

## Why Don Quijote's Battle Continues in Contemporary Cuban Literature:

### *Tres tristes tigres* and *El mundo alucinante*

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The 1960s was a particularly productive decade for Latin American literature. In those years, Latin American writers produced an astounding number of excellent novels that are marked by their incredible diversity in style and/or content. Despite their variety, however, there are some common characteristics such as the recurrent theme of metafictional concerns, the presence of intertextuality, the rediscovery of parody and the importance of humour. As these elements are also present in Cervantes's *Don Quijote*, it is hardly surprising that his work remains of great interest in contemporary Latin American fiction.

Cervantes's presence is particularly noteworthy in the early novels of two established Cuban writers, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Reinaldo Arenas. Both use intertextual and/or parodic references to Cervantes to comment not only on their own texts but also on general issues of metafictional interest. The latter's *El mundo alucinante* (1969) is based on the memoirs of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier who Arenas recreates as an inherently quixotic character. Arenas's rewriting of the Mexican monk's life is the hilarious narration of a truly adventurous and fantastical journey through which the author reflects on several metafictional issues. The one of interest in terms of a literary bond with Cervantes is Arenas's reflection upon the relationship between one of his three narrators (anonymous *yo*) and his fictional Servando, protagonist as well as first person narrator. As we shall demonstrate, in *El mundo alucinante* Arenas uses parody to echo humorously the relationship between *Don Quijote*'s narrator, Cide Hamete Benengeli, and Cervantes's knightly protagonist.

Whereas Arenas establishes a parodic link between *El mundo alucinante* and *Don Quijote*, the references to Cervantes in Cabrera Infante's *Tres tristes tigres* (1967) are of an intertextual and more indirect nature than found in Arenas. On the whole, *Tres tristes tigres* is

a highly metafictional text that explores and questions language and literature through the use of parody and intertextuality, just as Cervantes did in *Don Quijote*. This could explain why some of Cabrera Infante's protagonists repeatedly refer to *Don Quijote*. Their intertextual references not only accentuate some of Cabrera Infante's literary concerns but also highlight his stylistic techniques, at least to the reader familiar with *Don Quijote*.

In order to understand better the parodic and intertextual links between the two Cuban novels and *Don Quijote*, it seems pertinent to briefly outline the concept of modern parody especially as it has undergone many changes since its first appearance in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The proposed working definition of parody in this article is primarily based on leading critics such as Linda Hutcheon and Margaret Rose. I shall suggest a relatively open definition for two reasons. Firstly, contemporary Latin American authors tend not to write according to the literary boundaries as defined by critics. And secondly, it is my intention to offer a definition that does justice to parody's creative potential and its numerous objectives and applications.

Even nowadays, parody is often considered as a destructive and derivative art form as proposed by M.H. Abrams:

A parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, of the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and applies the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject.

(18)

However, modern parody challenges this generally accepted definition as it is able to establish a complex and critical distance between the reader and the text in order to explore trans-textual issues positively as well as negatively. According to Hutcheon, the etymological

origin of the word parody derives from *odos*, meaning ‘song’ and *para*, meaning ‘against’ or ‘beside’ (“Ironía” 178). Therefore, the original use of parody was two-fold. On the one hand, parody was used ‘against’ a pre-text in order to criticise or ridicule it. Its second use, however, has long been forgotten but finds itself resurrected in contemporary Latin American literature. In other words, parody can also be employed ‘beside’ a text, as a positive, non-destructive method to engage with a pre-text. The notion of parody being exclusively ridiculing has its roots in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century in Italian theatre where parody and the concept of the burlesque were used interchangeably. It was only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that authors and critics rediscovered the manifold facets of parody, possibly due to the intense interest in metafictional issues prevalent in those years. As parody is, in its broadest sense, a variation of intertextuality, it is a genre that undoubtedly invites metafictional discourse. In addition, the emphasis given to humour in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Latin American narrative has further promoted the use of parody in that region. Humour is an intrinsic characteristic of parody and also one of the main factors to differentiate parody from intertextuality as pointed out by various critics (Hutcheon, Rose, Dentith).

In effect, parody is inherently intertextual as it is based on one or more pre-texts. Unlike intertextuality, however, it is always humorous and serves a definite purpose. The term intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, based on Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism. Kristeva considers a novel as “una suma de libros” as every text is based on the author’s previous readings (209). In other words, Kristeva sees a text as a literary dialogue that incorporates, consciously or unconsciously, other texts previously read by an author. Humour, according to Kristeva, is not a defining element of intertextuality.

