

**Breaking the Code: *Generación Nocilla*,
New Technologies, and the Marketing of Literature**

Vicent Moreno

The increasing accessibility of the Internet and the numerous possibilities it provides to users are changing all aspects of life, from the ways we interact with each other to the ways we perceive and know about the world. The full impact and implications that the World Wide Web will have on the future of literature are still undetermined for the most part, yet there are already signs of change in the way that literature is being created, read and circulated currently. The aspect I will develop in this article has to do with the new ways of legitimation, promotion and dissemination of literature that the Internet enables. It can be said that we are currently living in a hybrid space, where dominant and popular agents of consecration (such as newspapers' literary reviews) coexist with emerging possibilities fostered by new technologies. Blogs, for one, have become alternative useful arenas for the discussion and dissemination of literature, especially of works written by new authors who struggle to find a position in the recent Spanish literary field, with its closed circuits of entrance and legitimation. On the other hand, the authors' active involvement in the promotion of their works through an intelligent use of the possibilities that the Internet offers, in terms of marketing and distribution, has made possible their entrance in the literary scene.

My article will focus on a group of new Spanish authors named by a journalist with the not-so-imaginative title of *Generación Nocilla*. Their entrance in the literary field offers important insights into the current constitution of the Spanish literary field, and advances notions of where the future of the field may be. This essay is organized in two parts. In the first part, I will examine the apparition and reception of Agustín Fernández Mallo's novel, *Nocilla Dream*, in 2006; Mallo's unexpected commercial and

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critical success led to the label of the *Generación Nocilla*. The analysis of how this novel is introduced and received sheds light on how literature is assessed at a certain moment and what factors contribute to that assessment. Thus, I will demonstrate how the critical reception of the novel was prefigured by an internal, self-referential apparatus that articulated and negotiated the way in which *Nocilla Dream* found its own entrance in the Spanish literary field. The appeal to commonplaces of the history of literature (such as a thematic innovation or the aesthetic rupture) in order to legitimate a work's position is the way in which Fernández Mallo's novel manifests itself. The critical reception, through the various reviews, does not question the "newness" value attached to the novel, but reproduces it, legitimizing and characterizing its position in the field. The journalistic press review's assimilation and propagation of the novel's rupturist value shows to what extent claims of "rupture" and "novelty" still play a role in getting critical attention and granting access to the literary field.

In the second part, I will examine how the visibility, as well as the symbolic and economic profitability acquired by *Nocilla Dream* made it possible for a group of authors with somewhat common ideas and literary interests, to achieve a media relevance, which then allowed them access to the literary field. In this respect, the use of the blog as a virtual meeting point for the exchange of ideas and as an advertising platform has been crucial for these authors and has thus influenced the reception and characterization carried out by the media. Finally, I will analyze two particular cases of the "symbolic struggles" that arose between new entrants in search for a position within the literary field and established authors "defending" their own. On the one hand, I will look at the dialectic confrontation between Javier Calvo (an author with a well-established trajectory in the peninsular literary field) and Fernández Mallo over the literary legitimacy of *Generación Nocilla* and its renovating elements. On the other hand, I will look at recent comments from Jorge Carrión, another prominent author in this new generation, who spoke during an interview on the issue of self-promotion and how it should not be seen as something alien to the literary field. The subsequent intervention of Javier Marías, who was mentioned in the interview and carries a very important weight in the field, will be analyzed as an example of a traditional *modus operandi* of the field these new authors are now challenging. In sum, the entrance of these authors and the reactions it provoked unveils and revises mechanisms of legitimation and consecration that in its naturalization are habitually obviated and thus taken for granted within the literary field.

***Nocilla Dream*, and the Construction of a Unique Novel**

Nocilla Dream, written by Agustín Fernández Mallo, was published in late 2006 and received several awards and nominations through its first year in circulation. Thus, it was chosen as one of the ten best novels of the year by *El Cultural*, the cultural supplement of the Spanish newspaper, *El Mundo*, and best novel in Spanish by the literary magazine *Quimera*, also in 2006. It is worth noting the great symbolic difference between both publications. On the one hand, *Quimera* is a specialized magazine, with a smaller distribution, and a publishing policy devoted to granting space to cultural endeavors that have trouble finding a space in the mainstream media. On the other hand, the supplement *El Cultural* belongs to one of the most important newspapers of Spain and, contrary to *Quimera*, its articles usually fulfill a more informative function, as a display of reviews for the latest published books. This coincidence in tastes between a big, non-specialized medium of distribution and a highly specialized one is central in understanding *Nocilla Dream* as a unique product and accounts for the critical attention that ensued after these nominations.

Throughout the month of January 2007, a succession of positive reviews appeared in several generalist media. On the 6th January, José María Pozuelo Yvancos (writing for ABC—another important Spanish newspaper), connected Fernández Mallo’s work with the historical avant-gardes in its attempt to break with the existing literary formulas (10). The critic noted that these rupturist attempts have always failed in the realm of poetry and narrative (10). However, according to him, “no va a ocurrir lo mismo con *Nocilla Dream*, un libro muy inteligente, juguetonamente serio” (10) (It won’t happen the same with *Nocilla Dream*, a very intelligent, playfully earnest book) and locates the rupturist gesture in the fact that it substitutes “la intriga, la estructura básica del interés narrativo” (10) (the plot, the basic structure of narrative interest) for “situaciones que llevan al lector a una constante intertextualidad cultural” (10) (situations that lead the reader to a continuous cultural intertextuality). Therefore, Pozuelo Yvancos grants *Nocilla Dream* the privilege of being the first novel that will “stay,” in regards as its rupturism, something that, according to him, had never happened before and thus giving it a historical dimension. Writing for *La Vanguardia*, a Catalan newspaper, on the 17th of January Jorge Carrión reiterates the novel’s rupturist element, talking about the disassociation between title and content, something that, according to him, is usually found in art, but not in literature (*La novela*). On the 20th of January, Lluís Satorras, in “Babelia” (the cultural supplement of the leading Spanish newspaper, *El País*), describes the book as an experiment and makes a historical connection when he explains that “para comprenderlo hay que atender a algunos antecedentes del siglo pasado, las vanguardias de los años veinte o los ensayos novelísticos de los sesenta” (9) (in order to understand it, it is necessary to note precedents from the last century, such as the 1920s

avant-gardes and the novelistic essays of the 1960s). Generally speaking, these critics use the avant-garde reference in order to account for what the novel means within the Spanish literary field. This reference is a recognizable way to “legitimate” the notion of rupture in the context of the field, due to the historical and meaningful weight attached to this concept in relation to the literary status quo.

