«LA NOVELA EN EL TRANVÍA» AND THE POETICS OF MOVEMENT IN GALDOSIAN NARRATIVE

Douglass M. Rogers

From time to time critics have singled out Galdós's short prose piece, «La novela en el tranvía» (first published in 1871), as one of the more remarkable of the author's narrative efforts outside of his full-fledged novels.[1] The sound study of this work published by Walter Oliver in 1973 recognizes its literary sophistication and, focusing particularly on the fantasy-reality theme, stresses the dominance of a realistic view even at this early point in the novelist's career:

> «La novela en el tranvía» is not a juvenile exercise in fantasy but rather a complex, if low-keyed attempt to show fantasy's realistic role in human existence—and, by implication, at least, its creative function in narrative art—through a careful structuring and a meticulous explanation of the psychological and scientific causes of fantasy. In this sense it is a «typical» example of one of Galdós's most important novelistic techniques. (263)

As was frequently the case in studies of *La sombra*, Oliver's emphasis is largely on the manner in which the early work augurs the novelist's mature period.

Without questioning the value of that focus, one may also claim that the primary interest of «La novela en el tranvía» is less its typicality than its exceptional nature, something discernible in an examination of the way its parts are put together. Testimony to this kind of interest, especially for the reader of the 1980s, is the attention given it by Robert Spires in his recent book, *Beyond the Metafictional Mode. Directions in the Modern Spanish Novel* (25-32). In spite of their considerable differences, these studies may be seen as two distinct approaches to a single problem: a reality-illusion dialectic fundamental to modern narrative. Our objectives in this study, even though they move in a different direction, coincide in some measure with both of these perspectives. First, we shall examine what one might call the «artistry» of the work as it may be perceived in the function and structure of time, space, and movement, features that make the story what it is; then, we shall extend our findings to an interpretation of Galdós's method of narration applicable to later works.

Deeming it unnecessary here to probe the history of modern critical investigations of time and space, we may accept as point of departure the anti-exclusivist stand put forth by W. J. T. Mitchell, who has described the relationship between the two as «one of complex interaction, interdependence and interpenetration» (276). In «La novela en el tranvía» there is no simple, neutral coexistence of temporal and spatial factors but a completely overt and artful interplay between them. Yet perhaps an even more important clue to the work's technical accomplishment resides in a third factor, movement,

something which of itself is neither time nor space but which is related to both. At the most fundamental referential level, we are speaking, first of all, of the locomotion of the streetcar, which advances through space and time, along its route, and in its own unrelenting tempo. This force is not only associated with the primary developments of the story but generates certain conditions within the discourse that tend to render its realism problematical, puncturing its affirmations with ambiguities, even approaching a «twilight zone» effect. The reader may consequently be led to have second thoughts about what the «scientific» explanations of the character's aberrations or the apparent didactic intention of the author are. It is not altogether facetious to see the moving streetcar as author of the «novela» within the story, even though the invention is carried out through an agent, a certain naive but imaginative passenger, significantly unnamed and wholly passive in nature.

At this point a reconstruction of the major incidents of the story is indispensable, not only to call to mind its novelty but as a basis for further analysis. The central character, who for practical purposes may be identified as a first-person narrator, encounters an old friend, Dr. Dionisio Cascajares, on boarding a streetcar in the Barrio de Salamanca, in Madrid.[2] The talkative friend tells him about the misfortunes of a countess of his acquaintance, who finds herself neglected by a jealous husband and threatened by the latter's majordomo, who is as much a scoundrel as she is a model of virtue. Cascajares dismounts at Cibeles, leaving his friend's curiosity greatly aroused. Later, on a portion of newspaper used as wrapping for some books that are being returned to their owner, the narrator discovers an account of «Mudarra, el insolente mayordomo,» threatening «La Condesa» with disclosure of her alleged interest in a certain *caballerito* (488). He reads about a heated exchange between these two, in which she resists his advances and proposals, prompting Mudarra to leave her room. At this point the text indicates, «Capítulo XI—*El complot*» (488). Feigning the Countess's hand, Mudarra carefully starts a letter promising an interview, but here the narrator intervenes to say: «El folletín estaba roto y no pude leer más» (489). While the streetcar continues in its unrelenting pace and the narrator in his wondering and worrying, his glance falls on the passenger seated immediately opposite him, whom he suddenly recognizes as «Mudarra, el mayordomo en persona, que estaba sentado frente a mí, con sus rodillas tocando las mías» (489). A slow inspection confirms all the sinister identifying features, but after the vehicle crosses the Puerta del Sol and enters the Calle Mayor, the individual stops the car and gets off, without further consequence. Returning to his musings, the narrator speculates that with the counterfeit letter the majordomo is scheming to lure the young friend of the Countess into a rendezvous so that they might be caught *in flagrante* by the husband. After dozing idly for a while, with increasingly hallucinatory thoughts, he falls into a deep sleep, during which he dreams the next chapter of the «novela.» He sees the melancholy Countess surprised by a visit from a handsome young man, Rafael, who claims to be responding to her letter. The husband, forewarned, enters the room and cynically serves tea—suspicious tea—for the trio (an episode remindful of the tea scene in Unamuno's *Nada menos que todo un hombre*). In a tense moment of this scene the Countess suddenly cries out, and the