It is important to note that the humour employed in modern parody can be of varying tenors or *ethos*, a term preferred by Hutcheon, depending on the parodist’s objective.<sup>1</sup> Thus the *ethos* of a parodic text can range from subtle irony to bitter satire. Like Hutcheon, Rose also grants modern parody the possibility of multi-functionality (criticism, praise, play, etc.).

Furthermore, Rose emphasises the fact that this resurrected genre may rewrite the style and/or the content of the pre-text, a quality that has not always been attributed to parody. Genette, for example, differentiates in *Palimpsestos* between parody and burlesque travesty with the latter ridiculing the style of a pre-text whereas parody rewrites the content of a pre-text using satire or gentle humour (175). In contrast, Rose states in her highly influential study *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Post-modern* that parody “in its broadest sense and application may be described as first imitating and then changing either, and sometimes both, the ‘form’ and ‘content’, or style and subject-matter, or syntax and meaning of another work, or, most simply, its vocabulary” (45).

In short, parody requires the direct presence of at least one pre-text. The parodic elements rework the pre-text’s theme and/or style using humour which creates a critical distance between the pre-text and its parody. Modern parody allows the parodist to engage with a pre-text on various levels using the appropriate humorous *ethos* to express ridicule, criticism, respect or praise. Of course, my proposed working definition of parody is not exhaustive but on this occasion it is not my intention to reopen the discussion on the generic characteristics of parody. Instead, I shall focus on specific aspects of the existing theoretical works which can be found in *Tres tristes tigres* and *El mundo alucinante*. I therefore believe that the provided theoretical framework is sufficient to allow for the following detailed analysis of the parodic and intertextual practices in Cabrera Infante and Arenas based on Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*.<sup>2</sup>

*Don Quijote* is a self-reflective novel that comments on language and literature in an intriguingly humorous manner. Goytisolo describes Cervantes’s masterpiece with the following words:

La novela de Cervantes es en puridad un relato de diferentes relatos, un discurso sobre discursos literarios anteriores que en ningún momento disimula el proceso de enunciación; antes bien, claramente lo manifiesta. La historia del personaje enloquecido por los libros de caballería se trueca así, de modo insidioso, en la historia de un escritor enloquecido con el poder fantasmal de la literatura. (9)

The same can be said about *Tres tristes tigres*. The conversations of Cabrera Infante's notorious *tigres* often revolve around literature, while endlessly exploring Havana's nightlife. It can therefore be argued that *Tres tristes tigres* and *Don Quijote* are thematically linked as both novels are humorous, self-reflective and rich in intertextual dialogues. This link is manifested in the shared passion for language and literature expressed by Cervantes's and Cabrera Infante's characters and is emphasised even further by the fact that the *tigres* directly refer to Cervantes and his classic novel.

The *tigres'* ironic and unorthodox comments reflect on general metafictional issues but also focus on specific works by Latin American, North American and European authors. Notably, Cervantes's ingenious knight is no stranger to the *tigres*. Although *Don Quijote* is not as frequently discussed in *Tres tristes tigres* as works by more contemporary authors such as Hemingway, Faulkner or Lewis Carroll, Cervantes is mentioned on several occasions. To give an example, the *tigre* Silvestre, Cabrera Infante's alter ego, is devastated by Bustrófedon's death. Silvestre refers to him repeatedly as "un mago del lenguaje". In his search for Bustrófedon's ghost, Silvestre finds him next to Cervantes':

En la parte seria de la hipótesis, en el espectro (buena palabra) en el espectro grave veo los restos gaseosos de Julio César [...] a Cervantes manco de un brazo aéreo o sutil, como diría Góngora, gaseoso, a su lado y rodeando la mano ingrávida de Velázquez que trata de pintar

con luz negra, el polvo sideral y enamorado de Quevedo, y más acá,  
mucho más acá, casi de este lado del límite, ¿a quién veo? No es un  
avión no es un pájaro de sombras es Superbustrófedon, [...]. (379)

In addition, the *tigres* also make reference to Borges's Pierre Menard and his efforts to rewrite *Don Quijote* which, of course, is another example of Cervantes's continuing presence in Latin American literature.<sup>3</sup> One of the principal themes in Borges's short story "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" is his protagonist's identification with Cervantes and the resulting possibility to rewrite an existing text through the process of reading. Borges's reader-centred approach to literature is also present in Cervantes and Cabrera Infante, as we shall see in later parts of this article. Therefore, *Don Quijote* appears in *Tres tristes tigres* not only by name but also through thematic parallels.

