

NICHOLAS ROUND

Nicholas Grenville Round

6 June 1938 – 12 June 2021

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1996

by

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Fellow of the Academy

Summary. Nicholas Round was a historian, critic, and translator of Spanish literature. His interests were wide-ranging: beginning with a thesis on the 15th-century translator of Plato, Pero Díaz de Toledo, he went on to become a leading expert on 19th-century realist Pérez Galdós, and influential critic and translator of major authors ranging from Fernando de Rojas and Golden Age dramatists to 20th-century poets and novelists, as well as an authority on late-medieval Iberian history and an energetic champion of translation studies. All his work was marked by profound scholarship and critical acumen, but also by an abiding engagement with ideas.

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Nicholas Round

Nick Round (as he was universally known), Professor Emeritus of Spanish at the University of Sheffield, died peacefully at home on Saturday 12 June 2021, aged 83. He had retired in 2003, moving back from Sheffield to his beloved native Cornwall, but remained a familiar figure at conferences as far afield as Monterrey in México; his last articles on Spanish literature were published in 2010 and 2013, the former on his long-standing interest in the 19th-century realist novelist Galdós, the latter stemming from his doctoral research on 15th-century literary culture. He also wrote a forty-page obituary of medievalist Alan Deyermond for the British Academy in 2013, and delivered a lecture on ‘Translation: In Place of Theory’ at the University of Exeter’s Centre for Translating Cultures in March 2014, and a paper on Galdós to the 60th anniversary conference of the Association of Hispanists of Great Britain & Ireland (AHGBI) in Exeter in April 2015.¹ After that his health declined, but he continued his ‘unstintingly’ sturdy work on the Birmingham project for a translation of the complete works of the 15th-century Portuguese chronicler Fernão Lopes (2011–23),² and also remained active on the Cornish literary and social scene, presenting two newly-published collections of his poetry at a book launch in the historic Morrab Library of Penzance, of which he was a Trustee from 2011 to 2019;³ while he and his wife Ann, having both stood as Labour Party candidates for the Penwith District Council elections in 2006, were signatories for Labour’s candidates for the St Ives parliamentary constituency in 2015, for the Cornwall Council in 2017, and for the Penzance Town Council in May 2021.

¹N.G. Round, ‘La oferta del hispanomedievalismo: lo que pasa y lo que queda’, in B. Mariscal & others (eds), *Actas del XV Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas ‘Las dos orillas’. Monterrey, México, del 19 al 24 de julio de 2004*, 4 vols (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), I, 279–302, https://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aih/aih_xv.htm; ‘Máximo Manso: Love’s Fool’, *Hispanic Research Journal*, 11:1 (2010), 82–93, <https://doi.org/10.1179/146827309X12561173791106>; ‘Gómez Manrique’s *Exclamación e querella de la gobernación*: Poem and Commentary’, in A.M. Beresford, L.M. Haywood & J. Weiss (eds), *Medieval Hispanic Studies in Memory of Alan Deyermond (Colección Tâmesis, A315)*; Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2013), pp. 149–74, <http://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/9781782040750/type/BOOK>. The obituary ‘Alan David Deyermond, 1932–2009’ is at <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publishing/memoirs/12/deyermond-alan-david-1932-2009/>, and for the lecture on translation the author’s typescript is at <https://www.academia.edu/25880277>

²A.P. Hutchinson, J. Perkins, & P. Krummrich (eds), *The Chronicles of Fernão Lopes*, trans. R.C. Willis et al., 5 vols (*Colección Tâmesis*, B64; Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2023), I, xv, xxii, xviii; this volume includes as an introduction Round’s last published work, ‘Fernão Lopes and the Writing of a Late Medieval Portuguese History’, pp. 11–53, the revised version of an article first published as ‘The Revolution of 1383–84 in the Portuguese Provinces: Causality and Style in Fernão Lopes’, *Dispositio*, 10:27 (1985 = *Medieval Historiographical Discourse*, ed. A. Deyermond & M. Vaquero): 65–84. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41491670>

³The two volumes were *Occasion for All: Poems of Cornwall 1964–2014* ([n.p.]: Russian Blue Cat Imprints [the author], 2018) and *The Histories: Poems 1965–2014* ([n.p.]: Russian Blue Cat Imprints, 2018); see R. Davies, ‘“Occasion for All” Nicholas Grenville (Nick) Round (1938–2021)’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 98:10 (2021), 1711–17 (1713–14). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2021.2003069>

These retirement activities were evidence of the energetic dedication, variety, and profound convictions of Round's life work. He was renowned as one of the leading Hispanists of his generation, an active figure in the transformation of the university study of Spanish from its lowly status as a subsidiary course of elementary language instruction for commercial purposes into a fully professional academic discipline. His distinction in the field was recognised by the Spanish government's award in 1989 of the Officer's Cross of the royal Orden de Isabel la Católica; the Society of Authors' Calouste Gulbenkian Prize for Portuguese Translation in 1992;⁴ and his election to a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1996. He was also appointed to the committee of the AHGBI in 1970–73, and President of the Asociación Internacional de Galdosistas in 1999–2001. Besides notable contributions to the work of the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature and the Institute of Translation & Interpreting, and involvement in numerous conferences and with the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, he was founder and consultant director of the online Pérez Galdós Editions Project at Sheffield from 1996, a pioneering venture in digital humanities.⁵

