

# Serenade in I-Major

## Autofictional Rule and Media in Justo Navarro's *Finalmusik*

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**ABSTRACT:** Ausgehend von Justo Navarros Auseinandersetzung mit der Übersetzung und seinem Vorwort zu Manuel Albercas Studie zur Autofiktion schlägt dieser Artikel eine autofiktionale Lesart von Navarros Werk *Finalmusik* (2007) vor. Dabei erweist sich nicht nur, dass dieses Werk in jenem 'Niemandland' zwischen autobiographischen und romanesken Modi literarischer Produktion und Rezeption situiert werden sollte, in dem auch Alberca das autofiktionale Schreiben lokalisiert, sondern dass Navarro in *Finalmusik* gleichzeitig mit ironischer Distanz den Zusammenhang zwischen der Autofiktion und der Welt des Medialen und neoliberalistischen Subjektentwürfen herstellt und reflektiert. Insofern ist das Werk als hedonistischer 'Abgesang' auf eine Epoche konzipiert.

**SCHLAGWORTE:** Autofiktion; Autobiographie; Postmoderne; Übersetzung; Neoliberalismus

**KEYWORDS:** autofiction; autobiography; postmodernism; translation; neoliberalism

### 1 Translation and Impersonation

The contemporary poet, novelist, and journalist Justo Navarro is also known as a translator. He translated works by T.S. Elliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald as well as Paul Auster's autobiographical work, *The Red Notebook*, into Spanish.<sup>1</sup> His essay, "El cazador de las coincidencias" prefaced *The Red Notebook* and describes chance as an important element of Auster's writing. It also discusses Auster's early translation work.

Ten years after this essay, Navarro published *Finalmusik*. *Finalmusik* centers around a translator who is the autodiegetic narrator and hero of the work and who shares the author's initials, J.N.<sup>2</sup> In the novel, in 2004 the narrator translates the Italian author Carlo Trenti's crime fiction *Giulla Neve*. Trenti is obviously Navarro's fictitious and well-paid alter-ego, a successful man

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Auster, *Cuaderno rojo*, trans. by Justo Navarro [first published in 1994], in Paul Auster, *Experimentos con la verdad* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2009), 9–39.

<sup>2</sup> Justo Navarro, *Finalmusik* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2007), 232–3.

(“Hombre-Éxito”) who, like the narrator, is a reflection of the relationship between authorship and translation which was the concern of Navarro’s essay about Paul Auster. This passage from *Finalmusik* explains it further:

No puedo pensar directamente las cosas, todo me lo cubre un velo de palabras, otros pasos, Joyce o quien sea, todos los tiempos al mismo tiempo, una infinita novela en varias lenguas a la vez. Es lo que hace el peregrino, dar pasos sobre los pasos de otros. Es como traducir, como hacer burla, repetir lo que otro ha dicho, scimmiettare, dicen aquí, hacer el simio, imitar como un mono a otro que ya pasó antes por aquí.<sup>4</sup>

[I can’t think of things directly, everything is covered by a fog of words, by the steps from others, Joyce or whoever, at any time or at the same time, it’s a never-ending novel in every language at once. The pilgrim wanders in the steps of others. It’s like translation, it’s mocking, a repetition of something someone else said, scimmiettare, as they say here, like monkeys, like an imitating monkey, imitating someone who has already been there. (my translations, FE)].

Marcos Eymar, one of the few literary critics having worked on *Finalmusik*, noticed that the tense relationship between the translator and Trenti, the author whose work he translates, is reflected in his family and sentimental relationships. His father and his young stepmother refuse to let him return to his home in Granada, as is shown through a series of telephone calls at the beginning of *Finalmusik*. This, however, makes his stay in Rome between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2004<sup>5</sup> possible. A quite similarly conflicted triangle binds the narrator with his former teacher, the semiotics professor and Dante specialist Stefania Rossi-Quarantotti, with whom he had an affair, and her husband, the bank director Franco Mazotti, whom he meets in Rome. His sexual relationship with the maid Francesca Olmi, who is married to Fulvio, a former Olympic boxing champion, also proves triangular. Projected in parallel is, as Eymar states, the conflicted and yet passionate relationship between the author Justo Navarro on the one hand, and the character of the translator who includes Navarro’s autobiographical clues into his narration on the other hand, and finally the character of Trenti. Such a constellation creates

<sup>3</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 59.

<sup>4</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 207.

<sup>5</sup> Marcos Eymar Benedicto, “Los bellos infieles: el deseo y la ficcionalización de la traducción en la narrativa española contemporánea”, *Cincinnati Romance Review* 38 (2014): 114–30, here 120. Eymar goes as far as to state that the fidelity of the author demands the abandonment of the translator’s own identity: “La fidelidad de la que hace gala el personaje-traductor sólo es posible a costa de renunciar a cualquier forma de identidad propia.”

the reflection space that autofictional writing provides, as the following passage shows:

Toda mi vida es esta multiplicación de historias oídas, leídas, traducidas, inventadas. Mi sentido de la irrealidad es mucho mayor que mi sentido de la realidad.<sup>6</sup>

[My whole life is centered around the multiplicity of stories being heard, read, translated, invented. My sense of unreality is stronger than my sense of reality].