This is not to suggest that all literary parallels between *Don Quijote* and *Tres tristes tigres* are intended, but I do believe that a certain quixotic echo can undoubtedly be found in Cabrera Infante's novel. To give a further example, it is a well known fact that Cervantes's *Don Quijote* is, among other things, a parody of chivalric novels and this kind of generic parody is also evident in *Tres tristes tigres*. However, Cabrera Infante's *tigres* do not identify themselves with knights in shining armour but instead with Alexandre Dumas's noble musketeers. After Bustrófedon's death, another *tigre*, Códac, evokes the musketeers' slogan:

¿Quién era Bustrófedon? ¿Quién fue quién será quién es Bustrófedon?  
¿B? Pensar en él es como pensar en la gallina de los huevos de oro, en  
una adivinanza sin respuesta, en la espiral. *Él era Bustrófedon para  
todos y todo para Bustrófedon era él.* (229)

The *tigres* are as absurd as musketeers as their queen is grotesque. Known by her stage name, La Estrella, the *tigres'* queen is an unusual singer of sentimental boleros and although

she might have a beautiful voice her physical appearance is part of yet another parody: *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. La Estrella is portrayed as an enormous and fat black whale who is generally bathed in sweat. Nevertheless, it is she who brings all the *tigres* together despite their separate lives. According to Códac, La Estrella “era [su] tema eterno entonces” (235). To transform parodically Dumas’s musketeers into *tigres*, Cabrera Infante makes use of what Bakhtin defines as literary carnival. Broadly speaking, literary carnival transforms the familiar into the unusual through a temporal inversion of established hierarchies. Its objective is to criticise through laughter. This method is effective and liberating as, according to Bakhtin, carnival revokes all “las leyes, prohibiciones y limitaciones que determinan el curso y el orden de la vida normal” (173).<sup>4</sup>

The effect of literary carnival on the reader is complex. When parody takes the form of literary carnival, Rose states that the reader feels “shock or surprise, and humour, from conflict with expectations about the text parodied” (38). In *Tres tristes tigres*, Cabrera Infante inverts the hierarchies between the pre-text and his parodic novel. While the musketeers move in aristocratic circles, the *tigres*’ “nobility” is comical as they are merely the kings of Havana’s absurd nightlife. In other words, Cabrera Infante challenges the reader’s expectations when evoking Dumas’s novel as the *tigres* show little signs of the unshakeable loyalty generally associated with Dumas’s musketeers. Similarly, Cervantes’s generic parody of chivalric novels is also based on hierarchal inversion, with Don Quijote being a rather atypical knight. In short, it is the element of parody which creates a literary bond between Cabrera Infante and Cervantes as *Tres tristes tigres* can be read as an absurd parody of a swashbuckling novel in the same way as *Don Quijote* is a humorous parody of the novels of chivalry.

Cervantes achieves this generic parody through Don Quijote’s strong affinity with the typical protagonist of a chivalric novel. Like in Cervantes, Cabrera Infante’s characters are often driven by their ability to identify strongly with their own fictional heroes. It is

noteworthy though that the *tigres* not only identify with literary heroes such as Dumas's musketeers, but also with their cinematic idols. As pointed out by Goytisolo, "Silvestre y Cué se convierten en personajes de películas como los protagonistas del *Quijote* se convierten en personajes de libros de caballería o novela bucólica" (14). For instance, one night when Silvestre cruises the streets of Havana with Cué, he explains to his friend:

Me sentí Philip Marlowe en una novela de Raymond Chandler. O mejor Robert Montgomery en la versión de una novela de Chandler. O mejor todavía, la cámara que hacía del ojo de Montgomery-Marlowe-Chandler en los mejores, inolvidables momentos de *La Dama en el Lago*, vista en el Alkázar el 7 de septiembre de 1946. (353)

On another occasion, Silvestre slips into the persona of yet another movie star to seduce a girl whose nickname is Ingrid Bérnago (as that is the way she pronounces the actress' name). Only when he talks to her "muy a lo Cary Grant" are his efforts successful (183). In fact, Cabrera Infante takes the identification of characters with other fictional characters, as previously done by Cervantes, to a modern day level. Rather than identifying with chivalresque knights, his *tigres* identify with some of the biggest movie stars of their time. Cervantes's humorous, but not necessarily satirical, use of parody, and therefore unusual for its time, is recognised by Cabrera Infante. Without doubt, the misfortunes and hardships of Don Quijote and the *tigres* will amuse any reader, even though neither Cervantes nor Cabrera Infante use parody to ridicule their characters. Instead, both authors employ parody to shed an ironic, but sympathetic light on their protagonists. By acknowledging Cervantes's use of parody, Cabrera Infante resurrects a feature of parody which has been ignored for centuries. As has been established previously, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century critics and authors generally considered parody to be interchangeable with the burlesque, a genre which,

nowadays, should be considered as related to parody but should not be confused with it, as it is the case for *Tres tristes tigres*.

