

The background of the entire cover is a repeating pattern of small, light green, eight-pointed stars or snowflakes on a cream-colored base.

PICARESQUE NARRATIVE, PICARESQUE FICTIONS

*A Theory and
Research
Guide*

ULRICH WICKS

PICARESQUE NARRATIVE, PICARESQUE FICTIONS

*A Theory and
Research
Guide*

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ULRICH WICKS



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To Barbara, Elisabeth, and Stephen

Nothing in the world is more constant
than inconstancy itself.

—*Simplicius Simplicissimus* (III, 8)

Contents

PREFACE	xv
PART I: A THEORY OF PICARESQUE NARRATIVE	1
Chapter 1: The Picaresque Genre	3
Chapter 2: The Picaresque Genre in Literary Scholarship	17
Chapter 3: The Picaresque Mode	35
Chapter 4: The Nature of Picaresque Narrative	53
Basic Studies in Picaresque Narrative/Works Cited	69
PART II: A GUIDE TO BASIC PICARESQUE FICTIONS	85
<i>Introduction</i>	87
<i>Alonso, mozo de muchos amos</i>	88
<i>Amerika</i>	90
<i>Aventuras del bachiller Trapaza</i>	99
<i>Barry Lyndon</i>	101
<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	107
<i>El Buscón</i>	108
<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>	117
<i>Colonel Jack</i>	123

<i>The Confidence-Man</i>	125
<i>La desordenada codicia de los bienes ajenos</i>	134
"The Dogs' Colloquy"	136
<i>Down and Out in Paris and London</i>	138
<i>The English Rogue</i>	142
<i>Estebanillo González</i>	145
<i>The Family of Pascual Duarte</i>	148
<i>Fanny</i>	152
<i>Felix Krull</i>	157
<i>The Futile Life of Pito Pérez</i>	163
<i>La garduña de Sevilla</i>	168
<i>Gil Blas</i>	170
<i>The Ginger Man</i>	177
<i>Going Places</i>	181
<i>The Golden Ass</i>	182
<i>Guzmán de Alfarache</i>	184
<i>Hermes Myth</i>	194
<i>Herself Surprised</i>	195
<i>La hija de Celestina</i>	196
<i>The Horse's Mouth</i>	198
<i>Huckleberry Finn</i>	203
"The Illustrious Kitchen-Maid"	212
<i>Invisible Man</i>	214
<i>The Itching Parrot</i>	220
<i>Journey to the End of the Night</i>	223
<i>Knulp</i>	227
<i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i>	230
<i>Liber Vagatorum</i>	241
<i>The Life and Death of Mr. Badman</i>	245

<i>Little Big Man</i>	247
<i>Marcos de Obregón</i>	250
<i>Memoirs of a Good-for-Nothing</i>	253
<i>Midnight Cowboy</i>	259
<i>Moll Flanders</i>	261
<i>La niña de los embustes, Teresa de Manzanares</i>	270
<i>Nuevas andanzas y desventuras de Lazarillo de Tormes</i>	273
<i>O Lucky Man!</i>	274
<i>On the Road</i>	276
<i>The Painted Bird</i>	278
<i>Periquillo, el de las gallineras</i>	285
<i>La pícara Justina</i>	286
<i>Reynard the Fox</i>	290
"Rinconete and Cortadillo"	293
<i>Roderick Random</i>	294
<i>Roxana</i>	303
<i>The Runagate Courage</i>	306
<i>The Satyricon</i>	312
<i>Setting Free the Bears</i>	315
<i>Simplicius Simplicissimus</i>	316
<i>Sisyphus Myth</i>	324
<i>The Thief's Journal</i>	326
<i>Till Eulenspiegel</i>	328
<i>The Tin Drum</i>	330
<i>Trickster Archetype</i>	339
<i>The Unfortunate Traveller</i>	344
<i>Zelig</i>	349
CHRONOLOGY OF BASIC PICARESQUES	353
INDEX	357

Preface

We might ask, in general, for whom should a literary term be defined? The expert? The casual reader? All those readers in between? Everyone? The question of audience, which governs all writing, troubled me long after my threefold goal was clear: to describe picaresque narrative with both careful attention to its historical development as a genre and to its persistent appeal as an archetypal narrative structure; to propose a genre construct of picaresque narrative; and to explore the usefulness of generic awareness in the act of reading by describing, in varying depths proportionate to their exemplary traits, a number of specific fictions that collectively illustrate the full narrative spectrum of the picaresque mode. Before long, I realized that my imaginary reader, my constructed audience, my *Vuestra Merced*, was myself. Let me explain this apparent presumptuousness, worthy of a narrating picaro himself.