narrator is abruptly awakened by shouts of protest from the passenger in the contiguous seat, the «venerable English lady,» who had been disturbed by the agitated dream. Now, where he had seen Mudarra before, the narrator discovers Rafael in person, describing to a companion a scene very similar to that of the truncated dream. But with the hasty departure of these two, he is unable to satisfy his burning curiosity about what happened to the Countess. The interruption of the dream puts an end to the continuity of the plot of the «novela.» The narrator grasps frantically at straws in his effort to ascertain the fate of the Countess, most notably a conversation between two passengers about a shooting and yet another involving a poisoning case. After he gives back the borrowed books and begins his return trip, the narrator is convinced that he has spotted Mudarra in the Calle de Serrano; rushing to the door, he yells for the car to be stopped and the assassin detained. The subject turns out to be the same individual who had previously been identified as Mudarra but who, in due course, is revealed to be an honorable businessman. The narrator is at last forced to return to reason and reality, a slow process: «Ha sido preciso que transcurran algunos meses para que las sombras vuelvan al ignorado sitio de donde surgieron, volviéndome loco, y torne la realidad a dominar en mi cabeza» (497).

One immediate conclusion may be drawn from such a summary: the spatial and temporal coordinates that are inseparable from the story's conception lend it a containment uncharacteristic of Galdós, possibly constituting what saves it from the expansiveness that made of the author a better novelist than short story writer.[3] Unity of time and place are thus automatic. But the first perceptible, important strategy of the work is its sense of movement, which initiates a fatal, uninterruptible sequence of incidents. By way of contrast with Galdós's story, «El crimen de la calle de la Perseguida» by Palacio Valdés is a model of stasis: two individuals are seated, not in a moving vehicle like Cascajares and the narrator, but in a café, one recounting to the other an anecdote that in itself comprises the plot of the story. «La novela en el tranvía,» on the other hand, exemplifies Antonio Machado's words: «Se hace camino al andar.»[4] It is the antithesis of staticity, a story on wheels, which exists only in and by its unfolding. In a brief essay entitled «Artes espaciales y temporales,» Ramón Pérez de Ayala hits upon a particularly relevant principle, even though he does not happen to be speaking of narrative. Outlining his personal conception of the traditional view of the arts as divided into these two categories, he says of the temporal ones: «Para explicarlo mejor: cuando escuchamos una pieza musical o leemos una poesía se nos figura que brotan y fluyen, nota por nota y verso por verso, de la misma manera que nacieron y se desarrollaron original y espontáneamente del numen del poeta. Nos producen el efecto de la inspiración, de la creación inmediata» (1276). Both this sense of temporal flow and of the «immediate creation» show up in «La novela en el tranvía,» as the movement associated with the streetcar is joined to the step-by-step manufacturing of the story within a story. Herein is found the work's explicit metafictionality: a steady process of displacement, a gradual revelation of this process of fabrication in itself as the central interest of the tale, rather than any occurrences within the car or the plot of the invented story *per se*.

