little-known documents

Two Arguments for the Spanish Authorship of *Gil Blas*

FRANCISCO DE ISLA AND JUAN ANTONIO LLORENTE

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATIONS BY NANCY VOGELEY

Introduction
Translation and National Politics: *Gil Blas* and the Picaresque

TODAY *PICARESQUE* IS A CATCH-ALL TERM, WHICH LITERARY CRITICS AND GENERAL READERS USE TO CHARACTERIZE ALMOST ANY STORY of playfulness and mischief.[1] It has been stretched across so many national boundaries that any notion of its historical or geographic referents is often lost. The central character, an antihero, seems to express the author's devilry and wit rather than any social criticism. This view, growing out of readers' preference for pleasant entertainment and critics' focus on language and form, sees no more than an on-the-road plot, with "adventures" ending whenever the author chooses to stop.[2] However, this sense of the picaresque forgets the complex, frequently damning portrayal of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain that the picaresque's original stories provided, as well as the contestation of the genre in postrevolutionary France, where it describes high crimes and suggests their punishment.

This process of reconceiving the picaresque to neutralize its political punch began in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When translations of Spain's novels arrived in France and England, readers there, if they thought of Spain as essential to the stories, easily displaced onto that distant national setting what they considered to be the fictional characters' baseness, cruelty, and foolishness. In translations and imaginative borrowings of the Spanish narrative model, English satirists like Tobias Smollett, Jonathan Swift, and Daniel Defoe pretended to imitate a foreign mode: saying that they aimed at buffoonery and comedy, they diverted attention from the seriousness of their attack on their own society.[3]

Examination of the controversy over the authorship of *Gil Blas* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries usefully sets out the role of translation at that critical moment and starkly calls into question events that contributed to reconceiving the picaresque. Europe was confronting the evidence of monarchical failure and people power: the takeover of the Bastille and the retributions of Robespierre's Terror were too awful for many to think of repeating, even imaginatively. *Gil Blas* told a story of Spanish immorality at the

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highest levels, a possibility that must have troubled European readers of the period even as they debated the truthfulness of the newly popular genre of the novel. The French identity of Lesage, writing from Paris under a Bourbon king whose family ties influenced the Bourbon regime in Spain, apparently protected him from Spanish recrimination over his exposé of the fragile edifice that was the Spanish court under the former house of Austria. The king, weak and avaricious, had turned over governance to the prime minister, the count of Olivares; ambitious nobodies had risen into the ruling class by catering to the low wishes of the powerful, thus contributing to factionalism and foolish decision making. Yet, the author tells, many of these upstarts were from the country's poor, forced into participating in this fraudulent theater so as to seek a patron in an economy that offered them no honest work.

Most histories of literature identify the French writer Alain-René Lesage as the original author of the Gil Blas story.[4] Lesage's *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* was published in Paris in 1715, and subsequent, expanded editions appeared in 1724 and 1735. However, not long after *Histoire* was first published, Spaniards said that Lesage's work originated in Spain and accused the Frenchman of robbery. Francisco de Isla, a Spanish Jesuit who translated Lesage's text into Spanish in 1787 while in exile in Italy, complained in a prologue to his translation that Lesage had taken a Spanish work and passed it off as his own. In 1818 Nicolas Louis François, count of Neufchâteau, argued to the Institut de France that Lesage was the author. In 1820 Juan Antonio Llorente, a Spanish cleric living in Paris, addressed a long manuscript to the institute, refuting the count's assertions and reaffirming that the author was a Spaniard. The institute decided in favor of the count; Llorente, forced to appeal to other judges, published his essay in 1822 in Paris and Madrid, where he wrote in his dedication to the Spanish congress that he hoped it would validate his claims. In 1836 Llorente's essay was republished in Barcelona as a fourth volume following Isla's three-volume translation, *Aventuras de Gil Blas de Santillana, robadas a España y adoptadas en Francia por Mr. Le Sage; restituidas a su patria y a su lengua nativa por un español zeloso que no sufre se burlen de su nacion* 'Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillana, Stolen from Spain and Adopted in France by Mr. Lesage; Restored to His Native Country and to His Native Language by a Spaniard Concerned That His Nation Not Suffer Mockery.'[5]



Portrait of Alain-René Lesage, frontispiece of his *Historia de Gil Blas de Santillana* . . . (Paris, 1850).