Several autonomic newspapers also reported on the novel with a similar praising tone and stressing its rupturist virtues. For example, on the 13th of January, Luis Ventoso, for *La Voz de Galicia*, meaningfully titled his article “Por fin, un poco de riesgo” (Finally, a bit of risk) and wrote about how the novel offers “algo un poco rompedor en el escenario de una narrativa española esclerotizada por las novelas visigóticas y los revivales [sic] guerracivilistas” (Something that breaks a Spanish narrative scene that has been *sclerotized* with Visigothic novels and Civil War revivals). The critic thus updates the significance of the novel beyond a connection with the avant-gardes by contextualizing a rupture with the current Spanish narrative, specifically in its opposition to historical and Spanish Civil War novels. On the 25th of January, Eusebi Lahoz, from *El Periódico*, claims that the book is “una maquinaria literaria que llega para remozar los géneros literarios y para poner en tela de juicio la supervivencia de la novela. Ante un proyecto de tal envergadura conviene dejar las cosas claras desde el principio: *Nocilla Dream* es genial” (Lahoz) (a literary mechanism that is here to renovate literary genres and challenge the survival of the novel. Faced with such a groundbreaking endeavor we have to be clear from the beginning: *Nocilla Dream* is brilliant). Once more, the rupture gesture is reiterated, in this case due to its unclassifiable genre, as is the fact that it lives up to the expectation.

There exists a critical consensus that highlights the groundbreaking and renovating aspects of Fernández Mallo’s novel. The explanation of this unanimity can be found in the wish for innovation, for novelty, which is innate in the very logic of the literary field and, by extension, in its agents, critics and reviewers in this case. On the other hand, it is necessary to note the viral component in the propagation of the novel’s groundbreaking virtues. For example, the analyzed reviews seem to coincide in the same commonplaces, which echo, in part, the textual and paratextual intentions of the novel, as I will now explain.

Nocilla Dream appears as a collection of one hundred and thirty vignettes—some of which are based or inspired by newspaper articles or real documents—with some recurring characters and landscapes that do not make up a classical narration. Its structure can be described, following Elena Hevia’s idea, as a “novela zapping” “that is, a “surfing-channel novel,” in which the various stories get interrupted to give way to new narrations and finally get picked up again at a different stage of the story (*El Periódico*). An

analysis of what exactly constitutes the rupturist elements of the novel and how the fragmentary nature (or the combination of fact and fiction) makes it a unique novel should be carried out. In my analysis, however, I am going to focus on how the reception of the novel is also informed by the novel itself, which operates as a self-promotion mechanism, forecasting or giving clues on what the discourse or critical opinion will be.

On the one hand, we find Juan Bonilla's prologue which, in a fashion, paves the way for the type of reviews that will come after the ones cited above.¹ Thus, Bonilla writes about the will to risk and the renovating elements that the author attempts with projects that "han revitalizado en nuestros tiempos la apuesta de la vanguardia literaria, tratando de abrir sendas, de aventurarse por caminos no trillados" (9) (have revitalized the bet on the literary avant-garde, in their attempt to open new paths, to venture into unpaved routes). As we can see, the issue of rupture and renovation is already present here. Additionally, there is a connection with the avant-garde, which Bonilla makes even more explicit when he adds that the *Nocilla Dream*'s poetics owes much to "grandes proyectos vanguardistas como el libro de París de Walter Benjamin (que tal vez inventara el zapping literario en los años treinta)" (9) (great avant-garde projects such as Walter Benjamin's *Paris* [which was perhaps the inventor of the literary channel-surfing in the 1930s]). Furthermore, Bonilla makes a preventive defense of possible attacks against his "explosivas consideraciones sobre el panorama actual de nuestra literatura," (explosive declarations about the current literary panorama) because Fernández Mallo is "un autor que tiene claro adónde va y que trata de renovar los modos de encarar la ficción" (10) (an author who knows very well where he is heading and who is trying to renovate ways of engaging with fiction) and his work is an "aventura narrativa . . . que no debería pasar desapercibida" (10) (narrative adventure that . . . should not go unnoticed).² Thus, Bonilla's comments are prefiguring (influencing) the kind of discourse present in the aforementioned reviews: how *Nocilla Dream* lives up to the rupturist expectations, auguring the novel a real significance beyond a mere rupturist gesture.

Nocilla Dream's cover flap also commands the reader's attention by emphasizing some of the elements exposed in Bonilla's prologue: "más que una novela, *Nocilla Dream* es el principio de muchas novelas hábilmente ensambladas con material documental y propio en una sólida e inesperada docuficción" (more than just a novel, *Nocilla Dream* is the beginning of many novels that have been skillfully assembled with factual and fictional material creating a solid and unexpected docufiction) or "una de las apuestas narrativas más arriesgadas de los últimos años" (one of the riskiest narrative projects of recent years). Once again, the adjectives that accompany the comments ("solid," "unexpected" or "riskiest") insist on the idea of rupture and novelty.

