

Metalepsis and Paradoxical Narration in *Don Quixote*: A Reconsideration

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1. Introduction

Metalepsis is the term proposed by Gérard Genette (ND 234–37) to designate a certain type of departure from the norm in narrative fiction, a paradoxical mode of storytelling that strikes readers as comic or bizarre. While this term has not gained the same universal acceptance as some of Genette’s coinages, metalepsis is the subject of recent book-length studies by Debra Malina and by Genette himself, as well as a collection of essays with contributions from leading narrative theorists.[1] Such renewed interest makes this a propitious moment to reconsider the place of metalepsis in recent critical work on *Don Quixote*. While the theoretical formulations of Genette and his fellow narratologists have certainly informed readings of Cervantes’s novel, the influence is surprisingly mutual: *Don Quixote* is among the texts most frequently cited in theoretical work on metalepsis.

In this article I argue that much of what has been written on metalepsis and *Don Quixote* is plagued by conceptual imprecision and many overstated claims. This is the case for Cervantes scholars working within a Genettian framework and for narrative theorists who use *Don Quixote* to illustrate their ideas. Both parties tend to see cases of narrative transgression and paradox where none actually exists. For Cervantes scholars, this has meant extending Genette’s definition of metalepsis to cover cases with no real narrative transgression. Theorists of metalepsis, on the other hand, have tended to misread *Don Quixote* in ways that bring the text in line with their narratological categories. This article describes these parallel trends and provides a corrective, with some concluding remarks on this odd case of reading and theorizing gone awry. My goal throughout is to examine the relations between a canonical text and the theoretical ideas informing and informed by its critical history.

I begin by reviewing the narratorial functions in standard (non-metaleptic) situations, before turning to Genette’s definition and examples of metalepsis. I then question the place of *Don Quixote* in theoretical work on metalepsis, specifically the collective volumes *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation* (2005) and *La narración paradójica: “Normas” narrativas y el principio de la “transgresión”* (2006). This section also addresses the parallel categories of *syllipsis* and *hyperlepsis* developed in recent work by the Narratology Research Group at the University of Hamburg. In addition to these developments in narrative theory, my discussion touches on the work of two leading Cervantine narratologists, Ruth Fine and José María Paz Gago.

1.1 Functions of the Narrator

Genette lists five narratorial functions, corresponding to five possible referents of the narrator’s discourse: (1) narrative (reference to the story), (2) directing (reference to the narrative text), (3) communicative (reference to the narrating situation), (4) testimonial (reference to the narrator’s relation to the story, in epistemic terms), and (5) ideological (the same, in axiomatic

terms) (*ND* 255–59). Telling the story is obviously the narrator’s main task; functions 2–5 are best regarded as temporary suspensions of the narrative function. The important point for our purposes is that a switch from the narrative to one of the secondary functions is not a violation of diegetic level. This should be noted especially with respect to the communicative and directing functions, as commentary on the narrating act or on the narrative’s form and features is sometimes treated as metalepsis. Functions 2–5 all involve some form of narratorial self-reference, and so may set the stage for an instance of paradoxical narration or metalepsis (self-reference being the enabling condition for many types of paradox [Miller]). But metalepsis is a more specific phenomenon, compatible with all five of the narratorial functions, but with no necessary connection to any one of them.

1.2 Levels and Transgressions

Metalepsis is a phenomenon of narrative *voice*—that is, of “the way in which the narrating itself is implicated in the narrative” (Genette, *ND* 31)—and more specifically of diegetic *level*. As is well known, Genette speaks of *extra-*, *intra-* and *metadiegetic* narrative levels. At the extradiegetic level, we have a narrator relating a series of events, or “story”; the events themselves take place at the intradiegetic level. If the story includes a second act of narrating—a second narrator recounting a second series of events—this new series of events takes place at the metadiegetic level. (The system is infinitely recursive: a narrating act at the metadiegetic level produces a meta-metadiegetic narrative, and so on.) The logic of the narrative system requires that passage from one diegetic level to another be mediated by a narrating instance (Genette, *ND* 234). The narrator is bound always and only to narrate events occurring at a subordinate diegetic level. All other modes of involvement in these events—as participant, witness, victim, or unseen demiurge—are unavailable to the narrator and to characters at the narrator’s level.[2] Narrative situations that violate this principle are cases of metalepsis, which Genette defines as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by the diegetic characters into the metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse” (*ND* 234–35).

A brief consideration of some of Genette’s examples will complete this initial discussion. First, an example of intrusion by an extradiegetic narrator into the diegetic universe, from Balzac’s *Illusions perdues*: “While the venerable churchman climbs the ramps of Angoulême, it is not useless to explain . . .” (qtd. in *ND* 235). Here the extradiegetic narrator’s explanation is synchronized with an act performed by an intradiegetic character, as if discourse time and story time were one and the same. The following example, from Théophile Gautier’s *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, is essentially the same phenomenon with an added metafictional comment:

The Marquise inhabited a separate suite, which the Marquis did not enter unless he was announced. We will commit this impropriety that authors of all times have allowed themselves, and without saying a word to the buttons who would have forewarned the lodger, we will penetrate into the bedroom, sure of disturbing no one. The writer of a novel naturally wears on his finger the ring of Gyges, which makes him invisible. (qtd. in *ND* 101n33)