Over and above this wrangle, which may never be resolved, lies the question of translation. Recovery of this historical controversy lays bare not only Spanish-French antagonisms and literary competitiveness throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but also the growing sense in Europe of a national language's uniqueness and an emerging critical awareness of the vagaries of translation. Isla's introduction to his translation illustrates this awareness. His textual analysis, in which he tries to ascertain what readers (French or Spanish) the original language was designed to address, shows a remarkable insight because it supposes that national reading publics would have had different reading expectations. In addition, his discussion of differences between the novel, the romance, and history, singular to those diverse readerships and dismissive of classical imitation, records an awareness that the forms were not the same in France, Spain, and Italy. Finally, his examination of biblical parables in which a king is rebuked, which he undertakes to illustrate the value of exemplary stories, not only signals that the Bible can now be compared with other,

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invented literary forms but also invokes that respected precedent for publishing misdeeds.

Rather than decide authorship, Isla's remarks in the document that follows declare that translation practices papered over national differences. They emphasize his view that national invention was making theories of classical imitation obsolete. They tell us that Spain was seeking to free itself from French neoclassicism, whose aesthetic rules denigrated Spain's rich novel tradition.[6] Isla poses the moral dilemma as to whether writers should reveal or conceal the wrongdoing of highborn men; if writers hid crimes or disguised the men's identities to preserve authority in an effort to maintain social order, they were partners in the crimes.

Isla's reflections on his situation—Spanish but living in exile in Bologna because the Spanish king had expelled the Jesuit order from Spain in 1767—point to how, astride several languages, Isla understood how translators often traveled or resided outside their language's home. Isla defends himself for having devoted time to what others might consider the mechanical task of translating; far from home and deprived of books, he finds that the retrieval of a Spanish work is a way of serving his nation.

In his 1820 refutation of Neufchâteau, Llorente expressed unhappiness over Isla's translation of Lesage's novel, considering it unfaithful to the original in its freedoms and omissions.[7] Nor was Llorente happy with Isla's theory that Lesage, residing in Spain, took a satirical manuscript by an anonymous author who did not dare to have his criticism of the Spanish government published in Spain and that Lesage then remade the story, publishing it as his own in France. Llorente thought that the author of most of the story was Antonio de Solís, the seventeenth-century writer famous for an authoritative history of the conquest of Mexico. By 1820 the French printer Lefèvre was publishing *Gil Blas* as a French work with Lesage as its author and the count of Neufchâteau's essay as prologue; thus, Llorente feared that any idea of translation or imitation of a Spanish original had disappeared.

Neufchâteau based his claim for Lesage's authorship on Lesage's statement that the book originated with him and that he would not have lied.[8] Llorente sensibly bypasses this argument and shows the Frenchman's lack of familiarity with Spain by saying that Lesage misrepresented Spanish surnames and topographical names, miscalculated distances between Spanish towns, ignored Spanish custom of the period—and, worst of all, did not understand that the Spanish work was intended to be read not as amusing satire but as denunciation of iniquity (for thus the Inquisition would have understood the text and given permission for its publication). Llorente would have been especially sensitive to the Inquisition's role in Spain's history because he had studied it from inside, first charged by the king to modernize it and then invited by Napoleon's appointee governor in the country, his brother José Bonaparte, to gather evidence for ending it. A canon lawyer, Llorente would go on to Paris, where he would publish his *Histoire de l'Inquisition* in 1818. Llorente says that Lesage was a good "sastre que cose retales agenos" 'stitcher of the remnants [created] by others' (412) and never understood the difference between copying and inventing. Perhaps because Neufchâteau had appropriated Richardson's *Pamela* for a theater piece of his own, he sympathized with Lesage's borrowing. Implicit in Neufchâteau's and Llorente's arguments is their national pride. Neufchâteau raised the question of the comparable worth of French and Spanish literary accomplishments, and Llorente concedes that France excelled in the present period but insists that Spain surpassed France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (346). However, Llorente also blames Isla for the fact that Lesage could pass himself off as the author of the text because Isla had so poorly translated the novel and so weakly defended its Spanish roots.[9]

Isla and Llorente had in common their exile. Displaced from Spain, they seized on discussion of a literary work as a means of proclaiming national identification and pride. Their recourse to a linguistic artifact suggests a certain wistfulness in holding on to the portion of nationhood that still belonged to them. Isla saw Lesage's appropriation of the work as an attack on Spain and, in establishing its Spanish paternity, sought to convert what others saw

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as outsiders' mockery (*burla*) into self-criticism. Though Llorente avoids harsh criticism of Lesage and discusses, more legalistically than Isla, the several Spaniards who could have authored the work, he concentrates on attacking Isla; Isla was a scapegoat for the French among whom Llorente was living and whom he could not criticize. Discussion of the literary work allowed Isla and Llorente to demonstrate the Spanish author's superiority to Lesage and familiarity with their homeland. Isla had used the novel form to parody the obscurity of priests' baroque sermons in his earlier *Fray Gerundio* (1758), but Llorente departs from his normal medium of history writing in this exercise in literary criticism.