The shadowy existence of the narrator's ego, who lives in quotations and in the consciousness of its own unreal world, and who provides an image of authorship that is determined by literary models and imitation, is a topos of Spanish literature.<sup>7</sup> However, the literary topos in *Finalmusik* is modeled into the situation of enunciation of the whole text whose aim is to tell an aimless transitory life ("vida transitoria"<sup>8</sup>) of its narrator who understands that his translating results from estrangement ("extrañamiento") that can be attributed to his father's refusal to let him come to his home.<sup>9</sup> Just as the narrative and experiential ego of the translator tries to grasp existence as a form of unfinished semiosis, Rome, like all other stations in his life, is only seen as a stopover in the never-ending global pilgrimage in the footsteps of others.<sup>10</sup> In figuring a borrowed existence in intertextual terms, he serves as a projection of authorship, as Justo Navarro translated texts from Italian himself,<sup>11</sup> just like James Joyce: "También fue Joyce traductor en Roma."<sup>12</sup> [Joyce was also a translator in Rome.] All of this is reminiscent of Navarro's 1994 essay about Paul Auster, which therefore sheds light on the publishing of *Finalmusik* ten years later:

<sup>6</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 229.

<sup>7</sup> As an example, cf. Tobias Berneiser, "Yo soy un enfermo de literatura: Fiktion, Obsession und quijoteske Subjektconstitution in Enrique Vila-Matas", in *Literatur als Obsession. quijoteske Rezeptionsweisen und wahnhaft gelebte Literatur zwischen Früher Neuzeit und Gegenwart* (Münster: LIT, will be published in 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 171.

<sup>9</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 43: "Lo más interesante de mi vida es consecuencia de mi extrañamiento, y estoy hablando de mi profesión de traductor del inglés, el italiano, y, muy ocasionalmente, el francés, el catalá y el alemán [...]."

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 226.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Susanna Tamaro, *Respóndeme*, trans. Justo Navarro (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 206.

El traductor se convierte en una sombra, fantasma del hombre que inventó las palabras que ahora inventa el traductor. La traducción es un caso de suplantación de identidad: por decirlo con una palabra inglesa, es un caso de *impersonation*. *Impersonation* significa suplantación, el acto de hacerse pasar por otro.<sup>13</sup>

[The translator becomes the shadow, the ghost of the man who invented the words that the translator is now inventing. Translation is a case of identity transfer: to put it in English, it is a case of impersonation (in original English – FE). Impersonation means taking over identity, the process of impersonating someone else.]

I'll come back to the translator as an *impersonator* of the author later in my article. But first I will discuss a few historical, contextual and methodological points related to *Finalmusik*, its place in Justo Navarro's complete works, and to the theory of autofiction and its repercussion in *Finalmusik*.

## 2 Towards the No Man's Land of Autofictional Writing

Seen from a greater distance, *Finalmusik* being set in Rome displaces the center in Justo Navarro's complete works. This center is Granada and the historical period called Posguerra, i.e. Franquist Spain after the end of the Spanish civil war. In reference to Posguerra, Navarro wrote *La casa del padre* (1994) about the return of a Falangist soldier to his native Granada after the 1942 Russian campaign.<sup>14</sup> Not returning to the 'House of the Father' in *Finalmusik* not only points out the generational conflict between the father and the son,<sup>15</sup> who is the narrator of the text, but also stands for the author's departure from the national culture of remembrance.<sup>16</sup> Justo Navarro is no longer concerned with literarily undermining the so called 'Pact of Forgetting', which was in ef-

<sup>13</sup> Justo Navarro, "El cazador de coincidencias" [first published in 1994], reprinted in *Homenaje a Paul Auster*, ed. by Jorge Herralde (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2007), 9–21, here 17.

<sup>14</sup> See Justo Navarro, *La casa del padre* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Ana Casas, "Pensar lo real desde la autoficción", *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 1 (2018), accessed April 12, 2018, <https://cuadernoshispanoamericanos.com/pensar-lo-real-desde-la-autoficcion/2/>.

<sup>16</sup> In her reading of the novel, F. Schouten insists on the "uncanny Doppelgänger-motif" that haunts *La casa del padre*; cf. Fiona Schouten, "Labyrinth without walls: the uncanny and the gothic modes as forms of haunting in *La casa del padre* by Justo Navarro", *Mester* 36,1 (2007): 179–97, here 183. A Freudian lecture could indeed prove useful to analyze the motif of doubling in the quite similarly structured *Finalmusik*.

fect after the democratic *Transición* and until the 1990s.<sup>17</sup> Abandoning Granada and Spain in 2004, he opens up a European, or even a global perspective with Italy at its center. In 2011 *El espía* followed up *Finalmusik*. In this factual fiction Navarro reconstructs the manifold entanglements between Ezra Pound, the author of *Pisan Cantos*, and Mussolini's followers of Italian fascism.<sup>18</sup>

*Finalmusik* was Navarro's only autofictional text, but however distant it is from conventional types of commemorative literature it includes memories of fascism as well, although in a differently mediated form. Carlo Trenti's trilogy that the narrator is about to translate into Spanish is set at the beginning of the Russian campaign of Mussolini's troops in 1941 and therefore builds an intratextual bridge to Navarro's long-standing interest in this topic. But Trenti's marketing of the subject of fascism in the genre of crime fiction, which is opportune in cultural-industrial terms, serves as a reflection of Navarro's own literary practice.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, *Finalmusik* may well emphasize the common history of European fascism in transgressing the history of the Spanish *falange*, but it also points to the ambivalent nature of the commercial aspects of commemorative literature.