All this reflected his prominent status in the scholarly world. He was highly respected for the trenchancy of his views and extraordinary breadth of knowledge, but also much liked for his outgoing personality, and not least his love of witty repartee. Students and colleagues remember his generosity, ever ready to answer their questions and engage in dialogue. James Murphy writes of his Glasgow days:

As an intellectual, Nick was unstoppable. [...] He loved to wrestle out loud with Pérez Galdós, Pío Baroja, Unamuno ... and would often carry on the exegesis long after the official hour was over by accompanying his undergraduates to lunch in the Ref. Soon though, he would drift into stories of his time in Belfast during the Troubles, talk openly of his own literary efforts and listen amiably to our experiences of West-of-Scotland life, in days when many of the students would be the very first of their family to go to a university. [...] He was also great fun. Some of us went out west to his home once, a pre-Finals dinner. We gathered round a piano to hear him sing a rollicking version of *Widcombe Fair*, his West Country accent soaring at the 'Old Uncle Tom Copley' part. [...] Above all, he loved his business – locating the spring of beauty in the

⁴This will have been for his translation of Romantic poet Almeida Garrett's play *Frei Luís de Sousa* (1844); commissioned in 1991 by the Anglo-Portuguese Foundation, adapted and performed as *The Pilgrim* at the Young Vic Theatre. It was staged again in the original version at the Prince Theatre, Greenwich, in September 1998, but remains unpublished.

⁵On this project, founded under the auspices of the British Academy, see N. Round, 'Hacia una nueva lectura de las *Novelas contemporáneas* de Galdós: la nueva tecnología y el "Pérez Galdós Editions Project"', in Y. Arencibia, M. del P. Escobar, & R.M. Quintana (eds), *VII Congreso Internacional Galdosiano 2001* (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Cabildo de Gran Canaria, 2004), pp. 885–9. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12285/galdosianos/540>

poems and the plays, pressurizing students to be lucid in their contributions, tolerating effort but never claptrap.⁶

He was equally supportive of academic peers. Fellow-expert on medieval translation María Morrás of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona recalls meeting the septuagenarian Nick at the AHGBI conference in Exeter in 2015, where he greeted her warmly with reminiscences of how her work had informed his studies of the reception of Cicero and Seneca in 15th-century Spain, and in particular her recent discovery of a manuscript of Alfonso de Cartagena's versions of Senecan (and pseudo-Senecan) works for Juan II of Castile in the 1430s which coincided with his own work on the subject, for which he had thanked her by sending a copy of his article.⁷

Alongside all these academic undertakings, Round was a committed socialist, serving on the Executive Council of the Strathclyde Region Labour Party, Vice-Chairman of the Clydebank and Milngavie Constituency Labour Party (1986–94), and Chairman of the Cornwall Labour Party (2007–10). And another life-long pursuit was his devotion to writing poetry, starting during his time in Northern Ireland where 'for a short, inglorious spell' he joined The Belfast Group, a poets' workshop founded in 1962 by Philip Hobsbaum and which met at his home on Monday nights, frequented by such luminaries as Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, and Round's Hispanist colleague Arthur Terry, and where his own poetry explored with 'piercing verbal intensity' the violent tensions of the Catholic-Protestant Troubles that arose in the late 1960s.⁸ In *Who's Who* he listed his

⁶J. Murphy, 'In Memoriam: Nicholas Round FBA, Professor Emeritus', 28 June 2021, blog at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/memoriam-nicholas-round-fba-professor-emeritus-james-murphy>

⁷N.G. Round, 'Alonso de Cartagena's *Libros de Séneca*: Disentangling the Manuscript Tradition', in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence. Studies in Honour of Angus MacKay*, ed. Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 123–47, which cites M. Morrás, 'Repertorio de obras, MSS y documentos de Alfonso de Cartagena (ca. 1384–1456)', *Boletín bibliográfico de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval*, Cuadernos bibliográficos 5 (1991), 213–48; but he soon after came across M. Morrás & M.M. López Casas, 'Lectura y difusión de los *Libros de Séneca* (a propósito de un testimonio desconocido)', *Revista de filología española*, 81:1–2 (2001), 137–63, on a new witness in the friary of San Francisco in Santiago de Compostela, which complemented his study, and this was the occasion of his sending her a copy of his article.

