PIERRE MENARD AND THE SCHOOL OF THE SKEPTICS

JORGE LUIS CASTILLO
University of California, Santa Barbara

The plot of Jorge Luis Borges's reader-oriented narrative "Pierre Menard, author of *Don Quixote*" (1939) is well known. An unnamed apologist pens a eulogy of an apocryphal symbolist poet that becomes a catalogue of both his "visible" and his "underground" or "invisible" works. The former consists of 19 entries, including essays, translations, and verse; the latter, "the subterranean, the interminable heroic, the peerless," and the apparent *raison d'être* of this pseudo-review, is of course Menard's *Quixote*, a fragmentary, incomplete work which coincides—word for word—with Cervantes's and yet is arguably more subtle and infinitely richer (*Labyrinths* 42).[1]

It is easy to see why some of the proponents of the *nouvelle critique* (Blanchot, Genette), reception theory (Jauss), and other representatives of postmodern philosophy (Deleuze, Danto) have used this short story as the paradigm of a new definition of meaning that is not fixed, ready-made, and author-oriented,[2] but transient, ever-changing, and reader-oriented. Within postmodernist thought, reading is no longer a passive undertaking, but an active endeavor

[1] The relationship between the two *Quixotes* has been the object of much scrutiny. See Balderston, De Grandis, del Río, Nallim, and Rabell ("Cervantes y Borges").

[2] See Dapía ("Pierre Menard: Autor del *Quijote*") and Aguilar.

that, like writing itself, incorporates its own horizon of expectations to confer alternate and endless meanings on the text: "ambiguity is richness" (*Labyrinths* 42). This infinite plurality of meanings, of course, would not be possible if the idea of meaning itself had not been infused with the nominalistic or lingualistic ethos of postmodern relativism, according to which meaning cannot be distinguished from the discourse that voices it.

It is no wonder that critical readings of "Pierre Menard" as a metaphor of the twofold process of writing/ reading have become commonplace, since this short story expresses a core belief of Borges's poetics. Menard's "invisible" masterpiece is only conceivable within a nominalistic, skeptical view of language as an epistemological tool, one of the fundamental presuppositions of Borges's entire literary production, which Jaime Rest, Arturo Echavarría, and lately Silvia Dapía have traced back to the philosophical works of Fritz Mauthner, particularly to his *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (1901–1902) and his *Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (1910). As they have noted, the most distinctive traits of Mauthner's ideas about language are his nominalism and his epistemological skepticism. For Mauthner, language is merely a social or communal construct based on arbitrary, conventional rules without any transcendence whatsoever. At best, language constitutes a symbolic, mnemonic device that allows its users to collect, organize, and articulate their sensations; otherwise a constant influx of sensorial data would flee the mind leaving no trace, and every sensation would seem a new one. According to Mauthner, however, "knowledge of the world through language is impossible" ("Welterkenntnis [ist] durch die Sprache unmöglich") because that very same metaphorical, approximate, and self-referential nature makes it an unfit epistemological tool (Mauthner, *Beiträge* I: xi; trans. Weiler 175).

It is precisely a nominalistic view of language such as Mauthner's that ultimately accounts for the richness unveiled by Menard's method. For Mauthner, language does not properly belong to the individual, but to the speaking community as a whole; language is a social game in which the context of the speakers plays a pivotal role in the act of communication: "the word is understandable only through the sentence, the sentence only through the situation, the situation only through the whole personality of the speaker, through his whole development" (Mauthner, *Beiträge* III: 117, trans. Dapía, 1996, 105).[3] In sum, language operates like a library of sorts, a vast depository of culture, traditions, and lore, inside which it is difficult for an individual voice to resound fully; in Borges's own words: "Each language is a tradition, each word a shared symbol, and what an innovator can change amounts to a trifle" (*Doctor Brodie's Report* 11).[4]