In 2007 Manuel Alberca published his study on autofictional literature, *-El pacto ambiguo. De la novela autobiográfica a la autoficción*. In his methodological section, to which I confine myself, Alberca agrees with Philippe Lejeune on

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<sup>17</sup> On this Pact for forgetting, see for example Walther Bernecker, "Demokratisierung und Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung in Spanien", in *Erinnern und Erzählen: der spanische Bürgerkrieg in der deutschen und spanischen Literatur und in den Bildmedien*, ed. by Bettina Bannasch and Christiane Holm (Tübingen: Narr, 2005), 9–23; Elisabeth Suntrup-Andresen, *Hacer memoria: der Bürgerkrieg in der Literatur der Nachgeborenen. Typologie und Analyse spanischer Gegenwartssromane von den 1980er Jahren bis heute* (München: Martin Meidenbauer, 2008), esp. 68–87; Claudia Jünke, *Erinnerung – Mythos – Medialität: der Spanische Bürgerkrieg im aktuellen Roman und Spielfilm in Spanien* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2012), esp. 39–47; Anne Kathrin Reichold, *Arbeit an der Erinnerung: die Bewältigung der Vergangenheit in der deutschen und spanischen Literatur der Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), esp. 72–93. It is in this historical moment at the beginning of the new millennium that the collective memory of the Spanish civil war was reinstated and when J. Navarro decided to open up the national perspective on Franco's legacy.

<sup>18</sup> See Justo Navarro, *El espía* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2011).

<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that Justo Navarro, in an interview, argued against literary best sellers not because they were part of the cultural industry or because of their stylistic banality, but because of their moral clichés ("Lo peor de los *best sellers* [...] son sus clichés morales"); Justo Navarro, "No entender la lógica de los 'best sellers' nos mueve a decir que son mala literatura. La novela como fin de fiesta" (interview with Maria Luisa Blanco), *El País*, 19 May 2007.

at least two aspects of autofiction.<sup>20</sup> For one, they agree on the assumption of the double pact between the author and the reader. Alberca refers to this as the “*pacto ambiguo*” or the ambiguous pact that combines both autobiographical and novelistic modes and expectations. Just like Lejeune, Alberca does not associate far-reaching cognitive, linguistic or anthropological claims with autofiction. Autofiction, for him, is a theoretically complex and contradictory, a “*tierra de nadie entre el pacto autobiográfico y el novelesco*” or a no man’s land between autobiographical and fictional contracts,<sup>21</sup> in which antinomical terms coincide. For Alberca, autofiction characterizes heterogenous forms of a ludic literary practice that serve as an alternative, experimental form of autobiography. Moreover, he believes that the ambiguous expectations of autofictional texts are brought about paratextually.<sup>22</sup>

These observations offer clues to understand *Finalmusik*. The work’s blurb first mentions “el narrador de la espléndida novela *Finalmusik*” [the narrator of the splendid novel *Finalmusik*],<sup>23</sup> which seems to exclude an autobiographical reading of the work. Nevertheless, this unambiguous expectation is soon disproved:

Todos los personajes, lugares e instituciones, reales o de ficción, sólo aparecen en esta memoria como personajes, lugares e instituciones de la imaginación.<sup>24</sup>  
[All people, places, institutions, real or fictitious, [...] are figures, places, and institutions of fantasy.]

This statement emphasizes the fictional aspects of the narrative, whose similarity with real persons, places and institutions is also described as accidental

<sup>20</sup> For his own reconstruction of Lejeune’s position and further discussions on autofictional theory, see Manuel Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo: de la novela autobiográfica a la autoficción. Prólogo de Justo Navarro* (Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, 2007), here 19–58 and 64–78.

<sup>21</sup> Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 78–80. On this definition of autofiction, though without classifying it as a type of autobiography, see Vera Toro, “Soy simultáneo”. El concepto poético de la autoficción en la narrativa hispánica (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2017), 16–57, and Christina Schäfer, “Die Autofiktion zwischen Fakt und Fiktion”, in *Im Zeichen der Fiktion: Aspekte fiktionaler Rede aus historischer und systematischer Sicht*, ed. by Irina O. Rajewsky and Ulrike Schneider (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 299–323.

<sup>23</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, blurb.

<sup>24</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, blurb and 156.

or unintentional through the well-known cinematic credits.<sup>25</sup> Basically, however, it relies on ambiguity. The reader is invoked to recognize how reality and fiction in people, places and institutions are mixed together in a fictional work, and to recognize which biographical elements of the “memoria” refer to reality and which to imagination. The term “memoria” highlights the ambivalent status of the following text and introduces both a historical and a fictional narration. Alberca, who places the derealization of the historical narrative at the center of his short interpretation of *Finalmusik*,<sup>26</sup> misses the point of the text. Navarro expects the reader to fluctuate between different readings of *Finalmusik*, in order to discern their differences and ambiguities. He seems to have a similar perspective on autofiction as the one Frank Zipfel suggests when he states: “Autofiction can be interpreted as an attempt to destabilize the border between fictional homodiegetic and factual autobiographical narration.”<sup>27</sup>

If one reads *Finalmusik* as an autofiction, one must recognize that Justo Navarro gave the most important of the paratexts in the form of the short preface to Alberca’s 2007 autofiction study. Although the preface never explicitly attributes autofiction to *Finalmusik*, it can still be read as a metaliterary commentary on the work published three years earlier from the autofiction perspective:

Nos contamos historias imaginadas para entender mejor lo real, para verlo mejor desde el cruce entre lo verdadero y lo fingido, lo dado y lo supuesto. [...] Creo que escribir ficción exige de sus autores un compromiso especial con la verdad, aunque otras literaturas, como la autobiografía, las memorias o la historia, parezcan tener la exclusiva de la fidelidad a los hechos del mundo.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In his article on contemporary literary authors’ work as columnists, B. Kenson notices a similar approach in Justo Navarro’s fictional biography of the Catalan writer Gabriel Ferrater, published as F. (2003). The similarity between F. and *Finalmusik* highlights the ambiguous character use of both the biographical and the autobiographical genre. Cf. Ben Kenson, “Fronteras entre ficción y dicción: Rosa Regás, Enrique Vila-Matas, Justo Navarro y Javier Cercas”, in *El columnismo de escritores españoles (1975–2005)*, ed. by Alexis Grohmann and Maarten Steenmeijer (Madrid: Verbum, 2006), 97–112, esp. 105–9.