The extradiegetic narrator, sharing a common spatiotemporal plane with the intradiegetic characters, raises the possibility of a paradoxical encounter with them. Metalepsis can also cross the boundary between a work's internal diegetic levels, from diegesis to metadiegesis or vice versa. This occurs in Cortázar's story "La continuidad de los parques," where the protagonist is murdered by a character in the novel he is reading—a metadiegetic character invading the intradiegetic universe (Genette, *ND* 234). The last two examples involve diegetic levels of differing fictional status: Gautier's authorial narrator regards his characters as fictional, and Cortázar's protagonist reads a work of fiction. But diegetic boundaries do not necessarily separate the fictively "real" from a fiction-within-the-fiction (Genette, *Métalepse* 61–62). Cortázar could have had his character read a newspaper report of a murder—the metaleptic effect would be the same. Metalepsis, in Genette's original formulation, is thus a transgression of narrative levels which (1) may or may not involve the narrator, (2) may range in nature from the inconspicuous to the markedly comical or fantastic, and (3) may or may not transpose a (fictively) real character or narrator to the level of a fiction-within-the-fiction, or vice versa.

2. *Don Quixote* in the Theory of Metalepsis

Narrative theory has benefited recently from two major developments in the study of metalepsis. The first came with a conference on the subject in 2002 and subsequent publication of its proceedings as *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation*. While the contributors approach their subject from a variety of perspectives, discussion of Cervantes's novel was a curiously consistent presence, particularly the matter of "the book within the book" in *Don Quixote II*.

A second milestone was reached in 2006 when the University of Hamburg's Narratology Research Group, led by the hispanist Klaus Meyer-Minnemann, proposed a multi-level typology of paradoxical narration based on Genette's discussion in *Narrative Discourse*. Paradoxical narration is simply narration in defiance of the *doxa*, the standards of consistency and coherence that define the norm in narrative fiction. Non-paradoxical narration maintains the distinction between narrative levels, between story and discourse, and between different degrees of fictionality, while presenting an ontologically consistent story world, with a single set of laws in effect throughout (Lang 23–24). Typologically, the Hamburg group distinguishes between metalepsis proper and a related but less radical narrative infraction called *sylllepsis* (see 2.2 below), and defines the phenomenon Genette calls *pseudodiegesis* (*ND* 236–43) as a separate category rather than a subtype of metalepsis (see 2.3 below).[3]

These are both admirable achievements. The following comments are intended to highlight certain shortcomings in these theorists' readings of *Don Quixote*, in hopes that eliminating examples not meeting the criteria for metalepsis or paradoxical narration will help to clarify and refine the proposed theoretical models.

2.1 The Book Within the Book: *Don Quixote II*, 2–4

The aspect of Cervantes's novel most frequently cited in connection with metalepsis is the presence of *Don Quixote I* as a book read and discussed by the characters of *Don Quixote II*. Genette, reflecting on the unsettling effect of metalepsis, cites the following passage from

Borges's essay "Magias parciales del *Quijote*": "¿Por qué nos inquieta que Don Quijote sea lector del *Quijote* y Hamlet espectador de *Hamlet*? Creo haber dado con la causa: tales inversiones sugieren que si los caracteres de una ficción pueden ser lectores o espectadores, nosotros, sus lectores o espectadores, podemos ser ficticios" (79; cf. Genette, *ND* 236). This influential statement has given rise to the persistent but erroneous notion that the work under discussion in *Don Quixote* II, 2–4 is "el *Quijote*," that is, the novel Cervantes published in 1605. This leads many to conclude that Don Quixote regards himself as a character in a work of fiction, which would be a highly transgressive case of metalepsis.[4] John G. Weiger has countered that the references in *Don Quixote* II are to a true history by Cide Hamete Benengeli, not a work of fiction by Cervantes (100–03; cf. Presberg 81–103). It follows that a single fictional world includes the characters of both parts of the novel *and* all those involved in producing the true history, including the writing, discovery and translation of manuscript sources and the narration and publication of the final version. It seems wrong to argue, as Wagner (241) does, that the metalepsis of "the book within the book" causes Don Quixote's ontological status to waver between historicity and fictionality. This would be the case only if the reader-characters of *Don Quixote* II regarded him as the fictional protagonist of a novel of chivalry. But these characters, free of Don Quixote's madness, read Cide Hamete's book as the non-fictional biography of an eccentric local *hidalgo*. This fact is overlooked by theorists who cite *Don Quixote* II as a paradigmatic case of metalepsis at its most transgressive.

In *Don Quixote* II, 2–4 the extradiegetic narrator shows us Don Quixote, Sancho Panza and Sansón Carrasco discussing the true history and its agents, including the "curioso" responsible for ordering a translation of Cide Hamete's manuscript. This is the *segundo autor* of I, 9, the novel's extradiegetic narrator in many critics' accounts. It is true that some extradiegetic narrators are impersonal figures, disembodied voices with no real presence in the story world. When a narrator's sphere of action is limited to the discourse level, it is a notable infraction for characters to address him or otherwise express knowledge of his existence. But this is not the case with the "curioso" under discussion in *Don Quixote* II, 2–4. He is at once a narrative voice and a fictive author, responsible for making the true history available to Sansón Carrasco and other fictive readers. The publication of the true history makes the extradiegetic narrator available as an object of discourse for the characters in *Don Quixote* II. This should make us wary of claims such as the following:

Al figurar de repente en la historia como personaje narrado, el narrador extradiegético, en cierto modo, se narra a sí mismo en su función de narrador, lo cual, por cierto, constituye una metalepsis vertical del acto de la narración. Esta transgresión de los niveles diegéticos se ve intensificada por el hecho de que también los personajes se refieren ahora al "segundo autor", es decir, transgreden los límites a nivel del discurso en dirección contraria. (Grabe 137)

Grabe's first claim is a non-starter: no literary *doxa* forbids a narrator from commenting on the process of narration. Metanarrative commentary is ubiquitous in literary fiction and need not involve an infraction of narrative level (Nünning 12–13, 24). If the narrator's self-reference in *Don Quixote* II is free of metalepsis, the same can be said of his appearance in the characters' discourse. The characters discuss the *segundo autor* in his capacity as co-author/editor of a book that has recently gone on sale. The *segundo autor*, preparing a continuation, later discovers a

manuscript and reads of this very discussion touching on his previous work as fictive author. Of course, how the author of this manuscript learned of this discussion is a nice question. In this respect, *Don Quixote* II, 2–4 is no different from other instances where it is unclear how Cide Hamete came to know of the events he reports. But this is a question of narratorial omniscience, not of diegetic level, and it need not concern us here.[5]

The complex relation between story time and the true history's time of narrating has given rise to several claims for metalepsis. In *Don Quixote* II, 2–4, we rejoin the fictional world after the first part of the true history has moved through the production process, from manuscript composition to distribution on the market, but *before* the beginning of the process for part two. At the end of *Don Quixote* I, the narrator/editor had begun the search for a second part, turning up some half-legible manuscripts which he attempted to have restored “con esperanza de la tercera salida de don Quijote” (I, 52: 608). In *Don Quixote* II, it becomes clear that these hopes were misplaced, since at that time Don Quixote's third expedition had not yet gotten underway. This is the situation underlying the following exchange between Don Quixote and Sansón Carrasco:

—Y por ventura —dijo don Quijote—, ¿promete el autor segunda parte?
 —Sí promete —respondió Sansón—; pero dice que no ha hallado ni sabe quién la tiene, y así, estamos en duda si saldrá o no. (II, 4: 68)

This is an instance of subsequent narrating, which is the norm in *Don Quixote*: Cide Hamete, at some later point in the history of the story world (perhaps following Don Quixote's death), looks back on an earlier time when two characters speculated about part two of the true history, which did not yet exist. Lucien Dällenbach protests: “But we are already reading this second part which is being put off until later. [...] What is the significance of this telescoping of present and future, and of the apparent autonomy of these two characters in search of an author?” (92). But the present time of our reading is of no moment here; it has no place on the timeline running between the characters' speculation about a future book and Cide Hamete's subsequent writing, which will provide the basis for that book. This confusion between fictive and real-world chronology is common in narrative theorists' readings of *Don Quixote* II. For instance:

Le protagoniste apprend que l'histoire de sa vie (que le narrataire extradiégétique est en train de lire) a été déjà imprimée: cet auto-enchâssement narratif est à la fois une mise en abyme aporistique et une métalepse d'énoncé verticale (transgression d'un ordre spatio-temporel), puisque les personnages ne peuvent pas avoir lu le (second) livre dans lequel ils apparaissent à ce moment-là et qui est le résultat de la narration du «second auteur». (Schlickers 162)

The extradiegetic narratee (any one of us) is reading *Don Quixote* II, by Miguel de Cervantes; the book Don Quixote learns has already been published is part one of Cide Hamete's true history. The fact that we read a second book does not mean that the characters have (or could have) read it. No character in *Don Quixote* II claims to have read part two of Cide Hamete's true history, much less *Don Quixote* II itself. Nothing in the text supports these claims for narrative metalepsis.

Other narrative theorists have written about the characters of *Don Quixote* II, 2–4 “jumping” metaleptically to a higher diegetic level by acquiring narrator status. In II, 4 Sancho Panza observes that the true history omits the recovery of his stolen mount, and Sansón Carrasco promises to have this corrected in any future printing. (Sansón apparently knows the *segundo autor*, or, less probably, Cide Hamete himself.[6]) John Pier comments: “Sancho, personnage intradiégétique dans la première partie du roman, devient, dans le contexte de l’entretien, le narrateur extradiégétique de sa propre histoire telle qu’elle est relatée dans la première partie pour s’y réintroduire, les faits revus et corrigés par ses propres soins” (251). But Sancho telling Sansón Carrasco how he recovered his mount remains an intradiegetic narrator, his narrating act itself narrated by the extradiegetic voice. As for a future corrected version of Cide Hamete’s true history, Sancho, being illiterate, cannot adopt the narrative medium in use at the extradiegetic level. Although Sancho could not participate in the actual rewriting of the true history, he could be presented as the interpolated story’s narrator. At the point in *Don Quixote* I, 30 where Sancho’s mount reappears, we could imagine the character’s voice suddenly interrupting the narrative (“I, Sancho Panza, declare that ...”). We would then have two extradiegetic narrators arranged “horizontally,” each narrating *different sections of the text* (cf. García Landa 302). Sancho’s narrative would not embed that of the extradiegetic narrator, and so there would be no infraction of narrative level. Of course, it is more likely that the extradiegetic narrator would take over Sancho’s story, incorporating it into his own narrative. In this case, he would either credit his source (“Sancho would later recall that ...”)—a case of prolepsis—or else slight Sancho, narrating his metadiegetic story as diegetic—a case of pseudodiegesis (see 2.3).[7] The first option would have a jarring effect, since the conversation in II, 4 is outside the timeframe of the true history, but anachronies are not instances of metalepsis—here there is no question of Sancho “jumping” to a level beyond that of the extradiegetic narrator.