Finally, another element from the book itself that adds to the novel's self-consciousness and anticipates reviews is *Nocilla Dream*'s chapter 107, where we can read excerpts from fictional reviews on a fictitious novel (that may or may not be *Nocilla Dream*). For example, we read that the novel is "el primer artefacto propiamente del siglo 21 escrito en lengua española. ¿En qué cajón estaba escondido?" (204) (the first artifact written in Spanish that can be said to belong to the twenty-first century) or "De repente todas las novelas han envejecido 50 años" (205) (Suddenly, the rest of novels have aged fifty years). The novel itself, then, provides the discourse of being a revolutionary book that is meant to change the Spanish literary scene.

To add more meaning to the will of change, Fernández Mallo himself talks in the same vein when is repeatedly interviewed for newspapers and magazines throughout January. For example, on the 4th of January, for *El Cultural*, he states that:

Creo que una parte muy amplia de lo que se publica en España es demasiado manierista y convencional y no hay audacia por romper, que es algo que me enseñaron en Ciencia, donde, si algo no funciona tienes que arriesgar, incluso dar saltos al vacío, y en poesía y en narrativa no veo tanta audacia. Quizá por eso cuando escribí *Nocilla Dream* iba a tumba abierta. (Azancot "Entrevista")

(I believe that a majority of what gets published in Spain is too mannerist and conventional and there's no courage to break, which is something that I was taught in Sciences, where, when something does not work, one needs to take risks, to not look before the leap, and I don't see such courage. Maybe that's why when I wrote *Nocilla Dream* I decided to go at a breakneck speed.)

Fernández Mallo also insists on the idea of renovation and rupture that lies behind his project, further inscribing in the novel a discourse that would be repeated throughout the different reviews. *Nocilla Dream* becomes the image, the signifier of a rupture in relation to the Spanish literary field; however, it is still early to assess the place that the novel (as an aesthetic project) will occupy in the future of the history of Spanish literature and whether it will be regarded as a groundbreaking phenomenon. What cannot be denied is the quick integration and absorption of the novel by mainstream culture. After the text's success, Fernández Mallo signed with publishing house Alfaguara, which published the two other novels that along with *Nocilla Dream* that make up the *Nocilla Project* trilogy. Since then, Fernández Mallo has since collaborated with *El País* writing essays and stories. His case marks a successful entrance in the Spanish literary field without the support of a big publishing house. This unique commercial and

critical success as well as the media visibility the novel acquired enabled a group of authors that had been working and struggling to find a proper distribution channel and the field's attention to have the opportunity to express a view on literature that contests hegemonic currents in the literary field and in turn, is contested from within.

Generación Nocilla: A Journalistic Invention?

In order to understand the *Generación Nocilla* phenomenon, it is necessary to make reference to an article by Nuria Azancot, published in the supplement *El Cultural* on July 19th, 2007.³ This article, entitled “La *Generación Nocilla* y el Afterpop piden paso,” can be regarded as seminal in the consideration of these authors as a generation with certain common characteristics. The article is made up of different declarations by various authors that would supposedly belong to this group. All the authors quoted by Azancot recognize themselves as part of a generation or, at least, of a group with a similar view on literature. According to their declarations, the characteristics they share are a technological awareness not present in previous generations, an interest in combining genres in their literary works, and an overcoming of the high- and low-culture dichotomy. Azancot notes the fact that a majority of these authors have a blog and participate regularly in other writers' blogs. A tentative roster of authors in this group is also included.⁴ Another remarkable aspect is that the journalist uses theoretical terms that had been coined by two of the “members” of the group—Vicente Luis Mora and Eloy Fernández Porta (“pangea” and “afterpop”)—a gesture that somewhat confers a consistency to the consideration of being a generation, building the image of a literary project from within and not only as a mere arbitrary grouping done from the outside by external critics.

Paradoxically however, it is this article—written by a journalist and using profusely the term *Generación Nocilla*—that causes the authors themselves to speak out: on the one hand, in order to react against the label; on the other, in order to recognize each other and also recognize themselves as part of the field and express a joint opinion. The chosen platform is *Diario de lecturas*, a blog created and run by Vicente Luis Mora, a common space where many of the authors mentioned by Azancot concur to discuss about literature. The very same day Azancot publishes her article, Mora posts an entry where he reveals that the *El Cultural* article had been composed by answers to some of the questions that the journalist had previously sent the aforementioned authors. According to Mora, the article “demuestra una muy saludable curiosidad (sólo compartida por Culturas, de *La Vanguardia*) por intentar adentrarse en una serie de jóvenes y valiosos narradores (me excluyo)” (“¿Generación?”) (shows a very beneficial

curiosity [only shared by *La Vanguardia's* cultural supplement] to try and find out what a group of young and valuable narrators [myself excluded] have in common). Mora leaves unanswered what these authors have in common, as this will be precisely the goal of the entry. He also observes that despite its good intentions, the article is not completely accurate, partly because of the lack of space that a format such as the newspaper article has. The blog, and therefore this particular entry, become a supplementary space in which to discuss, add and occasionally correct or complement what Azancot was exposing. Besides offering his own opinions, Mora summons two of the alluded authors, Eloy Fernández Porta and Jorge Carrión, so that they can contribute their own versions.

The three writers are against the concept “generación” as grouping and “nocilla” as the qualifier. Mora considers that his term “pangea” or Fernández Porta’s “afterpop” would be more appropriate. Fernández Porta also uses his term “afterpop” to describe the “paradigma estético” (¿Generación?) (aesthetic paradigm) of this new group. Finally, Carrión agrees with the other two authors’ views, arguing against the *Generación Nocilla* label and considering that “[p]ara comprender la literatura española actual se pueden encontrar términos bien definidos en los últimos libros de Vicente Luis Mora y de Eloy Fernández Porta. Que los lectores, y entre ellos los periodistas, encuentren esos términos, los comprendan, los analicen” (¿Generación?) (in order to understand the current Spanish literature, we can find well-defined terms in the latest books by Vicente Luis Mora and Eloy Fernández Porta. May readers, and journalists among them, find, understand, and analyze those terms). The authors’ opinions can be read as an attempt to reappropriate or recognize the group from an internal perspective. They never suggest, however, that there is no common factor or sense of difference regarding other periods or authors.

