

The first time Anagrama took a systematic interest in narrative fiction was in 1976 with the 'Contraseñas' collection, which began with Bukowski, Copi, Brautigan, the stars of New Journalism (so-called 'outlaw literature'). But in 1981 I decided to also back a less classifiable type of literature, and we launched 'Panorama de narrativas' with Jane Bowles, Grace Paley and Thomas Bernhard, all splendid cult authors. The collection was quickly consolidated with bestsellers by Patricia Highsmith and her Ripley, and with the smash hit *La conjura de los necios*. Incidentally, quite a few publishers had the good fortune to release 'high-quality bestsellers' (a phenomenon that is almost unimaginable now) in the eighties. In Spain these included *Memorias de Adriano*, *Bella del Señor* and *La insoportable levedad del ser*.

Meanwhile, on the Spanish language front, in the seventies we started to see the emergence of authors –particularly Eduardo Mendoza with *La verdad sobre el caso Savolta* and early works by Javier Marías and Juanjo Millás– who were producing high-quality literature while managing to stay away from the sterile style of works such as the experimental novels that proliferated in Europe and also in Spain, understandably scaring off readers.

Given the success of 'Panorama de narrativas', it seemed timely to organise a literary award for Spanish-language novels, targeted at authors who would feel drawn to Anagrama (the more literary prizes like the Barral and the Biblioteca Breve had disappeared, and the Nadal prize had lost the brilliance of its first two decades, the forties and fifties). We launched the prize and were fortunate that in its first edition, in 1984, it went to a virtually unknown Álvaro Pombo for *El héroe de las mansardas de Mansard*, which received extraordinary critical acclaim. He was followed by Marías, Azúa, Molina Foix, Vila-Matas, Tomeo, Díaz-Mas, Chirbes and Sánchez Ostiz, to mention only a few of the authors who won or were short-listed in the eighties. In other words, the prize went to prominent figures from what the cultural press called 'new Spanish fiction' which, on a mass scale, for the first time in the history of Spanish letters, received considerable international recognition and was included in the most prestigious foreign catalogues, which had previously been virtually

monopolised by the big (and medium-sized) names of the Latin American boom. Later on, particularly from 2000 onwards, after the 'Bolaño boom' and notwithstanding the fluctuations of each year's crop, a kind of balance was struck in terms of the international backing of Latin American and Spanish authors (apart from Nobel Prizes).

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