<sup>26</sup> For his interpretation of *Finalmusik*, see Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 191–3.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Zipfel, *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität: Analysen zur Fiktion in der Literatur und zum Fiktionsbegriff in der Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2001), here 142 (my translation). The author has presented a detailed discussion on the topic in Frank Zipfel, “Autofiktion: zwischen den Grenzen von Faktualität, Fiktionalität und Literarität?”, in *Grenzen der Literatur: zu Begriff und Phänomen des Literarischen*, ed. by Simone Winko et al. (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 285–314.

<sup>28</sup> Justo Navarro, “Prólogo”, in Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 15–7, here 15.

[We tell ourselves imagined stories to understand reality better, to see it better at the crossroads between truth and fiction, the given and the suspected ... I believe that writing fiction requires a special commitment to the truth from the author, even if other literary forms, such as autobiography, memoirs or historiography seem to have an exclusive right to the fidelity of facts.]

Navarro therefore recognizes that fictional texts have a significant relationship to the real and a special respect for reality. Fiction holds the limits and boundaries of the imaginary in front of the reader's eyes. This reversal of the Platonic criticism of mimesis sees fiction as a higher form of truthfulness. Another statement about autofiction elucidates this further:

Yo diría que la autoficción, el nuevo gusto por presentar lo imaginario como real, o al revés, no es una apología de la falsificación, sino todo el contrario. Así como, según Coleridge, hay ficciones que logran “esa voluntaria y momentánea suspensión de la incredulidad que constituye la fe poética”, la autoficción nos llama a neutralizar nuestra capacidad de ser crédulos. La autoficción es una apelación de suspender nuestra tendencia a la credulidad. Nos recuerda valiente y alegremente que puede ser mentira la realidad que nos presentan los dueños, fabricantes y administradores de la realidad.<sup>29</sup>

[I would say that autofiction is the new version of presenting the imaginary as real, or the real as imaginary. It is not an apology for forgery, but the opposite. Just as Coleridge says, fictions that procure “these shadows of imagination that willingly suspend disbelief for the moment, they constitute poetic faith” and so autofiction calls us to neutralize our gullibility. Autofiction calls for the lifting of our tendency to be gullible. It bravely and joyfully reminds us that the reality managed by owners, workers, and administrators of reality can be a lie.]

Even if Isabelle Grell would be skeptical of such claims,<sup>30</sup> Coleridge's willing suspension of disbelief is educational in Navarro's autofictional text. With the ambiguous pact, autofiction asks readers to distinguish between true and false statements. Unlike Serge Doubrovsky, it is not about completely fictionalizing autobiographies<sup>31</sup>, and it has no therapeutic goal. A “link between self-

<sup>29</sup> Navarro, “Prólogo”, 16.

<sup>30</sup> See Isabelle Grell, *Lautofiction* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), 23–4.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Grell, *Lautofiction*, 14–6, and the contributions made by Cl. Gronemann to autofictional theory and to Doubrovsky's version in particular, as in Claudia Gronemann, “Autofiction’ und das Ich in der Signifikantenkette: zur literarischen Konstitution des autobiographischen Subjekts bei Serge Doubrovsky”, *Poetica* 31 (1999): 237–62.



therapy and rhetorical self-staging”<sup>32</sup> is of no importance. In fact, autofiction makes readers oscillate between conflicting expectations of fictionality and factuality, between recognizing the various qualities of statements as either one or the other, thus breaking down habits of perception and sharpening our perception of reality at the same time.

From this point of view, Navarro’s preface corresponds to this uncertainty in *Finalmusik*. In interviews, Navarro has insisted on the real historical background for the warlike state of emergency that Rome is under while Abu Haf al Masris’s brigades wait for the expiration of the ultimatum on Ferragosto.<sup>33</sup> These brigades carried out the attacks at Atocha in Madrid in 2004 that also threatened Rome and Navarro who was living there at the time. In a 2017 essay on the theory of fiction, Navarro referred to the newspaper clippings he collected during his stay in Rome in 2004 that were later used in *Finalmusik*:

Escribí Finalmusik apoyándome en los recortes de prensa que guardé en Roma en el verano de 2004.<sup>34</sup>

[In writing *Finalmusik* I used the newspaper clippings I collected during the summer of 2004.]

This press material, according to Navarro’s subsequent indications, is not only about the terrorist threat to Rome, but also about the execution of a wanted criminal, “*La Morte del Killer in Fuga*”,<sup>35</sup> that refers to an event that occurred in Rome at that time, and about a well-documented financial scandal that in *Finalmusik* involves Franco Mazotti.<sup>36</sup> Through these important narrative strands that structure the entire text, *Finalmusik*’s historical background can be reconstructed, although its verification, if one does not refer to the information offered by the author himself, requires considerable research. Similarly, the readers can imagine that the semiotic professor’s monograph about

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<sup>32</sup> Jutta Weiser, “Psychoanalyse und Autofiktion”, in *Literaturtheorie und sciences humaines: Frankreichs Beitrag zur Methodik der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. by Rainer Zaiser (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2008), 43–69, here 57. In her readings of Serge Doubrovky’s and Christine Angot’s autofictional texts, Weiser investigates the transmission of psychoanalytical knowledge into literary discourse.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Justo Navarro, “No entender la lógica de los ‘best sellers’ nos mueve a decir que son mala literatura: la novela como fin de fiesta” (interview with Maria Luisa Blanco), *El País*, 19 May 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Navarro, “¿Ficción? Todo es documento”, *Revista de Occidente* 434 (2017): 194–204, here 200.