As Dapía has established, Mauthner's ideas about language constitute the basis of the epistemological relativism that underlies this reader-oriented text. Mauthner's conception of language, however, may not be the ultimate source of the most radical manifestation of philosophical skepticism featured in "Pierre Menard." Both Menard himself and the narrator who tells his story reflect the influence of the second-century (A.D.) philosopher Sextus Empiricus, a thinker to whom Mauthner himself recognized his indebtedness (Weiler 3). Sextus Empiricus's principal work on Pyrrhonism is the fullest extant account of the teachings of the school of the skeptics.[5] Although Mauthner was himself essentially a skeptic, his skepticism was moderate in comparison to the radical version purported by the school of that name, which was founded in the Hellenistic period (4th c. B.C.). For the skeptics, neither reason nor the senses were capable of furnishing knowledge of the nature of things; wisdom and happiness meant the suspension of any judgment about the essence of the world: "Suspension of judgment is a standstill of the intellect, owing to which we neither reject nor posit anything" (Sextus Empiricus I, iv: 10). The skeptics indeed claimed not to hold any beliefs whatso-

[3] The original reads: ". . . daß das Wort erst durch den Satz verständlich wird, der Satz erst durch die Situation, die Situation gar erst durch die ganze Persönlichkeit des Sprechenden, durch seine eigene Entwickelung." See Echavarría (111), Rabell (1992: 27-29), and all entries for Dapía.

[4] Borges writes in *Evaristo Carriego*: "There is no fledging versifier who does not attempt to define the night, a storm, carnal desire, the moon—things that stand in no need of definition since they already have a name or a representation known to us all" (66).

[5] Famous skeptics were Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–270 B.C.), the first skeptic philosopher; Timon of Philius (c. 320-230 B.C.), his follower and first commentator; Arcesilaus of Pitane (c. 315–240 B. C.) who was head of the Platonic Academy; Carneades of Cyrene (214–128/ 27 B.C.) who scandalized the Romans and incurred the displeasure of Cato the Censor with his facetious speeches; Aenesidemus of Cnossos (first century B.C.) who broke from the Academy, considering it too dogmatic, and tried to go back to Pyrrho's teachings; and Sextus Empiricus himself (fl. 200 A. D.), who contributed so little to the teaching of the skeptics and so much to the preservation of their ideas.

ever. They did not even affirm that knowledge of the world is impossible, because the validity of such a statement would have been, in itself, questionable (and dogmatic). Their goal was the tranquility that comes from not entertaining either affirmative or negative statements. According to Sextus Empiricus, "The chief constitutive principle of skepticism is the claim that to every account an equal account is opposed, for it is from this, we think, that we come to hold no beliefs" (I, vi: 12). It is not surprising that the skeptics wrote comparatively little.

The skeptics were a colorful, disputatious bunch who made enemies easily. Every person or school that claimed to have found the truth instantly became a bitter adversary as well as a prospective convert. Arguing was a favorite weapon of the skeptics, and some of the most notorious members of the school were highly skilled in the art of rhetoric. Their favorite method of persuasion was based on what Sextus Empiricus called "equipollence" (I, iv: 10). By this term, he meant "equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing" (Sextus Empiricus I, iv: 10). Arcesilaus of Pitane and Carneades of Cyrene gained notoriety as exponents of this method. The former "maintained no thesis, but would refute any thesis set up by a pupil. Sometimes he would himself advance two contradictory propositions on successive occasions, showing how to argue convincingly in favour of either" (Russell 235). His disciple, Carneades, created a riot in Rome when he delivered a lecture on the evils of social injustice, followed by another in which he treated his previous conclusions with contempt and scorn. At the behest of Cato the Censor, he was promptly invited to leave the city (Russell 237).

