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## Reseñas

**Fine, Ruth. *Una lectura semiótico-narratológica del Quijote en el contexto del Siglo de Oro español*. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2006.**  
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The years surrounding the fourth centenary of the 1605 *Don Quixote* have seen a flurry of activity in all areas of Cervantes criticism, including a renewed interest in narratological approaches to *Don Quixote*. This can no longer be considered a neglected corner of the field, as it was before the appearance of James Parr's *Don Quixote: An Anatomy of Subversive Discourse* and José María Paz Gago's *Semiótica del Quijote*. Nonetheless, Ruth Fine correctly observes in her new book that there is still no critical consensus on such issues as the number and character of the narrators and fictional authors contained in the novel, or whether *Don Quixote* is best understood as proto-realist or proto-postmodern in its narrative structure. Fine proposes a systematic application of narratological concepts to the analysis of narrative voice, time and characterization. The final chapter explores these elements' implications for the novel's relation to the literary, sociocultural and historical context of Golden Age Spain. The dominant theoretical presence informing this study is Gérard Genette, with contributions from Lucien Dällenbach, Josef Even and several others. The claim throughout is that *Don Quixote* should not be understood as a realist or proto-realist text. Instead, Cervantes's novel is governed at all levels by the principle of "metalepsis," Genette's term for a transgression of narrative levels, recast by Fine as a metaphor for the text's generalized transgressive dynamic.

The book's four chapters follow a common pattern: a summary of previous criticism leads to a brief exposition of the theoretical concepts to be applied, followed by a detailed textual analysis and some concluding remarks. Chapter 1, on narrative voice, pays particular attention to Paz Gago's work in this area. The presentation of narratological categories (level, person, reliability, perceptibility, time, focalization) is skillful and concise. Problems arise, however, when Fine turns to the question faced by all narratologically-oriented critics of *Don Quixote*: of the various writers on Don Quixote's adventures (Cide Hamete Benengeli, the Morisco translator, the "autor desta historia" and "segundo autor" mentioned in I, 8), who is a narrator and what do they narrate? Unlike the critics discussed in the chapter-opening survey, Fine does not establish a hierarchy of narrative levels,

instead classifying all the text's voices as "authorial substitutes." This term, borrowed from Dällenbach's *The Mirror in the Text*, is taken here to mean a narrator who is presented as the author of the text that contains his narration. Fine turns the authorial substitutes into metaleptic figures by situating their narration at the extradiegetic level. This makes it a transgression of narrative levels for the same authorial substitutes to appear intradiegetically as fictional authors, translators or editors. But Fine's reasons for treating the substitutes as extradiegetic narrators are unconvincing. Her argument is that Don Quixote's adventures constitute the novel's main or "primary" narrative, making its narrators extradiegetic by definition. But this is to confuse a matter of thematic priority with the strictly narratological question of diegetic level. As Genette himself observes in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, a novel's main action need not be narrated by an extradiegetic narrator. Fine's claim for a plurality of extradiegetic authorial substitutes appears intended to raise the profile of metalepsis in the novel. While there certainly is transgression of narrative levels in *Don Quixote*, this is the exception rather than the rule. Treating metalepsis as the text's governing trope causes narratologically challenging chapters such as I, 8-9, I, 52 and II, 44 to lose their distinctive character. A case in point is Fine's discussion of the notorious opening paragraph of II, 44 ("Dicen que en el propio original desta historia se lee que . . ."). Fine explains this as a case of "pseudodiegesis," a type of metalepsis in which an intermediate level situated between a narrator and the narrated events is elided in favor of direct presentation of story. While pseudodiegesis may be involved in II, 44, this concept hardly "solves" the problem of this chapter; it simply provides a term with which to designate the problem.

The second chapter, on time, opens with a lengthy summary of studies by Amparo de Juan Bolufer, Paz Gago, Félix Martínez Bonati and Luis Murillo. The narratological categories activated in this chapter are Genette's triad of order, frequency and duration. Fine concludes that narration in *Don Quixote* generally follows the sequence of events in the story, narrating each event once and maintaining a regular rhythm throughout. Nonetheless, the thesis in the rest of this chapter is that time in *Don Quixote* is fundamentally paradoxical. This claim is supported with reference to (1) Murillo's well-known discussion of the conflict between novelistic and mythical chronology in the novel; (2) the narrator's mistaken assertion in I, 52 that Don Quixote's third sally took him to Zaragoza; and (3) the imbrication of time and memory in the text. This third point represents Fine's most original contribution to the study of time in the novel. Don Quixote's individual memory, filled with events drawn not from personal experience but from his readings, is related to the Biblical conception of memory as a moral imperative against forgetting the Chosen People's collective past. Don Quixote suppresses his individual memory of events prior to his knighthood in favor of a quasi-religious devotion to this literary/collective memory. The authorial substitutes can be found engaging in similar acts of intentional forgetting ("de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme"). This is a suggestive line of thinking, though I fail to see its contribution to time's paradoxicality in the novel. As an example of a paradox generated by the protagonist's distorted memory, Fine points to Don