<sup>35</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Navarro, “¿Ficción?”, 200.

the pseudo-Hebrew verse 67 of Dante's *Commedia's* 31<sup>st</sup> *canto*, for example, is backed by actual existing academic publications that can be consulted in a library catalogue.<sup>37</sup> But is the German-Polish clergyman Monsignor Wolff-Wapowski, "WW," who manages the Vatican's property where the narrator lives, anything more than just a fictitious figure? As in all the narrator's personal conversations and inner monologues, the clergyman cannot be authenticated in archives or authenticated at all. This contributes to the ambiguous status of the story that is reinforced by literary coincidences, like the "Caffe Boiardo" in Rome,<sup>38</sup> where the characters in *Finalmusik* cross paths. Even his name makes an explicit reference to Ludovico Ariosto, so that the characters not only move along the Via Boiardo, but through a system of literary references which are possibly without any external references. But in contrast, the novel's mention of Rome and Bologna, the historical situation of august 2004 and the narrator's identity as a translator suggest an (auto)biographical and thus referential reading. In this way, by offering two optional readings, a referential and a fictional reading, Navarro advises the readers of *Finalmusik* to reconsider the credibility of the text, just like his preface to Alberca's study suggests.

In the third and last part of my reading, I will discuss the relationship between *Finalmusik* and the current, critical review that Manuel Alberca threw into the autofiction debate.

### 3 Critical Autopoiesis: Taped Conversations and the New Proust

Manuel Alberca's study in 2007 speculated that autofiction would lose its position as the autobiographical vanguard ("*vanguardia autobiográfica*") and that it would establish itself in Spanish literature as a special form of autobiographical writing.<sup>39</sup> This expectation was revised in his follow-up study *La máscara o la vida* published in 2017. In this later study, he steps away from autofiction and towards a new phenomenon, "*nueva autobiografía*" [the new autobiography], which distinguishes itself by its programmatic anti-fictionality, as Al-

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 61. The verse in question reads in broken Hebrew: 'Raphel may amech zabi almi'. The mention of the possible fictive study Donne Demone with complete biographical indications ("Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., Milano, 1996"; Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 75) is interesting as well in this context.

<sup>38</sup> See Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 298–300.

berca calls it.<sup>40</sup> Inspired by Michel Foucault's late works, Alberca associates autobiographical writing with the rhetorical category of parrhesia. Instead of continuing to rely on ambivalent autofictions, attention must be paid to the authors who make a fearless speech of the truth, which implies a risk for the speaker. Alberca, in contrast, attributes autofiction to the period between 1968 and the year the economic crisis was triggered by the collapse of the Lehmann Brothers, 2008:

La autoficción simboliza, para bien y para mal, con bastante exactitud el espíritu de una época, el de las cuatro posmodernas décadas (del post-68 a 2007), que acaban con la crisis económica de 2008, cuyo hito inaugural lo puso la quiebra de Lehman&Brothers. Fueron tiempos marcados por un capitalismo globalizado y neoliberal que uniformizaba a los sujetos hasta convertirlos en una legión sin señas de identidad propias, al mismo tiempo que vendía la idea de que, con un suplemento de ficción, cualquiera podía diseñarse a la carta una nueva y neo-narcisista identidad.<sup>41</sup>

[Autofiction symbolizes, for better or for worse, the spirit of an epoch, that of the four postmodern decades (from the post-68s to 2007), which ended with the economic crisis of 2008 and came through the bankruptcy of the Lehmann Brothers. These times were marked by a globalized and neo-liberal capitalism that equalized subjects to a mass without any identity characteristics of their own, but also sold the idea that everyone could create a new and neo-narcissistic identity with the help of a little fiction.]

If one values identities as forms of cultural difference, one should subject the postmodern and narcissistic self-fashioning of autofiction and the debate about it to critical revision. Seemingly, they coincide with the neoliberal model of mobile, open, uniform, and economically exploitable self-design, which has been in crisis since 2008. This somewhat contrafactual link established between postmodernism and neoliberalism, a link that is highly indicative of contemporary 'radical realism' and its often polemical view of the period that preceded it, assumes a co-responsibility between the abandonment of identities during the 'postmodernist decades', neoliberal modes of capitalist exploitation and autofictional writing. In this way, Alberca, who can be con-

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Manuel Alberca, *La máscara o la vida: de la autoficción a la antificción* (Málaga: Editorial Pálido Fuego, 2017), here 305–38 (chapter: "De la autoficción a la antificción: el coraje de escribir la verdad"). Prior to this study, its last chapter was partly published as: Manuel Alberca, "De la autoficción a la antificción: una reflexión sobre la autobiografía española actual", in *El yo fabulado: nuevas aproximaciones críticas a la autoficción*, ed. by Ana Casas (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2014), 149–68.