The "suspension of judgment" coined by the skeptics is evident in some of the key beliefs attributed to Menard by his pompous apologist. Although clearly Menard does not hold a radical view of skepticism in the sense that the ancients did, the skeptic method left its mark within his *opera omnia*. This is apparent in the basic structure of some of the "visible" works catalogued by his reviewer: according to his unnamed panegyrist, Pierre Menard's modesty makes him very much prone to the "resigned or ironical habit of propagating ideas which were the strict reverse of those he maintained" (*Labyrinths* 42).[6] Menard's "invective against Paul Valéry in the *Papers for the Suppression of Reality* of Jacques Reboul," as the narrator adds parenthetically, "is the exact opposite of his true opinion of Valéry. The latter understood it as such and their old friendship was not endangered" (*Labyrinths* 38).[7] The Pyrrhonian practice of arguing both sides of any question also structures another of Menard's treatises, namely his "technical article on the possibility of improving the game of chess, eliminating one of the rook's pawns," where "Menard proposes, recommends, discusses and finally rejects this innovation" (*Labyrinths* 37).

In these two "visible" works, Menard shows a relative mistrust of language as tool for knowledge that not only echoes Mauthner's, but also verges towards a more radical (or Pyrrhonian) form of epistemological skepticism. Menard's ambivalent "habit" of "equipollence" masks not only his "almost divine modesty" (*Labyrinths* 42), but also a skeptic circumspection which betrays a lack of confidence in the epistemological validity of any utterance. Menard's chess treaty, with its circular, self-effacing argumentation, assumes that the two contradictory tenets are tenable and, as the skeptics were fond of demonstrating, that the prevailing position owes more to the rhetorical skills of its proponent

[6] Woof refers to "the Symbolists' literary practice of saying the opposite of what is meant" (225); but no concrete instances of this practice are given, except for a vague allusion to Valéry (227).

[7] To a certain extent, Paul de Man, Daniel Balderston, and Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot have been successful in reconstructing the literary and historical context of Borges's short story, particularly the relationship between Menard and Mallarmé and between Menard, Valéry, and the latter's *alter ego*, Monsieur Teste. Paul de Man ("Un maestro") argues that Menard is an avatar of Valéry's Monsieur Teste (and therefore of Valéry himself), but does not consider to what an extent the creation of such a contentious and opinionated alter ego determines the ethos and the overall reliability of the story. In his zestful and well-documented study, Balderston offers a more detailed account of the Menard-Valéry relationship, but equally fails to go beyond mapping the story's sources. Balderston finds a possible counterpart for Menard's chess treatise in Valéry's discussion of a card game (19); but overlooks the fact that the "equipollent" ethos of Menard's work is, nonetheless, totally absent from Valéry's excerpted text. Even if Menard were indeed Valéry's (or Teste's) mirror image, to establish such a parallelism would hardly account for the complexities raised by the former's "resigned or ironical habit of propagating ideas which were the strict reverse of those he maintained" (*Labyrinths* 42). This method ("equipollence"), it has been established, was the trademark of the school of the skeptics; even if it were possible to trace it to Valéry's *opera*, its presence would merely attest to his familiarity with the teachings of ancient philosophy (as it certainly does in Borges).

than to any absolute, objective, or scientific standard. The "invective" against Valéry implies not only mauthnerian mistrust of language but also a good dose of radical skepticism, since it suggests that it is the past experiences shared by Menard and Valéry that allow the latter to understand the "invective" as a eulogy, that is, as a mere rhetorical exercise rather than Menard's actual opinion. This episode echoes Mauthner's controversial view of language as merely a social game in which the common experience shared by the speakers, and not the message itself, determines the effectiveness of the act of communication; as Valéry's reception of Menard's invective shows, it is even capable of superseding the message.

Undoubtedly, Menard's habit of proving a point and then its opposite undercuts his reliability; as a result of our exposure to a set of conflicting viewpoints, we have no way of knowing what Menard really thinks. Menard's equipollent games (his "resigned or ironical habit") and the small love he harbored toward his own literary work (the notebooks containing his clandestine masterpiece were given to the flames) are consonant with an epistemological skepticism very similar to the nominalistic reflections of Mauthner and Borges about the narcissistic nature of language, and, particularly, with the oppressive view of language as a communal archive or library where culture is stored. Menard's appropriation of *Don Quixote* might have been (as Nuño claims) an affirmation of freedom (Nuño 52): Pierre Menard (or anybody at all) can be the author of *Don Quixote* because language does not belong to an individual, but to everyone who shares the memories and the traditions stored in language.[8] By