⁸See n. 3, above. For these details, the quotation, and other biographical information I am indebted to the editors' 'Introduction: Celebrating Nick Round', in R. Davies & A. Brooksbank Jones (eds), *The Place of Argument: Essays in Honour of Nicholas G. Round (Colección Támesis, A245)* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2007), pp. ix–xviii. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781846155819> (at pp. ix–xi), and to their bibliography of Round's works, pp. xix–xxiv. Round himself described his ejection from the 'bull-ring. and occasional bear-garden' (as Seamus Heaney depicted it) of the Belfast Group as due to failing to produce 'discussible' work of his own, in 'Monuments, Makars and Modules: A British Experience', in P. Bush & K. Malmkjaer (eds), *Rimbaud's Rainbow: Literary Translation in Higher Education* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998), pp. 11–20 (at p. 15–16); from Heaney's account, it seems more likely it was due to political reasons to do with his non-Irish nationality.

recreations as ‘reading, music, all aspects of Cornwall’, to which one might add hiking and drawing; poetry, then, was not a hobby, but part of his work.

Born on 6 June 1938 in the picturesque fishing port of Looe on the coast of south-east Cornwall (population then 2877, 5311 in 2021), son of Isaac Eric Round and Laura Christabel Poole, Round went to primary school in Boyton Community Primary School, and then nearby Launceston College. At Pembroke College, Oxford, he studied Modern Languages, graduating as BA in 1959 with first-class honours in Spanish and French, and subsequently undertook research for his DPhil. His thesis, entitled ‘Pero Díaz de Toledo: A Study of a 15th Century Converso Translator in his Background’, in two volumes of 850 pp., was completed in 1967; he was supervised by Professor P.E. Russell and Dr C.A. Jones, two of the most distinguished scholars of that time in medieval and Golden-Age Hispanic literature and history (Cyril Jones having also taught Spanish at Launceston College in the late 1940s, when Round was a pupil, and published articles in 1959–61 on the realist novelist Pérez Galdos, the relevance of which will become clear below). While still writing his thesis he was appointed Lecturer in Spanish at Queen’s University Belfast in 1962, and married Ann Le Vin, also a research student at Oxford, in 1966. There he was promoted to a Readership in 1971, served as Warden of Alanbrooke Hall of Residence from 1970, and was elected Honorary Life Member of the Students’ Union. At the remarkably young age of 34, in January 1972 – perhaps influenced by the spiralling violence of the Troubles in Belfast with the advent of the IRA and British Army in 1969 – he migrated to the Stevenson Professorship of Hispanic Studies at the University of Glasgow, a position he held for 22 years, during which he restructured his Department to pursue ‘new directions’ in teaching and research.⁹ He left Glasgow in January 1994 to become Hughes Professor of Spanish at the University of Sheffield, and retired in 2003, moving back to Penzance in Cornwall, fifty miles from his birthplace.

The ‘new directions’ in his subject were part of an important reform. Spearheaded after the First World War by amateur Hispanophiles such as James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (1858–1923), Aubrey Bell (1881–1950), and J.B. Trend (1887–1958), Spanish studies were first carved out as a university discipline by the generation of Edgar Allison Peers (1891–1952, the first British professor of Spanish, at Liverpool in 1922, and founder of the first British journal on modern languages, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, in 1923),

⁹R. Davies, “‘Occasion for All’ Nicholas Grenville (Nick) Round (1938–2021)”, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 98:10 (2021), 1711–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753820.2021.2003069> (quotation at p. 1712). Characteristically, Round later opined that his appointment at that age over the incumbent head of department, 64-year-old Ivy McClelland, had been sexist; she retired two years later, but was not made honorary professor until 1997 (A.L. MacKenzie, ‘I.L. McClelland (1908–2006): *Lux perpetua luceat ei*’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 86:7–8 (2009), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753821003679056>, at p.23, citing Round’s obituary of McClelland in *The Independent*, 28 April 2006, p. 46. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/professor-ivy-mcclelland-6102496.html>: ‘She would have been an outstanding occupant of the Stevenson Chair, but was inexcusably passed over.’)

Ignacio González Llubera (1893–1962, lecturer and professor at Queen’s University Belfast), William J. Entwistle (1895–1952, lecturer at the University of Manchester 1921, professor at Glasgow 1925 and Oxford 1932, Fellow of the British Academy 1950), and William C. Atkinson (1902–92, graduate of Queen’s University Belfast, and Round’s predecessor as professor at Glasgow 1932–72, where he introduced Portuguese and Latin-American studies and took over editorship of the bulletin from Peers, renaming it *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* in 1949). Before the 1960s, however, as mentioned above, the discipline was still largely focused on teaching the language for commercial purposes. Round was one of the enthusiastic reformers who championed its need to focus on philology, literary studies, and history, a development that led to the expansion of Hispanism’s prestige as a credible alternative to French and German. By the late 1990s Spanish had indeed overtaken all other modern languages in terms of numbers of university students and staff; this was due in part to its far greater global spread (it replaced English in the late 1990s as the world’s second language with most native speakers, Mandarin Chinese being the first, and Portuguese also rising to fifth, while neither German, French, nor Italian are in the top ten); but the development of a properly academic philological, cultural, historical, and literary approach to the subject developed by Round and his colleagues in the 1960s was an essential precondition.¹⁰