When I began to study picaresque fiction, after being stunned by a first encounter with *Lazarillo de Tormes* in a graduate course on the Spanish novel, I wished I had a book of the kind I have here tried to write. At that time there was very little available from a generic and comparative perspective. As I pursued the subject, books and articles appeared from everywhere, and soon the picaresque was a hot, even controversial, topic among academic critics and scholars. Years later, after a number of superb and illuminating studies of the picaresque from a variety of angles, the book I had wished for still had not been written. So here I am, still trying to make sense of the picaresque to myself.

It may well be that such is the motivation behind all critical writing, as it is behind genre theory itself: to construct the extra-text that helps guide all other texts into an order within which individual texts can be properly understood. The paradox of the absent book is that, having now explored the critical territory that I wished were covered in that book, I no longer need this one. I therefore present it to any readers who, like me then, are now wishing for a reference

book that will help guide them through the confusing ubiquity of "picaresque" in contemporary critical and popular usage.

A wide-ranging study such as this led me of necessity into genres, periods, languages, and other territories in which I need guidance myself, and such errors of fact and of judgment that have resulted from my audacity in roaming so far and wide are entirely my fault, and not those of the critics and authors I present. In part I, except for a few instances, I have annotated all quotations parenthetically by author's name or title plus page number; full bibliographical information appears in the list of works cited following chapter 4. Part II is deliberately discontinuous; it is designed as a vagabondage of reading, appropriate to the fictions it discusses, and I hope the reader browses as he or she needs to. Except where noted, all annotations in part II refer to the select bibliographies following each entry. In order to make each entry self-standing, I have had to allow some bibliographical duplication from entry to entry, especially of those works that themselves cover a number of the fictions. In part II, I have not given original language editions with any consistency because I have not assumed a bilingual reader. Throughout I have tried to avoid the *à la mode* and *à la page* terminology of currently fashionable critical theory. Many of these terms remistify rather than clarify, even within the academy, to all but a few. When literary theory and criticism do not speak to the same audience that is reading literature, something is very wrong.

Brief portions of part I and a small section of part II were previously published in different form. I thank the editors of *Genre*, *PMLA*, *College Literature*, and *Mosaic* for permission to adapt portions of previously published work in this book. My debt to all the scholars and critics who have illuminated the picaresque from their perspectives will be evident from the frequency with which I quote them to make points that I could not hope to articulate more insightfully myself.

I am fortunate to have had the conscientious and patient editorial guidance of Marilyn Brownstein, Maureen Melino, Beverly Miller, and Penny Sippel of Greenwood Press.

PART I

A THEORY OF PICARESQUE NARRATIVE

CHAPTER 1

The Picaresque Genre

It has become a critical commonplace in generic theory to make an obligatory acknowledgment of vicious circularity before being forced to proceed within it. The frustration of this part of the hermeneutic task is succinctly put by Paul Hernadi (paraphrasing Günther Müller) in *Beyond Genre* (1972): "How can I define tragedy (or any other genre) before I know on which works to base the definition, yet how can I know on which works to base the definition before I have defined tragedy?" (2). Inside this circle is still another problem, which Alastair Fowler in *Kinds of Literature* (1982) calls "ineradicable knowledge": "In order to reconstruct the original genre, we have to eliminate from consciousness its subsequent states. For the idea of a genre that informs a reader's understanding is normally the latest, most inclusive conception of it that he knows. And unless he can unknow this conception, it seems that he cannot recover meanings that relate to the genre's earlier, 'innocent' states" (261). The first of these activities is essentially synchronic, seeking to create a paradigm or hypothetical *Ur*-type in the context of which individual works might be better understood. The second is primarily diachronic, aiming to trace the evolution of an identifiable genre or type in specific historical contexts. Together such literary activities only formalize theoretically and critically what is absolutely unsuppressible in even the most cursory acts of reading: trying to assimilate a new text into the familiar community of our accumulated reading experiences.

