1

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On the novel: mirror and text

Comparative in scope, this volume in the Cambridge Companion series presents the development of the modern Spanish novel from the seventeenth century to the present. Drawing on the legacies of *Don Quijote* and the traditions of the picaresque novel, the collected essays focus on the questions of invention and experiment, of what constitutes the singular features, formal and cultural, theoretical and philosophical, of the novel in Spain, and how the emergence of new fictional forms articulates the relationships between history and fiction, high and popular culture, art and ideology, gender and society, literature and film.

Three major concepts have guided the theme and structure of the volume: the role played by historical events and cultural contexts in the elaboration of the novel; the development of a reflexive, and at times parodic, stance toward writing and literary tradition; and the conviction, either expressed or implied, that ambiguity and the lived experience of time, filtered through memory, have defined human lives in transition, as scene and setting, characters and events become recreated through the diverse, dialogical modalities of the Spanish novel.

Regardless of the age, past or present, in the development of the Spanish novel we discern a fundamental element: the *quixotic* or what Nabokov has called "play in collusion with reality."[1] Here the accent falls not so much on the representation of the things of this world but rather, as Nabokov says, on the way "meaning gets into things and lives" (*Lectures*, p. xvi). Even when it appears that play is all, that there is no meaning, no message to take away from the novel, the imprint of the text, of the spectacle of verbal thinking, feeling, and imagining, creates meaning as it discloses collusion with a particular cultural moment. The depiction of things or ideas or actions or simply of dialogue, of the acts of reading, remembering, and

[1] V. Nabokov, *Lectures on "Don Quijote,"* ed. Fredson Bowers (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983), p. xiv.

writing, evolves as various novelistic forms of enchantment in a disenchanted world.

These forms specify a tension between referentiality (manifested in "things" like furniture, fashion, modes of speech, and social codes) and textuality, the verbal web of discourse.[2] Such a tension generates fusions of the real and the fictional which, in turn, create a self-reflexive dimension that expands the concept of mimesis, informing the novel with an inner questioning about itself and its making. Questioning stems from the *Quijote,* as it does from the spectacle of painting in Velázquez's *Las meninas* (1656): each is a work of art that promotes the theme of its own identity as a fabrication, and each shapes basic aspects of the development of the Spanish novel. Thus Galdós, speaking in 1870 of the invention of the modern Spanish novel, cites Cervantes and Velázquez as masters of the art of illusion and of the generative power of disillusion,[3] of disenchantment, a power that nonetheless enchants, as Nabokov has observed of the *Quijote* (ibid.). Juan Goytisolo, a leading contemporary Spanish novelist and critic, in a recent interview (2001) also harks back to that mix of referentiality and textuality, arguing, on the one hand, for an understanding only granted through the specifics of place, gesture, and time, and, on the other, for the creative power of language. "I believe," he says, that "a writer is, above all, the language he writes." Goytisolo attributes the knowledge of this essential equivalence of the writer's craft to Cervantes: "When I was 25 years old, I read the *Quijote*. That says it all."[4]

The notion of the *quixotic*, then, marks the trajectory of the Spanish novel from the 1600s to the present. Once worked through the trope of the mirror, what is quixotic grows larger than the novel that contains it. Thus the time-honored image of the mirror may be taken as a central metaphor to illuminate the nature of the Spanish novel and its development through the centuries from the belief in the possibility of reflecting life, as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to the most daringly experimental novels of the twentieth century. For the mirror is a lie that tells the truth. The left and right sides interchange in a reflection, a perceptual action that the Spanish novel exploits not only to picture a hallucinated or self-hypnotic or inspired state of mind that seeks to reinterpret and remake "real life": mirror-like images

[2] The tension between referentiality and textuality is elegantly analyzed by Lilian R. Furst in her opening chapter "Truth to Tell," in *"All is True": The Claims and Strategies of Realist Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 12.

[3] B. Pérez Galdós, "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea" (1870), in *Ensayos de crítica literaria*, ed. L. Bonet (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1999).