2.2 Syllepsis

Syllepsis differs from metalepsis as a temporary suspension, rather than a transgression, of the boundary between narrative levels.[8] The line separating syllepsis from metalepsis runs between Genette’s examples from Balzac and Gautier (see 1.2). Balzac’s narrator suspends the division between the extra- and intradiegetic levels, speaking *as if* he were on the scene as the churchman climbed the stairs (Meyer-Minnemann, “Procédé” 138–39). But nothing results from this momentary suspension; it is simply a manner of speaking which the narrator tries out and immediately abandons. Gautier’s narrator, on the other hand, actually ponders the logistics of his foray into the diegesis. This metaleptic intrusion would count as an event in the history of the story world, whereas the sylleptic dallying of Balzac’s narrator is strictly a phenomenon of discourse. The distinction between metalepsis and syllepsis has real descriptive value. However, the Hamburg group further divides syllepsis between “vertical” and “horizontal” types, illustrating the latter category with instances of alternating narration in *Don Quixote*. As I will show, there is no paradoxical narration in the examples drawn from Cervantes’s novel. The category of horizontal syllepsis should be dropped, leaving only vertical syllepsis of the Balzac type.

Writers on syllepsis have analyzed the series of back-and-forth transitions between Don Quixote in the Duke’s palace and Sancho Panza’s governorship in Barataria (II, 44–55). For the Hamburg group, this narrative technique suspends the boundary between two stories arranged

“horizontally,” on the same diegetic level, as opposed to the “vertical” relation obtaining between the extra- and intradiegetic levels (Lang 32–36). Two transitions mentioned in this connection are the following:

Deja, lector amable, ir en paz y en hora buena el buen Sancho, y espera dos fanegas de risa, que te ha de causar el saber cómo se portó en su cargo, y en tanto, atiende a saber lo que le pasó a su amo aquella noche; que si con ello no rieres, por lo menos desplegarás los labios con risa de jimia, porque los sucesos de don Quijote, o se han de celebrar con admiración, o con risa. (II, 44: 368; cf. Grabe 134–35)

Pero dejemos con su cólera a Sancho, y ándese la paz en el corro, y volvamos a don Quijote, que le dejamos vendado el rostro y curado de las gatascas heridas, de las cuales no sanó en ocho días [...] (II, 47: 395; cf. Meyer-Minnemann, “Narración” 54–55)

While these passages certainly highlight the communicative and directing functions of the narrator, nothing about them strikes one as even mildly paradoxical. The second passage receives the following commentary from Meyer-Minnemann:

Parece anularse el límite espacial y temporal entre los sucesos de las dos historias distintas que, si bien ocurren de forma paralela, no por eso resultan menos separadas espacial y (en parte también) temporalmente. La invitación a dejar de escuchar la narración de los sucesos de una historia en favor de los de otra produce un efecto de simultaneización de lo que espacial y temporalmente está separado en la medida en que el narrador, con su invitación, une los sucesos de dos historias en principio independientes por encima de las distancias espaciales y temporales establecidas por el relato mismo. (“Narración” 55)

This statement blurs the conventional distinction between story and discourse, which remains firmly in place in the text itself. At the story level, on either side of this transition, we find Sancho Panza on the afternoon of his first day outside his master’s company, and Don Quixote recovering from the cat attack he suffered the night of the *second* day of Sancho’s absence. The two sequences of story events occur in different places, at different times. At the discourse level, the only “places” one can speak of are places *in the text*, and different “times” can only be successive moments in the temporality of reading. A narrative transition by definition unites two textual “places”—in this case, the end of chapter 47 and the beginning of chapter 48. Meyer-Minnemann seems to believe that this textual contiguity somehow suspends the spatiotemporal distance between the events involving Don Quixote and those involving Sancho. But textual contiguity is not achieved in spite of (“por encima de”) spatiotemporal distances obtaining in the story world, for the extradiegetic narrator operates outside the limits of that world. His appeal to the narratee (“dejemos a Sancho [...] volvamos a don Quijote”) does not invite us to imagine the two characters’ stories unfolding in a common space. This is a routine switch from the narrative to the communicative and directing functions of the narrator, one that does not (or *should* not) affect our mental reconstruction of story events.