However, as Dominic Keown explains, the field of philology, ‘previously occupied exclusively by the classics and the imperial monolingualism of French and German’, was then shaken in the 1980s and ’90s by the ‘arrival of theory, which challenged the comfortable orthodoxy of [...] an established literary canon’.¹¹ Said canon in Spanish was still dominated by medieval and Golden Age authors, along with a handful of modern novelists and poets (Alas, Galdós, Unamuno, Machado, Lorca) – precisely the contours of Round’s own research. The irruption of theory and consequent broadening of scope (gender and cultural studies, contemporary writers, etc.) led to ‘volatile’ and often ‘distinctively personal’ disputes with those of ‘more conventional persuasion’, disputes in which Round participated, always with a readiness to discuss the possible benefits of this advancing paradigm shift to his own historical approach, but cautious about the applicability of postmodernist theories of critique.¹² His last thoughts on the subject,

¹⁰ A. Frost, *The Emergence and Growth of Hispanic Studies in British and Irish Universities* ([n.p]: Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland, 2019) —sadly no longer online— outlines this development of Iberian studies.

¹¹ D. Keown, ‘Dine with the Opposition? ¡No, gracias! Hispanism versus Iberian Studies in Great Britain and Ireland’, in J.R. Resina (ed.), *Iberian Modalities: A Relational Approach to the Study of Culture in the Iberian Peninsula* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2013), pp. 23–36 (at p. 30). <https://doi.org/10.5949/liverpool/9781846318337.003.0002>

¹² Examples are the discussions in his ‘Thinking about Thody: Language and Culture in the University Discipline’, *Modern Languages*, 61:4 (1980), 155–64; ‘From “Talk in Context” to “Texts and Culture”’, *Journal of the Modern Language Association of Northern Ireland*, 20–21 (1988–89), 11–26; ‘Metacriticism

delivered to the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas in 2004, reiterated his belief that the essential need was for an ‘adaptive’ positivism based on historical documentation, albeit with a consciousness that this will always be subject to the culture and ideology of the critic’s own age.¹³

The primary impression given by the 2596 pages of Round’s 97 publications (excluding some 70 book reviews and obituaries) is the remarkable breadth of his interests. From 1962 to 2013 they embraced late-medieval history and literature, with two major books on 15th-century political and cultural history, the second with an edition of a manuscript translation by a *converso* client of the marquis of Santillana from Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni’s Latin version of Plato’s *Phaedo*, and 27 articles on literary classics, history, and archival research.¹⁴ But from the 1970s he also wrote three monographs and 27 articles on modern Spanish fiction and poetry, as well as essays on such cultural subjects as nationalism, liberalism, and the theme of Don Juan through the ages, besides co-editing collections of essays and *Festschriften* combining all these topics. Over and above these, he became more and more deeply involved in translation; in 1986 he produced a 289-page student edition and translation of Tirso de Molina’s *El condenado por desconfiado*, but by then he had already translated two plays, Buero Vallejo’s *Las cartas boca abajo* (1957) and Pérez Galdós’s *Realidad* (1892), for broadcast on BBC Radio 4 (*The Cards Face Down*, 1973; *In Real Life*, 1975), and would go on to write versions of the Duke of Rivas’s Romantic tragedy *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* of 1835 (*Don Álvaro or the Power of Fate*, commissioned by Scottish Opera and performed at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow, 1990), Almeida Garrett’s *Frei Luís de Sousa* (see n. 4, above), selections from Alfonso X’s 13th-century *Cantigas de Santa María* for Glasgow’s Scottish Early Music Consort in 1992, to say nothing of his remarkable

& Hypercriticism’ (delivered in 1985), in *On Reasoning and Realism: Three Easy Pieces*, Manchester Spanish & Portuguese Studies, 2 (Manchester: Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Manchester, 1991), pp. 1–24; ‘The Politics of Hispanism Reconstructed’, *Journal of Hispanic Research*, 1 (1992–93), 134–47, identified as the ‘anti-theory lobby’ in the reply by S.M. Hart, “‘Mientras que en mi casa estoy, rey soy’: More on the Politics of Hispanism”, *Journal of Hispanic Research*, 1 (1992–93), 415–23; and ‘Translation, Cultural Influence and Semantics: Notes towards a Theoretical Convergence’, in M. Thelen & B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (eds), *Translation and Meaning, Part 3: Proceedings of the Maastricht Session of the 2nd International Maastricht-Łódź Duo Colloquium on Translation and Meaning, Held in Maastricht, The Netherlands, 19–22 April 1995* (Maastricht: Hogeschool, 1996), pp. 175–84. For a useful discussion of this subject and Round’s place in it, see P. Jordan, ‘Civilization and Barbarism: The Perpetual Question’, in Davies & Brooksbank Jones, *The Place of Argument*, pp. 203–20.

¹³ Round, ‘La oferta del hispanomedievalismo’, pp. 283–4, with a pointed discussion of Ramón Menéndez Pidal’s positivism and its relation to contemporary Francoist nationalism, etc., pp. 285–8.