Thus we have shown how Cabrera Infante reintroduces a broader notion of parody into contemporary narrative through the use of analogous generic parodies inspired by *Don Quijote*. Like in Cervantes, Cabrera Infante employs generic parodies primarily for non-satirical purposes; a notion which we shall also see in the analysis of some of the parodic elements present in Arenas's *El mundo alucinante*.

A further parallel between *Don Quijote* and *Tres tristes tigres* is the use of internal parodies. According to Ken Garrad, Cervantes employs a "sort of internal parody in which one character burlesques another by repeating his words, usually incorrectly, sometimes in travestied form, but always with the intention of taking him down a notch – if not in his own estimate, in the readers'" (23). The recognition of internal parody is also crucial if the reader intends to fully appreciate *Tres tristes tigres*. The *tigres* frequently engage in endless word games in which they twist and transform the other speaker's sentences. This practice is the *tigres'* favourite game in their constant urge to play with language in order to overcome its boundaries. During their journey through literature and night clubs, Silvestre informs Cué that he has spotted Magalena, one of the *tigres'* many love interests:

- ¿Quién? – me dijo -. ¿Alma Mahler Gropius Werfel?
- Sperm ceti. Sperm-Whale. Vallena de esperma.
- Whale? I mean, where?
- Ahoy! Ahoy! On starboard, sir. A estribor.

Capitán Cuéraje miró.

- De madre. Borracho perdido. No veo una, veo dos.
- Son dos. Perdona el infralenguaje, pero no conozco más que la de afuera. Amiga de Códac. (399)

Whereas the *tigres* never tire of their particular way of conversing, some of the female characters in *Tres tristes tigres* do not find their unusual banter particularly amusing. Other protagonists are often excluded from the *tigres*' speech pattern that is rich in thematic and phonetic associations. It is important to note though that their jargon is more than just funny; their frequently incomprehensible punning primarily enables them to extend language, which they – or Cabrera Infante – consider as being too limited. In *Tres tristes tigres*, conventional use of language prevents satisfactory expression with respect to spoken and written language as it is restrictive. In other words, Cabrera Infante favours the use of stylistic, internal parodies in order to, firstly, highlight his disillusion with language and, secondly, attempt to overcome the boundaries of language.

Apart from the transformed repetition of immediate dialogue, Cabrera Infante also refers back to passages mentioned earlier in the novel. The chapter “La muerte de Trotsky referida por varios escritores cubanos, años después – o antes” parodies seven established Cuban authors: José Martí, José Lezama Lima, Virgilio Piñera, Lydia Cabrera, Lino Novás, Alejo Carpentier and Nicolás Guillén. As the reader discovers in the last chapter of *Tres tristes tigres*, the stylistic parodies are a transcription of tapes Bustrófedon recorded shortly before his death. Although rarely referring directly to Bustrófedon's recordings, the *tigres* repeatedly discuss all seven authors in various parts of the novel. For example, the parody based on Lino Novás in “Trotsky” ridicules him as an author who stands out for a dramatic and exaggerated use of adjectives and a tendency to slip into an English syntax. Later on in the novel, in the chapter “Bachata”, Silvestre blames this previously parodied tendency on Novás's, in his view, mediocre translations of works by Faulkner and Hemingway. In “Bachata”, Silvestre scorns Novás for a famous mistake he made in a translation of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*: “Allí [Novás] llega a convertir los leones africanos del recuerdo de Santiago, ¡en “leones marinos”! Es decir, en morsas. Del carajo” (374).

Likewise, Carpentier, parodied in “Trotsky” for his preference for baroque language and his exaggerated use of French and Latin, is then criticised by Cué in “Bachata” as “el último novelista francés, que escribe en español devolviendo la visita a Heredia” (375). Clearly, the use of internal parody is an important feature not only in Cervantes but also in Cabrera Infante’s novel, although it serves different purposes. In *Tres tristes tigres*, internal parody does not necessarily intend to degrade another character of the same text, as previously stated by Garrard with regard to *Don Quijote*. Instead, it is a playful technique used to explore language, challenge its limitations and, equally importantly, to reflect humorously upon literature.

