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Schema Theory, Prototype Theory,
and the *Novela Dialogada*:
Toward a Perspectivist and Dynamic View of Literary Genres

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A literary genre is an elusive concept, which has generated and continues to generate much debate. At times the debate centers on its contours, at other times on its coordinates or its genesis, but few have denied its existence and legitimacy. In some instances the organization of the body of literature in taxonomies turns out to be straightforward while in other situations it proves to be more complex. All literary traditions, and the scholars studying them, have grappled with many such situations. In the Spanish tradition perhaps one of the most revealing examples is the case of the “novela dialogada” [dialogue novel], a genre straddling two generic traditions (the novelistic and the dramatic traditions) as well as two periods (the medieval era and the Renaissance).¹ *La Celestina*, the work that initiates the genre in 1499 and reigns supreme over it, best illustrates this resistance to be easily classified: because of its date of publication, but also because of its style and themes, which on one hand are indebted to medieval genres and on the other prefigure the literature to come. In sum, the novela dialogada—and most notably *La Celestina*—represents, for our purposes, a case study illustrating the difficulty of coming to a satisfactory consensus with regards to the classification of genres.

Under these circumstances, could our knowledge of human cognition help us shed some light on this conundrum (and perhaps similar situations found in other genres)? It may provide some answers, partial or complete, to some of the questions related to genres that we literary scholars are asking ourselves. What is happening in the brain as we browse, read, select, or discuss books? How do we conceptualize the knowledge of the books we read? How does this knowledge fit into our prior literary knowledge? How is our literary experience going to affect or transform our previously gathered body of literary knowledge? If we discuss a book with a friend or in an academic setting, is that discussion going to modify our concept of the book? Is our literary knowledge going to bias our reading of

a book? And if so, what are the cognitive processes that underlie these phenomena?

The clustering of works into genres and subgenres is ultimately a cognitive task and construct. Thus, studying the cognitive correlates of literary genres and the psychological rules that govern their creation and evolution can provide the genre theorist and literary scholar with invaluable knowledge. This knowledge, however, cannot replace the careful analysis of texts and the historical study of how genres emerge and evolve. Biology and culture are intertwined and not dissociable. We cannot have one without the other. Combining our knowledge of human cognition with that of the literary history of genres is therefore the approach being taken in this essay.

For the past two decades or so, various literary scholars have discerned in two psychological paradigms, namely Schema Theory and Prototype Theory, a way to tackle these issues.² In this paper, I will start by briefly presenting and looking at the connection between these two concepts, which are often used interchangeably in the psychological literature without an explanation of how they may relate to each other. I will then argue that the combination of the research on both Schema Theory and Prototype Theory as well as the understanding of how they relate to each other make possible a more complete model of how we perceive literary genres on a cognitive level. Finally, I will explore how this putative cognitive model can shed some light on the difficulties that the scholarship of early modern Spanish literature has had with the categorization of the *novela dialogada* and I will propose a perspectivist view of literary genres.³

Schema Theory

Schema Theory has been a very pervasive idea in the cognitive sciences. In 1911, to account for the representation of posture in the cerebral cortex, Henry Head and Gordon Holmes proposed the term “schema” and were the first scholars to lay the foundations of the concept. Subsequently, in 1932, Sir Frederic C. Bartlett in his research on memory perfected the concept and expanded its domain of applicability. What is particularly relevant to us is the fact that his theories in part originated from observations of the reception of a literary genre. Indeed, he presented a Native American folktale to British adolescents and found that they consistently made similar mistakes when recalling the story (see ch. 5,

“Experiments on Remembering: The Method of Repeated Reproduction,” 63-94). This led him to define schema as a sort of mental footprint of past experiences that are serially organized. He proposed that schemata could actually play a role not only at such low levels like posture perception (Head and Holmes’s use of the concept of a schema), but also at higher levels of abstraction:

Determination by schemata is the most fundamental of all ways in which we can be influenced by reactions and experiences which occurred some time in the past. All incoming impulses of a certain kind, or mode, go together to build up an active, organized setting: visual, auditory, various types of cutaneous impulses and the like, at a relatively low level; all the experiences connected by a common interest: in sport, in literature, history, art, science, philosophy and so on, on a higher level. (201)

For cognitive psychologists today, Bartlett is considered to be the father of Schema Theory.⁴ Some thirty years after Bartlett’s achievement, the same concept was taken again by a group of computer scientists studying vision. At the forefront of this group was Marvin Minsky. A short time later Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson used it to model social interaction. By this time, the concept was being introduced into fields like Cognitive Neuroscience and Cognitive Linguistics (David E. Rumelhart and his Connectionist Model is one example)⁵ and had resurfaced in Perception Studies, thanks to the work of Ulric Neisser. Today, it remains an important concept in Artificial Intelligence in the work of Michael A. Arbib and others (see *From Schema* and *Neural Organization*).

This pervasiveness of the schema concept, one of its defining features, also allows us to view literary genres as schemata: the cognitive correlate of a genre is the schema (see Bartlett; Johan Hoorn, “How,” “Psychophysiology,” Michael Sinding, “After Definitions”). As such, Schema Theory is a useful tool to delve into the cognition of almost all human behaviors: when we perceive, when we walk, when we memorize and recall past experiences, when we interact with people, when we learn, and when we read literature.