What follows is a portion of Isla's address to the readers of his translation, which he signed with an anagram of his name.[10] Next is a quotation from Llorente's refutation of the notes the count of Neufchâteau appended to his 1820 edition of *Gil Blas*, where we read a defense of Spain's *historias fabulosas* 'made-up stories,' among which Llorente finds three types—*historias* 'histories,' *novelas* 'novels,' and *romances* 'romances'—that may reflect Isla's categorization and that represent an effort to clarify the genre the French confusingly called *roman* and *histoire*. He then demonstrates Spain's novelistic creativity and originality in a lengthy list of the country's literary productions that reveals his generation's growing sense of a national canon (which Spanish literary historians were contributing to by publishing long-lost manuscripts and in which the novel figured prominently). Llorente, in Paris, had a privileged view of how Spanish fiction had traveled to other parts of Europe, to be translated and printed there for other readerships; he understood that the books not only spread knowledge of Spain's literary excellence but also undermined Spain's reputation among foreigners when they read of the country's disorder. Finally, Llorente's list of authors (which carefully details information about their access to power) indicates his sense that the large number of novels denouncing misdeeds by the most powerful members of society meant that they were intended for the moral instruction of Spain's literate class.

Llorente also describes how each of the novel's categories depicts a social class (perhaps revealing his exposure in Paris to talk of the various estates and the role of "the people" as a new foundation of the state). Llorente was among the first to introduce *picaresque* into literary history;[11] and his list of possible authors of *Gil Blas*, which has gone unnoticed in genealogies of the picaresque,[12] is a valuable record of that period's understanding of that type of fiction. Like Isla, Llorente recognizes that *Gil Blas* portrayed the personal weaknesses and ignoble motives of the upper classes. But, in associating the picaresque with low types, Llorente eliminates the possibility that kings and their counselors could misbehave. Thus, the less threatening sense of the picaresque, which Llorente's discussion sets out, in which misdeeds are recast as the "misadventures" resulting from random encounters and attributed to commoners, would prevail in literary history. Each writer's approach to *Gil Blas* reflects the frustrations and inhibitions of his personal condition—Isla introducing the notion that kings could err (he would have blamed Carlos III



Gil Blas (standing) and the count of Olivares in the garden of El Escorial. Illustration from *Aventuras de Gil Blas de Santillana* . . . (Barcelona, 1836; 2: 380).

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for the Jesuits' expulsion from Spain) and Llorente agonizing over the fact of the French Revolution and the lesson that the consequences of the king's just punishment could be disastrous for society.[13] (He hoped to earn reentry into Spain by flattering the Spanish congress, if not the king.)

The critical arguments of the three—Isla, Neufchâteau, and Llorente—uncover roots of the picaresque tradition and ways in which high crimes can be hidden by their absorption into inoffensive literature. In setting the novel off from parable, romance, and history, they point to the period's growing sense of the novel's taxonomy, particularly the genre's capacity for copying reality or imaginatively adding to it. The Spaniards' arguments insist on national differences as Huet's universalizing theories were beginning to subsume them into one history of the novel. The three writers' arguments validate the importance of translation analysis in determining authorship and readership. In their engagement with Lesage's text, they remind us to historicize the picaresque; to look beyond easy literary labels like *roguery* or even *beggary*, which remove the text from social realities;[14] and to avoid all-encompassing theoretical postures in our scholarship.

Notes

1. See Guillén for a checklist of characteristics defining a picaresque work.

2. Studies by Wicks and by Guillén represent this view.

3. Hume, for example, argues that *Don Quijote* and the Spanish picaresque novels introduced the satiric mode into England, inspiring Defoe and Swift. He understands the Spanish satire to have undermined previous literary forms such as the fantastic romance but not to have touched on politics. In this Hume was unlike American colonists who read criticism of the nobility in *Don Quijote*. However, he does record the tradition that *Lazarillo de Tormes* was a response to the Council of Trent (133).

4. Typical are the library classification for *Gil Blas* under Lesage and J. B. Priestley's statement in the 1937 edition of the Smollett translation that while the French writer may have taken Spanish material, his manner was original (x).

5. This edition is the source of my quotations from Isla's "Conversación preliminar" and from Llorente's "Observaciones críticas sobre el romance de *Gil Blas de Santillana*," which includes Llorente's original manuscript and his refutation of the arguments the count of Neufchâteau made after he had had Llorente's manuscript for a year and a half.

6. Blackall discusses how Germany was also asserting artistic and intellectual independence from France, making claims about the originality of its folk literature, about its Greek and Roman lineage, and about its Romantic genius.

7. Monlau says that Isla changed the locale of one adventure from Portugal to Poland (xxxiv). Peña y Marín corrected this change in his edition of *Gil Blas*.