Everything starts with the first word of the first sentence: «Partía el coche de la extremidad del barrio de Salamanca, para atravesar todo Madrid en dirección al de Pozas» (485), a phrase that, like a vector, projects a Madrilenian space, the broadest stage to underlie the story.[5] That there is something special about the constant movement of the vehicle is hinted at in the slight personification in the early description of the car: «resbalando suavemente por su calzada de hierro, bajaba la calle de Serrano, deteniéndose alguna vez para llenar los pocos asientos que quedaban ya vacíos» (486). Immediately after Cascajares dismounts, the seeds for the «novela» having been sown, the beginning of the interior duplication is indicated as directly induced by the renewed movement: «¡Cosa singular! Siguió el ómnibus su marcha, y yo, a mi vez, seguí pensando en la incógnita Condesa [...] poco tardó mi imaginación en apoderarse de aquel mismo asunto para darle vueltas de arriba abajo, operación psicológica que no deja de ser estimulada por la regular marcha del coche y el sordo y monótono rumor de sus ruedas, limando el hierro de los carriles» (487).

From now on each account of the evolving «novela» is preceded or accompanied by at least one comparable description, a process that continues approximately two-thirds of the way through the story, through the vision and the dream, as long as the invention continues. Some of these accounts involve sober physiological or psychological explanations, as in the following example of motion inducing a hypnotic state: «Andando, andando, el coche seguía, y ya por causa del calor que allí dentro se sentía, ya porque el movimiento, pausado y monótono, del vehículo produce cierto mareo que degenera en sueño, lo cierto es que sentí pesados los párpados, me incliné del costado izquierdo, apoyando el codo en el paquete de libros, y cerré los ojos» (490). Lulled into a semi-conscious state, the narrator experiences a vision, in which spatial imagery displaces the time sense, as the vehicle appears first under water, then in the air. Yet through it all there is reflected some degree of consciousness of its movement, expressionistically transformed. This state dissolves into a deep sleep wherein is found the dream in which the climactic tea episode occurs. Introducing it and completely dovetailing with it in an apparent cause-and-effect union is a description of the incessant drone of the moving car, penetrating the narrator at a subconscious level, even through the only major suspension of time and triumph of stasis in the work: «y entonces el coche cesó de andar, cesó de volar y desapareció para mí la sensación de que iba en tal coche, no quedando más que el ruido monótono y profundo de las ruedas, que no nos abandona jamás en nuestras pesadillas dentro de un tren o un camarote de un vapor. Me dormí... ¡Oh infortunada Condesa! La vi tan claramente [...]» (491).

It is essential to note that the work's particular sense of movement could not have been possible if the author had not hit upon a narrative structure that not only allows it but fosters it throughout the work, until the very final portion. This structure consists not only of a first-person narration, which adds unity of focus to the unities of time and place, but, most importantly, it is a nonretrospective view that renders everything inchoate, present but always forward-looking. In this sense it differs from the first-person narration of the *Lazarillo de Tormes,* from *La familia de Pascual Duarte,* from

Galdós's *Trafalgar,* or from the aforementioned short story by Palacio Valdés, random examples of works in which the action is reconstructed by a first-person narrator looking backward from a posterior point in time. (It is true that this nonretrospective focus is necessarily abandoned at the end, since the complete synchronicity of the method otherwise allows for no standard closure; one may also note a relatively minor authorial invasion early in the story [487].)