¹⁴ An example of archival work is his transcription of 55 letters in ‘La correspondencia del arcediano de Niebla en el archivo del Real Monasterio de Santa María de Guadalupe’, *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 7 (1980), 215–68. <https://revistascientificas.us.es/index.php/HID/article/view/6061>

nonsense rendition into Spanish of Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* (1871) in 1999.¹⁵ By that time, however, as was to be expected from his ever-questioning mind, this interest in translating had become analytic; having already engaged with the cultural ramifications of Díaz de Toledo's rendering of Plato c. 1440 in his thesis, much revised in the published edition of 1993, he wrote nine articles and edited a Special Issue of the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* on theories of translation. Both in practice and in theory, he focused emphatically on the translator's need to recreate not the original's straightforward verbal sense, but its cognitive and cultural inner meaning and style, and to express these in a form that engages the audience on their own terms, arousing parallel responses and mentalities in contemporary readers.¹⁶ As he put it in his plenary lecture to the AHGBI's anniversary conference in Valencia in 2005, 'to translate poetry one must be a poet'.¹⁷

Despite his suspicions of theory, Round's literary and historical studies likewise combined a positivist approach to sources with a concern for texts' cognitive and cultural aspects. As Davies and Brooksbank Jones say, his 'encyclopaedic knowledge' was sustained by 'exceptional powers of abstraction' ('Introduction: Celebrating Nick Round', p. xi). This emerged in his very first article, a study of the culture of Castile in the 15th century in which he argued, against scholarly conjectures to the contrary, that the term 'pre-Renaissance' cannot be applied to it, and indeed that it remained medieval 'well into the sixteenth century'. This he based on quotations from a selection of sources from 1417 to 1530 designed to show that, despite the cultural projects of king Juan II, the

¹⁵ N. Round, 'Jabberwocky in Translation: *La Jipijaraguera*', *Fragmentos*, 16 (Jan/Jun. 1999 = *Alice in Translation: A Homage to Lewis Carroll*, ed. P.A. Odber de Baubeta), 135–6. <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/fragmentos/article/view/6357>

¹⁶ Starting with the history of translation in the Middle Ages, when concepts of authorship and the integrity of texts were distinct, in 'Las traducciones medievales catalanas y castellanas de las *Tragedias* de Séneca' and *Libro llamado 'Fedron': Plato's 'Phaedo' Translated by Pero Díaz de Toledo* (MS Madrid, *Biblioteca Nacional Vitr* 17,4) (Colección *Támesis*, B39; London: Tamesis Books, 1993), he moved to theory with 'The Speakable and the Unspeakable', in L. & P. Fothergill-Payne (eds), *Prologue to Performance: Spanish Classical Theater Today* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991), pp. 113–35, <https://archive.org/details/prologuetoperfor0000unse>; 'Translation, Cultural Influence and Semantics: Notes towards a Theoretical Convergence' (1995), pp. 175–84; '"Interlocking the Voids": The Knowledges of the Translator', in M. Coulthard & P.A. Odber de Baubeta (eds), *The Knowledges of the Translator: From Literary Interpretation to Machine Classification* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1996), pp. 1–30; 'Monuments, Makars and Modules' (1998); and 'Translation and its Metaphors: The (N+1) Wise Men and the Elephant', *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation*, 1 (2005), 47–69, <http://www.skase.sk/JTI01index.html>, alongside others on individual texts, for instance in his Special Issue of *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (Glasgow), 75:1 (1998 = *Translation Studies in Hispanic Contexts*, ed. N.G. Round), to which he contributed an 'Introduction' and '"Perdóneme Séneca": The Translational Practices of Alonso de Cartagena', 1–7 and 17–30, <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cbhs19/75/1>

¹⁷ N.G. Round, 'Lenguaje poético y lenguaje traductivo', in R. Archer, V. Astvaldsson, S. Boyd, & M. Thompson (eds), *Antes y después del 'Quijote' en el cincuentenario de la Asociación de Hispanistas de Gran Bretaña e Irlanda*, 1 vol + CD-Rom (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 2005), I, 425–45.

Catholic Monarchs, and leading writers such as Mena, Santillana, Lucena, and Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, the Spanish nobility preserved an ingrained hostility to the conjunction of arms and letters, and that such literature as there was continued to display an ingrained moral didacticism that was ‘thoroughly medieval’.¹⁸ This view has since been challenged; the strong connexions with Italian humanists of major patrons and writers of the time and the striking efflorescence of translations from the classics – Pero Díaz de Toledo’s translation of *Phaedo* being a remarkable instance, the first of Plato into any modern language – along with the rise of an educated lay middle-class of *letrados*, not clerics but bureaucrats and secretaries (many of them *conversos*, Jewish converts), in fact brought about significant cultural change. Nevertheless, for its time Round’s array of sources was novel and impressive, almost none having been previously studied, and the treatment nuanced (he concedes, for instance, that Italian complaints of Spanish ‘barbarism’ were prompted by nationalist resentment at increasing Spanish control of their country, and that most of the complaints about the nobility’s aversion to letters came in texts designed precisely to praise the contrary attitude of *litterati* like Santillana; while the writers and patrons who broke the mould ‘were certainly considerably gifted’). More to the point, his conclusion pointed to what is now recognised as a central fact in 15th-century Spanish literary history: namely, that the nature of this cultural change, whether it be called ‘pre-Renaissance’ or ‘vernacular humanism’, was wholly distinct from, and as it developed in the Golden Age ultimately no less influential than, Italian humanism. When Round came to publish his thesis as a book in 1993, after extensive revisions in 1971–2, 1981, and 1987–8, he updated his views of the matter, including a chapter on ‘Fifteenth-Century Cultural Change’ (Round, *Libro llamado Fedrón*, pp. 62–76), as well as discussing in detail the challenges posed by the philosophy and translation of Plato’s text, Díaz de Toledo’s tactics in dealing with them, and the contours of the reception of Platonism from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.