Finally, Cabrera Infante and Cervantes both express a shared concern about the translator’s task. As pointed out by González Echevarría:

Cervantes created himself as author surrounded by several doubles as the second most important character in the *Quijote*. The author of the *Quijote* is that manifold character that includes (at least) the narrator, Cide Hamete Benengeli and the translator. [...] This intrusive translator also intervenes to question the authority of the author, as if wanting the reader to believe that he has re-created and annotated the work as he performed his modest task. (no pagination)

In *Tres tristes tristes*, the inherent problem of translations not being true to the original text is dealt with through the use of yet another internal parody which takes the form of self-parody. It is important to note that one of the principal functions of self-parody is to question the notion of writing itself. As Poirier argues, self-parody “shapes itself around its own dissolvents, it calls into question not any particular literary structure so much as the enterprise, the activity itself of creating any literary form, of empowering an idea with a style” (393). Cabrera Infante introduces a story within the story, a feature which is also present in

Cervantes, such as chapters XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV of the first volume of *Don Quijote* (“Donde se cuenta la novela del Curioso impertinente”, “Donde se prosigue la novela del Curioso impertinente” and “Donde se da fin a la novela del Curioso impertinente”). The “Historia de un bastón” is savagely translated by Rine, a literary critic and one of the *tigres*’ friends. His version is not only very literal but also enriched with dubious footnotes in which he intends to clarify the cultural and linguistic background of the story. His translation is so disastrous that a fictional Guillermo Cabrera Infante writes a letter to Silvestre to ask for his help, just as Cervantes who also recreated himself as a character in his own novel. The letter, signed GCI, states that “la traducción de Rine es pésima por no decir otra cosa mayor, que sería una mala palabra. Te ruego que me hagas una versión usando el texto de Rine como material prima” (480). Consequently, Silvestre, similar to a parodist, imitates and then transforms a text, which in this case is Rine’s poor but highly entertaining translation. As the reader is not familiar with the original story in English, it is impossible to judge how intrusive Silvestre’s attempt is. But it is exactly the absence of the original (fictitious) story that engages the reader most as s/he has to actively imagine the English original. Silvestre and the reader, therefore, are united by the same task in their attempts to “rewrite” an imaginative short story in order to translate it. This, indeed, is a particularly clear example of self-parody as it puts the very act of writing and translating into question. Therefore, just like Cervantes nearly 400 years earlier, Cabrera Infante expresses in *Tres tristes tigres* his concerns regarding the notion of authorship and reliability of translations, an issue which gained particular importance in 20<sup>th</sup> Century literature.

Once again, the use of intertextuality and parody as defining elements in both Cervantes’s and Cabrera Infante’s novels deserves to be emphasised. In general terms, parody “works to distance and, at the same time, to involve the reader in a participatory hermeneutic activity” (Hutcheon 1985: 92). Without a doubt, first Cervantes and later Cabrera Infante have both achieved this desired activation of the reader through their respective use of parody. And

since Cabrera Infante includes direct references to Cervantes in *Tres tristes tigres*, I believe that a Cervantine reading of his novel is certainly possible. On the one hand, Cabrera Infante reflects on some metafictional themes, such as the reliability of the narrator and/or the translator, which were also of great importance to Cervantes. On the other hand, Cabrera Infante revives some of Cervantes' stylistic devices such as the use of generic and internal self-parody. Therefore, the intertextual links between *Tres tristes tigres* and *Don Quijote* emphasise not only the literary techniques used by Cabrera Infante (self-parody, generic parody and internal referencing), but also highlight the continuing impossibility of solving issues of long-lasting literary concerns such as the unreliability of the author, translator and/or language itself.

Unlike Cabrera Infante, who first and foremost makes use of intertextual referencing to allude to Cervantes, Arenas uses parody to build a bridge between *El mundo alucinante* and *Don Quijote*. Another difference between Cabrera Infante and Arenas is that Cervantes's presence in *El mundo alucinante* is of a more explicit and central nature than it is in *Tres tristes tigres*. Although the principal pre-text of Arenas's novel is Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's autobiography, generally known as *Memorias*, Arenas also includes *Don Quijote* as one of several pre-texts for *El mundo alucinante*.<sup>5</sup> In general terms, Arenas's novel is the parodic and hyperbolic account of Servando's life which is based to varying degrees of accuracy on the Fray's memoirs, written by Servando while being imprisoned in Mexico (1818-1819). This legendary Mexican monk was originally persecuted by the Inquisition for a blasphemous sermon he gave in honour of the Virgin of Guadalupe (1794), in which he insisted that the gospel had been preached in Mexico long before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. In later years, he was primarily persecuted for his admirable fight for Mexican independence. His literary output spans over 30 years and is largely dedicated to justifying his controversial sermon and denouncing his prosecutors.