Below is a broad definition of a schema:⁶

1. A schema is a cognitive knowledge structure. It represents what is happening in the brain, how knowledge is organized and structured in the brain.

2. A schema is an active, dynamic, and ever-changing structure. As you interact with the environment, the schema integrates the new information and is in turn modified by it.
3. A schema works at different levels of abstraction. This is linked to the notion of pervasiveness mentioned earlier.
4. A schema has values or variables. When the schema is first called upon, it already has default values that are later modified.

Prototype Theory

Categorization is an intrinsic part of our cognition because it helps us make sense of the world around us. Grouping, classifying, sorting out, and clustering are routine cognitive tasks that we human beings perform continuously as we interact with the world. In recent years, the cognitive research on categorization has been of interest to several literary scholars and genre theorists who see a parallel at the cognitive level between the categorization of objects, people, behaviors, emotions, ideas, etc. and the categorization of literary genres.⁷

Within the field of Categorization research, the concept which most notably influenced these literary scholars has been Prototype Theory. Pioneered by Eleanor Rosch, Prototype Theory implied a crucial shift in how categories were viewed. It changed the focus of examination from the boundaries between categories—and how to define them—to the internal structure of categories—and how they are organized. In her article “Principles of Categorization,” Rosch asserts that the Western tradition has mainly been concerned with the boundaries of categories and on how to draw a line between them. To make them appear as clear-cut and separate from each other as possible, categories have usually been defined by necessary and sufficient criteria:

Most, if not all, categories do not have clear-cut boundaries. To argue that basic object categories follow clusters of perceived attributes is not to say that such attribute clusters are necessarily discontinuous.

In terms of the principles of categorization proposed earlier, cognitive economy dictates that categories tend to be viewed as being as separate from each other and as clear-cut as possible. One way to achieve this is by means of formal, necessary and sufficient

criteria for category membership. The attempt to impose such criteria on categories marks virtually all definitions in the tradition of Western reason. (35)

Traditionally, category membership was viewed in an “either-or” fashion. Either a member belongs to a certain category or it doesn’t. To differentiate members from non-members, a set of necessary and sufficient criteria was established or identified. Members within a category were then undistinguishable from one another since they either were or weren’t in said category.

According to Stephen Laurence and Eric Margolis, this view, which could be dated back to Plato,⁸ prevailed in the study of concepts until the 1950’s when it was questioned in the field of philosophy by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of “family resemblances.” Wittgenstein proposed that a concept cannot be defined by a limited set of necessary and sufficient features. The problem, he argued, was that the mere identification of features does not necessarily tell us what are the constituents of the concept. To illustrate his theory, he invited us to look at the concept of a “game” and to try to define its various constituents like board-games, card-games, Olympic Games, and so on:

The result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.

67. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: ‘games’ form a family. (171)

From a cognitive standpoint Rosch furthered Wittgenstein’s idea of “family resemblances” and claimed that defining the limits of categories was irrelevant since it was not what was really happening in our brain. Instead, she proposed that categories be seen as organized around a prototype that need not be a member of the particular category. A corollary of this claim is the notion of gradience, or “degree of membership.” In her research, she found that categories are organized in a “radial” fashion, in which the center is the prototype of the category, while the members of this category sit more or less close to that center, depending on their degree of membership. One example often cited is the “bird” category. If asked to

give the name of a bird, which one would come to mind? That of a chicken or penguin, or that of a robin or sparrow? Although chickens and penguins are birds, robins and sparrows are viewed as more prototypical types of birds. In the figure below, which is a visual illustration of the radial structure of the bird category, the robin and sparrow will therefore be found close to the bull's eye (or prototype of the category), while the other birds will be located further away from this bull's eye depending on their degree of membership (i.e., depending on how prototypical they are perceived).

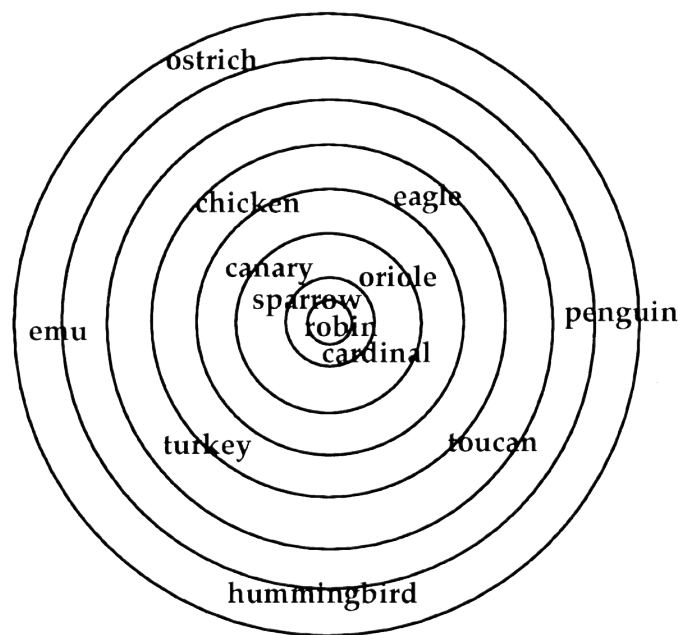


Figure 1 - Radial structure of the “bird category” (Mancing).