8. I have not reproduced Neufchâteau's long defense of Lesage's authorship, since it principally consists of disputing Llorente's claim that when the French ambassador to Spain was in the country, he got the manuscript of *Aventuras de bachiller de Salamanca* 'Adventures of the Bachelor of Salamanca,' the basis for *Gil Blas*, from Solís. According to Llorente, the ambassador then took the manuscript back to France, where his son passed it to his friend Lesage. Neufchâteau finds it strange that Solís would have composed a work so critical of the count of Olivares since he was working as a secretary for the count's nephew—and strange that the ambassador would have published a work that would have jeopardized his good relations with his host country.

9. Antonio Puigblanch, another Spaniard of Llorente's generation, was also dissatisfied with Isla's translation. In exile in London, Puigblanch undertook to retranslate *Gil Blas* but died midway through the project.

10. Neither did his translation bear his name.

11. Dunn finds an early use of *picaresque* in Simonde de Sismondi's 1813 description of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, in which Sismondi defines it as "the literature of beggary" (25). Dunn lists what are usually considered to be the major Spanish picaresque novels (5).

12. Dunn does not record Llorente's list in his excellent book.

13. Indeed, in 1824 Louis-Benoît Picard published to great acclaim *Le Gil Blas de la Révolution, ou les Confessions de Lorenzo Giffard* 'The Gil Blas of the Revolution; or, The Confessions of Lorenzo Giffard,' in which he linked misdeeds to the 1789 Revolution.

14. Recently Anne Cruz has gone back to the sixteenth-century picaresque to link the literary representation to the poverty Spain suffered then. I discuss the picaresque in Spanish society today in "The Picaresque Tradition Updated: Alfonso Sastre's *Lumpen, marginación y jerigonça*."

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Excerpts from "Conversación preliminar"

FRANCISCO DE ISLA

If you want to know from me what Spaniard was the true father of that child [*Gil Blas*] and how or when that poor creature came to land in the hands of the French gentleman [Alain-René Lesage], that [information] is what I cannot provide with the assurance that I would want and you would desire. I have been able to ascertain only that Mr. Lesage was in Spain for many years—according to some as secretary and to others as friend and dinner partner to an ambassador from France. His inclination to our language and the pleasure he took from the witty satiric and moral writings that just a little bit before had begun to be published in Spain, some anonymous and others with the names of their authors, compelled him to seek out friendships with them. He had a close association with a certain Andalusian lawyer who gave him the famous *Political Reverie* . . . , which was a furious satire directed at the ministry of Spain. This same lawyer entrusted to Mr. Lesage the manuscript for the novel *Gil Blas*, which was another, even wittier, satire, clearer and more biting in its attack on the governance of the high nobility, [a group] that was coming increasingly to the fore of the ministry, so that the manuscript, translated into French, could be published in Paris as if it had originated there. [The manuscript] could not be published in Spain without the lives of the printer or others involved in the publication being placed in danger.

What is not doubtful is that in the third and fourth volumes of *Gil Blas* two grandees are spoken of without the respect that they deserve, named and described with all their warts in spite of the veneration properly due their persons if not their high birth. I am not

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blind to the fact that some historians, even among our national writers, have not shown them greater consideration either. But, since such examples ought not to be followed, they have had no force with me, and so I disguised in my translation the grandees' titles and dictates without swerving from the truth. Those who already know the history will be familiar with my disguise, although I wish to give them [the grandees] cover, and to those who are unfamiliar with the story I refuse to say their names. . . .

. . . What need is there to prove that *Gil Blas de Santillana* was originally Spanish when Lesage's own compatriots and panegyrists say it? Don't they count this work among the translations and imitations from the Spanish language that Mr. Lesage did? Don't they say that his principal works in this genre were *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the *Bachiller de Salamanca* [*The Bachelor of Salamanca*], *Gil Blas de Santillana*, *Diablo cojuelo* ["The Limping Devil"], etc.? Don't they add immediately "that this author showed little invention but was endowed with wit and good taste, as well as with great talent to elaborate ideas and make the thoughts of others his own"? What need is there, then, for me to consider him [the book and its protagonist] a Frenchified Spaniard, to remove his fastidious outfit and dress him as a Spaniard from the north, to present him in stockings and doublet, making him speak in his own Castilian language, which is primitive and natural?

I am seeing that you, my reader, are still not very comfortable and that you have something to say to me: that this restitution is done by an old man, long in the tooth and rough, who doesn't tolerate being made fun of when it comes to his nation. How can a man of his years employ his time so badly on a work that is semibuffo, tiring himself on a task that is so mechanical that it seems foreign to his age and perhaps to his personal circumstances, from which one could expect more serious, useful, and no less entertaining works? . . .