Ruth Fine has written about a series of “metalepsis ingenuas” (71)—minimally transgressive infractions, or syllepses—involving the uncertain temporal position of the narrating

instance.[9] Once again, these are transitions between two stories presented in alternating narration: “Pero dejémosle aquí [a don Quijote], que no faltará quien le socorra [...] y volvámonos atrás cincuenta pasos, a ver qué fue lo que don Luis respondió al oidor, que le dejamos aparte, preguntándole la causa de su venida a pie y de tan vil traje vestido” (I, 44: 537; cf. Fine 71). Fine holds that in such passages “oscila marcadamente el tiempo subsiguiente con el anterior e, incluso, con el simultáneo” (72). *Subsequent*, *prior*, and *simultaneous* narrating are Genette’s terms for describing the temporal relation between the narrating act and the narrated events (ND 216–17). This relation is frequently confused, as in Fine’s analysis, with what Genette calls “anachronies”—discrepancies between the temporal sequence of story events and their order of presentation in the narrative (ND 35). Specifically, Fine seems to confuse prior narrating (prediction of events to occur *after* they are narrated) with prolepsis, which is simply foreshadowing or “narration of a story-event at a point before earlier events have been mentioned” (Rimmon-Kenan 46).[10] In prior narrating the point of reference is the time of the narrating act, in prolepsis it is not. When the narrator reassures us that Don Quixote will eventually be helped out of his predicament, he is not divining future events, but simply previewing what will be narrated in full on the following page. The future tense (“no faltará”) does not indicate prediction or supposition; it constitutes a promise that the narratee will soon share the narrator’s certain knowledge of past events. This is a standard case of prolepsis, not a shift from prior to subsequent narrating.

There is an important distinction to be made between anachronies, on the one hand, and a temporally indeterminate narrating instance, on the other: temporal indeterminacy generates paradoxes, anachronies do not. The widespread confusion on this point is codified in one of the Hamburg group’s subtypes of horizontal syllepsis: “El narrador recapitula lo ya narrado de una historia y anticipa los sucesos que quedan por narrar. Así, se confunden una situación narrativa anterior y una situación narrativa posterior en un presente” (Lang 35). This formulation repeats in theoretical terms Fine’s equivocation between anachrony and a shifting time of the narrating. Recapitulating already narrated events is an instance of iterative frequency (Genette, ND 116) and, secondarily, of flashback or *analepsis*. Anticipating as yet unnarrated events is prolepsis, and once they are eventually revisited we can again speak of iterative frequency. This combination of *analepsis* and prolepsis is possible in any narrative situation—subsequent, prior, or simultaneous—and does not alter the time of the narrating. There is no metalepsis in such instances, not even of the “innocent” or sylleptic variety.

These examples lead me to conclude that what the Hamburg group calls “horizontal syllepsis” does not in fact belong in a typology of paradoxical narration. The only suspension of boundaries in such cases is effected by the critics themselves, whose explanations blur the distinction between story and discourse, turning shifts in narrative order into a shifting time of the narrating. All this is accompanied by inflated claims for these syllepses’ alleged anti-mimetic effects, as in the following comment on the passage from *Don Quixote* II, 44 cited above: “va en contra de la ilusión mimética y, en consecuencia, llama la atención del lector sobre la ficcionalidad de la novela, es decir, sobre la factura del texto como tal” (Grabe 135). This comment plays on yet another blurred distinction, this time between metanarration and metafiction, that is, between “the narrator’s reflections on the discourse or the process of narrating” and “comments on the fictionality of the narrated text or of the narrator” (Nünning 16). Since all discourses must be structured in some way, fictional texts are not unique in being

products of discursive “making” (“factura”). The mimetic illusion does not require that the fictional text appear as self-begetting or unstructured, showing no signs of “making”; it requires that readers not be reminded of the story’s and the narrator’s fictional status. Transitions in alternating narration foreground the directing function of the narrator, not his fictionality. There is no paradox, no anti-mimetic effect, and finally no suspension of narrative boundaries in such instances.

To conclude this section, I will consider two instances of vertical syllepsis in *Don Quixote*, lest the reader conclude that the novel has no instances of paradoxical narration. Both are narrative transitions of the sort cited in my critique of horizontal syllepsis:

[Don Quijote] se acostó en su lecho, donde le dejaremos por ahora, porque nos está llamando el gran Sancho Panza, que quiere dar principio a su famoso gobierno. (II, 44: 375)

Y quédese aquí el buen Sancho, que es mucha la priesa que nos da su amo, alborozado con la música de Altisidora. (II, 45: 382)

The first example finds Sancho Panza impatiently awaiting the narrator’s attention before beginning his governorship. In the second, it is Don Quixote’s impatience that prompts the narrator to resume his story. Characters’ wishes are said to influence the disposition of the narrative discourse, as if the frontier between the intra- and extradiegetic levels had been erased, allowing characters and narrator to mingle in a common space and time. Yet there is no metalepsis, for no one imagines Sancho actually postponing the commencement of his rule in Barataria—this is simply a manner of speaking. The distinction between metalepsis and (vertical) syllepsis is a useful one, as these examples show. Dropping the superfluous category of horizontal syllepsis would make the Hamburg group’s contribution all the more valuable.

2.3 Pseudodiegesis

In Genette’s original formulation, pseudodiegesis is “telling as if it were diegetic (as if it were at the same narrative level as its context) something that has nevertheless been presented as (or can easily be guessed to be) metadiegetic in its principle or, if one prefers, in its origin” (*ND* 236). In other words, a pseudodiegetic narrator is one who appropriates another narrator’s story, retelling it without attribution to his intradiegetic source. The relation between pseudodiegesis and metalepsis has been subject to various formulations. Genette, while discussing both figures together, affirms only that one can “connect” pseudodiegesis to metalepsis (*ND* 236). Fine considers pseudodiegesis a variant of metalepsis (29), a weakly transgressive figure like syllepsis (45–46). The Hamburg group rechristens pseudodiegesis as *hyperlepsis* and includes it in their four-part typology of paradoxical narration (Lang 41–44). The most sensible position, in my view, is that of Monika Fludernik, who excludes the figure from her discussion of metalepsis, considering it a realistically motivated device lacking any paradoxical quality (82–83). Pseudodiegesis, as opposed to horizontal syllepsis, is an actual feature of narrative texts; the concept has real (though limited) descriptive value. However, it does not belong in a typology of paradoxical narration, as an analysis of the concept’s application to *Don Quixote* will reveal.