Even the child reading (or being read) her first stories gropes for connections, for the most rudimentary generic signals. In the act of reading, a text yields meaning only in the context of its co-texts from other acts of reading; these co-texts in turn alter their meanings and slightly rearrange themselves with the addition of every new text. The reading of each new text is therefore of necessity also a rereading of already familiar texts; the reading of the new and this rereading of the old often combine to form an extratext, a generic construct, or type, or kind against which the strangely new text can be familiarized while simultane-

ously reassessing the old texts. The reading experience is always implicitly and sometimes explicitly generic, and the whole of genre theory springs from this dynamic process, which T. S. Eliot in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917) captured in an assertion that itself resonates like the phenomenon it describes: "What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it" (50). Fifty years later, Eliot's statement finds an echo in Julia Kristeva's description of the structuralist concept of *intertextuality*, as quoted in Jonathan Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (1975): "Every text takes shape as a mosaic of citations, every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts" (139). Culler himself adds, "A work can only be read in connection with or against other texts, which provides a grid through which it is read and structured by establishing expectations which enable one to pick out salient features and give them a structure." Both Eliot's statement and the structuralist variations of it describe the creation and reception of literary texts as a process of continual generic readjustment, of constant reformulation of the literary frame of reference within which we read.

The very imprecision and circularity of Eliot's assertion ("what happens . . . is something that happens") are particularly appropriate to a phenomenon that is always process. Just when we think we have the "what" pinned down, the "something" proves elusive and forces us back to reformulate the "what," which in turn impels us to reassess the "something," and so on. The circle is not vicious after all, for it is hardly closed. As more texts are added to the collectivity of experienced texts, it resembles more an ever-expanding spiral, with each new text (or new reading of a previously read text) at its center for the duration of the reading. The centrifugal force of the new reading and the centripetal force of all accumulated readings (the "ineradicable memory") automatically—and dynamically—interact, creating the generic process that leads to an understanding of texts in the only way that we can understand them: in relation to other texts.

Or should lead. Genre theory, unfortunately, has more often than not in literary history been rigidly prescriptive rather than flexibly descriptive, for both maker and reader. When genre theory exists primarily as a pigeonholing or classification system for its own sake, it soon becomes tiresome to all but the hyperorganized reader, as individual literary works are coerced through formulaic reduction into available slots. Rigid genre theory actually undermines literature by squelching what we most admire in literary texts: the innovative, the unpredictable, the experimental—in short, the new, for which there may be no existing pigeonhole. When genre theory cannot or will not do what individual texts are constantly doing, then one of the two must make way for the other; either the new text is rejected as an unacceptable mutation, or genre theory must refine or expand its categories.

When literature thrives on experimentation, as it has in the twentieth century, prescriptive genre theory must make room or else make way. That the latter has

been the case—that the theory of genres has not been at the center of literary study and reflection in this century—is diagnosed by René Wellek at the beginning of his "Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*" (1967): "Clearly this is due to the fact that in the practice of almost all writers of our time genre distinctions matter little: boundaries are being constantly transgressed, genres combined or fused, old genres discarded or transformed, new genres created, to such an extent that the very concept has been called in doubt" (225). If genre theory adapted itself to what Wellek describes literature as doing—if, that is, it conceived of itself in Eliot's terms or along the lines of structuralist conceptions of *intertextuality*—it could again be at the heart of literary study, where in fact it should be, given that the act of reading is inherently generic.