Round’s work on the political history of that age was no less innovative. His account of the downfall of Juan II of Castile’s all-powerful chief minister Álvaro de Luna sets the story in the context of the bloody and long-drawn-out civil wars between the crown and aristocracy that were to bring to an end the medieval feudal estates system by the turn of the century.¹⁹ Centring not on Luna’s biography but on the events leading to his spectacular public execution in 1453, the study is a close-textured cultural examination focusing on the mechanics of power, language, and ideologies of 15th-century Castile, illuminating how contemporaries perceived royal authority, noble insurrection, and the tragedy – or happy-ending comedy, as enemies such as Santillana portrayed it – of the favourite’s

¹⁸N.G. Round, ‘Renaissance Culture and Its Opponents in Fifteenth-Century Castile’, *Modern Language Review*, 57 (1962), 204–15. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3720965>

¹⁹N. Round, *The Greatest Man Uncrowned: A Study of the Fall of Don Alvaro de Luna* (Colección Támesis, A111; London: Tamesis, 1986). <https://archive.org/details/greatestmanuncro0000round>

fate. And his last article was on the same topics, as expressed in a poem by a member of the powerful Manrique clan ('Gómez Manrique's *Exclamación e querella de la gobernación*').

In his work on medieval authors, Round devoted little attention to literary critique as such, his few articles on the major figures Juan Ruiz, Jorge Manrique, and Fernando de Rojas centring on cultural features or sources.²⁰ But by 1971 his attention in literary matters had turned to modern authors such as Alas, Pardo Bazán, Machado, Lorca, post-realist Unamuno (1864–1936), and above all the realist novelist Galdós (1843–1920). His monographs and articles on the latter two numbered five and 14 respectively, 70 per cent of the 27 items on this subject; and in them he engaged with up-to-date literary critique, as well as such innovations as digital humanities.²¹ In all these studies we are immediately struck by the constant directness and forcefulness of his approach; he has a point to make, and does so with decisive resolve. Even in his early Critical Guide to Unamuno's novel *Abel Sánchez* (1917), supposedly intended as an introduction for students approaching the text for the first time,²² he plunges straight into a complex

²⁰ N.G. Round, 'Conduct and Values in *La Celestina*', in F.W. Hodcroft, D.G. Pattison, R.D.F. Pring-Mill, & R.W. Truman (eds), *Medieval and Renaissance Studies on Spain and Portugal in Honour of P.E. Russell* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literatures, 1981), pp. 38–52; 'Formal Integration in Jorge Manrique's *Coplas por la muerte de su padre*', in N.G. Round & D.G. Walters (eds), *Readings in Spanish and Portuguese Poetry for Geoffrey Connell* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Department of Hispanic Studies, 1985), pp. 205–21; '*Celestina*, Aucto I: A Platonic Echo and its Resonances', in J.T. Snow & I.A. Corfis (eds), '*Celestina*': *Approaching the Fifth Centenary* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1992), pp. 93–112; 'Juan Ruiz and Some Versions of *Nummus*', in I. Macpherson & R. Penny (eds), *The Medieval Mind: Hispanic Studies in Honour of Alan Deyermond* (Colección Tàmesis, A170; Woodbridge: Tamesis, 1997), pp. 381–400.

²¹ For example, *Unamuno: Abel Sánchez* (Critical Guides to Spanish Texts, 12; London, Grant & Cutler, 1974), <https://archive.org/details/abelsanchez0000unse>; 'Galdós' *Realidad*: Novel into Drama', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 20:1 (1984), 30–48, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fmls/XX.1.30>; 'On the Logic of Unamuno Criticism: The Problem of "Belief"', in D. Gómez Molleda (ed.), *Volumen-homenaje a Miguel de Unamuno* (Salamanca: Casa-Museo Unamuno, 1986), pp. 683–706; '"Without a City Wall": *Paz en la guerra* and the End of Realism', in N.G. Round (ed.), *Re-reading Unamuno* (Glasgow Colloquium Papers, 1; Glasgow: University of Glasgow Department of Hispanic Studies, 1989), pp. 101–20; 'The Fictional Plenitude of *Angel Guerra*', in A. H. Clarke & E.J. Rodgers (eds), *Galdós' House of Fiction: Papers Given at the Birmingham Galdós Colloquium* (Llangrannog: Dolphin, 1991), pp. 143–67; 'The Tragic Sense of *Niebla*', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* (Glasgow), 69:5 (1992 = *Hispanic Studies in Honour of Geoffrey Ribbans*, ed. A.L. Mackenzie), 171–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0007490X.1992.12035756>; 'Misericordia: Galdosian Realism's "Last Word"', in L.M. Willem (ed.), *A Sesquicentennial Tribute to Galdós 1843–1993* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1993), pp. 155–72; down to 'Galdós Rewrites Galdós: The Deaths of Children and the Dying Century', in N.G. Round (ed.), *New Galdós Studies: Essays in Memory of John Varey* (Colección Tàmesis, A192; Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2003), pp. 125–39, and 'Máximo Manso' (2010).