In the first place, because I am an old man, long in the tooth, rough, and devoted to his nation, I could not, nor ought I, suffer that a Frenchman, whoever he may be, come to us with his hands clean, or apparently clean, to make us believe that an Asturian born (as he assures us) in the port of Pajares had been engendered, conceived, and given birth to on the other side of the Pyrenees, supposing that Mr. Alain-René Lesage had given him birth, which is like saying that Jupiter bore Minerva.

In the second place, the work has nothing in it of the semibuffo, although it is written with a lot of salt [wit] and even with some grains of pepper [sharpness and irritation]. The question "What forbids a person, when laughing, from speaking the truth?" is understood by all persons of good taste and is not called buffoonery [*bufonería*] but seasoning and good humor. "It corrects manners by laughing at them" has been held for many centuries to be one of the most instructive and mature sayings that antiquity has left us. Although old age is sometimes subjected to ill humor, it is not always at odds with good humor. . . .

Why must a work be called semibuffo when it is filled with lively and apt portraits of the customs of men and reflections no less full of good sense, written in a style that without ever leaving off being natural is elegant, its words Castilian, and its narrative fluid, free, and uninterrupted, as well as from time to time witty but never shocking? A work of this nature has nothing of the buffo style and should not be thought to be unseemly for the hands of any Methuselah, even if he is in the last year of his long life. . . .

The novel *Gil Blas* is a romance with good sense, very instructive and at the same time very entertaining because of the many events that are joined with the greatest sense of connection, consequence, and naturalness. The author uses these events to paint with liveliness and propriety the customs of men, passing on to them his solid reflections, which conform to inherent honesty and church mo-

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rality. If perhaps he introduces the adventures of some gallants, they are treated with all decency and with all the decorum that could be desired from an old, circumspect pen. It must be observed that adventures of this kind are described in such a manner that their representation incites flight from them by means of a shaming lesson.

But, oh, sir! That all this morality is based on fictitious deeds, since even the hero of the romance is fictitious! And what does it matter that the deeds are imagined or fictitious, provided that they are similar to real ones and that the morality is solid, proper to Spain, and in all conforming to what religion and reason dictate? The fables of Phaedrus and Aesop, are they by any chance other than fables? And with all this, who has denied up until now that those actions and sayings of plants and brutes haven't taught men a lot? The very erudite Pierre-Daniel Huet, bishop of Avranches, one of France's wisest men, wrote a book on the origin of romances or novels. "One has only to read it," a modern critic says, "and anyone will be convinced not only of the novel's antiquity and use but also of its utility as a school for morality, much more efficient than that of any schoolmaster."

The same critic argues (and indeed the reasons for his assertion are not weak) that the reading of well-written novels or romances is more useful to individuals than the reading of history.[1] In history one learns only what has been done, and even here in very few cases, because the historians are few who don't disfigure, out of passion or out of partisan or national spirit, the true facts, passing off as such those that are most altered and not a few times the most contrary. But in romances, one is taught what one ought to do, basing the instruction on the very thing that is confessed was not done. Among historians, "nulli jactantius fidem suam obligant, quam qui maximè violant" ["none are more fallacious than those who boast of their fidelity"], as one historian, who was very accredited among the moderns, once said.[2] But novelists begin by advising us that everything they say is made up, although so close to what is seen and felt that the very fiction leads us by the hand to realization of the truth and introduces us imperceptibly to the instructive message. The reading of history is commonly directed at refreshing one's memory of uncertain past events to show off a puerile and pedantic erudition in private conversation and in public writing. But the reading of romances, although it entertains through a variety of pretended events, is directed principally at passing on practical knowledge of the world, the discovery of mischief, and the means of conducting oneself discreetly, prudently, and in a Christian manner.

Novels, fables, and parables are all similar in their goal—none other than teaching men to be men. They differ only in that the first are long and entertaining; the second brief and witty; the third sometimes long and sometimes short. But all are moral.

Those who doubted the real existence of Job learned of it by means of a long parable and a short romance (however full of great historical documentation). The few who think the same of the story of Tobias suppose it to be a superior, valuable romance, made up of singular episodes, all of which inspire the highest maxims of religion, the most elevated concept of God, and the principles most conducive to stamping on the soul the obligations of human society. Neither of these two opinions can be sustained by Catholic reasoning, but it doesn't matter. The two parables, one of Nathan as regards David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the other of Thecuites and the same king after David had resolved to take Absalom's life because of the fratricide he committed on his brother Amnon: these two parables, I repeat, are like two short novels—the first intended to get that monarch to repent of his adultery and the subsequent murder of Uriah and the second to get him to reinstate to good grace and not kill the fratricidal son, a parable invented by his captain Joab.

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Parables are not anything other than short romances reduced to one event entirely supposed and imaginary, and the romance is nothing more than a long parable, woven of various invented episodes, like everyday ones, so that the true monstrosity of the romance is felt in the monstrous irrationality of the parable—no pen can disavow this if the forms are dealt with with decency, discretion, and proper judgment. . . .