[4] J. Goytisolo, "'Juan Goytisolo, escritor.' Entrevista con Arcadí Espada," *El País*, 10 June 2001, p. 13.

also question the role and identity of author, character, narrator, critic, and reader, as these re-creations imitate and reflect each other in a series of criss-crossing relations. Examples abound, from *Pepita Jiménez* (1874) and *El amigo Manso* (*Our Friend Manso*, 1882) to *Niebla* (*Mist*, 1914), *Cinco horas con Mario* (*Five Hours with Mario*, 1966) and *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* ('Beatriz and the Heavenly Bodies', 1998).

Thus one paradox of Spanish fiction is how the diverse images of the mirror act as a metaphor to articulate the defining coherence of a novelistic production that resists definition. For the ubiquitous mirror, in various guises, clarifies the evolving trajectory of a fundamentally quixotic, novelistic consciousness that characterizes the minds of author and character, narrator and reader. We move from the mirror of chivalry in the *Quijote* to the mimetic mirror and intertextuality of realist fiction; from the redoubled reflections of Unamuno's novels to the distortions of Valle-Inclán's concave mirror; from the "circus of mirrors" proposed by Azorín to Ortega's famous "window," a formalist frame through which a novel's plot must pass to achieve aesthetic integrity.[5] Finally we enter the dialogical reflections of the testimonial novel and the novel of memory, later to witness the "broken mirrors" of recent experimental fiction. However pictured, the image of the mirror expands across the centuries to encompass three interrelated concepts: mimesis, metafiction, and myth.

In the *Quijote* a mimetic focus on *menudencias* – the trifling things of life – acts as a kind of inset mirror that reflects those trifles within a nexus of relations that confers upon the ordinary an extraordinary range of meaning. An example is the brown, bristly mole in the middle of don Quijote's back: Sancho sees this bristly mole as the sign of a strong man, a token of virility like the abundant hair on his master's chest.[6] Don Quijote, however, takes the mole to be a mark of lineage, his affinity to chivalric heroes like Amadis de Gaula. Thus not only does the mole, like the barber's basin, provoke overlapping points of view and a belief in intersecting identities: the bristling hairs also denote a supra-textual vitality. That small sign of heroic, masculine identity will surface three hundred years later in the dainty little mole, bristling with three (no more, no less) copper-colored hairs, that enlivens the corner of the mouth of doña Lupe, a formidable domestic ruler in Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* (*Fortunata and Jacinta*, 1886–7).

This particular bristly mole delineates the entrepreneurial spirit of a middle-class woman, a seasoned campaigner in the field. Doña Lupe, an

[5] A. Zamora Juárez, *El doble silencio del eunuco. Poéticas sexuales de la novela realista según Clarín* (Caracas: Editorial Fundamentos, 1998), p. 70.
[6] Nabokov, *Lectures*, p. 13.

expert in bargain hunting and the practice of usury, takes on transactions as seemingly impossible as don Quijote's windmills. One example is the reconcilation of Fortunata, a fallen woman, in marriage to her (Lupe's) nephew Maxi. Further, when the narrator counts the sprouting hairs as precisely three, refers to the years of her youth as "mocedades," and traces that shadow of an adolescent mustache over her upper lip, he parlays a tiny brown mole into a complex of qualities that hark back to literary tradition, one that had applied the term *mocedades*, meaning "adolescence," only to those early years of a male protagonist. In this way, those traits expose hidden characteristics such as doña Lupe's essentially masculine character, her acumen with numbers, and her capacity, like don Quijote's, for "heroic" deeds.

In the *Quijote*, something as ordinary as a brown bristly mole poses the problem of point of view, belief, and reality. In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, something as familiar as body hair creates inset stories: tiny bursts of action, scene, setting, and psychological insight. Examples are the black bunches of hair that bustle about the "balconies" of nose and ear of Nicolás Rubín, Maxi's incipient baldness, Fortunata's tumbling dark curls, or the treacherous Aurora's thinning hair. Trifling things – *menudencias* – and important political, social, and historical events collude to tell Galdós's two entwined stories of married women.