[8] In "The Flower of Coleridge," Borges writes: "Around 1938 Paul Valéry wrote that the history of literature should not be the history of the authors and the accidents of their careers or of the career of their works, but rather the history of the Spirit as the producer or consumer of literature. He added that such a history could be written without the mention of a single writer" (*Other Inquisitions* 10). This Hegelian view of every literary endeavor echoes, in turn, Mauthner's ideas about the collective nature of language. It is also worth noting that although Valéry's (and Mauthner's) thoughts are perceptible in the unnamed narrator's reader-oriented reading of Menard's opus, the narrator himself is not consistent with Valéry's model in his glorification of Menard. Neither has the narrator respected Menard's last wishes: the original version, published in *Sur* (1939), states that Menard burnt his manuscript of *Don Quixote* because "When we are alive our friends tolerate us—that is their function—but for a dead man to continue requiring attention . . ." (Balderston 145, n. 11). This sentence was deleted in the final version of the story.

the same token, this short story can also be seen as the realization of the impossibility of achieving true originality through language precisely because it belongs to no one.

At a metadiegetical level, the same "equipollence" present in Menard's self-contradictory stances underlies the storytelling of his unnamed apologist. In essence and in character, the narrator of "Pierre Menard, author of *Don Quixote*" resembles Cide Hamete Benengeli, Cervantes's mendacious alter ego; Menard's narrator, however, exercises an absolute control over his narrative, an autonomy that Benengeli does not enjoy.[9] The narrative voice within this pseudo-critical piece of literary criticism embodies everything that any respectable critic should avoid: no attentive reader can in good conscience disregard the narrator's pedantic, tendentious writing. The narrator's blatant prejudices are religious as well as literary: he attributes the presence of certain spurious additions and omissions in Madame Bachellier's catalogue of Menard's works to her religious beliefs (the "*Protestant* tendency" of her "fallacious catalogue" "is no secret") and claims that her readers must be "few and Calvinists, if not Masonic and circumcised" (*Labyrinths* 36). The reasons for the narrator's prejudices and for his hatred of Mme. Bachelier are not known. We can only guess from the virulence of his statements against Protestants, Freemasons, and Jews that he must be a staunch Catholic; we can perhaps entertain the possibility that his contempt for the lady is the darker side of an unrequited love.[10] Whatever the explanations might be, it is hard to find one that would allow us to overlook the narrator's bigoted statements.[11]

If the narrator's biases are not enough to cause one to doubt his reliability, we must evaluate the rationality of his discourse. It should not surprise us that a serious contradiction, a byproduct of his animosity against Mme. Bachelier, lies at the core of the story's plot. In one of the story's footnotes the narrator denies that Menard ever

[9] For a lucid account of Benengeli's unreliability, see Riley.

[10] Perhaps Madame Henri Bachelier (like Beatriz Viterbo or Teodelina Villar) is another avatar of the frivolous, inaccessible *femme fatale* who often populates Borges's narrative universe.

[11] If we consider that the narrator's anti-Semitic statements were written in 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, and when the Nazis were about to invade most of Europe to proclaim the superiority of the Aryan race, his racist utterances would seem all the more reprehensible.

