is the social form of what with *Don Quixote* modulates into a more intellectualized satire" (*Anatomy* 229). Yet Frye also calls Cervantes' protagonist "possibly the greatest figure in the history of romance," whose proper role is that of "social visionary" (*Secular* 179), within a work that gives birth to the novel as a new kind of fictional endeavor (*Secular* 39; *Anatomy* 306). Parr judges Frye's comment about *Don Quixote*'s relation to the picaresque "much closer to the mark" than his comment about the protagonist as a figure of romance (Parr 167). Highet finds *Don Quixote* inconsistent in its satire of romance conventions, since it starts as a burlesque, ends as mock-heroic parody and alternates in its support for the protagonist and the world that laughs at his lunatic (romantic) adventures (Highet 116–20). Bakhtin dubs Cervantes' fiction, though influenced by the *menippea*, one of the most "carnivalistic novels in world literature" (128; emphasis added). Parr never summarizes or cites Highet's evaluation of Cervantes' work and reproduces, without comment, the forgoing quotation by Bakhtin.

It seems unlikely, in my view, that Parr understands the genre of Cervantes' most famous work, or the tradition to which his most famous work belongs, better than Cervantes himself. If Cervantes creates an equivalent of himself to deny that he wrote satire—in reference to his own fiction, and with no sign of irony—it seems reasonable to assume that he knows what he's talking about and that he may have a point. Further, I think it risky to assume that Parr is a better reader of Frye, Highet, and Bakhtin than Frye, Highet, and Bakhtin, or that these critics, cited by Parr as pre-eminent experts on satire, would fail to recognize satire as the dominant genre of *Don Quixote*.

From the standpoint of genre, then, it seems less risky to assert that *Don Quixote* represents Cervantes' premeditated act of disorderly conduct, or multigeneric play. Thus, from one line of critical inquiry, the work emerges as an ingenious refashioning of romance; from another, as an ingenious refashioning of menippean satire; and from yet another, as an ingenious refashioning of the existing narrative tradition that yields the first example, the forerunner, or the sponsoring text of both the mod-

ern and postmodern novel. This position tallies with assessments of *Don Quixote* by Frye, Bakhtin and Highet. What is more, it also agrees with Parr's assessments of Cervantes' narrative, if separated from the taxonomical excess that translates into Parr's hierarchy of voices with presences, his reducing irony, parody and paradox to the status of generic markers, and his identifying menippean satire as the dominant genre, or figurative backbone, of Cervantes' text. Our critic recognizes that it is "a distortion to speak of a work of such artistic complexity [like *Don Quixote*] as being a novel, a satire, or a romance to the exclusion of the other strands that are so evident within it" (156). He later adds: "We should not assume that its [*Don Quixote's*] posture *vis-à-vis* romance is entirely negative" (156). And Cervantes' work is also, for Parr, the "germinal text" of the novelistic tradition: "Thus, the *Quixote* stands in the same relationship to the novel as does *Lazarillo* with respect to the picaresque" (155).

Moreover, this position about the complex, multigeneric form of *Don Quixote* accords with another claim by Cervantes in the *Parnaso*, stated just after he identifies himself as author of his most renowned fictions, and just before he denies ever writing satire: "Yo soy aquel que en la invención excede / a muchos" (Chapter IV, vv. 28–29). Here, "invention" occurs in its rhetorical and root sense as both discovery and recreation (*invenire*), as the power to probe a hidden mystery within a model of poetic imitation and to reveal or refashion that mystery under an innovative form and to an innovative degree. Although an analysis of how such invention relates to the genre of *Don Quixote* would require a separate article, let me simply suggest that, as this type of literary inventor, Cervantes refashions through his protagonist the tradition of romance as ballad or tale devoted to an adventurous quest for heroic identity. In doing so, he enlarges to an unparalleled degree that genre's capacity for self-parody, already evident in the *Orlando furioso* by Ariosto. At the same time, an inventive Cervantes refashions and enlarges in *Don Quixote* the Erasmian tradition of menippean satire as both a survey and mock encomium of human life under the aspect of folly—a survey which includes, on a greater scale than what one finds in Erasmus, countless instances of folly in apparent wisdom, and the reverse. Cervantes' power of invention allows him, as well, to refashion the verisimilar plot, character and milieu of, for him, a relatively new picaresque tradition. This tradition already refashions menippean satire and replaces its predecessor's tendency to establish an external vantage on "civilized" society through fantasy with the equally external vantage of an outcast whose actions remain linked

to socio-political codes of identity, based on lineage, rank and wealth. But Cervantes' invention moves beyond fiction, I believe, to refashion his period's increasingly self-conscious practice of historiography, with its claim to narrate what Aristotle calls "historical truth."

In its playful merger of romance, satire and fictionalized history, Cervantes' "true history" adopts a posture of detached *irony* with respect to all these narrative genres. It uses each of them—in dialogue and in conflict—to *parody* themselves and one another as adequate verbal means of attaining truth. This results in a dramatized *paradox*; a growing synthesis of seeming opposites at the levels of form and content alike; a continuing mock encomium of itself and other texts, alternating in its praise and censure of both poetic and historical discourse, whether written or recited, read or heard. In this way, the narrative forms of romance, satire and what later criticism would call the novel remain as inseparable from the genre of *Don Quixote* as the tropes of irony, parody and paradox remain inseparable from innovations in what Parr calls Cervantes' mimetic and diegetic domains.

Finally, in visual terms, I would contend that both the form and content of *Don Quixote*—from its genre to the narration of its most slapstick incidents—ingeniously refashions, enlarges and multiplies a favorite image of Erasmus. At the close of Folly's mock declamation, she likens her discourse to a Silenus of Alcibiades: a statue of a portly lute player, most likely a satyr, that opens at its center to reveal the figure of a god. In Cervantes' fiction, satire, romance and proto-novel contain and "open" to reveal variations of one another as seeming contraries, successively exchanging their generic masks as well as positions of subordination and dominance. In the work's self-conscious amalgam of theme, character, point of view and incident, instances of the serious enfold and continually give way to the comic; the compliantly sane to the heroically mad; the laudable to the laughable, and to the reverse, and then to a varied reversal of that reverse, and so on. As a fiction, *Don Quixote* reflects and, thus, reveals the historical circumstance of both its actual and potential readers, figuratively opening before them with a mechanism that we may denote with the classical adage *de te fabula*. As a poetic utterance about literature and life, *Don Quixote* therefore reveals a unity that remains less hierarchical and schematic than carnivalesque and kaleidoscopic, less settled or complacent than perplexing and errant.

If I have argued with parts of Parr's study, that is because I believe that it ranks among the books on *Don Quixote* that most deserve reading, rereading, and reflection. I believe that the book would have benefit-

ted from a broader critical-historical perspective and, in several senses, a bit more “classical” restraint. But I am confident, and hopeful, that it will influence studies on Cervantes’ masterpiece for years to come.

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