. . . No knowing person has denied this merit to *Gil Blas*, the romance that Mr. Lesage adopted. There are even critics of refined taste who judge the work to be not inferior to the celebrated *Télémaque* of the incomparable Fénelon de Salignac.

Notes

1. The lawyer Constantini, *Lettere critiche* [*Critical Letters*], vol. 2, p. 32.

2. Famiano Estrada, prologue to *De Bello Belgico* [*A History of the Low Countries' Wars*].

Excerpts from *Observaciones críticas sobre el romance de Gil Blas de Santillana*

JUAN ANTONIO LLORENTE

THERE ARE SEVERAL KINDS OF PROSE FABLES. The three principal ones are histories of knights-errant [*historias de caballeros andantes*], novels of love [*novelas amorosas*], and ethical tales of adventure [*romances morales de aventuras*]. Spaniards have achieved primacy in the three classes, according to the testimony of impartial judges and even of some Frenchmen.

The German Gaspar Bartius, speaking of the Spanish tragicomedy *Celestina*, subtitled *Calixto y Melibea* ["Calisto and Melibea"] said, during the first third of the seventeenth century,

> Because the Spanish language exceeds all others in gravity and rich vocabulary, so also it presents us with a greater number of elegant writers in that genre in which we find agreeable and useful fables. That is why we see in other languages, particularly in French, some compositions in which utility is joined to pleasure, which is owing to the invention and the illustrative talents of the Spanish writers.[1]

In 1774 the very wise Frenchman Linguet (victim of the revolutionary tribunal of 27 June 1794) published in French four volumes with the title *Teatro español* [*Spanish Theater*], in which, knowing the language and literature of Spain well, he confessed that "the Spanish novels were of such vigor and of such fine tact that they exceeded the common ideas of the period and thus contributed much to the perfection of the French tongue, because all the French novels were translations or imitations of the Spanish ones. These were generally much better written than dramas because they came closer to the originality of Nature."[2]

As regards the first kind of prose fable, the first story of knights-errant was *Amadís de Gaula* [*Amadis of Gaul*], a Spanish work invented in the fourteenth century by the Portuguese Vasco de Loberia. Later the Castilian García Ordóñez, native of Medina del Campo, corrected it and had it printed in Seville with the addition of a fifth volume, *Esplandián, hijo de Amandís* ["Esplandián, Son of Amadís"], which contained the history of

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the knight in the title. Then it was translated into Italian, and, as we have seen, Mr. Des Essarts translated it into French in 1545. This work was the origin of a multitude of chivalric stories. Nicolás Antonio records a number in his *Biblioteca española* [*Spanish Library*], and we don't know how many there would have been if Miguel de Cervantes had not cut off their progress with his inimitable *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. That book meant not only that no more books of chivalry were written but also that those already composed were not printed—as happened to one of my maternal grandparents (Gregorio González, native of the town of Rincón del Soto, my homeland, who was a contemporary of Cervantes and who wrote *Primera parte de don Onofre, caballero guitón* ["The First Part of Don Onofre, a Shiftless, Begging Nobleman"]).[3]

The second kind, called *novels*, also brings glory to Spain. Italians wrote before Spaniards in this vein, but the latter quickly left their masters behind, writing novels that entertained without the indecent and lascivious words that the Italians had used. They fought against vice, sometimes praising and rewarding virtue and other times censuring and showing the disastrous results of society's disorder. The Spaniard Alfonso de Ulloa purified the novels of the celebrated Boccaccio and published them in Spanish in 1566 in Venice. Cervantes published his original ones in Seville in 1613, and Lope de Vega, Juan Pérez de Montalbán, Alonso de Castillo, and many other Spaniards imitated him. Their relevance was recognized in France, as evidenced by the French translations of those works.

The third kind of prose fable, the *romance*, is longer than the *novel* and tells the story of a civil hero and not a military knight. Romances perhaps contain the whole life of the hero, perhaps only its principal events, but in either case they ought to relate to [an individual's] life in society, so that they are truthful and vice is punished, or at least censured, and virtue is rewarded, or at least praised—a circumstance that should be common to any invented composition.

Stories of knights-errant suppose events of a more elevated level than those in romances, and they are less realistic, since a knight belongs not to ordinary society but to the extraordinary.

Based on this principle, romances are subdivided into as many subaltern kinds as there are in civil society, especially three: first, those pertaining to the fabled heroes of the nobility; second, those pertaining to the honest citizens of the nation; and third, those pertaining to the masses (an idea and class well-defined and differentiated from the "people," the body of the nation). Spanish genius has shone in the composition of the three types and even in a fourth that resulted from the mixture of some with others. But it has excelled in the third category, which displays a picaresque taste, showing the adventures of persons from low society.