wrote a work very much in the same spirit of his *Quixote*: "Madame Henri Bachelier also lists a literal translation of Quevedo's literal translation of the *Introduction à la vie dévote* of St. Francis of Sales. There are no traces of such a work in Menard's library. It must have been a jest of our friend, misunderstood by the lady" (*Labyrinths* 30, n. 1).[12] There is no apparent reason for this denial other than the narrator's dislike for Mme. Bachelier and his doubts about her intellectual honesty. He refuses, for no particularly good reason other than his own bias, to consider worthy of inclusion in his own catalogue of Menard's works "a few vague sonnets of circumstance written for the hospitable, or avid, album of Madame Bachelier" (*Labyrinths* 38). In another passage, the narrator clearly implies that Madame Bachelier is not the author of *Le jardin du Centaure* (the title suggests a cross between Albert Samain's *Au jardin de l'infante* and Maurice de Guérin's *Le centaure)*, since one of the advantages of Menard's method is that we could read the book "of Madame Henri Bachelier as if it were by Madame Henri Bachelier" (*Labyrinths* 44). We can assume of course that the narrator also has a penchant for Menard's "equipollent" games and does not mean what he says. The narrator's feelings toward the lady are not entirely consistent: in reviewing some interpretations of don Quixote's discourse on arms and letters, the narrator could have very well censured Mme. Bachelier's commentary on the significance of this episode (such an act would have been entirely concordant with his personality), and yet, leaving his previous animosity aside, he obviously chooses not to do so (*Labyrinths* 42). But, if the narrator were indeed serious, he would then be making a claim for Pierre Menard's literary immortality precisely on the same type of work the existence of which he finds preposterous in the context of Mme. Bachelier's catalogue. In

[12] As Kristal has not failed to notice, Menard's translation "ostensibly restores the original French" (95–96) thereby accomplishing a project similar in spirit to his "invisible work": the recreation of an already extant text which, perhaps (if meaning is relative, contextually based, and reader-oriented, not fixed, textually-based, and author-oriented) entails the creation of an altogether different work (cf. Aguilar). Some critics have argued as well that Quevedo's translation of the *Introduction à la vie dévote* is in fact a literal copy of a previous translation of the same work by Eyzaguirre (1618) (cf. Carrera Ferreiro). If such claims were true, Quevedo's literal translation of a literal translation would echo Menard's "invisible work" in a manner that probably Borges did not even suspect.

other words, either because of his own bias, or because he is playing the skeptic's equipollent game, the narrator undermines his own reliability when he refuses to consider seriously the writing of an already extant book.

Given the unreliability shown by this narrator, one might also ask: why should we presume that the lost transcription of Quevedo's translation is no more than a joke, while we take Menard's version of the *Quixote* seriously? The fact that Menard's transcription of Quevedo's manuscript cannot be found is not a convincing excuse; Menard's *Quixote* is also lost. In fact, we are forced to rely on the narrator's testimony (a risky enterprise) even to assess the existence of such work, since Menard "did not let anyone examine these drafts and took care they should not survive him. In vain I have tried to reconstruct them" (*Labyrinths* 44). It becomes obvious at the end of the story that readers cannot be certain to what extent the narrator might have examined or read Menard's manuscripts; perhaps, as is the case with Mallarmé's *Livre*, the entire work was never written, except in Menard's imagination (which would, of course, divert the reader away from any literal reading of this story). The oft-quoted correspondence between Menard and the narrator, even taken at face value, does not constitute enough proof of the existence of Menard's *Quixote*. Like Mallarmé, Menard might have left extensive documentation about a text that he never got around to writing.[13] In any case, for the tenacious narrator, it is of no consequence that Menard's incomplete *Quixote* was in fact destroyed, because he has artfully redefined the act of reading to compensate for the (partial or total) absence of Menard's text: "Shall I confess that I often imagine he did finish it and that I read the *Quixote*—all of it—as if Menard had conceived it?" (*Labyrinths* 40). It is again the unreliable narrator, not Menard, who posits the true significance of the text, and who deems the latter's *Quixote* subtler and richer than the original; like Cervantes's contemporaries, Menard himself—the narrator admits—considered it just "an entertaining book" (*Labyrinths* 43). But, then again, could not this casual comment be the opposite of what Menard really thought?

[13] Of Mallarmé's *Livre* very little actually materialized (cf. Scherer's edition); of Menard's it seems that nothing at all survived. That is, of course, precisely the point Borges is trying to make regarding the nature and the necessity of artistic creation in the modern age.