Fine rightly considers pseudodiegesis to be the most prevalent feature of *Don Quixote*'s narrative structure (36; cf. Grabe 130–33). Pseudodiegetic narration prevails due to Cervantes's recourse to a series of fictive authors to tell the story of Don Quixote. From I, 9 on, the extradiegetic narrator tells us what the Morisco translator says Cide Hamete said about Don Quixote and his world. This narrator only occasionally acknowledges the chain of narrative transmission; more often he narrates in the pseudodiegetic mode, as if enjoying unmediated access to the story world. However, I part company with Fine and Grabe when they ascribe transgressive or paradoxical qualities to this realistically motivated narrative technique. It is realistically motivated because *Don Quixote* presents itself as a (fictive) work of history, and historians generally narrate events of which their knowledge is textually mediated rather than first-hand. Attribution of source is required, of course, but it need not be reiterated at every turn: pseudodiegesis is the norm in historical narrative. Likewise, in fictional narrative there is simply no *doxa* requiring a narrator constantly to invoke the source of his knowledge, and thus no paradoxical transgression when a narrator fails to do so. To see this clearly, consider the narrative's occasional *breaks* in pseudodiegesis, when the extradiegetic narrator pauses to identify his intradiegetic source. This happens with every reference to the translator and every instance of narrative formulas such as “cuenta Cide Hamete” or “dice la historia.” In order to avoid pseudodiegesis and rid the text of what Fine and Grabe consider paradoxical narration, every assertion about the story world would have to be prefaced by some such formula. But imagine a text riddled from start to finish with attributions such as “Digo que dicen que dejó el autor escrito que [...]” (II, 12: 123)! Pseudodiegesis violates no literary *doxa*—in fact, its *absence* from *Don Quixote* would violate the principle of narrative economy and render the text unreadable. It has no place among the varieties of paradoxical narration, and (*pace* Fine) its presence in *Don Quixote* does not help to establish metalepsis as the text's master trope.

None of this is to deny that it is difficult to identify the narrators and fictive authors involved in certain passages of *Don Quixote*. While Fine overstates the extent of this overlapping and confusion of narrative voices,[11] there are instances of this phenomenon at specific points in the text. One case that has exercised critics over the years is the opening of *Don Quixote* II, 44: “Dicen que en el propio original de esta historia se lee que llegando Cide Hamete a escribir este capítulo, no le tradujo su intérprete como él le había escrito [...]” (II, 44: 366). Fine cites this passage as evidence that the notion of pseudodiegesis “parece desentrañar en gran medida las irresoluciones en torno a la problemática de la voz narrativa del *Quijote*” (36). But recourse to pseudodiegesis does not resolve the tangle of narrative voices in this passage; it simply provides an elegant term to express what every reader already knows, namely that the passage is obscure. Since pseudodiegesis pervades the novel's structure from beginning to end, its use as an analytical category is unlikely to yield an accurate, detailed description of any given passage.

2.4 Metalepsis and Character Narration

Paz Gago has identified a number of metaleptic transgressions in stories narrated by characters rather than by an extradiegetic narrator: the shepherd Pedro's tale of Marcela and Grisóstomo (I, 12), Don Quixote's account of the Cave of Montesinos (II, 22–23), and the story of Gaiferos and Melisendra told by Maese Pedro and his assistant (II, 26). In these cases of

intradiegetic or character narration, we would expect to find the sort of metalepsis Genette calls “intrusion [...] by the diegetic characters into the metadiegetic universe [...] or the inverse” (*ND* 234–35). However, in each instance the case for metalepsis is made using criteria other than the infraction of narrative level.

Paz Gago makes two claims for metalepsis in the case of Pedro’s narrative (144–45). The first is that Pedro appears to be a heterodiegetic narrator until he belatedly reveals his (marginal) participation by counting himself among “todos los que la conocemos [a Marcela]” (I, 12: 167). But this is no metalepsis, first of all because Genette’s distinction between hetero- and homodiegetic or character narrators is a matter of narrative *person* rather than diegetic *level*. Also, Genette notes that there is no hard-and-fast distinction between the “weak absence” of some heterodiegetic narrators and the “dim presence” of some homodiegetic types (*NDR* 103–05). Talk of transgressing a boundary is idle where there is no clear boundary to begin with. Finally, even if it were useful to speak of an infraction of narrative person, Pedro’s tale would be a poor example. Pedro’s narrative is prompted by the arrival of a shepherd who, bringing news of Grisóstomo’s suicide, greets his friends by asking, “¿Sabéis lo que pasa en el lugar, compañeros?” (I, 12: 161). This *lugar* is obviously the hometown of Pedro and his friends, where Marcela and Grisóstomo have come to live. This is confirmed when Pedro refers to the pair’s presence in “nuestro pueblo” (I, 12: 163), “nuestra aldea” (I, 12: 164). We know from the outset that Pedro will tell of people who live in his town, and so it is no surprise—and no narrative transgression—to learn that he plays a minor role in this story. Paz Gago’s second claim for metalepsis is that Pedro’s narrative is repeatedly interrupted by remarks from Don Quixote, his intradiegetic narratee. This is true, but interrupting the narrative discourse leaves the story itself unaltered and entails no infraction of narrative level. Genette’s function of communication accounts for narrator-narratee contact; Don Quixote’s constant interventions simply foreground this function of the narrator. The same objection can be raised to Paz Gago’s discussion of Maese Pedro’s puppet show (145), where the narrative is interrupted not by Don Quixote but by the digressions of the commentator or *trujamán*. Here again, there is no metalepsis involved when a narrator or narratee interrupts the narrative with an appeal to his diegetic counterpart or a comment on the story being told.[12]