By the twentieth century, the motif of body hair takes on a temporal dimension, appearing in Rosa Montero's *Crónica del desamor* (*Absent Love*, 1979) as a sign of the passage of time and an improbable future, each bracketing, as it were, an acute recognition of the suffering caused by the traditional gender roles that a patriarchal society assigns to men and women. The narrator, Ana, and Javier, her lover, have played mind games with one another for ten years, unable to communicate true feelings. When Ana gives up on Javier, she confronts him with what she perceives to be his selfish, typically male behavior, only to discover that she – like Javier – had mistaken the clues that had shaped their relationship. During their last encounter, Ana intensely regrets those ten years of wasted opportunities, captured to her eye in the graying strands of her lover's pubic hair. Now *menudencia*s – those graying strands – function as a chronotopic image, depicting how the contemporary Spanish novel mirrors the space–time continuum while it embraces a more open approach to sexuality and a feminist imaginary.

As Michael Wood has observed, the mirror may be tilted, the slice of life taken at an angle.[7] In the twentieth century, Spanish novels like Luis Martín Santos's *Tiempo de silencio* (*Time of Silence*, 1962) or Juan Goytisolo's

[7] M. Wood, "The Art of Losing," *The New York Review of Books*, 18 February 1999, p. 7.

Reivindicación del conde don Julián (*Count Julian*, 1970) reposition the mirror to confront the text. Now that text, its genesis, literary tradition, critical and public reception, as well as the persona of writer and reader, stand encompassed by an all-inclusive mirror, which itself is part of the reality that the novel purposes to capture. The text, catching at the sleeve of author, narrator, character, critic, and reader, generates a series of mimetic transferences and exchanges to convert the novel into a metafictive mirror. This mirror "goes walking" to promote a series of simultaneous, kaleidoscopic perspectives, seeming to "break" as new writers discard linear plots, reliable narrators, and the unities of time and place, thereby questioning traditional authority. Novels like Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (*The Same Sea as Every Summer*, 1978) or Carme Riera's *Una primavera per a Domenico Guarini* (*Spring for Domenico Guarini*, 1984) dismantle the canon and replace vertical (masculine) concepts of rank and tradition by a horizontal network, even fusion, of entries and images. They also confound categories of high and low, gender and identity, and the role of author, character, narrator, and reader. *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* ('Love, Curiosity, Prozac, Doubts', 1997), Lucía Extebarria's title, brings together the broken pieces of the mirror in a gesture that only points up their dispersion in an electronic age.

Mythic reconfigurations also reverberate in the images reflected by mimetic, metafictive, or broken mirrors. As industrialization changed rural environments in the nineteenth century and as storytelling shifted from the written word to film and electronic images in the late twentieth century, space opens out to the unknown, communication proliferates through the Internet, and Spain becomes part of the global enterprise. Now the creation and consolation of myth articulate in the novel a resistance either to the recent past of the dictatorship or to capitalistic change itself. Spectacle engages the imagination, while the new historicism seeks times and settings untouched by consumerism and recent strife. Imitation, invention, experiment, rescue, and recovery: as the Spanish novel moves toward the condition of electronic media and cinematography, it retains in new forms the active principles of mimesis, metafiction, and myth.

These forms, old and new, stand reflected in the cover of this volume: the gnarled lines of Picasso's black and white lithograph *Don Quijote and Sancho*, set within the angles of the abstract rendition of spring by the contemporary Spanish painter Eusebio Sempere, depict the idea of the Cervantine "root" of the Spanish, and indeed of the European, novel. Sempere's background of geometric planes, bisected by light, provides an apt image of a "broken" mirror, communicating visually the idea of the "lites"/"lights" of the novel beyond modernity. Further, the juxtaposition of geometric shapes,

lines, and colors projects the informing theme of mental and imaginative replay that takes place in the Spanish novel – in reading, writing, and in writing about writing.