Arenas's rewriting of Servando's memoirs is the narration of a truly adventurous and fantastical life in which he juxtaposes three different narrators who give contradicting versions of Servando's life. The omnipresent narrator is the most objective and neutral voice in Arenas's spectacular representation of the monk's life and this, consequently, gives a biographic rather than autobiographic outlook on Servando's odyssey through several Mexican, Cuban and Spanish prisons. The second narrator is a fictional Servando whose only intention is to justify his sermon and to accuse his prosecutors of the injustices he has experienced during his seemingly endless years of imprisonment – exactly like the historical Servando did in his memoirs – but with the difference that Arenas's Servando fantasises to a totally ludicrous extent which triggers the third narrator's verbal attacks on Servando. The intention of this anonymous first person narrator is to not only question Servando's reliability but also to ridicule the stylistic inadequacies of the episodes narrated by him. By extension, the anonymous first person narrator also satirises the style of the historical Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, as Arenas imitates and then exaggerates the monk's eccentric style of writing in the passages voiced by his fictional Servando. The self-parodic interplay between Arenas's Servando and the anonymous narrator of *El mundo alucinante* seems overly complex at first glance but, as we shall demonstrate in due course, Arenas clarifies their complicated relationship by quoting Cervantes.

Arenas's quixotic representation of Servando is as humorous as it is illuminating. But only for the reader familiar with both pre-texts: *Memorias* and *Don Quijote*. By and large, a parodist runs the risk of being misinterpreted if the reader fails to pick up on the existence of the pre-text. As correctly observed by Hutcheon:

[...] if the readers miss a parodic allusion, they will merely read the text like any other: the pragmatic ethos would be neutralized by the

refusal or inability to share the necessary mutual code that would permit the phenomenon to come into being. (*A Theory* 94)

The mutual code between author and reader which allows for a parodic interpretation of *El mundo alucinante* is the shared knowledge of *Don Quijote*. Firstly, Cervantes's novel sheds light on the conflicting relationship between two of the narrators (Servando and the anonymous *yo*). Secondly, the references to *Don Quijote* highlight the absurdity of Arenas's undertaking in rewriting an existing autobiography, Fray Servando's *Memorias*, from an external point of view and a temporal distance of over 250 years.

Arenas's Servando is a Mexican version of Cervantes' protagonist, who does not fight windmills but, instead, an endless battle against the religious authorities of the time as he stubbornly insists upon the validity of his sermon in honour of the Virgin of Guadalupe. To the reader familiar with Servando's *Memorias*, the primary pre-text of *El mundo alucinante*, this quixotic portrayal of Arenas's eccentric protagonist is particularly amusing as, ironically, the real Servando's preferred literary weapon to ridicule his opponents in his writings is, as a matter of fact, to compare them to Cervantes's ingenious knight. In *Memorias*, Servando describes the censors of his sermon in the following words:

[Los señores canónicos son] reprehensibilísimos por haberse puesto a jugar títeres delante de manchegos expuestos y tomarles por realidades, como le sucedió a D. Quijote con el totili mundi de maese Pedro. Al ruido de los atables, moros, gaiferos, Melisendas, etc., el hombre se creyó en su obligación de acudir en su calidad de caballero andante, sacó su tizona y no dejó títere con cabeza en el retablo; y si maese Pedro no agazapa tanto la suya, se la taja, como me ha cortado a cercén mi honor el redactor del edicto. (133)

Just like the historical Servando, Arenas's Servando enjoys quoting Cervantes on several occasions. For the reader not knowledgeable about Servando's *Memorias*, the parodic circularity in *El mundo alucinante* is lost as Arenas turns the literary strategies used by Servando against his own protagonist to shed an ironic light not only on the historical Fray but also on his parodied Servando.

In the chapter "Estados Unidos 28. Las nuevas peripecias. Primera Expedición", Servando recites Cervantes, with gravity in his voice: "El bachiller, aunque se llamaba Sansón, no muy grande de cuerpo [...]" (166). Here, for the reader unfamiliar with *Don Quijote* but with possible knowledge of Servando's *Memorias*, this might seem exclusively as an ironic comment by Arenas on the monk's arrogance as he – in his autobiography and to an exaggerated extent in *El mundo alucinante* - never misses an opportunity to show off his memory as well as his supposedly deep understanding of literature. However, when looking at the quotes' original context, that is in Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, it becomes clear that Arenas allows Servando to quote specific passages taken from *Don Quijote* to give insight into the relation between his narrator (anonymous *yo*) and his protagonist (Servando). Furthermore, the quotes in question serve to enlighten the reader about one of his motivations for writing *El mundo alucinante*.