Paz Gago finds a transgression of the frontier between different ontological realms in the episode of the Cave of Montesinos (145–47). This would be a metalepsis along the lines of Genette’s example from Cortázar, involving diegetic levels of differing fictional status: Don Quixote passes from the realistic universe of the main narrative into the fantastic world described in his metadiegetic narrative. While Paz Gago does recognize that Don Quixote is recounting a dream, his claim for metalepsis blurs the distinction between *having a dream* and *entering an oniric world*. Don Quixote believes that he has actually visited a fantastic world, but readers know better. Such a distinction would not hold in true cases of metalepsis such as “Continuidad de los parques”: Cortázar’s fictive reader actually does come into contact with the subordinate narrative level of a fiction-within-the-fiction. Cervantes could have accomplished something similar by having Don Quixote emerge from the cave carrying the petticoat which, in his dream, Dulcinea’s companion offered him as security for a loan (I, 23: 221–22). No such transgression occurs in Don Quixote’s metadiegetic narrative, and so there is no metalepsis in this case either.

3. Conclusion

If most recent claims for metalepsis and paradoxical narration in *Don Quixote* miss the mark, what is left of the idea of Cervantes as a daring formal innovator, even a forerunner to postmodern varieties of narrative self-consciousness? My view—by no means original—is that Cervantes achieves his unique reflexive effects by reworking the fictive authorship device used in the books of chivalry and in the Renaissance epics of Boiardo and Ariosto. The result is a particular kind of narrative complexity, at once thematic and structural, which exceeds Genette's categories of level and person. Is it Cervantes or a fictional narrator who speaks in the prologue to *Don Quixote* I? Who are the *autor desta historia* and *segundo autor* of I, 8? Is Cide Hamete involved in producing the first eight chapters? How does the Moorish historian record Don Quixote's deeds in such detail? Are Cide Hamete and/or the narrator contemporaries of Don Quixote? How is it that poetic epitaphs for Don Quixote surface during the protagonist's lifetime (I, 52)? How much fictional time has elapsed between the end of *Don Quixote* I and the beginning of *Don Quixote* II? Does Sansón Carrasco know Cide Hamete or the *segundo autor* (II, 4)? Where are the chapters Cide Hamete supposedly dedicated to the friendship between Rocinante and Sancho's mount (II, 12)? What is the mysterious *propio original* of II, 44? Who are the anonymous *they* who report details about Cide Hamete and his text (I, 16; II, 12; II, 44)? These questions are worth recognizing—answering them is another matter—but many are not recoverable within a Genettian framework.

Genette's concept of metalepsis is now caught up in a kind of circular economy involving Cervantes's novel, Hispanists of a formalist-structuralist bent, and narrative theorists. The latter must defend themselves against charges of irrelevance by presenting their descriptive poetics as an aid to reading, if not a full-blown theory of interpretation. Credit will accrue to theories capable of reading canonical texts, the more prestigious the better. Given this situation, it is not difficult to understand why readings of *Don Quixote* figure so prominently in recent theoretical work on metalepsis. As I have shown, some of these readings are in fact misreadings caused by an apparent lack of familiarity with Cervantes's novel and its critical history. The case of the Hamburg group's typology is rather different. Their examples taken from *Don Quixote* reveal shortcomings in the typology itself, and the underlying problem seems to be a rigid formalism which dictates, for instance, that syllepsis must come in both vertical and horizontal varieties and that pseudodiegesis, since it involves a crossing of narrative levels, must produce paradoxical effects similar to metalepsis.

Cervantes scholars face a different challenge. *Don Quixote* is the quintessential work about which, as the saying goes, "everything has already been said." Hence the appeal of a critical metalanguage that allows us to say—ideally, to *think*—something new about Cervantes's great novel. The analytical categories worked out by Genette and his fellow narratologists fit the bill, but they are useful only to the extent that descriptive accuracy remains the immediate goal. Of course, the ultimate goal is often interpretation; narratology as an autonomous, purely descriptive *alternative* to interpretation seems to have run its course (Kindt and Müller 209–11). If narratology is to function as a heuristic tool for interpretation, as Genette originally intended (*ND* 265; cf. Kindt and Müller), then the first commitment of critics and theorists alike should be to precision in defining concepts and accuracy in applying them to narrative texts.