This Cambridge Companion volume brings the most interesting, original, and difficult aspects of the Spanish novel to the attention of an informed reader, mainly (but by no means exclusively) in the English-speaking world. Samples of style and the analysis of tropes, imagery, idiolect, syntax, poetic diction, and other defining features, which are always related to a meaning that the reader can absorb and understand, display the distinctive qualities of this literature.

The volume opens with a chapter by Anthony Close that traces the legacy of *Don Quijote*, showing how Cervantes's great novel intersects with the genre of the picaresque. For the *Quijote* gives birth to the modern novel in Spain, the rest of Europe, and the Americas. As Close points out, the features of the picaresque and the Cervantine emphasis on the interplay of *menudencias* and idealizing fantasy, which shapes the inner life of an individual character, constitute not only the origin of nineteenth-century European realism but also mark the trajectory of the Spanish novel in the twentieth century.

In the third chapter, "The Enlightenment and Fictional Form," Rebecca Haidt argues the case for linking the concept of "enlightenment" and experimentation with fictional form. Taking as an example Cadalso's *Noches lúgubres* ('Dark Nights of Dejection', 1798) – not a novel and yet a text that struggles with fictional forms as it articulates certain concepts and trends of the Enlightenment – she presents several types of eighteenth-century fictional productions that fit the category of "novel."

In Chapter 4, "The Regional Novel: Evolution and Consolation," Alison Sinclair gives an overview of the ideas that produced the regional novel and the *costumbrismo* (attention to manners, dress, furnishings, local customs) that shaped a literary genre flourishing in the 1830s in Madrid and, by mid-century, also in the Spanish provinces. Following the legacies of the *Quijote*, the picaresque novel, and the Enlightenment, she focuses on the mix of evolution and consolation, tradition and innovation, in politics and culture that oriented the Spanish regional novel toward the realism of the 1880s.

Chapter 5, "The *Folletín*: Spain Looks to Europe," explores the question of what literary imitation meant for Spain in a time of rising nationalist sentiment. Elisa Martí-López analyzes the themes and narrative techniques of popular and salon fiction – the sentimental novel, derived from French and English models, the Romantic novel, and novels of social protest, which were published serially. She shows how the serial novel transformed publishing

markets and how it informed, in part, the structural and stylistic innovations of realist writers like Benito Pérez Galdós.

Chapter 6, "The Realist Novel," concentrates on the art of creating a persistent belief in the reality of a fictional world, demonstrated to supreme and varied effect in *La Regenta* (1884–5) by Leopoldo Alas (Clarín) and Benito Pérez Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886–7). The analysis and interpretative details define the traditional and experimental nature of these and other novels, whose competing claims of referentiality and textuality hark back to Cervantes even as they foreshadow the invention of the modern existential novel, such as Unamuno's *Niebla* (*Mist*, 1914). This chapter also shows how Galdós's novels anticipate the narrative, dramatic, and cinematographic techniques that prefigure aspects of novel and film in contemporary Spain.

In Chapter 7, "History and Fiction," Geoffrey Ribbans elucidates the relations between history and fiction that, on the one hand, define the historicist vision of nineteenth-century Spain and, on the other, form the basis of a new type of novel: the forty-six *Episodios nacionales* written by Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920). He shows how Galdós established this genre at the same time as he created the contemporary social novel. Each series of novels served as a point of departure for the historical novels of Pío Baroja, Unamuno, Valle-Inclán, and Ramón Sender, all of whom articulated shifts in the concept of the genre. By dramatizing historical elements and situations through the subjectivity of their protagonists, these writers translate philosophy, melodrama, and romance into a uniquely existential mode of fiction. The historical novel, increasingly an element of popular culture, poses contested questions of the reconstruction of history, and of the relation of fiction to historiography, that will define the post-Civil War novel in Spain.