<sup>41</sup> Alberca, *La máscara o la vida*, 307.

sidered the real protagonist of autofiction research in Spain, is tired of the discussions of 2017: “[...] me cansa ya la autoficción”.<sup>42</sup> He limits the productive contribution of autofictions to the literary history of having been a detour in the acceptance of autobiographical writing by authors, the public and literary studies, “un desvío pasajero de la autobiografía o una fase intermedia del camino de esta hacia su reconocimiento literario y su plenitud creativa.”<sup>43</sup>

As a first step this idea is quite illuminating in understanding Justo Navarro’s *Finalmusik*. The novel is structured by the ideas of multiple unbound and hedonistic ego avatars, whose similarities and differences to himself as a person Justo Navarro has staged rather nonchalantly. Nevertheless, as a second step, the polemic side of Alberca’s accusation is only incidental. This is essentially due to the fact that *Finalmusik* is one of the experimental novels (“*novelas de laboratorio*”<sup>44</sup>) that Justo Navarro generally associated with autofiction while writing the preface to Alberca’s 2007 study. Like other autofictions, it delivers a message from the author’s lab and shifts to an essayistic style. But this is precisely where its critical potential lies. Without her striking enunciatory selfconsciousness (“autoconciencia enunciativa”<sup>45</sup>), as Domingo Ródenas de Moya called it, she could not arouse interest in “realistic simulation[s]” on the reader’s side.<sup>46</sup> Navarro’s previously cited doubt about supposed certainties<sup>47</sup> that are made evident through his interest in John Searle’s intentionalist approach to fiction as pretension (which translates into ‘simulation’ in Spanish),<sup>48</sup> and the fact that he confronts his readers in *Finalmusik* with uncertain intentions supports that view.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Alberca, *La máscara o la vida*, 306.

<sup>43</sup> Alberca, *La máscara o la vida*, 315.

<sup>44</sup> Navarro, “Prólogo”, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Domingo Ródenas de Moya, “Reflexiones y verdades del yo en la novela española actual”, in *El yo fabulado: nuevas aproximaciones críticas a la autoficción*, ed. by Ana Casas (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2014), 169–90, here 177.

<sup>46</sup> Zipfel, *Fiktion, Fiktivität, Fiktionalität*, 143. For further details on the concept of simulation, see Casas, “Pensar lo real desde la autoficción” and Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 78–80.

<sup>47</sup> Navarro, “Prólogo”, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Justo Navarro, “El crítico es un narrador”, *Renacimiento* 13/14 (1996): 16–20, here 16: “[...] el objetivo de la ficción sería alterar nuestra relación con la realidad, modificar lo más intensamente posible nuestra percepción del mundo, desplazar nuestro punto de vista, romper las rutinas de la percepción.” See also Navarro, “¿Ficción?”, 194.

<sup>49</sup> On Navarro’s interest in John R. Searle’s seminal article “The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse” [published in *New Literary History* 6,2 (1975): 319–22], cf. Navarro, “¿Ficción?”, 195.

The narrator as *impersonator* is a form of restraint. This restraint offers, unlike how Alberca sees it, a timely critical approach that reaches deep into ideology. It can be best seen in the text with the problem of the proper name. Carlo Trenti is an author's pseudonym and literary war name ("nombre de guerra literario"), which was given to the insurance employee Federico Galatti.<sup>50</sup> The narrator of *Finalmusik* also goes under fake names. He reacts to a meeting with one of his former US-American acquaintances as follows:

Algo me impulsa a perderme bajo nombre falso en regiones del mundo donde nadie me conoce. He tenido muchos nombres en mi vida, me encuentro con viejos conocidos absolutamente desconocidos que me llaman con los extraños nombres que recibí en ciudades sucesivas o simultáneas, como si en cada sitio quisieran decirme quién soy de verdad, revelarme mi personalidad genuina y absoluta, Yust, Yast, Iostea, Hastou, Istu, Novaro, Nibaró, Nofeira, Nosferatu, o Fats, por un trompetista que murió joven y precisamente el año en que nació mi madre, 1950, e incluso hubo un entomólogo que veía mis iniciales en colores, J roja, N de un greyish-yellowish oatmeal color. Mis nombres sucesivos son como los recuerdos de amigos y amigas que guardo en mi habitación de Granada [...].<sup>51</sup>

[Something causes me to lose myself under a fake name in regions of the world where nobody knows me. I have had many names in my life, I have met completely unknown old acquaintances. I was given names in successive or simultaneous cities, as if every place wanted to say who I really am, to reveal to me my genuine and absolute personality, Yust, Yast, Iosea, Hastou, Istu, Novaro, Nibaró, Nofeira, Nosferatu, o Fats – after a trumpeter who died the year my mother was born, 1950 – and there was even an entomologist who saw my initials in color, J in red, N in a *greyish-yellowish oatmeal color* (in original English – FE). My list of my names is like the souvenirs of friends that I keep in my room in Granada.]

The characteristic homonymy between the proper names of the author, the narrator and protagonist, which has been discussed by most theorists of autobiography and autofiction,<sup>52</sup> was taken up in *Finalmusik*, but also denied. It is here, finally, that an important function of autofictional writing, already a tradition in Spain, comes to light: the possibility of camouflaging the writ-

<sup>50</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 87 and 89.

<sup>51</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 232–3.