If every act of reading is fundamentally, inherently, and inescapably generic and yet genre theory is not at the center of literary study, then somewhere theory must have gotten seriously out of whack with practice. It did so primarily by not changing as literature itself changes. This is precisely the point Fowler makes in refuting those who hold genre theory to be irrelevant because they misapprehend genres as simple and immutable permanent forms, established once and for all:

But . . . genres are actually in a continual state of transmutation. It is by *their* modification, primarily, that individual works convey literary meaning. Frequent adjustments in genre theory are needed, therefore, if the forms are to continue to mediate between the flux of history and the canons of art. Thus, to expect fixed forms, immune to change yet permanently corresponding to literature, is to misunderstand what genre theory undertakes (or should undertake). (*Kinds of Literature*, 24; emphasis mine)

As Fowler suggests, genre theory must be conceived in rhythm with what actually happens in our individual acts of reading, which are only superficially guided by a genre theory that limits itself to the prescriptively taxonomic or the historically cartographic. When genre theory acknowledges the rudimentary generic groping of the reading experience itself, it can help us understand a text as the act of reading blends imperceptibly into interpretation. Here, too, generic identity is absolutely fundamental. It is also unavoidably consequential, as E. D. Hirsch points out in *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) when he says that "an interpreter's preliminary generic conception of a text is constitutive of everything that he subsequently understands, and that this remains the case unless and until that generic conception is altered" (74). It is this process of constant alteration that generic theory should concern itself with, as Thomas Kent proposes in *Interpretation and Genre* (1986) when he calls for a holistic theory of genre that will attempt to see each text as both an unchanging body of words and a continually developing cultural artifact: "The holistic genre critic, then, should see both the part and the whole, the synchronic and the diachronic conventional elements, constantly interacting together to form new patterns of meaning, and generating a descriptive model of this kind of activity requires a substantial shift in attitude about the critic's role in the study of literary texts" (27). Yet such a

shift would only bring critical theory into line with literary practice; it would simply and rightfully acknowledge what actually happens to and in the text as it is being made and whenever it is being received. The term *holistic genre theory* ought to be something of a redundancy, but its necessity for Kent's purpose emphasizes how fragmenting and distancing our received concepts of genre have become when we bring them into our actual encounters with literary texts. Genre theory that has a healthy respect for how literature actually works should by its very nature be holistic, always keeping the text and its kind in a carefully balanced and mutually respectful relationship, which Rosalie Colie in her conclusion to *The Resources of Kind* (1973) captures in an almost aphoristic way: "Significant pieces of literature are worth much more than their kind, but they are what they are in part by their inevitable kind-ness" (128).

What concept of kind-ness was going through the mind of the reader in 1554 who picked up a slim volume called *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades*? And what kinds of kind-ness had been at work in the mind and imagination of the anonymous author when he wrote it a year or two earlier? What prompted 1599 readers of the first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* to make a conscious connection with *Lazarillo*? How aware were these readers of the generic newness of what they were reading, and how consciously did they have to sift through their accumulated reading experiences in order to assimilate these new texts? What generic signals were the texts themselves giving these readers? Was it only something as crude as mere content or subject matter? Who, in fact, were these first readers, and how did they respond interpretively to these fictions?

Unfortunately, the further back in literary history we go, the more elusively hypothetical the answers to such questions become. Thus far, we know relatively little about the actual readers of the fictions that soon came to be called picaresque. We know that *Lazarillo* was considered to be a subversive book. (In 1559 it was placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a list of books forbidden by Church authority to be read by Roman Catholics.) We know that *Guzmán* became an unprecedented best-seller. In the wake of the popularity of *Guzmán*, *Lazarillo* was reissued at least nine times in the four years between 1599 and 1603—as many editions as there had been in the whole forty-five years since its initial publication. King Philip II had died in 1598, and the new reign of his son Philip III resulted in some relaxation of censorship. For several years, then, until the publication of the first part of *Don Quixote* in 1605, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* must have been the most talked-about books of the decade, if not of the century. But the actual composition of this sizable literate audience has not yet been explored. It seems reasonable to conclude that almost none of this large readership coincided with the lower class, among whom were the hordes of vagrants and beggars roaming the roads of Spain and congregating in some cities in such huge numbers that they had to be periodically expelled. The poor, as Lionel Trilling has said, do not read about the poor. One may imagine then, as Helen H. Reed does in *The Reader in the Picaresque Novel* (1984),

a reading public comprised of aristocrats, courtiers, *conversos*, country gentry, the urban bourgeoisie, clergy, students, some women, and virtually no *pícaros*. . . . No doubt the individual novels varied in their appeal to different social groups as well as to different tastes, but the early picaresque novel might be described as a new genre in search of a readership, or a genre in the process of formation that created its own readership. (17–18)