One of the many metafictional concerns raised in *El mundo alucinante* is Arenas's sceptical view on the subject of historical writing which he considers to be limited in its possibilities. In the prologue of *El mundo alucinante* the anonymous first person narrator rejects historical texts as "las abrumadoras enciclopedias, siempre demasiado exactas, y los terribles libros de ensayo, siempre demasiado inexactos" (9). Out of this disillusion with historical writing, Arenas opts for the novel. His favoured choice of genre allows him a freedom the historian does not have as s/he is restricted to the impersonal representation of facts. To manifest his preference for the novel over historical writing even more, Arenas lets his Servando quote from the third chapter of Cervantes' second volume, "Del ridículo

razonamiento que pasó entre don Quijote, Sancho Panza y el bachiller Sansón Carrasco” as referred to above. In this chapter, Sansón Carrasco explains to his knightly friend the respective responsibilities of a novelist compared with a historian:

[...] pero uno es escribir como poeta y otro como historiador: el poeta puede contar o cantar las cosas, no como fueron, sino como debían ser; el historiador las ha de escribir, no como debían ser, sino como fueron, sin añadir ni quitar a la verdad cosa alguna. (Cervantes II 49)

This particular allusion to Cervantes illuminates the reader on Arenas’s original liking for the Mexican monk as his literary inspiration. As historical writing does not allow for creative freedom, Arenas opts for the novel despite his interest in a historical topic. This overlap between historical and fictional discourse is a recurrent theme in *El mundo alucinante* for two reasons. Arenas’s Servando, just like Don Quijote, is not able (or willing) to distinguish between reality and fiction. Furthermore, the writings of the historical Servando are heavily influenced by fiction despite his claims of historical authenticity. For that reason, it can be argued that Arenas’s Servando (and to a lesser degree the historical Servando) and Don Quijote prefer to replace reality with their fictional worlds.

Unlike Cervantes’s protagonist, *El mundo alucinante*’s Servando is treated with sharp ridicule when narrating fantastic events. Nevertheless, the novel is not free of affection for its quixotic narrator and protagonist. This might sound contradictory considering the tenor of the unnamed first person narrator whose role it is to satirise all of Servando’s thoughts and observations. Servando, for example, describes his horror when he realises that black people are used as fuel by the American train driver on a train he takes to return to Mexico. This outrageous claim is rejected violently by the always accusing anonymous yo:

Pero para qué vas a contar esa vieja calamidad, oh fraile, ah fraile. Esa calamidad que nada tiene de original, pues todavía se repite. Eh, fraile, deja algo para las nuevas generaciones y sigue tus andanzas. Upa, fraile. ¡Anda!, fraile, ¡Zas!, fraile. Ahora dirás cómo fue que te esapaste de ese enemoniado sitio. Y cómo te hiciste de ciento veinte mil dólares, y ¡cómo fue que entraste al fin, ¡ca!, fraile, en las tierras mexicanas. ¡Anda, fraile! ¡Ea!, fraile. ¡Viva!, fraile. ¡Jau!, fraile. ¡Yeu!, fraile! (165)

Although his attacks on Servando are not always as “physical” as in the quote above, they are generally ridiculing and tend to aim at the stylistic weaknesses of Arenas’s Servando, and by extension at those of the historical Fray, whose writing has been criticised by O’Gorman as being marked by “la inútil reiteración, el desorden, la inexactitud y el yo constante” (XI). All in all, Arenas’s unnamed first person narrator never ceases to spotlight, often through parodic exaggeration, Servando’s stylistic flaws. These are based on the historical Fray’s style which can be described as repetitive, unorganised, inexact and self-centred to an extreme.

Despite the condescending tone of the novel, a certain sympathy which the author feels for his protagonist can be found between the lines. Arenas seems to be fascinated by the monk’s adventures, his forced journey of 27 years through several prisons and exiles, his persistence in fighting for Mexico’s independence and, possibly, by his quixotic madness.

Although Arenas is intrigued by Servando’s captivating voyage, he does not admire the Fray’s writing skills. To illustrate his interest in Servando’s life and to simultaneously highlight that he, or respectively his anonymous first person narrator, are better writers than Servando could have ever been, Arenas once more refers to Cervantes. Arenas’s Fray recites a poem by Cide Hamete Benengeli which is dedicated to the recently deceased Don Quijote:

¡Tate, tate, folloncicos!,  
de ninguno sea tocada;  
porque esta empresa, buen rey,  
para mí estaba guardada. (Arenas 166; Cervantes II 577)

This quote only becomes relevant when considering its original context in which Cide Hamete Benengeli reflects on the importance Don Quijote had for him. Cide Hamete Benengeli, one of the fictitious authors of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, explains in the last chapter of Cervantes' novel that:

Para mí sola nació Don Quijote, y yo para él; él supo obrar y yo escribir; solos los dos somos para en uno, a despecho y pesar del escritor fingido y tordesillesco que se atrevió, o se ha de atrever, a escribir con pluma de avestruz grosera y mal deliñada las hazañas de mi valeroso caballero, porque no es carga de sus hombros, no asunto de su resfriado ingenio. (Cervantes II 578)

I therefore argue that Arenas parodically echoes the dependence between Cide Hamete and Don Quijote. In other words, the relation between his anonymous narrator and the fictitious Servando mirrors that of Cide Hamete and Don Quijote. Consequently, the parodic references to Cervantes are used by Arenas to give an insight into his motivation for writing *El mundo alucinante*. Arenas's narrator is, in the same way as Cide Hamete, intrigued by his protagonist's adventures but aware of the fact that he is probably the more capable writer to document his subject's life.