It is surprising that most critics of the story have unwillingly or conveniently dissociated the unreliability of Menard's idiosyncratic apologist from the contents of his discourse, namely from the claims he makes about the existence of Menard's "underground" work and, especially, from its staggering philosophical, literary, and linguistic implications. As enticing and fruitful as the familiar, reader-oriented readings of "Pierre Menard" indeed are, nearly all of them overlook the skeptic, nihilistic side of the text.[14] The critics no doubt commit such an act of neglect to preserve the integrity of their own readings, thus perpetrating an act of hermeneutical bad faith: in Paul de Man's felicitous wording, they are blinded by the narrow focus of their critical assumptions, through which they achieve their own, usually brilliant, insights (*Blindness and Insight* 109). Neither can my own essay escape what is every critic's dilemma.

Reading the story as a skeptic text, however, is not incompatible with the philosophical relativism of postmodernity; on the contrary, its anti-authoritarian stance is perfectly consonant with the skeptic and nihilistic attitude toward discourse ensconced in the diegetic and metadiegetic levels of Borges's text. As the reviewer of Menard intimates, it does not essentially matter whether Menard actually wrote his *Quixote* or not. Creation through language is no longer possible, because it is not really creation; in Borges's own words, "there are no longer any original ideas" (Chancel 76). Literary activity becomes a reshuffling of existing elements, one component of which are the already extant works of art that are created anew by the critical gaze of the beholder. Creation is thus a mental, critical operation and one which does not entail the fabrication of another actual object, because it is a phenomenon that happens within the mind, which is its sole milieu. Menard's reviewer is able to read Menard's *Quixote* even in those chapters of Cervantes that Menard did not succeed in writing because his reading is ultimately as "real"

[14] To a certain extent, Woof avoids the pitfalls of dogmatism regarding "Pierre Menard, Author of don Quixote." He does so by acknowledging that at the core of the story lies the irresolution of an impasse between idealism and realism, in which neither of the two traditional trends of Western philosophy are able to establish a logical difference between imaginary and real objects: "It is common sense and not epistemology that condemns Menard" (216). Woof suggests both the skeptic, postmodern bent of Menard's enterprise and Borges's own epistemological skepticism vis-à-vis the "hallucinatory nature of the world" (*Other Inquisitions* 114).

as the literary object. As a text, the *Quixote* remains the same; the only change is the way in which the individual mind apprehends it.[15] Thus literary creation is neither ruled by mimetic (classical) or sentimental (romantic) principles: it has become solely a critical, interior phenomenon, one that is confined to a curiously nihilistic ideal or nonmaterial realm. The "author" has been displaced by the "translator," the "editor," or simply the "reader."[16]

This essentially solipsistic attitude toward language is yet more pessimistic about the possibilities of attaining objective meaning than even Mauthner's nominalistic conception of language as a conventional, social construct. Although Mauthner deems language an unfit tool for scientific knowledge of the world, he does not go as far as the skeptics do, who reduce the scope of language to the most elemental expression of one's own particular, individual feelings, "without holding opinions" or "affirming nothing about external objects" (Sextus Empiricus I, vi: 7).[17] By abstaining from making dogmatic statements, of any kind and by whatever means, about the nature of things, the skeptics avoid the question of whether the world is comprehensible in an intersubjective fashion, whether by language or some other means. Their mechanism of equipollence was devised to show that concepts and meanings (the ideas expressed in language) are mere opinions (*doxa*), wholly subjective and transitory. Without explicitly denying it—they could not since they claimed to hold no beliefs—the skeptics' demonstration of the unreliability of language challenged the legitimacy of any fixed or stable interpretation of any literary text.

The unreliability of the statements of both the narrator and his subject, Pierre Menard, renders Borges's story a skeptic cipher, a text that does not authorize anyone to hold any opinion. The interaction between the diegetic and the metadiegetic level operates like the skeptic mechanism of "equipollence." The two opposing narra-

[15] Borges's short story has become "a favorite source of intuitions concerning the ontological status of a literary work of art. Many philosophers are convinced that Borges has shown in this piece of fiction how two different literary artworks can share the same text, therewith offering support to the view that works are not texts" (Aguilar 166).