Thanks to the near purity of this perspective, «La novela en el tranvía» creates a sensation of immediate experience which is always evolving. As though in symbiotic relationship with the rhythm of the streetcar wheels, rolling constantly onto new metal, the narrator's story is emerging through the interaction of discovery and invention, encountering evidence and extending it imaginatively. The streetcar tracks have a forward direction only, again, like vectors, whereas behind they are reduced to «estelas en la mar,» to recall Machado's image. But unlike Machado's world, there is no past here. The narrator-character has space-producing visions and dreams, paralleling Bachelard's *rêveries* or Machado's *retablos,* but no memories, thus throwing the Bergsonian *durée* somewhat off balance.[6] At an early point in the story a feeling of urgency is mentioned as being characteristic of all travelers: «a pesar de la brevedad del trayecto no hay uno que no desee terminarlo pronto» (487), which suggests a consciousness of a present-future relationship. As the interior fiction becomes dominant, this sense is dramatized and intensifies the constant thrust toward the future. «¿Pero quién vendrá? ¿Y por dónde...?» asks García Lorca's *persona* (in «Romance sonámbulo») in a famous, quintessential example of this type of dramatizing technique. Even if we grant the distance between Lorca and Galdós, there are similar forward-pointing questions that Galdós's narrator poses when he reaches the tear in the *folletín,* questions that constitute the first stage of his own imaginative elaboration: «Y ¿qué haría el maldito [Mudarra] para vengarse?... Y el conde, ¿qué hará? Y aquel mozalbete de quien hablaron, Cascajares, en el coche, y después Mudarra, en el folletín, ¿qué hará?, ¿quién será? ¿Qué hay entre la Condesa y ese incógnito caballerito? Algo daría por saber...» (489). Because of the readers' dependency on the strictly limited focus of the first-person narration, they can know only what the narrator knows, discover what he discovers in the process of its unfolding. To be sure, the growing irony, which by definition effects a bifurcation between character and reader, offers the latter a perspective that the character-narrator cannot have of himself. But the split does not counteract the manipulation of information involved in this temporal dramatization, with its «efecto de la inspiración, de la creación inmediata» (Pérez de Ayala 1276).

If the basic time sense is identified primarily with movement, the major spatial components of «La novela en el tranvía» are characterized by enclosures, by «within-ness,» a feature applicable both to physical space and to the space of the interior duplication. Madrid is undescribed, but its presence is conjured up through a handful of place names. And within Madrid is the streetcar, within which is the narrator-character, within whose mind the «novela» grows, within which is the room of the Countess, within which we find her and into which Rafael and the Count are to enter. A Chinese

box structure suggests itself, at least if conceived as stretched out horizontally, like a telescope being slowly opened, given the fashion in which the fictional ingredients emerge one at a time, each from the preceding one. Within this chain of events, the dimension of irreality is initiated with the discovery of the *folletín* fragment, but the most remarkable incidents in the game of reality versus illusion are probably the appearances of Mudarra and Rafael within the work's primary world, that of the streetcar: creatures elaborated first in the mind of a given character, later showing up in the zone of his own fictional existence. They prefigure the don Romualdo episode of *Misericordia,* of some twenty-six years later, in spite of the fundamental difference of their being apparently only an extension of the narrator's fantasies, projected into his «external world» and never confirmed by others (as happens—in a sense—with Benina's invention).

Where do such observations on the form and structure of this work lead? One should doubtless take care not to overstate a case to the point of finding a Kafka or a Borges where we have a Galdós, whether for better or for worse, with a certain casualness in style and structure and a familiar mixture of tones already much in evidence. However, a few final examples should serve to illustrate both the association of the streetcar with a «twilight zone» and a kind of ambiguity capable of producing a text that tends to work against itself, rendering its realism more enigmatic than dogmatic.

Clearly the streetcar is the zone within which peculiar things happen. Outside of it there is only «inert» space: once the narrator steps outside to look for the supposed Mudarra, the fictional creation is terminated on all levels, the spell has been broken, and all that remains is to tie up loose ends. The interior of the car is somewhat like the house in Bachelard, an intimate enclosure that integrates daydreams; but, with the addition of the motion and droning, it does more than simply furnish peace and security propitious to a free association of images. In spite of the occasional semi-scientific explanations offered for psychological phenomena, something of an otherworldly effect penetrates the work, first because the descriptive references to the streetcar, with few exceptions, are highly metaphorical, setting this vein apart from all other portions of the text. In addition, despite the basically ordinary settings within which most things are easily accepted or adequately explained, there is never any accounting for the mode of propulsion of the streetcar, a most noticeable silence. It thus appears moved by extraterrestrial forces, superior to human space and time, «siempre corriendo sobre las dos interminables paralelas de hierro, resbaladizas como los siglos» (487). Only in the trance-like state preceding the narrator's dream is there a reference to the *fuerza motriz,* and in it the phantasmagorical effect is suggestively reinforced: «El coche iba arrastrado por algún volátil apocalíptico más fuerte que el hipogrifo y más atrevido que el dragón, y el rumor de las ruedas y de la fuerza motriz recordaba el zumbido de las grandes aspas de un molino de viento, o más bien el de un abejorro del tamaño de un elefante» (491).