Chapter 8, "Gender and Beyond: Nineteenth-Century Spanish Women Writers," focuses on the question of gender and its consequence for writing practices in nineteenth-century Spain. Lou Charnon-Deutsch reevaluates fiction written by women within dominant realist discourses, interpreting the relevance of political, social, psychological, and religious factors to cultural assumptions bound up with the formation of the canon. Her chapter explores the contrapuntal dialogue between, on the one hand, the way nineteenth-century women wrote about themselves and their struggles, and, on the other, what that writing discloses about their stance vis à vis the working classes and the subjects of Spain's former colonies.

In Chapter 9, "Decadence and Innovation in *fin de siglo* Spain," Noël Valis probes the decadent mode in fiction: its distrust of surface representations, the desire to penetrate into a deeper reality, the perception of life as a charade, and the wish to evade the historical present, all of which gave rise to *modernismo*, symbolism, and the decadent movement, adumbrated in

La Regenta and brought to aesthetic fruition in the novels of Valle-Inclán. Her analysis centers on the stylized structures and forms of Valle-Inclán's novels, which, on the one hand, seek the cult of artificiality and distortion, while on the other hand displaying, as in *Tirano Banderas* (1926), bitter cynicism and an obsession with the perversities of political power.

Chapter 10, "From the Generation of 1898 to the Vanguard," illuminates the changing relations between narrative form and philosophical preoccupation which were taking place as the form of the novel evolved consequent upon the "disaster of 98" – the loss of Spain's last colonial possessions, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines – in the Spanish American War of 1898. The stable structures of fiction yield to the predominance of ideas as ideological configurations come to shape character and action, scene and setting. Roberta Johnson shows how the year 1902 inaugurates the "Age of Silver" in Spanish letters, and how novels by an older generation of writers (Unamuno, Baroja, and "Azorín") and of the next generation (Pérez de Ayala, Miró, Chacel, Jarnés) display a confluence of fiction and philosophy, of theory as textual praxis. In their rejection of the staples of realism, they join the literary currents of European modernism.

In Chapter 11, "The Testimonial Novel and the Novel of Memory," Gonzalo Sobejano explores the novels that emerged from Spain's Civil War (1936–9). First he focuses on their biographical, social, and historical contexts, and then proceeds to discuss their formal innovations and obsession with the themes of war. Sobejano analyzes the themes of disillusion, loss, alienation, uncertainty, and evasion in novels by Cela, Delibes, Sender, Sánchez Ferlosio, Fernández Santos, and Martín Santos, and shows how the novel becomes a montage of narrative structures and modes of poetic diction that contest, by implication, with the coercive, "official" optimism of Francoist Spain. Sobejano explains how, after the death of the dictator, modalities of social realism shift to emphasize an alternate representation: the novel of memory, which evokes the past through remembering, writing, and reading. Just as the texts of popular culture (romances of chivalry) transformed, in Cervantes's great novel, the character and ordinary life of Alonso Quijano/Quijada/Quesada into the new, exalted persona of Don Quijote, so the texts of mass culture (romances, mystery stories, sentimental dance tunes known as *boleros* and folksongs styled as *coplas*) recapture the experience of the lost world of childhood before the war. Texts of mass culture thus allowed the roles of author/narrator/character and reader to merge and to speak as one multi-vocal participant.

Chapter 12, "Questioning the Text," analyzes the intertextuality, montage, and fragmentation that mark the novels by Benet, the Goytisolos, and Torrente Ballester in the 1970s. Promoting difference, crossing cultures,

exploring sexual otherness, are thematic strands stemming from the interrelated approaches of feminism, psychoanalysis, film theory, and the visual arts. Brad Epps shows how linguistic experimentation, a renewed emphasis on subjectivity, the use of fantasy and the supernatural, and the parodic use of structuralist jargon take the resources of the imagination to extremes. Language itself turns into protagonist as the discourse of literary criticism turns into narrative.

In Chapter 13, "Women and Fiction in Post-Franco Spain," Akiko Tsuchiya concentrates on women's writings that defy the notion of fixed gender roles in life and literature. Incorporating concepts established by contemporary feminist thinkers, she examines how Spanish women writers create alternate patterns of communication, such as the disruption of gendered expectations, the construction of female utopian spaces, and the replacement of traditional rhetoric by discursive technique, that articulate the uniqueness of each writer's voice, vision, and ideology.