²² The series, founded by Round's colleagues Alan Deyermond and John Varey, both also Fellows of the British Academy, in association with their publishing house Tamesis, issued 71 volumes between 1971 and 2009, one of the most successful and significant ventures in Hispanic studies of its time.

discussion of the modernist antirealism of the Generation of 1898, and Unamuno's unique and different outlook and style, 'dense' but 'pared down to what is absolutely essential'; theme and substance, not form, artistry, or psychological description, a narrative mode Unamuno himself nicknamed *nivola* or 'fog/non-novel'.²³ The following six chapters discuss features related to the author's sceptical essay *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1913); Hegelian dialecticism and the private and public self; the relevance of the Cain and Abel story to doctor Joaquín's envy and killing of artist Abel, and its use as a metaphor for Spanish cultural history; the identification of the characters with Unamuno's diverse biographical 'selves' and politics; his existentialist doubts about life and identity; and finally his 'viviparous' method of narrative, exemplified by the lack of descriptive settings, fixed characters, or linear plot, culminating with Joaquín/Cain's *Confesión*. Finally, the conclusion proposes that the novel's refusal to resolve the character's predicament of envy is meant to 'impel the reader towards formulating answers in terms of his own will, his own practice and his own life', rejecting the 'subordination of life to art', so leading the way to the 20th-century novel. There is little illustration by way of quotation or textual exemplification of the features of style so described; the study assumes its readers already know the novel well, and focuses on its cultural and philosophical motifs and motivations.

Much the same held for the studies of his favourite author of all, the realist novelist Galdós; they spread over almost 45 years, from 1971 to 2015.²⁴ A representative example is his analysis of Galdós's treatment of contemporary history in the series of 21 works he called *Novelas españolas contemporáneas* (1881–89).²⁵ For this Galdós used a technique for which Round coined the term 'cognitive engines', which he illustrates by an analysis of the novelist's presentation of three specific moments in Madrid leading to the democratic 'Glorious Revolution' of 1868 that brought about the exile of the monarch Isabel II, the drafting of a liberal Constitution in 1869, the institution of the First Republic in 1873, and finally the military coup of 1874 that led to the Restoration of the monarchy. Galdós could of course count fully on his readers' first-hand experience and memory of all three episodes; they were the tragic slaughter by the police of students at a rally in the Plaza del Sol on 10 April 1865, the Eve of St Daniel or *Noche del Matadero*

²³ The punning term was first coined as the subtitle to Unamuno's *Niebla* or 'Mist' (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1914) <https://archive.org/details/nieblanivola00unam>, a genre which the character Víctor Goti claims to have invented in the prologue and Ch. 27, and which Round explains in his 'The Tragic Sense of *Niebla*' as a mannerist post-modern and anti-realist style of presenting a subjective narrative of inner life through dramatisation and dialogue, not physical or social description.

²⁴ His last contribution was an unpublished paper delivered at the age of 76 to the AHGBI in Exeter 2015, 'Beyond Source and Influence: Unlikely Connections and the Interpretation of Galdós'.

²⁵ N.G. Round, 'Cognitive Engines: Notes on The Presentation of History in Galdós's *Novelas españolas contemporáneas*', *Anales galdosianos*, 36 (2001 = *Homenaje a John W. Kronik*), 231–41. <https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmc76671>