One final example of a very different type of ambiguity is a shift in the narrative voice that clouds the reader's perception of what is to be taken as real and what is not. Was it or was it not Mudarra who appeared on the streetcar? In this instance the narrator himself temporarily admits doubt about

his own convictions, speaking of «el hombre en quien creí ver al terrible mayordomo» (490). On the other hand, when the individual he identifies as Rafael (relying on numerous bits of evidence) descends from the streetcar, there is no such disclaimer within the narrative discourse, as we read: «¡Ah!, ya estamos en los Consejos. Bajemos—dijo Rafael» (492). By opting not to correct or qualify the words of his narrator—«dijo Rafael»—the author sows in the reader a seed of belief in a character properly identified as the Rafael of the internal story. One crack like this in the system can place the reliability of the entire system in doubt. Nevertheless, although toying with the limits of reader credibility, Galdós does not truly cross that decisive border into the realm of «the fantastic,» «magic realism,» or some other form of antirealism. Whereas the text of Kafka's «Metamorphosis» states unequivocally that his protagonist woke up one morning to find himself transformed into an insect or Cortázar's character in «Axolotl» affirms early, «Ahora soy un axolotl,» Galdós's text is tempered by a measure of playfulness and structural «cheating» but contains no definitive metamorphosis of the primary mimetic level of his work. That the ending is an obvious literal negation of the fantastic element goes without saying, but it is just as obviously more of an epilogue than an organic part of the story proper.

It was only natural that «La novela en el tranvía» should first be recognized as an early and emphatic statement in defense of a realistic outlook, thus anticipating the author's mature novels. But given the polysemic nature of Galdós's writing—no longer a debatable question—it is equally reasonable for a later reading to weigh more heavily certain counterforces at work. By way of conclusion, I should like to return to the question of internal (Galdosian) intertextuality but starting with a different premise: that «La novela en el tranvía» can be viewed as a metaphor for what will become a fundamental aspect of Galdós's approach to the narrative genre. There is no doubt that this work contains a statement—that it is foolish to lose touch with reality by allowing one's self to get carried away by unbridled imagination—a position known by abundant extratextual evidence to represent a conviction of the novelist who described himself as «un autor más aficionado a las cosas reales que a las soñadas» (prologue to *La sombra*; Shoemaker 67). But even without negating this thesis, the developing work loses rigidity, challenges its own didactic statement, and shows signs of a different message, to the effect that impulses and motives other than observation and sober truths function *in the process* of making a novel (not «novela» here). Writing, like the streetcar and the narrator's imagination, gathers its own momentum: one component grows from another, one poses questions that seek answers and incite further development. It is not that plan and referents do not exist but that they are displaced or reshaped by the new reality of the flowing discourse, as were the thoughts of the story's protagonist.

Doubtless, if one reads «La novela en el tranvía» as a straight allegory or parable, one may well arrive at just the opposite conclusion—that this crazy narrator demonstrates how *not* to write. But reading synthetically, through a screen of irony, and accepting the signifying value of the artistic elaboration,

one may reconstruct an image of a Galdosian methodology that transcends simple formulas. A first step in such a reading has been underscored in the work before us: that of adding the streetcar to the figure of the narrator to form a composite protagonist. Even the title gives a pointed clue with its suggestion that this is not first and foremost the story of a person, of an individual who behaves foolishly, but of a happening, of a creative phenomenon brought about in a certain space and under special circumstances: «La novela en el tranvía.» Thus, the allegory must be reconstructed, starting with the vehicle—the act of writing is like a journey, initiated («El coche partía») —and followed step by step throughout. The passive narrator is «exonerated» of his responsibility as protagonist, since he is not a prime mover; he even acquires a modicum of sympathy for his earnestness and his innocence, attributes strengthened by the comic foil found in the grotesque individual traveling at his side, the ever-present «venerable English lady.»