For Fernández Porta, this difference would be the question of “afterpop,” a term that defines the critical superseding of “pop” which, according to him, has traditionally been regarded as a differentiator between high culture and low culture. In the “afterpop” world, therefore, “pop” would not have this function but is completely integrated in the cultural landscape and is used and accepted by any cultural producer, independently of whether they are perceived as high or low culture. Carrión speaks in social terms and points to “una nueva conciencia tecnológica . . . que diferencia nuestro momento histórico de los precedentes” (¿Generación?) (a new technological awareness . . . that distinguishes our historic moment from previous ones). He also stresses the fact that they share certain cultural and social referents:

Por haber vivido la juventud en la misma época, antes de que cada uno formara su propio mundo de lecturas, compartimos series de televisión,

iconos pop, una cierta forma de vivir la sentimentalidad, la posibilidad de viajar fácilmente (con lo que ello ha conllevado de transformación de coordenadas tempo-espaciales), la frecuentación de países e idiomas, una formación académica interdisciplinar, etc. (¿Generación?)

(Because we have lived our youth in the same epoch, before everyone started to form his or her own world of readings, we share TV series, pop icons, a certain way of living the sentimentality, the possibility to travel easily (and everything that this fact has brought about in terms of a transformation of time-space coordinates), the familiarization with countries and languages, an interdisciplinary academic education, etc.)

Carrión is conveying in his description an idea of generation on biologic (rather than literary) terms, as their common factors are grounded in the fact that they all came of age within a certain historic, social and cultural period.

The entry “¿Generación? ¿Nocilla?” attracted numerous comments of readers, some of them readers that had been mentioned in Azancot’s article. These comments dealt mostly with the question introduced by Mora regarding the existence (or not) of a new generation, and agreed on the unfortunate label (“nocilla”), while admitting commonalities. A remarkable comment is the one written by Agustín Fernández Mallo one day after the blog post. As Fernández Mallo’s novel is the obvious origin of the appellation grants, he has the opportunity to dismiss the assertion that his novel “sea representativa de las otras estéticas de otros autores” (*Hola*) (is representative of the other authors’ aesthetic projects). Nonetheless, he evaluates the success of his novel in the following manner: “si mi novela ha servido para que autores cojonudos, pero hasta ahora más ocultos, se hagan visibles, pues fenomenal” (*Hola*) (if my novel has made possible that superb, though up until now hidden, authors acquire visibility, then it’s great). The success of *Nocilla Dream*, then, may serve as a precedent to shed light on projects that are not, in principle, backed by a big publishing house or the mass media. Actually, this is the most important conclusion that Fernández Mallo extracts from the article: the fact that, despite its flaws—the consideration of a generation, the inclusion of certain names over others, and the very denomination “nocilla”—the article means “publicidad inevitable, y además, gratis, que tendríamos que saber utilizar en nuestro beneficio” (*Hola*) (inevitable publicity and for free, that we should be able to utilize to our own advantage). For these reasons, he believes that “deberíamos los ahí citados dar las gracias de que una publicación masiva como *El Cultural* nos haya prestado atención de una manera seria y honesta. Con los tiempos que corren, eso es una pasada . . . Seguramente hace no muchos años todos hubiéramos dado los dos brazos y un pie por que alguien nos sacara en un medio así” (*Hola*) (we, the mentioned authors, should be thankful that a

mass media publication such as *El Cultural* has given us an earnest and honest attention. Given the times we live in, this is a big thing . . . Most likely, a few years ago, we would have given anything to appear in a medium like that).

The characterization done by Fernández Mallo combines the anxiety and celebration, in lieu of their presence on a “mass media publication,” in a comment that points to the need of this kind of publicity in order to gain a position within the literary field. It is precisely a personal anecdote that will help the author exemplify this fact:

Ayer me dejé caer por un evento literario de ‘alto copete,’ en el que había desde pringaos [sic] como yo a Premios Nobel. Bien, todo el mundo, (y cuando digo todo digo todo el mundo), hablaba en algún momento del artículo de *El Cultural*. Si eso no está bien, que baje quien tenga que bajar y lo vea, ¿no? (*Hola*)

(Yesterday, I dropped by a ‘high level’ literary event, where Mr. Nobodies like me coexisted with Nobel Prizes. Well, everybody, [and I am emphasizing this: everybody], was speaking at some point about the article from *El Cultural*. If this is not good, I don’t know what is!)

Fernández Mallo’s intervention seeks to make clear that the group has managed to make “everybody” talk about them. Fernández Mallo does not explain the content of what is talked about, but in a way we can dismiss it as irrelevant: what he tries to do with his comment is precisely to make this group *exist* within the literary field, albeit indirectly, through this anecdote. This is the idea that underlies Pierre Bourdieu’s words when, in reference to the entry of new agents in the literary field, he indicates that “to produce effects is already to exist in a field, even if these effects are mere reactions of resistance or exclusion” (*Rules* 225–26). For Fernández Mallo it is clear that in the particular case of this group, the effect is produced by their appearance in an important newspaper, something that grants them a visibility in the literary circles. It is because of that appearance that Azancot’s article offers these authors the possibility to exist at a general level while making possible a mutual recognition. In this respect, it is paradoxical that a group of authors who had struggled to look for options outside of the traditional avenues of promotion and discussion of literature end up recognizing themselves as a group through a traditional medium which also “imposes” a name.⁵ Nonetheless, it is possible to attempt a different reading—that the fact that the name or the consideration of these authors as a group had been made from the outside rules out any doubts of a possible self-promotion, giving it a more objective tint, so to speak. The article’s effect is grounded, firstly, in that it serves as a reflecting mirror of a

group's image in which part of the mentioned authors (more or less) can recognize themselves. Secondly, it enables circulation in the literary field of a cohesive group of new authors.