In Chapter 14, "Cultural Alliances: Film and Literature in the Socialist Period, 1982–1995," Isolina Ballesteros explores the intertextual relations between novel and film in contemporary Spain to show how these two forms of narrative pursue a common goal: the creation of belief in the reality of fiction. Responding to the cinematographic structures and textures of the modern Spanish novel, film-makers like Luis Buñuel, Víctor Érice, Carlos Saura, Mario Camús, Ricardo Franco, Vicente Aranda, and Francesc Betriu have recourse to narrative and drama, recasting themes that highlight in both novel and film how each genre operates within and across a semiotic system of meaning.

In Chapter 15, "The Novel Beyond Modernity," Teresa Vilarós traces new developments as today's writers return to the basic conventions of storytelling and popular genres, such as detective stories, adventures, and romance. She shows how this new fiction fuses roles, voices, and texts, and conflates culture and cult, art and fashion, historiography and legend, information and noise, pastiche and parody. She analyses techniques of fragmentation, pointing to the way an "encrypted" or "scarred" discourse attempts to mask or erase the notion of Spanish "difference" as Spain becomes part of the global enterprise. The notion of literature *lite* – brief, dazzling, cosmopolitan, oriented toward the consumer – combines with the "lights" of the transition from dictatorship to democracy during the 1980s. It refashions a genre that reflects, on the one hand, the uneven modernity of Spain and, on the other, the persistence of myth: writers engage in a distinctly Spanish mode of new historicism by creating medieval or pre-Columbian plots and settings. Once again myth reengages fiction, but now as a mode of erasure of the immediate past of the Francoist dictatorship.

In the concluding chapter, "Writing about Writing," Randolph Pope explores how Spanish novelists have textualized their theories about writing. From Cervantes to Goytisolo to Lucía Extebarria, writers have turned narrative into critical reflection and theory into story. He shows how, since Cervantes, novelists have conceived the process of writing as a central novelistic theme, amplifying the mimetic mirror with metafictive dimensions. The questions of parody, metafiction, and the polyphonic texture of narrative mark a thematic and artistic coherence, which, through the essays of this volume, becomes clearly discernible in the evolution of the modern Spanish novel.

Now a word about the process of editing: Each contributor was free to select the works, develop lines of argument, and propose an interpretation, directing the essay towards the general reader, undergraduate students, and specialists in Hispanic Studies. Thus each chapter refers to the historical moment, cultural context, and to the literary tradition in which particular novels arise, engaging theoretical concepts to illuminate text and context. Whether the contributors contemplate the writer as thinker, storyteller of plots, creator of character, theorist, or a mind as a mirror of his or her times, a concern for the use of language, structure, and point of view is always paramount. In every chapter, writing is thinking. Each contributor takes time to build arguments that are quite detailed and sometimes technical. At the same time, each takes care to use technical terms sparingly and to avoid jargon. Analytical sections, which focus on the novels most relevant to the chosen topic, show how these have affected the subsequent history of the genre in Spain.

Translations of the titles of novels appear parenthetically in the text of each chapter. If a translation has been published in English, we print the title in italics; otherwise the translated title appears in roman type. The volume includes a biographical note for each contributor, a chronology, bibliography, and index. The original dates of publication of the novels are given in the chronology. The publication date given in the bibliography normally refers to the edition cited by the relevant contributor. The chronology, providing more than a list of dates and works, frames the novels within salient historical and political events, social trends, artistic production, and popular fashions. In this way, the chronology instructs the reader about the complexity of the dynamics that have shaped the global context in which these novels were written and published. The bibliography consists of a comprehensive list of the novels cited in the volume, giving full references for translations published in English.

Preparing a volume in the Cambridge Companion series depends on collaboration. We thank our contributors for their skill and patience during the