Nor can such an interpretation be so literal as to be deemed a return to the romantic muse (the streetcar) inspiring a listless bard (the narrator) to creative accomplishments superior to his normal powers. It is a matter of the story as process: the novelist discovers and invents as he goes; there may be a plan, an incipient morphology, even an ideological thrust, at the start; but things have not yet coalesced prior to the act of writing, which act modifies the plan, then modifies itself indefinitely as the give-and-take movement of the composition rolls on. Such a conception of writing, by no means a novelty in our day, stands in opposition to the not wholly defunct view of realism as essentially a static act of observation and recording. José Angel Valente has articulated an entire system of poetics based on the act of writing as discovery («conocimiento»); [7] but discovery is also something of particular relevance to the novelist, as may be seen in these extracts from the American author, E. L. Doctorow:

> When I write, the first part of the work is uncalculated. I write to see what I'm writing. Then I find a voice or an image or some idea or feeling—and the true work begins. Something is evocative enough to pull me after it [...]. The act of composition is a series of discoveries. You find things just as you turn the corner. Eventually, you reach the stage at which it becomes an editorial, cerebral act as much as an intuitive thing. The further along you go, the more inevitable the course of the book. (73)

«La novela en el tranvía» offers illustration of a critical principle that has been easy to neglect in regard to Galdós: the importance of not losing sight of the difference between an author in his function as writer and in his daily existence independent of it, a difference in this case between Galdós the novelist and Galdós «the man.» [8] When he wrote the essay «Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España» in 1870, deploring the superficiality and deleterious effects of the popular novel in Spain, Galdós was expressing himself straightforwardly (even if picturesquely), primarily as «the man,» functioning as journalist, with a rational message to convey. In the following year, when he presumably wrote «La novela en el tranvía,» he was dealing with the same subject but functioning as creative writer. In the essay, the terms of the structuralist formula—addresser/message (referent)/addressee—are precise and stable; in the fictional piece, however, the levels of meaning

are multiplied, straightforwardness is eroded, and a problematic cloud is thrown over the formula. There are new freedoms implicit in narrative discourse: a different type of author-text relationship and of author-reader relationship (with a new narrator-narratee dimension) and an ever-advancing movement of ironic manipulation, which includes both withholding and exploring.

This procedure cannot be simply brushed off as one which all writers must go through, given the fact that an unwritten work must be initiated and developed step by step through a sequential or temporal process until its completion. «La novela en el tranvía» is likely evidence not only of Galdós's incipient awareness and acceptance of this aspect of writing prose fiction but of an impulse to accentuate it, even to let it show as part of his overall «communication.» The write-as-you-go approach, along with the parody factor, accounts for much of his propensity for self-reflexive writing, and the story is in this additional fashion an early manifestation of a characteristic that is to flower in later works, such as *El amigo Manso, Tormento,* or *Misericordia.* [9]

To investigate specific aspects of writing as movement, discovery, and invention in the major novels of Galdós is too vast and elusive a task to be seriously confronted here. Needless to say, the subject is frequently touched upon in other contexts. As a minimal symptom of its presence, one may recall the use of interrogation and future tenses in the chapter titles of his novels, a technique anticipated by the cluster of questions that the «narrator» asks after reading the fragment from the *folletín.* The case of *Doña Perfecta* is also a convenient illustration. In a study of this novel, Ricardo Gullón stresses the nature of its writing as *devenir.* He notes first the uncertainties involved in the early stages of its composition, which lead into a kind of self-generating momentum:

> Juzgando por la primera versión de la novela, publicada por entregas en la *Revista de Madrid,* al principio no estaba Galdós muy seguro de lo que iba a ser el personaje; el carácter de la señora no está trazado, ni puede estarlo: es una idea, y una idea no basta para crear un personaje, aunque sí para esbozarlo. No hay otro modo de creación que la actuación, situar al personaje y observar cómo reacciona en esa situación y en las sucesivas; esas reacciones le constituyen, le integran y le hacen comprensible. (23)

Regarding the dramatizing of incidents, Gullón notes a similar open-endedness: «El capítulo quinto de *Doña Perfecta* se titula: "¿Habrá desavenencia?", sugiriéndose por la forma interrogativa que la desavenencia no es en tal momento forzosa» (23). Nothing is static; all is development or, in Gullón's term, «progression»: «La desavenencia crece, [...] sigue creciendo y amenaza convertirse en discordia.» The critic continues: «En esos fragmentos van los personajes mostrándose, manifestándose; la novela los va creando y haciendo de doña Perfecta el centro de la acción» (24).