Both rejection and acceptance are equally valid in order to make a new agent exist in the literary field. Azancot's article can be read as a sign of acceptance, although it soon is contested through dissonant opinions in the article itself and during the following months. The reaction comes from Javier Calvo, an author who, having been born in 1973, could be placed among the rest of the authors discussed and grouped under *Generación Nocilla*. However, Calvo, by social age (that is, by time and status within the literary field), is "older" than these authors. While they, for the most part, have published a novel with small publishing houses without big critical attention, (except for Fernández Mallo and Javier Calvo who, at the time of the article, had already published three books with Random-House Mondadori: a collection of short stories *Risas enlatadas* [2001] and two novels, *El dios reflectante* [2003] and *Los ríos perdidos de Londres* [2005]). *El dios reflectante*, in particular, was hailed by critics as an original and different novel within the Spanish narrative scene, influenced by the literature of young North American authors such as David Foster Wallace. For instance, Toni Iturbe, critic for the magazine *Qué Leer* states that "por primera vez en unos cuantos años se vislumbra ese libro con personalidad propia que se puede consolidar como emblema de los nuevos tiempos: *El dios reflectante*" (for the first time in several years it is possible to behold a book with true character that can become the spearhead of the new times: *El dios reflectante*). Calvo, thus, holds a position of being the new literary sensation within the literary field. Therefore, when asked whether he considers himself part of *Generación Nocilla*, he expresses the following in the aforementioned article by Azancot:

Para mí la literatura es el acto supremo de expresión individual. A un autor o a un libro hay que juzgarlos a partir de los parámetros de ese autor o de ese libro, no a partir de los de otros. Y que yo sepa, no comparto absolutamente ningún modelo ni maestro con ningún otro escritor español de mi generación. ¿Los más destacados del grupo? Tengo entendido que yo. Para ser sinceros: me halaga que haya gente que me considere parte de su grupo, o generación, o lo que sea. Simplemente no es cosa mía. (Azancot)

(Literature, for me, is the supreme act of individual expression. A book or an author must be judged according to that book or author's parameters, not by the others' And as far as I know, I don't share models or influences with any other Spanish writer of my generation. The most prominent of the group? I understand it would be me. To be

honest: I am flattered that there are people who consider me as part of their group, or generation, or whatever. It is just not my thing.)

Calvo's conclusive remarks make clear his refusal to be considered as part of a generation. His words can be read as a defense of the leading position that he already holds, and therefore the fact that he does not need to be associated with any group (thus his comment regarding the individual expression). In this respect, his reaction contrasts with Fernández Mallo's more generous stance, who, despite his qualms regarding the name, shows a sense of union with the group.

These two confronting stances: Javier Calvo's, which can be understood as a defense of his own individual position at the vanguard of the literary field, and Fernández Mallo's, considered as an attempt to secure that same rupturist or new position through the group of authors, has a continuation in two articles where the authors expose their own views on the "Nocilla Case." Both interventions, besides lending themselves to a strategic reading on the defense of the respective positions within the field, contain interesting notes on the present state of literature, its meaning and function.

On the 12th of September 2007, barely two months after Nuria Azancot's article where the name *Generación Nocilla* was put in the spotlight, Javier Calvo wrote a piece for *La Vanguardia* entitled "La historia de la nocilla." Here he offered his own perspective on this group of authors that he characterizes as part of a "Do It Yourself culture," or in other words, a type of cultural production whose management and promotion are carried out by the authors themselves. According to him, this type of culture is more prominent "en los momentos de mayor ostracismo de la escena cultural. O sea, cuando productores, editores y agentes no encuentran posibilidad de beneficio material en la creación emergente" ("La historia de la nocilla") (in the times of bigger cultural ostracism within the cultural scene. That is, when producers, publishers and agents cannot find material benefits by supporting the emerging creators). Calvo's comments, therefore, locate the reason for the existence of the group as a reaction to a cultural context that he considers "depressing" and where "el *establishment* cultural cierra filas en torno a lo consolidado y en contra de cualquier cosa que huele a nuevo" (the cultural powers close ranks around what is firmly established and against anything that is new). According to Calvo, this is the context in which we can find "la verdadera génesis y razón de ser de la Generación Nocilla" (the real genesis and *raison d'être* of Generación Nocilla). Calvo denies the weight of the group by indicating that their credentials are nothing more than a reaction to media and critical neglect, without any real aesthetic or critical arguments that would support a genuine change. He also believes that the group will fade away as its members start to enter the "mainstream," but for the time being, "vale la pena disfrutar del momento de forma de estos

angry young men, ya un poco crecidos pero todavía dispuestos a dar mordiscos y patadas” (it is worth it to enjoy the momentum of these *angry young men* who, though already grown up, still feel inclined to kicking and screaming). Calvo’s harsh words try to deauthorize the literary value of these authors’ works in the sense that, according to him, their foundation—and value—is the opposition and reaction to a publishing market that does not represent them. Calvo suggests that because of this, authors are obliged to “a la autogestión, a través de Internet, de sellos como Berenice, Plurabelle y DVD y de órganos como la revista *Lateral* y después *Quimera*” (self-management, through the Internet, through publishing houses such as Berenice, Plurabelle and DVD and platforms such as the magazine *Lateral* and later, *Quimera*). The key word in this quote is “self-management,” as Calvo’s critique is centered on the fact that authors themselves fulfill the role of commentators, critics and even publishers of their own works or of related authors, something he had labeled as Do It Yourself culture.