In conclusion, Cervantes's *Don Quijote* is a text that remains highly influential in contemporary Cuban literature. Arenas's fascination for the quixotic Fray Servando Teresa de

Mier as a literary inspiration is revealed through his parodic allusions to *Don Quijote*. Furthermore, Arenas refers to *Don Quijote* to manifest his preference for fiction over historical writing whereas Cabrera Infante's intertextual allusions to Cervantes lead to the contemporary reworking of some of the themes and literary devices already present in *Don Quijote*. Thus, some of Cervantes's concerns and techniques regain great relevance in modern narrative such as the reliability of translations, the authority of the author or the use of parodic and intertextual practices. Clearly, Don Quijote has not yet fought his last battle as his creator's clever use of intertextuality, parody and humour has been rediscovered and adapted to the needs of contemporary Cuban literature.

#### Notes:

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1 Hutcheon emphasises that parody, satire and irony rarely appear in their pure form. She therefore suggests a scheme to classify hybrid forms such as satirical parody, parodic satire, ironic parody, etc. For further reading see Hutcheon, Linda. "Ironía, sátira, parodia. Una aproximación pragmática a la ironía." *De la ironía a lo grotesco (en algunos textos literarios hispanoamericanos)*. Ed. Hernán Silva. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992. 171-193.

2 This article focuses on textual analysis rather than on a theoretical debate of parody. Therefore, I had to be selective with respect to the references on which I base my proposed working definition. However, for further reading on the theoretical background of parody, particularly with respect to Spanish American literature, I suggest the following titles: **Bennet**, David. "Parody, Postmodernism, and the Politics of Reading." *Comic Relations: Studies in the Comic, Satire and Parody*. Ed. Petr Pavel et al. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1985. 193-210. **Boone**, Linda R. "'Si tú te llamarás Babel...': Love, Poetry, Parody and Irony in *Tres tristes tigres*." *Siglo XX Century* 8 (1990-1991): 31-40. **Herrero-Olaizola**, Alejandro. "El mundo alucinante o el 'Post-modernismo' de Reinaldo Arenas: visiones y re-visiones paródicas de la historia de Fray Servando." *Symposium* 48 (1994): 120-134. **Kerr**, Lucille. *Reclaiming the Author. Figures and Fictions from Spanish America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992. **Malcuzyński**, M.-Pierrette. "Tres tristes tigres, or the Treacherous Play on Carnival." *Ideologies and Literature* 3 (1981): 33-56. **Mendez Rodenas**, Adriana. "Repetición y paralismo en la prosa narrativa: *El mundo alucinante* de Reinaldo Arenas." *Crítica semiológica de textos literarios hispánicos*. Ed. Miguel Ángel Garrido Gallardo. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1986. 457-469. **Rodríguez Monegal**, Emir. "Carnaval/Antropofagia/Parodia." *Revista Iberoamericana* 45 (1979): 401-412. **Silva**, Hernán, ed., *De la ironía a lo grotesco (en algunos textos literarios hispanoamericanos)*. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992. **Skłodowska**, Elzbieta. *La parodia en la nueva novela hispanoamericana (1960-1985)*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1991 and "La parodia como factor de evolución literaria en la novela hispanoamericana." *Texto Crítico* 1 (1995): 101-107. **Tittler**, Johnathan. "Intratextual Distance in *Tres tristes tigres*." *Modern Language Notes* 93 (1978): 285-296. **Tomashevsky**, Boris. "Thematics." *Russian Formalist Criticism, Four Essays*. Ed. and Trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reiss. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1965.

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3 The short story “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” was first published in 1942 in *El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan* (Buenos Aires: Sur).

4 For more detailed information on Bakhtin’s definition of literary carnival see Bakhtin, M.M. *Problemas de la poética de Dostoievski*. Trans. Tatiana Bubnova. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988.

5 Fray Servando Teresa de Mier wrote two autobiographies (*La Apología del Doctor Mier* and *Relación de lo que sucedió en Europa al Doctor Servando Teresa de Mier después que fue trasladado allá por resultas de lo actuado contra él en México, desde julio de 1795 hasta octubre de 1805*) which are generally known as *Memorias*. The quotes given in this article are taken from *Memorias I* and *Memorias II*, edited by Antonio Castro Real (México: Porrúa, 1946).

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