(‘Slaughterhouse Night’); the execution of rebel sergeants at the artillery barracks of San Gil in the Plaza de España on 22–23 June 1868; and then the celebration of the success of the uprising in the Plaza del Sol on 29 September. Opening with a florid invocation of Marxist theorist György Lukács’s distinction between historiography, which ‘seeks to engage readers in an imaginative and cognitive dialogue with evidences’, and the historical romance, which draws them ‘into the actual construction of evidences’ by giving ‘human embodiment to historical-social types’ of a ‘middling’ sort (Lukács’s example being the middle-class characters of Walter Scott), Round dubs the latter ‘cognitive engines’ for directing the reader’s understanding at a complex array of different levels.²⁶ Thus in *Fortunata y Jacinta* he portrays the first event, the rally, through the shocked eyes of the protagonist Juanito de Santa Cruz and three young friends who witness the deaths of their fellow students; but Juanito, son of a wealthy and ‘most respectable’ bourgeois family, is protected by his father, rendering his participation in the freedom movement artificial, and so prefiguring Galdós’s notion of the ultimate failure of the Glorious Revolution. Likewise in *Tormento* and *La de Bringas* (1884), set in the nine months before the September uprising, the royal bureaucrat Francisco Bringas’s advancing blindness and his devotion to two religions, ‘God and saving money’, adumbrate the rebellion’s broken roots, a futility further reflected in the main character, his wife Rosalía, whose pride in her class, living in the Royal Palace as Isabel II’s lady-in-waiting, is upset neither by politics nor by her ironic subsequent fate, caused by secret overspending; all this makes readers confront the meaning of the events through a multi-dimensional matrix of polarities of change and permanence and social values. And finally, in *Ángel Guerra* (1890–91), the bourgeois rebel protagonist’s forced flight to Toledo is preceded by an account of his nightmare of having witnessed as a schoolboy the execution of the sergeants in 1866, which the third-person narrator expresses in childish form but with journalistic details, intermixing the adult’s recollections with the youth’s contrasting point of view expressed in exclamatory verbless phrases (‘Feet in the air, blue trousers, bodies stretched out, others doubled up, face down [...] smell of gunpowder’). The effect is to engrave the traumatic effect of the past on the wrecked present, first shaping Guerra’s revolutionary activism (his surname means ‘War’), but then losing its hold as he grows wealthy. These real events in recent history thus raise spectres of unresolved tension between resistance to tyranny and the bloody consequences of revolution; the alternating focus of their ‘cognitive engines’ pile up multiple layers of historical imagination by

²⁶ First published in Russian as Исторический роман, a series of articles in the magazine *Литературный Критик* 1937–8, and as a book in Hungarian, *A történelmi regény* (Budapest: Hungária Könyvek, 1947), Round cites Lukács from the English translation from German, *The Historical Novel*, trans. H. Mitchell & S. Mitchell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 30–33. <https://ia600509.us.archive.org/1/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.65818/2015.65818.The-Historical-Novel.pdf>

Lukácsian novelistic ‘construction of evidences’. Here, as in other essays on Galdós, we see Round’s ability to rise to instructive and persuasive literary critique.

To conclude, I return to Nick Round’s rural origins. Discussing the reasons for his introduction of Spanish at Launceston College in the 1930s, headmaster H. Spencer Toy wrote:

To the question ‘Why do you teach Spanish at Launceston?’ the short answer is that the choice was determined fundamentally by the geographical configuration of the district. [...] Launceston is the centre of a rural district, bounded by moorland and coast, [...] an area of rather poor farms, [...] tiny villages or hamlets. [...] I began to wonder how they could possibly compete with boys from the larger towns and cities [...]. It was evident that the boys of this rural district [...] must be given some unusual qualification that the great mass of their fellows did not have [...]; so by the process of elimination [...] we came to Spanish, so widely spoken and so rarely taught, as the obvious choice, a choice we have never regretted.²⁷

He goes on to explain how popular the subject became, spawning a Spanish Society that regularly presented literary evenings, charades and plays, all in Spanish; and how it enabled unprecedented numbers of pupils, many the sons of small farmers, to win scholarships to Oxford and go on to successful careers in government offices, banks or universities. This was Round’s case, shared with other distinguished Hispanists connected with Launceston such as Calderonian scholar Albert Sloman, a pupil in the 1930s. Country-bred Round bore the stamp of his lucky privilege with faithful constancy throughout his life, and it explains much about his highly individual commitment to teaching and researching Iberian literature and history.

He was likewise devoted to and proud of his wife Ann, author of an Oxford MLitt on ‘Sir Thomas Edmondes’ Embassy to Paris 1610-1617: A Study of Diplomatic Administration’ (1965), and Cornwall Coordinator of the St Hugh’s Alumni Association Regional Network, as well as committed socialist; and their daughter Gráinne/Anna, Oxford graduate and researcher in theoretical linguistics, and subsequently administrator of think-tanks in the fields of education, regional economy, and social policy. He thanked Ann for collaborating in the preparation of his books, and dedicated his translation of Tirso de Molina’s *El condenado por desconfiado* to Gráinne in 1986, also thanking her for help on linguistics in an article of 1991.²⁸ So we owe as many thanks to

²⁷ H.S. Toy, ‘An Experiment in Teaching Spanish’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 24:93 (Jan 1947), 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.3828/bhs.24.93.1>

²⁸ Tirso de Molina, *Damned for Despair (El condenado por desconfiado)*, ed. & trans. N.G. Round (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986). <https://archive.org/details/damnedfordespair0000moli>, p. vi ‘For Gráinne’, and p. viii ‘My wife Ann has sustained me in this work as in everything that I undertake, and has taken a major part in preparing the book for print’; Round, *The Greatest Man Uncrowned*, p. xii ‘she has enriched the work [with] the benefit of her overall historical sense. [...] the achievement is as much hers as

them as to Nick himself for his tireless and perspicacious dedication to exploring Spanish literature, culture, and history. His contribution was, and will continue to be, deeply appreciated.

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mine’; ‘The Speakable and the Unspeakable’, p. 134 n. 25 ‘I am grateful to Ms Gráinne Round for advice on the background in linguistics.’