Schema Theory and Prototype Theory: The Relation

Establishing the relationship between Schema Theory and Prototype Theory is not a convenient stance on my part but instead constitutes a claim informed by a careful analysis of what each concept represents at the

level of the brain. Indeed, I argue that these two concepts are the two sides of the same cognitive entity and that the relation between them is one of focus of analysis. That is, the Categorization scholarship (e.g., Rosch, George Lakoff) has focused, mainly for experimental reasons, on classes of items that are natural (i.e., animals and plants) or static in nature. Birds, plants, and furniture contain a certain number of members that over our lifetime and within a given environment will not evolve much. They are cognitive representations of a “static” environment. On the other hand, the Schema Theory scholarship has used the concept of a schema as a means to represent situations such as past experiences, posture, and social interactions (e.g., restaurant scripts), which are constantly evolving or changing. They are then cognitive representations of a “dynamic” environment. What I argue is that the cognitive structures that these paradigms attempt to reveal are, in fact, one. A category is a special type of schema and a schema is a special type of category. Categories are “static” schemata and schemata are “dynamic” categories. And, as George Mandler suggests, when first instantiated the default values of a schema correspond to a sort of “prototypical schema.”

Combining the research about the two concepts can thus help us develop a more complete picture of literary genres, a picture in which Prototype Theory can shed light on the internal structure of genres (i.e., prototype and radial structures) and in which Schema Theory helps us to understand the external exchange of information with the environment, the dynamic interaction with the world—how the information coming from the environment modifies our generic conceptualization and how in turn our generic conceptualization can guide our perception of the environment—.

The implications of this combination are as follows:

1. A genre is a cognitive structure. It has correlates in the brain (Schema Theory).
2. Genres have prototypes (Prototype Theory).
3. Genres are organized in a radial fashion (Prototype Theory).
4. Genres are dynamic entities (Schema Theory).
5. Genres are individual (Schema Theory).

A Proposed Putative Cognitive Model of Genre Formation

To illustrate these implications, I would like to propose a putative model of how genres are constructed and how they evolve cognitively.⁹ The basic premise of this model is that the prototype of a genre corresponds, in psychological space, to the center of gravity of the mental representations of the members of that genre in that same space. Therefore, I propose that after the reading of one book from a given genre, the representation formed in the brain is the consequent prototype of that same genre (see figure 2).

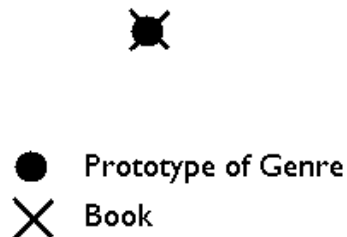


Figure 2 - Putative models of our generic knowledge of one book.

If we read a second book of the same genre, the prototypical book would then lie somewhere on a straight line between the two books. However, the prototype of this genre will not necessarily sit exactly in the middle of the two crosses, for we will always view one of the two members as being more prototypical or significant than the other (figure 3).

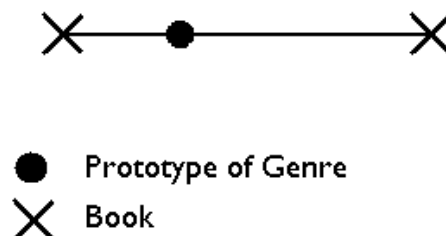


Figure 3 - Putative models of our generic knowledge of two books.

Similarly, if we read a third book in this genre, the prototype of this genre will be somewhere in between the three books but not at an equal distance of them (see figure 4).

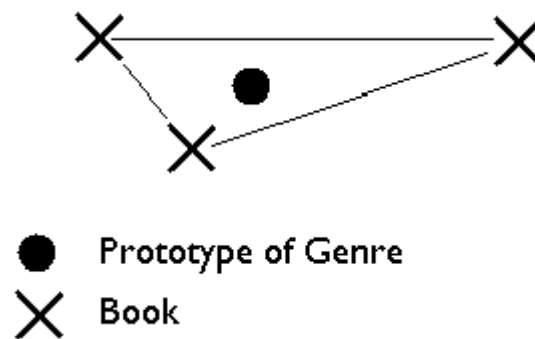


Figure 4 - Putative models of our generic knowledge of three books.

We therefore mentally assign to each book a certain “cognitive weight.” In essence, this weight integrates the level of significance of the various attributes that we (readers) perceive as relevant; those attributes being related to the form, content, and style of the text being read. This process takes place outside of our consciousness, although conscious assessment of our readings certainly affects and further modifies our mental representation of genres. Indeed, we constantly revise this mental representation as we read more books and as we deepen our understanding of genres through informal discussions, scholarly debates, the readings of secondary sources, self-reassessments, and in response to shifting mindsets and worldviews (see figure 5).