Notes

[1] The studies in question are Malina's *Breaking the Frame*, Genette's *Métalepse: De la figure à la fiction*, and the volume entitled *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation*, edited by Pier and Schaeffer. See Prince (630) for the short list of titles on metalepsis appearing between Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1972) and these recent contributions.

[2] Of course, the narrator can recount events he participates in—he can be homodiegetic as well as heterodiegetic. In such cases this participant is a character who experiences story events and also, under different circumstances and at some spatiotemporal remove, a narrator who recounts those same events. But the narrator *as narrator* is no more involved in those events than the character is in their telling (Genette, *NDR* 84–85).

[3] The fourth category of paradoxical narration includes cases of narrative “reflection”—*mise en abyme* in earlier critical parlance, *epanalepsis* for the Hamburg group. The four-part typology is outlined by Lang, with examples in Meyer-Minnemann (“*Narración*”). For further discussion of metalepsis, see Meyer-Minnemann (“*Procédé*”) and Schlickers. *Mise en abyme* or *epanalepsis*, not addressed in this article, is discussed in Meyer-Minnemann/Schlickers.

[4] See, for example, Dotras (45–46), Fine (70), and the critics cited by Weiger (252n36). Borges is also wrong in suggesting that Don Quixote is a reader of the book discussed in II, 2–4. Don Quixote shows no interest in reading either the true history or Avellaneda's book, as Weiger (101–37) has shown in detail.

[5] Cide Hamete's occasional omniscience has led critics to describe him variously as a wizard with paranormal powers of observation (Ródenas de Moya 370–74), a historian who relies on the work of previous chroniclers (Ascunce 48), an eyewitness to some or all of the events he reports (López Navia 217–18), or even a transparent ruse fabricated—Arabic manuscript and all—by the extradiegetic narrator (Presberg 184–90). A related problem is that no second manuscript by Cide Hamete is mentioned in *Don Quixote* II. However, it is difficult to make sense of the narrative without inferring a second manuscript, as Martín Morán (15–18, 26) has shown. In any case, this area of ambiguity in the fictive authorship device does not bear on the question of narrative levels.

[6] If I understand them correctly, Pier and Schaeffer believe that Sansón Carrasco *is* the *segundo autor*: “C'est seulement dans la deuxième partie du *Don Quichotte* que les protagonistes apprennent que *l'interlocuteur devant lequel ils se trouvent, traducteur de la première partie du roman, est en fait le narrateur des deux parties*, le système de niveaux apparent, établi dès la première partie, étant donc sérieusement ébranlé” (11–12; emphasis added). This highly idiosyncratic reading of Sansón's reference to the “*autor de la historia*” (II, 4: 68) would find little support among Cervantes scholars.

[7] In the second Juan de la Cuesta edition of *Don Quixote* I (1605), it is in fact the extradiegetic voice that narrates this episode, with no attribution to Sancho (I, 30: 380n26).

[8] *Suspension* is my term for what the Hamburg group calls *nivelage des lignes de partage* in their French-language publications (cf. Meyer-Minnemann/Schlickers) and *anulación de límites* in their contributions in Spanish (cf. Lang). *Anulación* seems to me too strong a word for what is supposed to be a less radical infraction than metalepsis or *transgresión de límites*. My term *suspension* hopes to preserve this distinction: when a rule is suspended, one is free to act as if it had never existed, whereas transgressing a rule has real consequences because the rule itself remains in effect.

[9] Fine is not affiliated with the Hamburg group, though she shares their broadly inclusive notion of paradoxical narration (cf. the references to Fine in Lang [42] and Grabe [131]). What Fine calls “metalepsis ingenuas” would count as syllepses in the Hamburg group’s typology.

[10] I cite Rimmon-Kenan’s definition of *prolepsis* because Genette’s definition may be partially responsible for the confusion under discussion here. Genette defines *prolepsis* as “any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later” (ND 40). By *later* Genette means after the next narrated event, not after the time of the narrating, this latter phenomenon being a case of prior narrating rather than prolepsis. Rimmon-Kenan herself falls victim to this confusion when she writes that “Any prolepsis is, of course, a ‘pocket’ of anterior [i.e., prior] narration” (90). But consider the following example: “Yesterday I filled up on gas. I drove two hundred miles last week.” This micro-narrative reverses causal/chronological order by narrating an effect before the cause that preceded and occasioned it—a (trivial) case of prolepsis. But this is also a case of subsequent narrating, as indicated by the past tense and the temporal deictics *yesterday* and *last week*.

[11] The prevalence of pseudodiegesis is Fine’s main reason for forgoing a hierarchy of diegetic levels in favor of the notion of inextricably confused narrative voices (47). But other critics have already made much progress on this front, accomplishing what Fine deems impossible or unnecessary. One outstanding example is Martín Morán’s convincing analysis of the interplay between Cide Hamete and the extradiegetic narrator in *Don Quijote II*.

[12] For Genette, it is Don Quixote’s stage-crashing rescue of Gaiferos and Melisendra that constitutes a sort of *metalepsis*, though one involving an illusory rather than an actual infraction of narrative level: only in the hero’s fantasy has he gained access to the metadiegetic universe represented on stage (*Métalepse* 50–51). Genette later argues that a failed attempt to pass through a movie screen into a filmic diegesis would result only in property damage, not in *metalepsis* (*Métalepse* 59–60). I agree, and believe the same can be said of the Maese Pedro episode.

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