Although a thorough study of this approach to narrative in Galdós would be a difficult undertaking, one probable source for it is an easy matter on which to speculate: in some measure we are dealing with one sign of Galdós's absorption of the style of *Don Quijote,* which can be considered the prototype of this way of writing. Cervantes's masterpiece literally had to unfold in order to discover itself, detail by detail, episode by episode, thus «inventing a genre.» That *Don Quijote* consequently had a certain authenticity which

cannot be wholly repeated by those who write in its wake does not necessarily imply falseness in Galdós's assimilation of its spirit and procedures. Even though it may be in part a «borrowing,» in the author of *Fortunata y Jacinta* it becomes a carefully and consciously structured ironic mode, in harmony with the needs of an experimenter constantly probing and changing, with a growing belief in the novel as an instrument for investigation and inquiry, as well as a fondness for leading his readers along, toying with them as he advances.

Tracking down in detail this vein of Galdós's Cervantine heritage is also beyond the scope of the present essay; the coexistence of physical and thematic movement, obviously as fundamental to *Don Quijote* as to Galdós, would in itself be a challenging comparison to pursue. Curiously enough, in spite of the obvious quixotic nature of the narrator, «La novela en el tranvía» is remarkably free of the many direct echoes of *Don Quijote* that appear in other works by Galdós, both early and late. However, it is at least possible to take note of signs of both the presence and the absence of certain parallels with *Don Quijote*, an examination that may be organized by a comparison with the basic elements of Cervantes's novel as worked out by Juan Ignacio Ferreras in *La estructura paródica del Quijote* (see the Introduction and chap. 1, especially 26-27, 31-32).

Following a review of traditional terminology applied to the study of narrative, Ferreras opts to examine the *Quijote* as a set of «structures.» His point of departure is the fundamental «estructura paródica,» an aspect of «La novela en el tranvía» signaled clearly in the direct analogue to the *libros de caballerías* found in the «muchas y malas novelas» (490) that the narrator admits having read and that apparently are the primary cause of his mental disorder (a parody to be renewed later in Ido del Sagrario, the *folletinista* of *Tormento*). Parallels for Ferreras's «comic structure» and «ironic structure» can also readily be found in «La novela en el tranvía.» The critic then establishes four «worlds,» of which two, the «mundo real,» or *extramundo*, and the «mundo transformado» of the protagonist not only have their counterparts but are highlighted in Galdós's story, where they appear as the world of the streetcar with its passengers and the illusory world fabricated by the narrator. With the term «mundo fingido,» Ferreras identifies the world transformed *by other characters*, something that greatly enriches the interaction of Don Quijote and Sancho with their outer world; this is, not surprisingly, a dimension of Cervantes' work wholly absent from «La novela en el tranvía.» Finally (the world which the critic actually treats first), there is «un mundo voluntario, un verdadero intramundo, construido por el personaje mismo [...]; este primer universo, este universo voluntario es interior y suele residir en la voluntad del personaje; es así y casi siempre, pura voluntad» (Ferreras 31). Even though the parallel with *Don Quijote* is not destroyed, herein lies the most revealing discrepancy; Alonso Quijano becomes Don Quijote of his own volition, without the need of outside intervention, whereas the weak-willed protagonist of «La novela en el tranvía,» in truth only a pale precursor of Ido del Sagrario, can transform his world only by means of the impetus supplied when he is «taken over» by an alien force.

The story of this particular intervention is the story of «La novela en el tranvía» and comprises its singularity as an individual literary piece. At the same time, the way in which it is elaborated turns out to be an illuminating disclosure regarding the dynamics of Galdosian narrative: novels move into their existence through time, creating their own unique spaces, often acquiring their meaning both because of and in spite of what they seem to be communicating.

University of Texas at Austin

NOTES

[1] The first section of this study was read as a paper with the title «Time, Space and Movement in 'La novela en el tranvía'» at the MLA Convention, Chicago, Dec. 28, 1985.