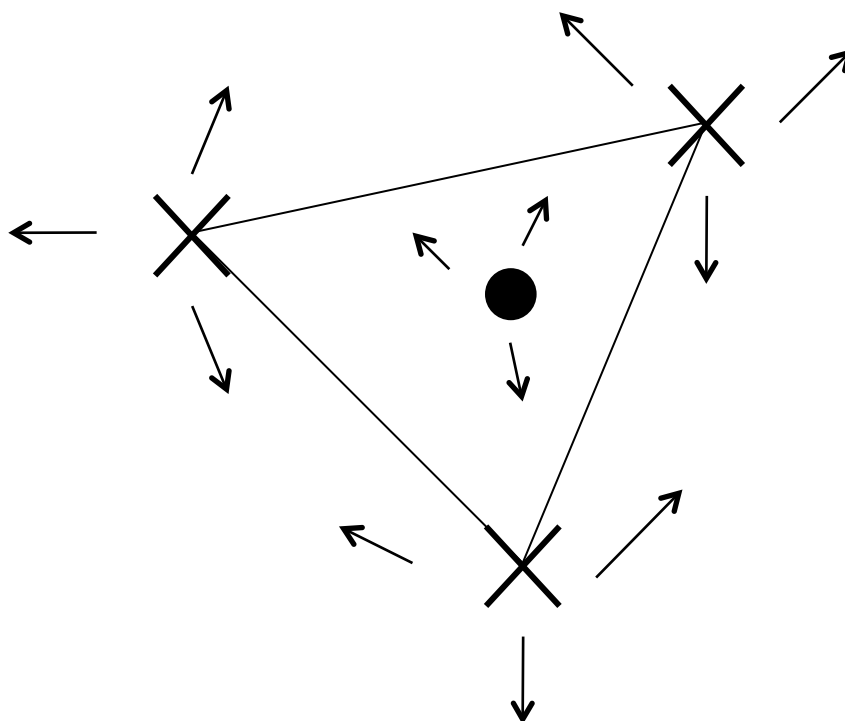


Figure 5 - Dynamic version of above model (arrows characterize possible shiftings of the books' cognitive representations and therefore of the prototype).

In sum, Schema Theory and Prototype Theory can contribute, as we saw, to a more complete view of literary genres. The results of this union are summarized as follows:

1. Genres are the literary correlates of schemata (or categories). In that sense, they are cognitive entities that we (readers) create and constantly modify.
2. Genres are radial cognitive structures. In a given genre, some texts will be more prototypical than others. There is a degree of membership. How this structural process operates depends on the individual as well as on the texts themselves.
3. Genres are dynamic, even if we are looking at historical genres. They evolve because we evolve. That is the reason why new eras

bring new critical tools that help us look at the body of texts from different perspectives (e.g., Feminism, Marxism).

4. Genres are individual, for no two people can claim to have had the exact same literary experience, and no two people can have the exact same mindset or neural organization.

A corollary of the last two implications is that genres are therefore fuzzy.

Genre Formation and the Novela Dialogada

In his article “Prototypes of Genre in Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares*,” Howard Mancing drew from the research on categorization to offer a new taxonomy of the Spanish picaresque novel and proposed that:

the literary genre we call the picaresque novel be considered as having a theoretical prototype and a radial structure. Works such as *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* would be very close to the bulls-eye prototype, with *La pícara Justina* and *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* further from the center, and *El diálogo del capón* and *Periquillo el de las gallineras* even further out, while *El diablo cojuelo* and *El criticón* are off my version of the map [see figure 6]. (133)

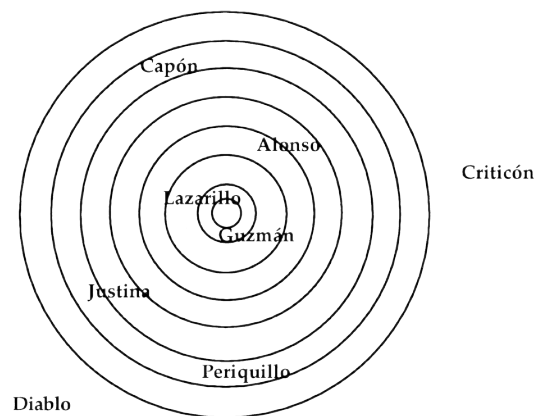


Figure 6 – Picaresque prototype (Mancing).

This taxonomy shifted the focus from the genre's boundaries—boundaries to which literary scholars had been paying more heed to until then—to its internal structure (i.e., a radial structure organized around a prototype). In a broader sense, Mancing's cognitive exploration of the picaresque novel (and of Cervantes's *novelas ejemplares*, later on in the article) forced a reconsideration of the literary genre concept itself:

A theory of categorization based on the tenets of modern cognitive science illustrates two of the main points made consistently within that orientation: 1) all knowledge is knowledge to someone, and 2) a human knower is always situated within a specific historical and cultural context. (132; emphasis in text)

The *novela dialogada* is another early modern literary genre¹⁰ that has proved to be problematic regarding its classification. The crux of the issue stems from the fact that the works that belong to it could be perceived as novels as well as dramas. Therefore, the Spanish scholarship has alternately classified the *novela dialogada* as belonging to either the novelistic or the dramatic traditions.¹¹ This disagreement has been even more patent with regard to *La Celestina*, the work that inaugurated the genre in 1499. For some scholars, *La Celestina* is a drama, because, among other arguments, there is no narrator (only dialogues) and the discourse is typically theatrical (e.g., presence of asides), while for others it is a novel because, among other arguments, it is influenced by the sentimental romance (a more prototypical novelistic genre) and it is too long to be staged (16 to 22 acts depending on the edition).¹² Another illustration of the ambivalence that the genre generates is the many different labels that have been used by Hispanists to refer to this body of texts: “*novela dialogada*” (e.g., Antonio García Berrio and Javier Huerta Calvo), “*novela dramática*” (e.g., Leandro Fernández de Moratín, Jorge Puebla Ortega), “*prosa dialógica*” (e.g., Antonio Hurtado Torres), “*comedia humanística española*” (e.g., María Rosa Lida de Malkiel; Michael E. Gerli; José Luis Canet Vallés, *De la comedia*), “*obras celestinescas*” (e.g., Pierre Heugas; Keith Whinnom, “El género”), “*comedias celestinescas*” (e.g., Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego), “*tragicomedia española*” (e.g., James Parr), among others.