Spanish genius always had a particular talent for inventing fabled stories, anecdotes, novels, and events. Ariosto and Tasso used Spanish stories for their poems; and later the author of the fifteenth-century Italian romance *Guerrin di Durazzo el meschino* ["The Book of the Wretched Guerino, from the Town of Durazzo"] did the same. Torquato Tasso wrote:

> [W]hoever he was who described the love of Amadís for Oriana, he deserves greater praise than any of the French writers, including Arnaut Daniel, who wrote of Lancelot, though Dante says, "Rime d'amor e prosi di romance / soverchiò tutti, e lasciar dir gli stolti / che quel di *Lemosi* credon chez avanci" ["Verses of love and tales of romance, he surpassed them all, and let the fools talk who think that he of Limoges excels"]. I say despite these verses because if Dante had read *Amadís of Gaul*, *Amadís of Greece*, or *Primaleón* he would have changed his mind, since the Spanish poets have described love with more nobility and constancy than the French.[a]

The Spanish tragicomedy *Calixto y Melibea* [*Calisto and Melibea*], composed in the

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fifteenth century by Cota de Maguaque and not by Juan de Mena, . . . could be considered a dialogued romance and the origin of all the romances of the picaresque class. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Fernando de Rojas corrected, enlarged, and published it, calling himself the author. Then it was translated into Italian and published in 1514 and later into French and printed in Paris in 1525.

A century later, in 1567, Lope de Rueda, a comedian and author of comedies like Molière's, published a Spanish romance called *El Deleitoso* ["The Delightful One"]. Juan de Timoneda, his friend and compatriot of the same taste, published the works of Rueda and, in 1576, a romance of his own called *El Patrañuelo* ["The Trickster"].

In 1586 a new romance appeared that almost caused the two previous ones to be forgotten. Its title was *Lazarillo de Tormes*. It is commonly said that its author was Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the writer of *La historia de las rebeliones de los moriscos de Granada* ["The History of the Rebellions of the Moriscos of Granada"]. But a wise contemporary, Fray José de Sigüenza, asserts that it was the work of Fray Juan de Ortega, a Hieronymite monk. The Italians translated it later under the title *Il picariglio castellano* ["The Spanish Pícaro"]; a French prose translation appeared in 1651; and two years afterward a French verse translation was published that is still read with pleasure today.

In 1599 Mateo Alemán published his romance *Vida del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache* ["Life of the Pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache"]. It was then translated into German, Italian, and English. The same thing happened to it as happened to *Quijote*; it had three translations, none of which was exact. The best is the modern one of Lesage, but this gentleman took his customary liberties with it.

In 1605 our Cervantes published *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* [*The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of la Mancha*], which all nations have wanted to read in their languages without, however, being able to extract a complete idea of its true merit, because proverbs mean something that one can know not by means of a literal translation but rather by means of another proverb that may convey the same idea, perhaps with analogous words, perhaps with others totally different in construction and sound.

In 1608 *La pícara Justina* [*Justine, the Country Jilt*] was published. Its author is rumored to be Francisco de Ubeda; but in the bibliography of the Dominican friars it is said that Fray Andrés Pérez wrote it. Whoever it may be, it is said that "Justina was born to marry Guzmán de Alfarache," and it also was translated into French.

In 1612 Alfonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo produced another romance, titled *La ingeniosa Elena, hija de Celestina* ["The Ingenious Helen, Daughter of Celestina"], whose character was very similar to that of *Celestina* and of *La pícara Justina*.

In 1614 a new romance was published with the title *Continuación de don Quijote de la Mancha* ["Continuation of Don Quijote de la Mancha"]. Its author was supposedly Alfonso Fernández de Avellaneda. But there are many reasons to believe that it was an Aragonese friar and that Mr. Lesage also translated it with many deletions, additions, and variations, according to his custom (as our Juan de Iriarte noted and as anyone who compares the translation with the original can see).

In 1615 our unequaled Cervantes published the second part of *Don Quijote*, which ruined Avellaneda's continuation, a view shared by the Spaniards and the French.

In 1618 Vicente Espinel had printed another work, which he titled *Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* ["Tales of the Life of the Squire Marcos de Obregón"]. The hero, because of his moral qualities and the situations in which he finds himself, belongs to the middle class, like the *Bachiller de Salamanca* [*The Bachelor of Salamanca*] and *Gil Blas*. Voltaire thought that this work had

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served as the basis for Lesage's romance *Gil Blas*; but there is little that Lesage took from the thoughts of Espinel.