[2] The version of the story utilized is from the *Obras completas*. The variations found in different editions of this volume do not represent major deviations from the original and have little or no effect on our study. Sainz de Robles dates this story Nov. 1871. The facsimile edition published by the Banco de Crédito Industrial (Madrid, 1981) reproduces the original from the *Ilustración de Madrid*, with the indication «Octubre de 1871,» apparently the date that the composition was finished. The question of variants has been studied by Schraibman, who dates the two parts Nov. 30 and Dec. 15, 1871. The original text has also been published, accompanied by a brief study, by José Extramania.

[3] Although «La novela en el tranvía» has been called Galdós's best «short story,» and not without justification, it is not a paradigm of the short story genre by traditional standards, in the sense that a story like Clarín's «¡Adiós, Cordera!» might be so considered. In our text the term «story» is used to fill an obvious practical need, and although we do not take up the subject of generic classification as such, our analysis of this piece should clarify some of the problems posed by the genre question.

[4] From «Caminante son tus huellas [...],» from «Proverbios y cantares», in *Campos de Castilla*.

[5] Rudolph Arnheim not infrequently uses the term «vector» to refer to an image that suggests direction in space. See, for example, «A Stricture on Space and Time.»

[6] Allusions to Bachelard are based on *La Poétique de l'espace*.

[7] An extract from Valente: «Todo poema es, pues, una exploración del material de experiencia no previamente conocido que constituye su objeto. El conocimiento más o menos pleno del objeto del poema supone la existencia más o menos plena (en la poesía hay grados) del poema en cuestión. De ahí que el proceso de la creación poética sea un movimiento de indagación y tanteo en el que la identificación de cada nuevo elemento modifica a los demás o los elimina, porque todo poema es un conocimiento 'haciéndose'» (157-58).

[8] This critical principle has been most insistently studied with respect to its multiple implications and in connection with the Spanish novel of the nineteenth century by Germán Gullón (for example, 21 ff.) Given the general familiarity with this position, it is not a little surprising to find the following statement about the authorship of «La novela»: «Nul doute que, dans ce récit écrit à la première personne, le romancier anonyme soit bien Galdós lui-même» (Extramania 275).

[9] A topic most thoroughly studied in Galdós by John W. Kronik, some of whose works on the subject are described by Spires in his treatment of «La novela en el tranvía» (26).

WORKS CITED

Arnheim, Rudolph. «A Stricture on Space and Time.» *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1978): 645-55.

Bachelard, Gaston. *La Poétique de l'espace*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957.

Doctorow, E. L. «Writing Is Often a Desperate Act.» *U. S. News and World Report* 16 Dec. 1985: 73.

Extramania, José. «'La novela en el tranvía': Une nouvelle oubliée de Pérez Galdós.» *Hommage des hispanistes français à Noël Salomon*. Barcelona: Laia, 1979. 273-93.

Ferreras, Juan Ignacio. *La estructura paródica del Quijote*. Madrid: Taurus, 1982.

Gullón, Germán. *La novela como acto imaginativo*. Madrid: Taurus, 1983.

Gullón, Ricardo. *Técnicas de Galdós*. Madrid: Taurus, 1970.

Mitchell, W. J. T. «Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory.» *The Lan-*

guage of Images. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980. 271-99.

Oliver, Walter. «Galdós' 'La novela en el tranvía': Fantasy and the Art of Realistic Narration.» *MLN* 88 (1973): 249-63.

Pérez de Ayala, Ramón. «Artes espaciales y temporales.» *Obras completas*. Vol. 3. Madrid: Aguilar, 1963.

Pérez Galdós, Benito. *Obras completas*. Ed. Federico C. Sainz de Robles. 2nd ed. Vol. 6. Madrid: Aguilar, 1951.

— «Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España.» *Ensayos de crítica literaria*. Ed. Laureano Bonet. Barcelona: Península, 1972. 115-32.

Schraibman, Joseph. «Variantes de *La novela en el tranvía*, de Galdós.» *La Torre* 48 (1964): 149-63.

Shoemaker, William H., ed. *Los prólogos de Galdós*. México: Andrea, 1962.

Spires, Robert C. *Beyond the Metafictional Mode. Directions in the Modern Spanish Novel*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1984.

Valente, José Angel. «Conocimiento y comunicación.» *Poesía última*. Ed. Francisco Brines. Madrid: Taurus, 1963.