I must note here that the use, in this essay, of the label *novela dialogada* does not denote any preconceived notion as to its generic filiation. My decision lies in the fact that, among all the labels mentioned above, the *novela dialogada* seems to be the one that has more currency today among

scholars. In addition, one cannot help but also remark that a taxonomy decision (choosing one of the labels above) is not an impartial process and has ramifications in terms of the status of its chief member: *La Celestina*. Indeed, the novel is a modern phenomenon and literary criticism has been for some time on a quest to find its roots, Ian P. Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* being a case in point.¹³ Inscribing *La Celestina* in the genealogy of the novel is a tempting posture for any critic, especially in view of the almost accepted fact that *Don Quixote* is the first modern novel. If Cervantes's opus magnum marks the beginning of the novel, it is eminently logical to be looking for its progenitor(s). The most obvious place to look is in the Spanish strand and *La Celestina* constitutes therefore a perfect candidate. Additionally, in today's world it is undeniable that the novelistic genre enjoys a higher status compared to poetry or theater.¹⁴ Novelists are at the forefront of cultural news; some can even be considered "pop stars." The recent successes of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series or of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, just to name a few, attest to this fact. Furthermore, although *La Celestina* is perhaps the second most influential work in the literary history of Spanish letters, many early modern scholars have deplored its relative absence from the Western literary canon (see for example Roberto González Echevarría, Joseph T. Snow). In sum, if one wants to highlight *La Celestina*'s literary genius and restore its rightful place in the panorama of Spanish and European literature, its novelistic qualities will naturally be brought to the fore—while for its dramatic side the reverse operation will likely take place—and part of this project, accordingly, can be achieved by picking a name for the genre.¹⁵

Regarding the complexity of placing the novela dialogada on the literary map, the model I propose offers a way to disentangle this situation. Viewing literary genres as radial categories (i.e., viewing the members of the novela dialogada as "more or less" belonging to the genre, rather than "either/or" belonging, and considering the novela dialogada as "more or less" a play and "more or less" a novel, rather than as "either" a play "or" a novel) can indeed shed some light on this conundrum. As a result, I propose that the novela dialogada be located on the periphery of both the novelistic and the dramatic generic "radial" map (see figure 7), for the novela dialogada is clearly not a prototypical novel or play.

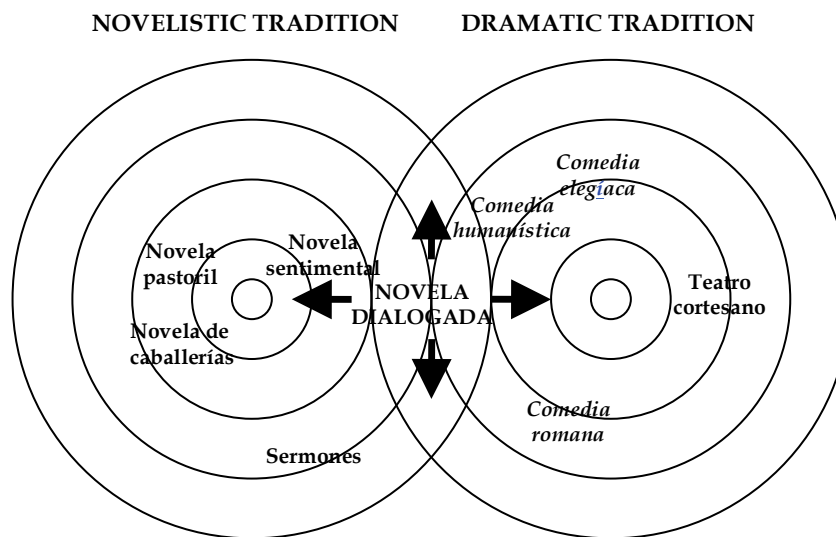


Figure 7 – Novela dialogada situated between two traditions

This diagram represents a non-exhaustive genre map of the literary spectrum around the turn of the fifteenth century (circa 1450-1550). Not all the genres of the epoch are included but the closest literary filiations to *La Celestina* and the novela dialogada are, except for the Arcipreste de Hita's *Libro de buen amor* owing to the fact that it was published in the fourteenth century.

On the theatrical side of the diagram, the comedia humanística, being as many scholars have shown (e.g., Lida de Malkiel; Whinnom;¹⁶ Huerta Calvo;¹⁷ Canet Vallés, "Introduction"; among others) the closest precursor to *La Celestina*, is therefore placed very close to the novela dialogada. It is at the same time a relatively prototypical theatrical genre, hence its placement rather close to the bull's eye. Both the comedia romana and the comedia elegiaca have also been recognized by the *Celestina* scholarship as close antecedents of the book (e.g., Lida de Malkiel) and were consequently placed on the left side. The teatro cortesano is a denomination proposed by Huerta Calvo which includes playwrights at the turn of the fifteenth century, such as Juan del Encina, Lucas Fernández, Torres Naharro, and Gil Vicente.¹⁸ The plays produced by these dramatists overall represent more

prototypical forms of theater, hence the placement of the teatro cortesano close to the bull's eye, but not on the left side of the diagram since they did not directly influenced or were influenced by *La Celestina* and the novela dialogada as a whole.

