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Some Considerations  
about Why I Wrote an Academic Novel

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*The Marvelous Technique* is the result of my university years. After having read quite a lot of academic writing I realized that academic criticism of the academy itself is unusual. Academics used to criticize society but who criticizes the Academy? While I was researching this particular subject I discovered a bunch of novelists (many of them also university teachers but not all) who strengthened all my suspicions: Kingsley Amis, David Lodge, Malcolm Bradbury, John Barth, Jonathan Lethem and many others. All these novelists and writers, through satire, worked as contra-hegemonic figures against the university ideal. So, after all, it wasn't the academics but fiction writers who, in one way or another, work for the university who criticize the university system. Being a writer before becoming a university student, that was like an epiphany for me. So I read for a couple of years some of this academic fiction and I started to do all my academic research around these novels related to the university institution and the history of education. But academic research about academic fiction is also moderately rare. During my research one thing above all made me wonder: Why is academic fiction not interesting for the academics, being a rising genre (or subgenre) with more than a century of literary history which talks about academics? The answer, found in one book, *The Academic Novel: New and Classic Essays* (2007), edited by Merritt Moseley, is that there *is* academic interest in academic fiction. This particular book opened my eyes to all the academic research about academic fiction and helped me realize that this particular literary genre has existed from the very beginning of the university as an institution. In other words, academic fiction works as an anti-hegemonic genre against institutional education. We have to remember that the

struggle for education began with the quarrel between Homeric poetry and philosophy. And it seems that academic fiction represents, somehow, this battle for the education of a society which is still wondering what kind of education we deserve.

Another thing is that in my country, Spain and Catalonia, this kind of literary production is almost nonexistent. One possible explanation is that here we don't have university campuses, like the American or English ones, which make possible this kind of literary productions. Another possible reason, related to the first one, could be the lack of Creative Writing programs in the Spanish universities and therefore a scarcity of creative writers working in universities. We have to remember that the academic professionalization of these campus writers allowed for an increase of academic fiction, especially in the United States from the 1960's. But again, if you look into academic fiction in general, there are a lot of teachers (not only writers but professors) who ended up writing academic fiction in the English departments. Why don't we have something similar here? It could be because they don't know how to write a novel; it could be because they are afraid of the consequences; or it could be because here, in Spain, we don't have (at least in the majority of our universities) a degree called Creative Writing. Starting a war in your own department or against another department could be a risky decision for your own professional career. And last but not least, what about the students? Much academic writing is made by teachers and writers-who-became-teachers. But there is also some academic fiction made by students. They live in this world (at least five to eight hours per day); they create a meta-language in their own gangs or fraternities to communicate with each other; they make sophisticated jokes on what they are learning and on the teachers they have. In one sentence: they are the ultimate reason for the existence of the university. So, if you spend four or five years in a place such as this and you study, let's say, Literature, and you like to write, that micro-world should be the perfect subject for a novel! Surprisingly, I never met one single person who wishes to write anything about it.

That's why I did it myself over the five years that I was there. And the thing is that it was very easy to build all the characters of the novel

because all of them were right in front of my eyes every morning. From all this work I made up this novel, *The Marvelous Technique*, and I am also still working on my doctoral thesis. And this work had to be done all together because, in my opinion, academic and literary knowledge work together as two different radically different positions that nevertheless interact as ancient partners (or enemies) from different fields, as a big intertextual game.