Two aspects regarding the literary field and the changing notions of literature can be drawn from Calvo’s criticism and disapproval. On the one hand, it is worth noticing that Calvo possesses a symbolic “authority” to “deauthorize” the new group’s project. This symbolic power, acquired through his status as a recognized and published author within the literary field, allows him access to a “public rostrum” (the newspaper) from which to express his opinions. Secondly, it is his status as a member of the literary field that allows him to sanction (positively or negatively) the entrance of new agents. Due to his symbolic power and the fact that he could be considered, by age and literary style, at the vanguard of the literary field, Calvo reacts negatively to the advance of these new authors, in a way that can be understood as a defense of his position. His defense is significant in that it reproduces the internal logic of the literary field, theorized by Bourdieu as an “inverted economy” (*Field* 75). In this “inverted economy,” the symbolic capital is defined as a disavowal of the economic, political and, in some cases, even institutionalized cultural capital (*Field* 75). For Bourdieu, this disavowal is practical as the agents who make up the literary field “only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing” (*Field* 76). Precisely what Calvo points out is how the new authors show an “interest” in advertising or talking about their works that—in Calvo’s harsh terms—has to do with a “síndrome de Napoleón (verte a ti mismo mucho más grande de lo que te ven los demás)” (Napoleon syndrome (seeing yourself much bigger than what the others see you and do) and therefore, “[esta generación] no duda en autopromocionarse en terminos mesiánicos” ([this generation] does not hesitate in self promoting themselves in messianic terms). The authors’ effort to advertise their works, to speak about them and expose their aesthetic projects (be it through alternative media, such as specialized magazines, the Internet, or (and particularly) blog

spaces) would be the real difference between this generation and the previous. According to Calvo, the “Nocillas” are not bringing anything new to the literary scene, nor are they reacting substantially in terms of experimentalism against previous generations, because “autores como Ray Loriga, Rodrigo Fresán, Francisco Casavella o Luis Magrinyà son de todo menos conservadores” (authors such as Ray Loriga, Rodrigo Fresán, Francisco Casavella or Luis Magrinyà are anything but conservative) and, therefore, “[r]esulta difícil defender que la GN esté introduciendo en la literatura española, tal como se puede leer en alguna parte, cosas como la fragmentariedad, la influencia americana, la cultura pop o la mezcla de géneros, que ya hace tiempo que estaban por aquí” (it is hard to prove that GN is introducing elements such as fragmentarity, the American influence, pop culture or genre hybridation into Spanish literature, as it is stated in some places, since these are elements that had been here for a long time). For Calvo, then, the “new” element introduced by these authors would not be thematic or stylistic but operational, in the sense that they would have found in the “Do It Yourself” approach a way around a literary market that makes publishing hard for young authors. Thus, for Calvo, “la Generación Nocilla es una energía y una actitud, y también un insulto al sistema” (Generación Nocilla is an energy, an attitude and also, an insult to the system”) and this is “la verdadera diferencia con proyectos literarios anteriores” (the real difference with previous literary projects).

On the other hand, these symbolic struggles between an author (like Calvo) who defends a particular position in the field, and other authors who are precisely trying to find their own position, lay bare two notions about literature, especially as regards to its dissemination. What Calvo defines as a “endogamia orgullosa” (proud inbreeding) on the grounds that the authors talk about their works and their colleagues is regarded by Fernández Mallo as “una red de personas con intereses comunes” (*La otra*) (a network of people with common interests) in a response piece that appeared in the same newspaper two weeks later (September 26, 2007). Here, Fernández Mallo defends vehemently the existence of a new group of authors:

La hornada de nuevos narradores y poetas en este país está saliendo de bombonas de gas periféricas por una espita que cada vez es más difícil cerrar. No hay más que asomarse a la actualidad literaria para ver la cantidad de convenciones, congresos, jornadas y reuniones a los que los nuevos poetas y narradores llegan bien armados. Somos empollones, sí, dejamos para otros anacrónicos procesos de voluntaria malditización. Más que una generación—término que nos importa bien poco—yo estaría hablando de una red de personas con intereses comunes y cosmovisiones parecidas, que son radicales en el sentido etimológico, es decir, que están agarrando el problema por la raíz. (*La otra*)

(The crop of new narrators and poets in this country is coming from peripheral pumps through a gas valve that is harder and harder to close. You only need to peek into the current literary scene in order to realize the quantity of conventions, conferences, symposiums and meetings that the new poets and narrators attend, well armed. We are nerds, yes, we leave for others the anachronistic processes of becoming *poète maudite* voluntarily. More than a generation—a term we don't care much about—I talk about a network of people with common interests and a similar worldview who are radical in the etymological sense, that is, in the sense of going to the root of the problem.)

Fernández Mallo stands as a sort of speaker and defender of this group, partly because (as I noted previously) he has the possibility of access to this medium on equal terms with Calvo. It would be possible to also see a certain sense of responsibility toward a “generation” that has been named after his novel as well as a series of affinities and loyalties to other writers that propel him to make this stance. Regarding the above quote, I would like to point to the metaphor that he uses to characterize these writers, stressing the idea that they are an energy coming from the periphery that cannot be stopped or silenced. Next, Fernández Mallo also counteracts Calvo's criticism about how they were “angry young men” united on the grounds of being dismissed by publishing houses and media. Contrary to this, Fernández Mallo assures that this grouping is not impulsive but it is well grounded, with “new poets and narrators . . . well armed” and “common interests and a similar worldview” (*La otra*).

Fernández Mallo defends the group on several fronts. One would be a defense against the criticism that these authors are not doing anything *new*, as it had been done before. He posits that experimentation in arts is an issue that reappears cyclically and “cada generación reinventa la literatura en el sentido de cómo dar forma a unos contenidos, aunque la palabra experimentación sea, en efecto, la misma” (“La ‘otra’ historia”) (every generation reinvents literature in the sense of how to give shape to certain contents, even though the word “experimentation” is in fact the same). In regards to what are the fundamentals of this experimentation in relation to other periods, Fernández Mallo thinks that the introduction and establishment of the Internet at a social level supposes a paradigm shift that would be also impacting the way literature is created. Accordingly, “es imposible que los narradores que hoy están innovando escriban como los que innovaron hace diez años porque en aquel tiempo no existían un Internet generalizado ni una serie de tecnologías que configurase no ya las obras literarias sino algo mucho más medular, la propia manera de pensar” (“La ‘otra’ historia”) (It is impossible that narrators who are doing something new

nowadays write in the same way as those who did something new ten years ago. Back then, we didn't have a generalized use of the Internet nor a series of technologies that were configuring not only literary works but something much more fundamental: our very way of thinking). Fernández Mallo, therefore, bases the innovation on the existence of the Internet, a new tool that would be shaping their way of narrating.