On the novelistic side, the genre whose indelible mark on *La Celestina* and the novela dialogada has been noted by many scholars (e.g., Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo; Dorothy S. Severin, "Is *La Celestina*," *Tragicomedy*; Ángel Gómez Moreno¹⁹) is the novela sentimental. This fifteenth-century genre can also be considered prototypical of the novelistic tradition and is therefore placed close to the bull's eye and to the novela dialogada. The sermones²⁰ genre is placed further from the center as it doesn't constitute a standard novelistic form. The influence of the *Corbacho* (1438) on *La Celestina*, though not as apparent as that of the novela sentimental, has been acknowledged by several scholars (e.g., Menéndez y Pelayo, Joaquín González Muela) and therefore led me to place the sermones genre somewhat close to the novela dialogada on the diagram. Finally, both the novela pastoril and the novela de caballerías can be viewed as prototypical novelistic genres and should therefore be close to the center. However, because of the weak link that exists between these two genres and the novela dialogada, they were placed to the left of the center.

Conclusion: A Perspectivistic View of the Novela Dialogada and Literary Genres

From the discussion of the novela dialogada above, it appears that no clear-cut and definite decision regarding its generic filiation can be made. If the literary critic chooses to take sides, it is because s/he will naturally lean towards one perspective or another. To illustrate the dual nature of the novela dialogada as well as to understand the ease with which one can switch from one perspective to the other,²¹ I would like to offer a visual metaphor, an optical illusion that has drawn the attention of many psychologists in the field of perception. It can provide a good insight into the mechanics of the perception of the novela dialogada's generic filiation and into how one can so easily perceive the genre as falling under the sphere of influence of the drama and the novel.



Figure 8 – Rubin's vase²²

Rubin's vase is a reversible and ambiguous/bistable figure. It was designed in 1915 by a Danish psychologist Edgar Rubin. This figure-ground distinction heavily influenced Gestalt psychologists. In the case of the novela dialogada, depending on the features that the reader/scholar foregrounds or privileges, s/he will perceive the genre as either a drama or a novel. This illustrates the ambiguous and amorphous nature of genre and the difficulty of the determination of its filiation. The final generic "decision," so to speak, is inherently individual and time-dependent. It depends on our worldviews, mindset, personality, and expertise (or experience with the genre). All of these elements evolve with time. Some, like our personality, may not be altered or modified much over time, but they will nonetheless shift. Events in life, and time itself, make us change how we see things and who are. For that reason, some "perspectivism" on genre classification is inescapable.

This perspectivism works at all levels of the generic hierarchy. It also operates on the perceptions of the novelistic and dramatic traditions. Hence, arrows are to be placed around the prototype (i.e., the bull's eye) of each tradition (see figure below) since these also evolve with time for the same reasons explained above.

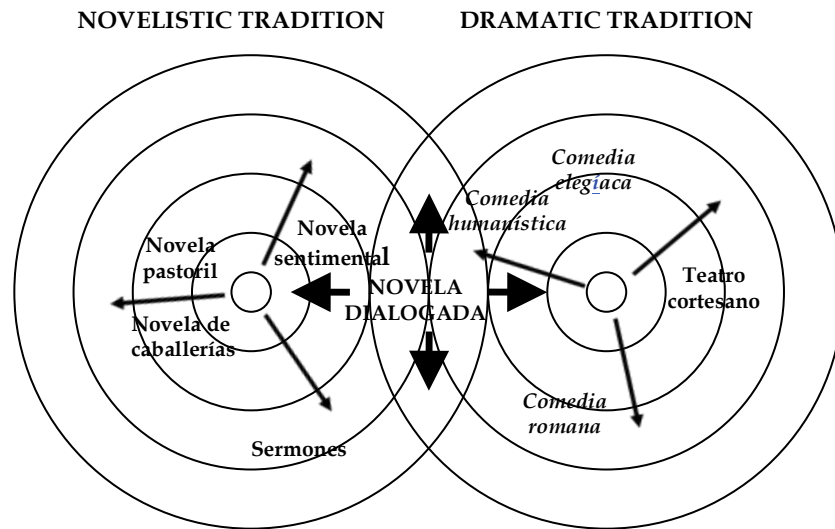


Figure 9 – The concepts of a novel and a drama can evolve as well

Our conceptualizations of a novel or a drama may seem immutable, but this presupposition need not be true however. The literary triad (Prose, Theater, and Poetry), which is the basis of how we perceive and classify the literary world, could be “supplanted” by another that would completely change our literary map. Such a major overhaul of the perception of the literary world to some extent already took place. For instance, from the Antiquity to modern times, we went from a triadic division of the body of literary texts in terms of “lyric, epic, and drama” to “prose, theater, and poetry” nowadays.²³ While the former triad was mainly based on the type of rhetorical expression of the text, the latter classifies along format-based lines. Going forward we don’t know on what properties the fictional world will be delineated. This delineation of literary kinds could well emerge along medium-based lines (i.e., paper, podcast, spectacles, etc.) or along the emotional quality of the work (i.e., the emotional response that the works afford) regardless of the medium, that is regardless of whether we read, watch, or listen to the story. We cannot know for sure what the future holds. However, we do know that there are no fixed ways to classify objects and hence artistic expressions. As we evolve and as the world evolves, other ways to classify it may arise. Culture and cognition co-evolve and are