Quixote's observation that the book recounting his adventures has become an international bestseller in an impossibly short amount of time (II, 3). It seems to me that this paradox is verified by the narrator and exists independently of the protagonist's memory; this has been recognized by the novel's critics since John J. Allen's *Don Quixote: Hero or Fool?*. While the examples of temporal paradox discussed in this chapter have all been studied in greater detail by previous critics, Fine offers a useful summary and her reflections on time and memory are valuable independently of the question of paradox.

Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the characterological theories of Josef Even, whose writings are currently accessible only in Hebrew. Even posits three axes of characterization—complexity, evolution and interiority—and three methods of characterization—direct (narratorial description), indirect (characters' actions and words) and analogical. Applying these categories to the novel's pair of protagonists, as well as to minor characters Maritornes and Ricote, Fine detects a deliberate confusion between the complexity and evolution axes, and contradictions between the information conveyed through the direct and indirect methods. She observes that characters' actions and discourse frequently contradict their direct characterization by the narrator. In the case of Maritornes and Ricote, whose characterization by the narrator is framed by social stereotypes, the displacement of direct characterization by the indirect method casts doubt on the validity of these stereotypes. Fine goes on to describe these complexities as cases of "characterological metalepsis," in line with the narrative and temporal transgressions outlined in chapters 1 and 2. This chapter succeeds in relating narration and characterization, bridging the gap between a structuralist view of characters as textually constructed actants, and psychoanalytic methods that endow characters with the rich inner worlds of actual human subjects.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the text-context relationship. Following a brief sociohistorical sketch of the Spanish Golden Age, Fine situates Cervantes with respect to the neo-Aristotelian literary theories circulating during the Renaissance. This task is anticipated in chapter 1's analysis of *Don Quixote's* generic models (an incomplete list including chivalresque, picaresque and Byzantine novels, but not the Italian *novella* or pastoral fiction) and chapter 3's examination of sixteenth-century theoretical concepts related to characterization (verisimilitude, *admiratio*, decorum, unity). The Golden Age is defined as an era of ethnic, socioreligious and cultural "crossing" or *mestizaje*. In support of her claim for *Don Quixote* as the representative work of this era, Fine analyzes traces of Morisco and Jewish culture in the novel. She entertains the notion of Cervantes's possible *converso* descent, distancing herself from esoteric crypto-Judaic interpretations of the novel while at the same time adopting some of their claims and developing more of her own. This is an unexpected direction for a semiotic-narratological study to take, especially when read alongside the closing pages of Paz Gago's *Semiótica del Quijote*, which call for a new *cervantismo*, grounded in semiotics, that would put an end to the "metatextual delirium" let loose by Américo Castro's hypothesis on Cervantes's *converso* origins. Reflecting on the epistemological significance of Cervantes's master trope of metalepsis, Fine appeals to the concepts of perspectivism, ambiguity and reader

response. While Cervantes's adoption of these principles places him in a position to challenge his society's horizon of expectations, it also makes his work emblematic of a Golden Age characterized as syncretic and widely paradoxical.

In sum, Ruth Fine offers an ambitious new reading of *Don Quixote* in which several related projects are realized with varying degrees of success. The exposition of narratological concepts is clear and relatively free of jargon. Except for the scant attention paid to James Parr's work, the summaries of previous criticism are balanced, though often (and perhaps inevitably) incomplete. I found the application of the narratological model in chapters 1 and 2 somewhat disappointing; readers will have to look elsewhere for an effort that truly builds on the work of Parr and Paz Gago. The final two chapters are, in my estimation, the strongest; here, Cervantes's cultivation of an essentially metaleptic or transgressive esthetic is shown to inhere in characterization and, most strikingly, in the novel's relation to its sociohistorical and cultural context. The author's stated commitment to a "scientific" study of literature via semiotics and narratology—extended to include the text's interaction with what Fine calls the *extratexto*—may be the first signs of a new *cervantismo* all its own.

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