<sup>52</sup> For a wider discussion, see for example Toro, "Soy simultáneo", 41–3; José María Pozuelo Yvancos, "Figuración del Yo' frente a Autoficción", in *Figuraciones del Yo en la narrativa: J. Marías y E. Vila-Matas* (Valladolid: Servicios de publicaciones e intercambio editorial, Universidad de Valladolid, 2010), 11–35, esp. 19–20.

ing ego while under threat from the state or quasi-state rule.<sup>53</sup> If autofiction wants to escape the “control society,” it must also break free from the magnetism of the proper name.<sup>54</sup> The work’s large repertoire of subversive practices such as decomposition, masking, exaggeration and parody, reversal and doubling,<sup>55</sup> is largely responsible for the deliberately staged and joyfully dissident game of hide-and-seek presented by the translator’s subject. The double pact of “biographical autofiction”<sup>56</sup> is not dissolved: “J.N.” refers to the author Justo Navarro as an acronym, but neither clearly nor unanimously. The narrating translator, unlike the successful Trenti or the semiotician “Madame Memory,”<sup>57</sup> does not give himself a name, or rather he has not given himself just any name. Thus, in one way, he always remains as the author’s de-restored other, and in another way, he is never himself. As a translator, the author of autofiction is characterized from the outset by the inauthentic and the imitative. The reference to Navarro’s essay about Paul Auster and the translator’s initial designation as an impersonator are now obvious. It becomes clear that authorship in *Finalmusik* is described through a system of impersonations. This applies to the author Justo Navarro who is impersonated by the narrator, who, in turn, is impersonated by the translator, an impersonator of someone else’s work.<sup>58</sup>

There is a religious interpretation to this representation. Juan Goytisolo, implicitly cited in Alberca’s reproach to autofictional writing as being “sin señas de identidad”<sup>59</sup>, would have strongly suggested the transcultural dimension of translation. But in this case, another type of interpretation is more prominent. It offers valuable clues not only to Alberca’s stand against the dis-

<sup>53</sup> This is one of the guiding principles of Alberca’s interesting reading of the Lazarillo de Tormes (1554); cf. Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 81–9. Cf. Grell, *Lautofiction*, 46 and 98–9.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Terkessidis, “Karma Chamäleon. Unverbindliche Richtlinien für die Anwendung von subversiven Taktiken früher und heute”, in *SUBversionen: zum Verhältnis von Politik und Ästhetik in der Gegenwart*, ed. by Thomas Ernst et al. (Bielefeld: transcript, 2008), 27–45, here 41–2. A. Casas’ lecture of Lejeune can prove useful in this context as well; Ana Casas, “El simulacro del yo: la autoficción en la narrativa actual”, in *La autoficción: reflexiones teóricas*, ed. by Ana Casas (Madrid: Arco/Libros, 2012), 9–42, here 17–8.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Terkessidis, “Karma Chamäleon”, 32–7, and Diedrich Diederichsen, “Subversion: kalte Strategie und heiße Differenz”, in *Freiheit macht arm: das Leben nach Rock’n’Roll, 1990–1993* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1993), 33–52, here 34.

<sup>56</sup> For the concept of biographical autofictions, see Vincent Colonna, *Autofiction & autres mythomanies littéraires* (Auch: Éd. Tristram, 2007), as resumed in Grell, *Lautofiction*, 20–2.

<sup>57</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 206.

<sup>59</sup> Alberca, *La máscara o la vida*, 307.

sociation from cultural affiliations in contemporary literary cultures, but at the same time, to the implicit norms that structure *Finalmusik*. The fact that the 33-year old translator dwells in one of the Vatican's houses located in the piazza di San Cosimato (in lieu of the paternal house in Granada) may be far from a coincidence.<sup>60</sup> It points to his Christian identity. In addition, the narrator, who is at the age in which Jesus died, is constantly confronted with the reproduction of Memling's crucifixion and resurrection in his bed room.<sup>61</sup> Religion might indeed offer an escape from what is referred to as the 'pilgrimages'<sup>62</sup> of a translator, his constant travelling. At times, the narrator's dwelling in Rome seems to be an attempt to reassure himself against fundamental (and fundamentalist) challenges in the age of Islamist terrorist attacks and of neoliberal threats to society.

Let us not forget that Rome, as the narrator experiences, has been put into a state of emergency by terrorist Islamist brigades with support from mass media.<sup>63</sup> This experience appears to the characters, like "WW," who represents an apparently sincere Catholicism otherwise seen as decadent, to be a "Fourth World War". It is responsible for a situation that blurs and makes invisible the boundaries between the inner and outer front, between what is real and what is a staged reality. In that sense the blurring of boundaries mirrors Navarro's own autofictional writing. Both mass media and autofiction provide the ability to camouflage behind simulated realities, but their function is totally different. The mass media simulate reality in order to dominate and manipulate, whereas an author can use his simulated identities to hide from domination. The Spanish versions of autofictional poetics, as proposed by Manuel Alberca and Justo Navarro, seem to concur with that assumption. In that sense, the scandal of autofiction consists in sensitizing its readers to challenge the mimetic function of media produced news.

In response to the crisis, the Italian state authorities implemented a network of inception and surveillance that affected 300,000 inhabitants. This is reflected by the economist Franco Mazotti, a man who always uses three mobile phones – which is revealing in this context.<sup>64</sup> According to this economist of the Banca d'Italia, the Italian state tapped his phones over a period of weeks and transcribed his conversations. In Mazotti's eyes, the transcrip-

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 17.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 207.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 122, 137 and 154.

<sup>64</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 151.

tions of his calls resemble Marcel Proust's main work because of the similarities between the war context, their form, their representation of the present and their display of the multiple identities of their authors:

Dos mil páginas. Las he visto. Tengo una copia. Es *À la recherche du temps perdu*, una obra maestra, ya sabe usted, una novela cómica, irónica, sobre el espíritu de una época y el carácter de una sociedad, un monumento histórico-literario. [...] Esto es mi Marcel Proust del año 2004.<sup>65</sup>

[Two thousand pages. I've seen them. I have a print-out. It is *À la recherche du temps perdu*, a masterpiece, you know, a comic, ironic novel about the zeitgeist and character of a society, a historical-literary monument ... This is my Marcel Proust of 2004.]