indissociable. Being aware of how we cognitively perceive and modify categories can inform the study of genres. Nonetheless, it cannot replace the meticulous analysis of their evolution in a given cultural context. Thus, an approach that is both cultural and cognitive is the most efficient tool to account for the biological-cultural nature of genres and of artistic forms in general.

Epilogue

Returning to the treatment of *La Celestina*'s genre and, as an additional illustration of how we should view genres, I would like to revisit Stephen Gilman's proposal that Rojas's text be considered an "ageneric" work (194). Although his epithet does convey the sense that classifying literary works is a complex task in general and particularly so in the case of *La Celestina*, I would instead prefer the term "transgeneric." Indeed, Gilman's expression implies that *La Celestina* is "unclassifiable," that it cannot belong to any genre. If we think of a genre in cognitive terms—that is, as a category or schema, as a way to make sense of the information coming from the world which should be viewed not as discrete items but as patterns²⁴—we realize that genres/categories are inescapable. We must recognize patterns in the literary panorama in order to make sense of it, in much the way that our knowledge of the world is organized around cognitive categories and schemata. The term "transgeneric" therefore does not negate the existence of genres as Gilman's "ageneric" term does. Instead, it reinforces its literary filiation across genres.

Notes

¹ Most of the texts were published during the first half of the sixteenth century.

² On the connection between Prototype Theory and literary genres, see John M. Swales; Gerard Steen; Mancing; and Sinding, "After Definitions." For the link to Schema Theory, see Hoorn, "How," "Psychophysiology;" Sinding, "After Definitions;" and particularly Bartlett. For a study of literary genres combining Schema Theory and Conceptual Blending, see Sinding, "Sermon" and "Blending in a *baciuelmo*."

³ Although this paper focuses in part on Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina*, it will not deal with the author's decision to change, in response to the reception of contemporary readers and audiences, the generic filiation of his work from a 'comedy' (*Comedia de Calixto y Melibea* [Comedy of Calisto and Melibea]) when it first appeared in 1499 to a 'tragicomedy' (*Tragicomedia de Calixto y Melibea* [Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea]) in subsequent editions. These considerations fall outside of the scope of this paper as my discussion on genres, first, revolves around the novela dialogada, and not on individual members of the genre, and second because it takes place more on a cognitive-level rather than on a literary-historical level.

⁴ I must acknowledge here the work of Jean Piaget in the field of developmental psychology who in the 1960s in a fashion similar to Bartlett and future schema theorists distinguished two phenomena occurring during the interaction between the world and the perceiver: "Assimilation" and "Accommodation." In his view, when a perceiver interacts with the world she does not merely make a carbon copy of what she sees. There are unavoidable discrepancies between what is seen and the reality of what is seen. We therefore "assimilate" the world to make it fit into previous cognitive structures instead of simply mirroring it. Piaget, himself, puts it as follows: "The essential starting point here is the fact that no form of knowledge, not even perceptual knowledge, constitutes a simple copy of reality, because it always includes a process of assimilation to previous structures" (4).

In turn the assimilated information will further modify the cognitive structure that has facilitated the interaction with the world. The schema that allowed the information to be picked up from the environment will, as a

result, be modified by this “picked-up” information. The cognitive schema therefore accommodates itself after assimilation has taken place. Conversely accommodation will also impact the way we assimilate our environment. The cognitive adjustments undergone by means of the influx of assimilated information have modified to a greater or lesser degree our mindset, which, in turn, will influence the way we view the world. One process cannot exist without the other: “We shall apply the term “accommodation” (by analogy with “accommodates” in biology) to any modification produced on assimilation schemata by the influence of environment to which they are attached. But just as there is no assimilation without accommodation (whether previous or current), so in the same way there is no accommodation without assimilation; this is as much as to say that environment does not merely cause a series of prints or copies to be made which register themselves on the subject, but it also sets in motion active adjustments; which is why every time we speak of accommodation the phrase “accommodation of assimilation schemata” is to be understood” (8-9, n 3).

⁵ See for example Rumelhart and McClelland.

⁶ These characteristics broadly summarize the views of scholars across the many disciplines that use a schema theoretic approach.

⁷ See note 2.

⁸ The traditional view of categorization is derived from Plato and is generally referred to as the Classical Theory, although it has also been called Traditional Theory or Definition View. See Laurence and Margolis for a detailed review of this line of thought in dealing with concepts (8-14).

⁹ By “putative” I mean that my model is not based on empirical evidence although it is meant to represent a cognitive phenomenon.

¹⁰ The novela dialogada starts with the publication of *La Celestina* (Fernando de Rojas) in 1499 and, for most scholars, ends with *La Dorotea* (Lope de Vega) in 1632. Some of the major works in this genre, besides these two, include: *La comedia Tebaida* (Anon., 1521), *La lozana andaluza* (Francisco Delicado, 1528), and *La segunda comedia de Celestina* (Feliciano de Silva, 1534).