In 1619 Fray Manuel de Oporto, a Portuguese Dominican friar, published a continuation of *Lazarillo de Tormes*; in 1620 Juan de Cortés de Tolosa, manservant to King Philip III, published *Lazarillo de Manzanares*; and the before-mentioned Salas Barbadillo published *El sutil cordobés Pedro de Urdemalas* ["The Cunning Cordoban, Pedro de Urdemalas"], to which he added in 1623 *El licenciado Talega* ["Master Talega"] and then *La sabia mal-floridilla* ["The Wise Mal-Floridilla"].

In 1624 Gerónimo de Alcalá put out *Alonzo, mozo de muchos amos* ["Alonso, Servant to Many Masters"], to which he later added a second part.

In 1626 Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses, author of a history of King Philip IV, published a new romance, titled *Varia fortuna del soldado Pindaro* ["The Varying Fortunes of the Soldier Pindaro"].

In 1636 Matías de los Reyes, a native of Madrid, published *Menandro*, a romance that already belonged in part to the first category, tales of knights-errant, because its ideas and adventures were not of the picaresque genre, and so its credit fell quickly because the national taste favored things that were less serious.

In 1641 Luis Vélez de Guevara, chamberlain to King Philip IV and author of many plays, published his *Diablo cojuelo* ["The Limping Devil"], which Lesage translated with his accustomed deletions, additions, and variations.

A little bit afterward, the *Vida y hechos de Estebanillo Gonzales, hombre de buen humor, escrita por él mismo* ["Life and Adventures of Estebanillo Gonzalez, a Man of Good Humor, Written by Himself"] appeared. Mr. Lesage also translated it into French; and Nicolás Antonio assures us in his *Library* that Esteban was a manservant to General Octavio Piccolimini, governor of Flanders under King Philip IV of Spain.

In 1644 Francisco de Quevedo, lord of the village Torre-de-Juan-Abad and author of many works in prose and poetry, wrote a romance in the picaresque vein, *Vida del buscón gran Tacaño* [*Life of Paul the Spanish Sharper*], which was translated into French and printed in Lyon with another work by the author, *Cartas del caballero de la Tenaza* ["Letters of the Gentleman from Tenaza"].

In the same year, Antonio Henriquez Gómez, Portuguese by birth and living in Paris, nobleman of the Order of Saint Michael, adviser and majordomo to the king of France, published *El siglo pitagórico y vida de don Gregorio Guadaña* ["The Pythagorean Century and Life of Don Gregorio Guadaña"], which was translated into French, like a new work of his, *Culpa del primer peregrino* ["Guilt of the First Pilgrim"], which the author dedicated to the Duchess of Orleans.

In 1645 Diego de Tovar Valderrama, nobleman of the Order of Saint James and professor of law at Alcalá de Henares, published in Madrid the romance *Don Raimundo el Entretenido* ["Don Raimundo, the Amusing One"], belonging to the first class, like *Gregorio Guadaña*. . . .

In 1652 Juan de Zabaleta, author of many plays and of other works in prose and verse, published a work with this rather odd title: *Teatro del hombre, el hombre, ó vida del conde Matisio* ["The Theater of Man, Man, or the Life of Count Matisio"], which was also a romance belonging to the first category.

The publication of these last three works seems to have resulted from the desire to extinguish the national taste for picaresque romances of the third class and to push the fable toward elevated subjects—as a result of which Marcos García, a surgeon in Madrid, considering the existence of partisans of one or another kind of romance, had the madness to laugh at the expense of both groups, writing in 1657 a romance that he called *La flema de Pedro Hernández* ["The Coolness of Pedro Hernández"].

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Meanwhile, a Spanish genius was working on another romance of great merit, joining in the same scenes personages from the nobility, different types from the middle class of the nation, and lower-class persons from the picaresque genre. Thus he uncovered, better than Zabaleta, the theater of this world with his narration of the lives, ideas, opinions, customs, and vices of many individuals from the three classes. He used a language as clear as that used in the romances of the picaresque genre but with fine expressions and a pure, agreeable, choice style, as if he were dealing only with the middle class—without bloating, confusion, or boredom. Such was the romance he titled *Aventuras del bachiller de Salamanca*, a work that included all the main events that today one reads in the work of two volumes with the same title and that also belong to *Gil Blas de Santillana* in four volumes.[b]

This catalogue of Spanish romances is evident testimony of the error of the count of Neufchâteau. . . .

Notes

1. Bartius in his translation of *Celestina*.

2. Linguet in his preface to *Teatro español*.

3. Nicolás Antonio, *Biblioteca hispana nova* ["New Spanish Library"], vol. 1, art. "Gregorius Gonzalez."

Translator's Notes

I have consulted Hume for English versions of some of the titles in my translation of the Llorente text.

a. Torquato Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, trans. Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 48, print.

b. *Bachiller de Salamanca*, Llorente thinks, is the work by Solís that Lesage took as the basis for his novel.

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