That it was a democratic intended readership we know from the hypothetical readers set up in the prologues to both *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*. *Lazarillo* not only addresses a specific narratee ("Vuestra Merced"), to whom he has been asked to explain his life, but he also invites a homogeneous readership to listen in, as it were, for "anybody can read my story and enjoy it." Alemán in *Guzmán* provides two direct addresses to readers—one "al Vulgo," the other "al discreto lector"—and then adds a "Declaration for the Understanding of this Book," which is addressed to all readers. No actual reader is going to admit belonging to the mob at whom the first prologue is aimed, and so Alemán shapes his readers by making them feel privileged, above the incorrigible rabble—a narrating strategy that justifies his subject matter by short-circuiting any objections to it. Ironically, the reader becomes part of an in-group looking at society's down and out. In both *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, all readers ("anybody") are discreet; this flattery aimed at the self-images of readers makes them paradoxically both willing and wary participants in a narrative confidence game that enables picaresque narration to function between author and reader.

In two of his three addresses to readers in the 1599 first part, Alemán uses *pícaro* (which does not occur in *Lazarillo*), a word choice he would come to regret by the time he published the second part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* in 1604, when he has *Guzmán* (in the sixth chapter of book 1) lament the epithet by which he has been known since writing the first part. The etymology of *pícaro* is troublesome. Corominas (1954–1957) dates its first appearance in 1525 in the expression *pícaro de cocina* ("kitchen boy," or "scullion"), a relatively neutral word with none of the associations *Guzmán* is complaining about. But around 1545, the meaning of *pícaro* shifted from designating a lowly profession to describing immoral and antisocial behavior. In Eugenio de Salazar's *Carta del Bachiller de Arcadia* (1548), *pícaros* are explicitly contrasted with courtiers. In a morality play of that time, the word is used in a context clearly of mischief and wrongdoing. Harry Sieber in *The Picaresque* (1977) suggests that the semantic shift may have had something to do with the vast armies of pike-men (*picas secas* and/or *piqueros secos*, from the verb *picar*) needed in Spain's defense of its territories. Some of them were recruited from among criminals, and many deserted. "Deserting soldiers . . . attempted to return home, begging and stealing on the way. It is possible that some of the deserters carried their previous military title of *piquero* with them into 'civilian' life" (6). Another explanation for the later meaning of *pícaro* is by association with Picardy, a region near Flanders where Spain was engaged in wars from 1587 to 1659. To a Spaniard, a Picard was a rogue. Whatever its precise origins, the word *pícaro*

achieved wide currency by the end of the sixteenth century. In dictionaries compiled in 1570 and 1593, a *pícaro* is defined as a shabby man without honor. This was the popular meaning of the word when Alemán applied it to his literary creation, and from then on the meaning of the word has been inextricably bound up with the various literary characters who are called *pícaros*. A dramatic interlude called *Testamento del pícaro pobre*, which must have been written before 1605, when the author to whom it has been attributed (Pedro Láinez) died, has a sonnet in praise of the picaresque life; it begins, "Gozar de libertad, vivir contento" ("to enjoy freedom, to live content"), which emphasizes the picaro's outsider status positively as a freedom from responsibility and tiresome social obligations. A similar tone dominates a poem from about the same time, *La vida del pícaro*, in which "sólo el pícaro muere bien logrado, / que desde que nació, nada desea" ("only a picaro dies successful, because from birth he desired nothing"). By 1611 in Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, as Bjornson points out in *The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction* (1977), the word *pícaro* meant a vulgar, rootless person willing to perform menial tasks, but there begins to be associated with him "a characteristic freedom from duty and responsibility" (262).

A year after Guzmán de Alfarache complained of his epithet, Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*, in the twenty-second chapter of which Quixote encounters the galley slave Ginés de Pasamonte, who says that he is writing a book:

"It's so good," replied Ginés, "that Lazarillo de Tormes will have to look out, and so will everything in that style that has ever been written or ever will be. One thing I can promise you, is that it is all the truth, and such well-written, entertaining truth that there is no fiction that can compare with it."

"And what is the title of the book?" asked Don Quixote.

"*The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte*," replied that hero.