[16] Borges was fond of quoting an idea that ultimately stems from a letter from Novalis to Schlegel: "in the end, all literature is translation" (Kristal 32).

[17] According to Sextus Empiricus, the skeptics "utter their own phrases in such a way that they are implicitly canceled by themselves, then they cannot be said to hold beliefs in uttering them" (I, vi: 6-7).

tive levels simply cancel each other out. The existing contradictions within the diegetical and the metadiegetical levels of the text operate as a destabilizing factor that abolishes the internal hierarchy of the text, depriving it of its authority, and, ultimately, questioning the legitimacy of all discourses, especially its own.

In consonance with his repeated public statements of agnosticism, Borges has taken great pains in contrasting and complementing the subversive literary endeavors of Pierre Menard with the utterly unreliable voice that reviews the life and works of this counterfeit symbolist *auteur*. It is almost as though Borges did not want his arguments to be taken too seriously, an attitude he often showed in public when he thought critics overread his works.[18] The result of this skeptic stance is to perform another turn of the screw in what has become a leitmotif throughout Borges's entire literary enterprise—namely, as stated in "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," that "there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and conjectural. The reason is very simple: we do not know what the universe is" (*Other inquisitions* 104). The skeptics indeed could not have agreed more.

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[18] Borges's well-known fondness of using philosophical ideas for their literary possibilities rather than for their truth is certainly a skeptic attitude but not a dogmatic one. On numerous occasions, Borges flaunted his own skepticism, yet he clearly did not take it too seriously. As Kristal notes in the closing pages of his book, Borges's skepticism is tinged with irony and contradiction: "it is impossible to determine whether his air of perplexity was a mask for philosophical certainties or whether his philosophical affirmations were a mask for his perplexity" (142). His skepticism might have been, as Borges himself admitted, a consolation for the painful experiences that are all too human (143).

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REVIEWS

En un lugar de La Mancha: Estudios cervantinos en honor de Manuel Durán. Ed. Georgina Dopico Black y Roberto González Echevarría. Salamanca: Almar, 1999. 274 páginas.

Manuel Durán ha dedicado toda su vida docente a la Universidad de Yale y allí ha impartido innumerables lecciones cervantinas a múltiples generaciones de jóvenes universitarios. Algunos de ellos se reunieron el 1 y el 2 de noviembre de 1996 para celebrar merecidamente la jubilación de su maestro. La anfitriona de todo ello fue la directora del Departamento de Español y Portugués, María Rosa Menocal, quien, en su lección inaugural ("En un lugar de la Mancha . . . "), trazó un esbozo biográfico de Manolo, como afectuosamente le llamamos todos. Siguieron catorce ponencias más, todas de tema cervantino, y el conjunto se ha puesto entre cubiertas y se presenta como una útil contribución al cervantismo.

El libro se abre con unos reconocimientos que ponen en evidencia la gestación de este homenaje en su doble aspecto de tributo oral e impreso. Sigue a esto una lista de los numerosos libros del homenajeado: cuarenta aparecen en la lista y nueve de ellos son de poesía. De los restantes libros profesionales algunos de ellos se escribieron en colaboración con diversos colegas y dos de ellos con su simpática esposa, Gloria. Quiero recordar que uno de sus primeros libros fue de tema cervantino (*La ambigüedad en el 'Quijote,'* Veracruz, 1961), que reseñé, en su momento, en estas mismas páginas. Sigue una Tabula gratulatoria y ahora sí se abre este breve y merecido homenaje a nuestro cervantista catalano-yanqui.

El primer artículo es lo que fue homenaje oral e inaugural de María Rosa Menocal, "En un lugar de La Mancha . . . ," ya mencionado (15–21). El resto de los trabajos se agrupa naturalmente en dos: los dedicados en cierta manera al *Quijote* y los dedicados a otras obras del manco inmortal. Entre