Despite this defense, Fernández Mallo's response does not go deeper into one of the issues discussed by Calvo: self-management. Fernández Mallo focuses on denying the "pathos anticomercial" and the "beligerancia" ("La historia") (anti-commercial pathos, belligerence) that, according to Calvo, would be this group's trademark. Fernández Mallo does not think there is a will to oppose the market, but rather to call its attention toward products that habitually dismisses: "Nada tiene que ver con publicar por narices en editoriales minoritarias, sino al contrario, igual que ocurrió en la música, hacer también venir a las editoriales mayoritarias a nuestro terreno, hacer que se mojen y cambien sus filosofías de ventas maximalistas ("La 'otra' historia") (Nothing to do with publishing in minority publishing houses just because, but on the contrary, and just like it happened with music, have major publishing houses come to us, have them involved and make them change their sales philosophy). In a way, Fernández Mallo is deproblematizing the movement of having big publishing houses notice products that, in principle, are addressed to a minority audience. Although it is necessary to acknowledge the symbolic value that such rapprochements have, it is also true that they are framed in the context of a market. Thus, inspired by Adorno and Horkheimer's views, it is possible to read this movement exemplifying that nothing escapes the omnivorous power of the market, able to locate and assimilate any possible deviation (131). Therefore, the movement of rapprochement done by big publishing houses is not triggered by the consideration of the innovative, groundbreaking or purely artist value of the work, but triggered by a special conjuncture that has made the product profitable in the eyes of the big publishing houses.

Fernández Mallo does not address the concept of "self-management" or "Do It Yourself culture" which Calvo has criticized as a mere reaction to the market neglect, and noted as a particular element of this group. Calvo's criticism can be explained, as I noted, on the grounds of the literary field logic, which distrusts any blatant interest in promoting one's own works. Instead, this logic calls for an "external agent"—indefinite or unnamed, most of the times—to be judge and sanctioner. The fact that the mechanisms by which a particular work or author acquire a resonance and a position within the literary field remain, for the most part, veiled, disguised or simply non-discussed. The recourse to self-management is the manner in which authors can get around the constraints of a closed circuit of legitimation and circulation of literature, where finding a place in the cultural section of a

major newspaper is crucial for acknowledgement and selling. However, the recourse to self-legitimation does also denaturalize, and thus, exposes those mechanisms that have become part of the logic of the literary field and that are rarely discussed. Through the exposure of the mechanisms of legitimation and promotion, there also occurs a demystification of the idea that success and recognition in literature is achieved naturally attributed to constructs such as individual genius, for instance.

An example that will help illustrate this discussion has to do with Jorge Carrión, one of the “members” of the “new generation,” and his new novel *Los muertos*. In order to accompany, or complement, the launching of the novel, Carrión built a sort of marketing campaign consisting of a series of book trailers on the Internet imitating the classic concept of film trailers and teasers. The use of these clips to promote the novel is not trivial, as it actually belongs to the spirit of a novel that deals with television series, fan fiction and the influence of the visual. However, as I have pointed out, the topic of self-promotion or self-management is still regarded with suspicion in the world of literature. Thus, during an interview with Gabriela Wiener for the supplement EP3 from *El País*, he was asked about the question of self-promotion. Carrión’s view is precisely that promotion and the defense of one’s work is not something alien to the literary field: “No hay más que ver la historia de la literatura para darse cuenta de que los escritores—como el resto de artistas—han defendido su obra (el resultado de su trabajo) para conseguir nuevos contratos o para poder publicar” (“Los muertos en *El País*”) (You only need to take a look at the history of literature in order to understand that authors—just like the rest of artists—have defended their work [the results of their work] in order to get new contracts or to be able to publish). He also thinks that the image of an author as someone who exists outside of the market is nothing but a distortion based on a romantic idea of the writer as a solitary creator. The interest in defending and advertising a piece of literature, therefore, should not only be natural, but also habitual. Carrión illustrates this by mentioning how most writers have a direct collaboration in the composition of their back covers and speaks of Javier Marías as someone who, due to his large social capital within the field, has access to an immediate publicity through other consecrated writers: “Javier Marías, por ejemplo, carteándose con celebridades que admira (y que después se citan en las solapas de sus libros)” (Javier Marías, for instance, exchanging letters with celebrities he admire [and who are then quoted in his books’ back covers]).⁶ Javier Marías, for his part, responded a few days later (March 9, 2010) complaining that he had never asked anyone to praise him nor “jamás se ha citado en un libro mío ninguna frase de nadie que no se hubiera publicado en prensa con anterioridad” (never has a book of mine quoted any sentence that had not been published in [journalistic] press previously).

This exchange, partially similar to the one involving Calvo and Fernández Mallo, reveals two visions of a changing literary field.⁷ In a field of cultural production (such as literary) where, according to Bourdieu, its agents “only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing” or, in other words, a field that privileges a reverse operational logic, book trailers such as Carrión’s tend to surprise agents that have been part of the field (and are completely established) for a longer period of time (*Field* 76). In this particular case, the extensive use of “new technologies” in order to promote a book, and the fact that the author’s involvement in the promotion is obvious, exposes the reality of the need for agents of legitimation and promotion in order to publish, a reality that Marías does not seem to grasp to its full extent. Thus, when he affirms that his books have never quoted a sentence that had not been previously published in the press, he is in fact denying the reality of his own symbolic and social weight in the field, which in the end makes possible the “praising lines” about his works, or even the fact that his new novel will have a space in the cultural supplements.