¹¹ For a summary of the various taxonomies emanating from the Spanish scholarship, see chapter 3 in Julien Simon.

¹² Without expanding too much on the generic controversy with regard to *La Celestina* itself, here are some of the arguments that have been brought to the fore on both sides of the debate. The scholars who prefer to view it as a novel argue for example that *La Celestina* influenced more the development of the Spanish novel than of Spanish theater. Heugas's "descendance directe" (the works that most closely imitated Rojas's *La Celestina*) represents an illustration of this influence. For instance, in the Editorial Playor's series called "Lectura crítica de la literatura española," Hurtado Torres's *Prosa de ficción en los siglos de oro* (book number 7 in the series) includes *La Celestina*'s descendance directe while book number 4, Huerta Calvo's *El teatro medieval y renacentista*, does not although it discusses *La Celestina*. Other scholars, such as Severin, have emphasized *La Celestina*'s realism as a critical element which, coupled with its ironic, parodic, and satiric discourse, prefigures the world of the picaresque and *Don Quixote*, hence of the novel (see Severin, "Is *La Celestina*," *Tragicomedy*). On the dramatic side, scholars have argued that the issue of "non-representability" due to its length is anachronistic in light of the fact that the humanistic comedy, the genre which most heavily influenced *La Celestina* and on which it is based, was meant to be "read" in university circles and therefore constituted a performance in front of an audience (see for example Gómez Moreno, 114-115). Furthermore, many scholars have noted, besides the abovementioned humanistic comedy, the influence of other theatrical genres in *La Celestina*: the elegiac comedy and the Roman comedy (see for example Lida de Malkiel's *Originalidad artística de La Celestina*, especially pgs. 29-50). In sum, the novelistic side has tended to emphasize the impact of *La Celestina* on the development of Spanish literature, which allegedly has been more on the novel than on theater, while the dramatic side has looked at *La Celestina* in its literary context as well as its sources which are mainly, though not entirely (e.g., the sentimental romance), emanating from the dramatic tradition.

¹³ Mikhail Bakhtin is another of the major theorists of the novelistic genre and his four essays on the topic published in *The Dialogic Imagination* have been highly influential. Other important scholars in this line of study include, among others, Georg Lukács, José Ortega y Gasset, or Michael McKeon.

¹⁴ In 2002, when the Norwegian Book Club asked a group of a hundred writers from over fifty different countries to pick the best books ever written, they produced a list of hundred works atop which sat *Don Quixote*. More than half the books were novels. Works of poetry, largely from the pre-modern era, comprised between one eighth and one seventh of the works and plays amounted to a little over one of tenth of the books. If we look at the works written during the twentieth century only, which consisted of forty-five books, the proportions overwhelmingly favor the novelistic genre; over eighty percent of the works were novels, while it is also noteworthy to point out that not a single play was represented (see “The Top 100 Books”).

¹⁵ In that sense, if the term “novela dialogada” has been privileged over the “novela dramática” (these two terms are the ones that most clearly align themselves with the genesis of the novel), it could be due to the fact that the former still emphasizes the theatrical legacy of the genre while the latter less so. Plus, the fact that “novela dialogada” is the term used to refer to Benito Pérez Galdós’s trilogy, that is, *Realidad* (1889) y *La loca de la casa* (1892) and *El abuelo* (1997), might have played a role too.

¹⁶ “There is really no possible doubt that the shape of *Celestina* owes everything to humanistic comedy” (Whinnom, “The Form,” 135). See also section called “Humanistic Comedy,” 135-41.

¹⁷ p. 27.

¹⁸ See pp. 30-40 in *El teatro medieval y renacentista*. The full title of this group of playwrights is: “El teatro cortesano en la encrucijada medieval-renacentista.”

¹⁹ Gómez Moreno, in spite of being a proponent of classifying *La Celestina* as a medieval drama acknowledged that: “Porque el segundo modelo, tras la comedia humanística, es el relato sentimental en general y la *Cárcel de amor* en particular; gracias a este género se justifican el final trágico (inaudito en una obra que tiene como patrón la comedia humanística) y muchos de los rasgos característicos de los personajes (así el propio Calisto, que es parodia de Leriano, como ha recordado Severin en reiteradas ocasiones)” (115).

²⁰ See Joaquín Rubio Tovar’s classification, 36-37.

²¹ A case in point would be Menéndez y Pelayo's insistence that *La Celestina* be considered a drama although he included this work in his *Orígenes de la novela* [Origins of the Novel].

²² For copyrights information about this picture, please follow this link: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>.

²³ In Spain in the fifteenth century, the Classical triad could be converted into a tetrad with the inclusion of the didactic. Juan Luis Alborg's map of Spanish literature in this century more or less follows this tetradic division. Under the section title called "Siglo XV," there are four sub-sections called: "La lírica en el siglo XV," "La épica popular: El romancero," "La didáctica, la novela y la historia," and "El teatro en el siglo XV."

²⁴ The brain cannot possibly "memorize" or "store" what it perceives as individual bits of information instead it recognizes patterns of information, which is a much more economical way to make sense of the environment.

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