Mazotti's 'Proust' are the minutes of his calls with his wife, his lover, his colleagues and business partners that were interested in a bank merger. It was formulated knowing that he was aware that he was being recorded. As an "infinite novel" in "several languages," which was initially mentioned,<sup>66</sup> it is the "auto-representation"<sup>67</sup> of the economist. Now such a staged representation of himself undoubtedly carries within itself the previously evoked camouflage to ward against state rule, but nevertheless fits in well with the epoch of transparency and over-exposure of the private and intimate ("época de transparencia y ultra-exposición de lo privado y de lo íntimo"<sup>68</sup>) that Alberca depicts in the present. As a *mise en abyme* of autofiction, however, the 'Proust of 2004' also represents a reflection of autofictional writing in literature. So it is no coincidence that Justo Navarro referred to 'Proust' regarding the transcribed minutes of Mazotti's tapped calls during a historical financial crisis. *Finalmusik* is not just autofiction destined to measure how history intermingles with intimate experiences – or as Navarro puts it in an interview, "cómo el gran tiempo histórico está en nuestro tiempo íntimo"<sup>69</sup> – but is also a text about autofiction that contains a reflection of its means, its function and its historical location, and a text that has clearly risen from social developments.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 149–50.

<sup>66</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 207.

<sup>67</sup> Grell, *L'autofiction*, 81.

<sup>68</sup> Alberca, *La máscara o la vida*, 312.

<sup>69</sup> Navarro, "No entender la lógica de los 'best sellers'".

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Christine Ott and Jutta Weiser, "Autofiktion und Medienrealität: Einleitung", in *Autofiktion und Medienrealität: kulturelle Formungen des postmodernen Subjekts*, ed. by Jutta Weiser and Christine Ott with the collaboration of Lena Schönwälder (Heidelberg: Winter, 2013), 7–16, here 13–6.



If Alberca recently wanted to set a critical counter articulation against the masquerade of the autofictional in parrhesia, the open and resistant articulation of truth, Alberca undoubtedly meets Justo Navarro's understanding of autofiction. This becomes clear in the twelfth and penultimate chapter of *Finalmusik*, also entitled "Finalmusik," which depicts a similar form of media mediated reflexivity. This chapter tells of the film premiere for the *Giulla Neve* adaptation of the Trenti trilogy. All of the works' characters are in this finale and the event takes place on the last evening in Rome before the Ferragosto, before the terrorist ultimatum expires. Only in this chapter does the novel's title make sense. In the subtitles of Serenade Number 9 in D major, a work of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart that premiered at the end of the academic year at the University of Salzburg in 1779, the piece is referred to as the final music. In a figurative sense, which seemingly justifies the novel's clearly meta-autofictional structure, Justo Navarro's *Finalmusik* could be characterized both as a divertimento in "I Major" and as the requiem of a historical period. In one way we meet the post horn of the narrator: "Se acaba otra vida mía, la vida romana de los últimos tres meses [...],"<sup>71</sup> but in another way the *Finalmusik* is orchestrated and performed in a symphonic setting of the contemporary world that carries its 'listeners' into a new uncertain and war-filled era. So, *Finalmusik*, Alberca is right, is really about constantly evading denotation. Nevertheless, in the face of such autofiction as a critical and educational autopoiesis, the accusation of narcissistic self-reflection and the insinuation of neoliberal conformism goes awry.<sup>72</sup> Rather, the work attempts to open an era of autofiction that goes beyond the Nouveau Roman, deconstruction, Lacan's psychoanalysis, and the *ethos* of Doubrovsky's autofictional writing that shaped its postmodern phase.

In *Finalmusik*, subjectivity is regarded to be mobile and is thus set against the authentic, the identical and the easily identifiable – claims to which the ambivalent pact of autofiction reveals itself to be the antipode. On the one hand, its elusive but reflective subject escapes the terrorist threat and capitalist modes of reproduction and of consumption, as Navarro has underlined

<sup>71</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 225.

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly enough, Alberca's opinion is represented in *Finalmusik* itself, since "WW", the Vatican's representative, claims: "Sí, dijo Monseñor, la verdad pesa más que el cuento, quizá tenga usted razón y la época exija testigos verdaderos, nada de novelistas." [Yes, Your Grace said, truth weighs more than fairy tales, perhaps you are right and our epoch needs true witnesses, not novelists]. Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 180.

in an interview<sup>73</sup> with the newspaper *El País* on the occasion of *Finalmusik's* publication in 2004. The elusive subject also stands against the state rule that manifests itself in the ubiquitous police record photographs that are spread on television screens (“fotos de ficha policial que difunden las televisiones”).<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, there is undoubtedly no attempt to rebel or to get organized. Ideas of social organization, intersubjective dialogue or network building are absent. The Other is regarded as an intimidating adversary; the boxing champion Fulvio states in one of the conversations with the narrator: “Uno tiene dentro a otro no sé si me entiendes, no sé si tú te notas el Otro, l’Altro. E l’Altro è un figlio della gran puttana.”<sup>75</sup> [One carries the Other within oneself, I don’t know if you understand me, if you have noticed the Other, l’Altro. And the Other is a son of a bitch.] Navarro uses the late modernist tropes of translation and alterity such as deploying tactics of reflexivity and subversion in his text, or such as applying educational strategies of fictionalization to his autobiographical writing. These techniques all reflect on the modes and functions of authorship in the contemporary world, and these techniques converge in their scepticism of mass media produced realities and their sentimental consumers, the “multitudes adictas a la televisión y al sentimentalismo”<sup>76</sup> that are explicitly named in the text.

<sup>73</sup> Navarro, “No entender la lógica de los ‘best sellers’”.

<sup>74</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> Navarro, *Finalmusik*, 36.