Publicity and promotion have existed since the formation of the modern field of cultural production, that is, after the independence of writers and artists from patronage and their subsequent and inevitable entrance in the market of cultural goods. Their existence, however, has been naturalized and internalized to the point of almost being totally invisible and are habitually disguised in order to maintain the illusion of literature as a total autonomous, quasi-ethereal domain. New authors, who have recently accessed the field and therefore lack a social weight in it, find in new technologies a novel and efficient way to promote their works, putting in check established assumptions about the dynamic of the field.

In this sense, the Internet is becoming an effective tool enabling the visibility of certain works and authors, favoring the self-management and opening new spaces for the criticism and the dissemination of literature. Despite this, the possibilities of the web in this respect are still in an embryonic state; it is hard to say the limits and the impact that the Internet will have in our conception and consumption of literature. For one, the web facilitates self-publication and self-promotion in a way that no other technological device has before. If the invention of the printing press inaugurated a revolution in the way we accessed and read literary works—among other achievements, a way to “democratize” literature and change its mode of circulation—the Internet could now start a new revolution as well. Online publishers like the Spanish Web site “Bubok” are already offering authors the possibility to publish their books online and thus allow the reader to decide whether they want a print copy or an electronic copy. Projects like this one have an obviously long way to go, especially with regards to changing the conception of literature. The literary field, which, as indicated by Bourdieu, is a system of belief in which all of its agents share a series of

tacit rules that allow them the entrance and continuance in a “game” that has been maintained historically. A nearly absolute self-management as the one advanced by “Bubok,” without the need for external sanctions, without agents who possess the authority to legitimize the works, is impossible nowadays. A hypothetical situation in which everyone could become writers and critics would “democratize” the literary field completely, which would mean also its end, as we know it, thereby changing the meaning of literature.

What the story of the *Generación Nocilla* reveals, on the one hand, is the existence of new spaces and possibilities to discuss and disseminate literature. For instance, blogs occupy, in Carrión’s words, “el lugar del café literario hasta la llegada de la democracia; y de los bares y pubs de la Transición” (“Estimado José Andrés Rojo”) (the place of the literary café before the arrival of democracy; and of bars and pubs during the Transition). Carrión, therefore, places the blog as the natural continuation of traditional intellectual spaces. Precisely, it has been principally Vicente Luis Mora’s blog that has served as an exchange and meeting point for the authors that would later be labeled as the *Generación Nocilla*. Blogs like this have served the task of decentralizing literary information, opening new informative venues and forums where debate is encouraged. However, this important task has clashed with the reality that it is difficult to change completely the rules of the literary field in regards to the legitimation and consecration of works and authors. Thus, the need for traditional media and vehicles of formal recognition like newspapers, cultural supplements, etc. still exists. On the other hand, the entry of these authors into the literary field asks for a reconsideration of the role of the author and the possibilities and limits of self-management and promotion in the twenty-first century. The reactions of well-established authors (such as Javier Calvo and Javier Marías) to the advance and mode of operation of these authors not only betrays a structural dynamic of the field (the opposition between new and old agents), but also reveals the kind of mechanisms that allow authors and works to be recognized and validated.

Notes

1. Juan Bonilla is an author with a fairly well known trajectory. He began publishing in the early 1990s with a collection of journalistic articles in *Pre-Textos* and titled *El arte del yo-yo*. Later he wrote a series of novels and short-story collections that gave him a name within the Spanish literary scene, especially after the movie adaptation of his novel *Nadie conoce a nadie*. However, his definitive consecration within the Spanish literary field happened when Bonilla was awarded the Premio Biblioteca Breve de Seix Barral in 2003. Nowadays, he writes for the newspaper *El Mundo*, which gives him visibility and recognition in the cultural world.
2. Bonilla is referring here to Fernández Mallo’s comments on how “ninety-nine percent of the Spanish poetry is very bad” (9).

3. Although Azancot's article is important and relevant in attempting a genealogy of this group, in the sense that the whole article is devoted to this "phenomenon," it is necessary to note that the first time that the *Generación Nocilla* was used on a newspaper was on June 29th 2007 by author Elena Hevia.
4. In this sense the article expresses the following: "Puestos a señalar una docena de autores, no deberían faltar" (If one were to identify a dozen authors, the following must be in the list). . . Vicente Luis Mora (1970) y Jorge Carrión (1976), ni Eloy Fernández-Porta (1974), Javier Fernández (1970), Milo Krmpotic (1974), Mario Cuenca Sandoval (1975), Lolita Bosch (1978), Javier Calvo (1973), Domenico Chiappe (1970), Gabi Martínez (1971), Álvaro Colomer, Harkaitz Cano, con Juan Francisco Ferré (1962), Germán Sierra (1960) y Fernández Mallo (1965) como hermanos mayores y tutelares" (as older brothers or guardians). (Azancot) Later on, Vicente Luis Mora in his blog *Diario de lecturas* adds five more authors (Diego Doncel, Mercedes Cebrián, Robert Juan-Cantavella, Salvador Gutiérrez Solís and Manuel Vilas).
5. In this respect and in the aforementioned intervention, Fernández Mallo writes about the impossibility of changing a name (*Generación Nocilla*) that has been coined by the mass media. In his own words: "Ahora bien, como decía el otro día un periodista, "podéis los autores ponerlos las etiquetas que queráis, las más variadas, ocurrencias y bonitas, ahora bien, llegaremos los periodistas, inventaremos otra etiqueta, y tendréis que aguantaros." Eso es importante porque creo que da a entender que es un acto bastante inútil patear demasiado. Los medios ahí mandan" (*Hola*) (Now, as a journalist was saying the other day, 'you authors can coin the most varied, witty, beautiful labels for yourselves, but we, journalists will come up with a new label and you will have to accept it.' This is important because it shows how pointless it is to complain too much about it. The media has the last word here.) Fernández Mallo does not consider important *what* name is given, but *how* this name can be used to open new paths, or to acquire a visibility.
6. Javier Marías is arguably one of the better-known and recognized Spanish writers.
7. In this case, however, what is at stake is not the loss of a vanguard position (as with Calvo and Fernández Mallo).

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