"Is it finished?" asked Don Quixote.

"How can it be finished," replied the other, "if my life isn't? What is written begins with my birth and goes down to the point when I was sent to the galleys this last time." (Trans. J. M. Cohen, 176-77)

There are two allusions here: a direct one to Lazarillo and an indirect one to Guzmán de Alfarache, who writes while serving a sentence in the galleys. Not only is an explicit link made between *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, but a sense of genre distinctly emerges in Ginés's comparing his effort with "everything in that style" that has been or is yet to be written. Ginés de Pasamonte the writer is generically conscious of his narrative task, and the genre he is actively being shaped by and shaping is the emerging picaresque genre as thus far articulated in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*. "One witnesses here," writes Claudio Guillén in "Genre and Countergenre" (1971), "the spontaneous discovery of a class by a reader-critic belonging to the most vast of the audiences. . . . Ginés, as a reader neither cultured nor ignorant, as a layman (or *ingenio lego*), combines a bold ability to recognize novelty with the generic

mentality of his time, that is, with an immoderate fondness for classification, be it within or without the pale of traditional poetics" (*Literature as System*, 151-52). The essential point here is that Ginés is not merely expressing the imitative urge of a hack copycat; he is not spinning off *Lazarillo* but rather improving on the kind or "style" or class of which he sees *Lazarillo* as a specific example (Cervantes's word is actually *género*, but it did not then mean "genre" in the modern sense). Ginés has a strong, if rudimentary, sense of genre, both diachronically and synchronically, as he posits the future development of this kind of fiction. And Cervantes assumed that his own readers would catch the allusions and understand the implications without further explanation.

This passage from *Don Quixote* establishes as strongly as any contemporary evidence can a generic awareness of the emerging picaresque genre in both writers and readers. The passage also emphasizes major characteristics of the structure, content, style, and readership of works in that genre. A work of this kind is, first of all, a *vida*, and thus narrated by its protagonist; as such, it is true to life in the sense of being empirically valid, as compared to the chivalric romances, which were not and which the emerging picaresque must have dealt a considerable blow (when Cervantes has a friend in his prologue to part 1 of *Don Quixote* describe the book as "una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías," he may have been beating a dying or already dead horse). When Ginés insists on the need to live out his life before writing about it, he emphasizes the empirical impulse in this kind of writing. A *vida* is, moreover, chronological in structure. It should be entertaining and well written. Its content is determined by the shady, shift— even criminal—behavior of characters like Ginés de Pasamonte himself (who later validates his status as a picaro by turning the galley slaves against Don Quixote, stealing Sancho's donkey, and robbing the priest and barber; in disguise as Maese Pedro in part 2, he reappears as a full-fledged trickster). And, finally, such *vidas* can be read—and indeed written—by everybody, including the Ginés de Pasamontes of the world: the "anybody" Lazarillo addresses in his prologue.

Even if we accept the by-now almost conventional interpretation of the Ginés de Pasamonte episode in *Don Quixote* as expressing Cervantine hostility against the new picaresque narrative form (as expounded perhaps most influentially in Carlos Blanco Aguinaga's 1957 article, "Cervantes y la picaresca. Notas sobre dos tipos de realismo"), we have to assume that in the dialogue between Ginés and Don Quixote, Cervantes is relying absolutely on a rudimentary generic awareness on the part of his readers. As reader Ginés converses with reader Quixote, their exchange is listened to by a third: the readers of *Don Quixote* who, whether they interpret the discussion as critical parody or not, are nevertheless expected to bring to it an intertextual and intergeneric awareness of the picaresque, which is as necessary for understanding this episode as an even more fundamentally assumed generic familiarity with the chivalric romances is for the whole of *Don Quixote*. Thus, by 1605, the emerging picaresque is already "defined"—implicitly, if not explicitly—as a distinctly recognizable kind of

writing, and it is so defined by a pizaro himself. By 1605, a huge (by any previous standard) audience has been responding to, and by that very response further engendering, a specific narrative type, if not a literary genre in the formal sense of a traditional literary kind familiar to educated Renaissance readers. A regulative concept must have been at work, though its "poetics" will remain informal for several more centuries, until literary historians in the nineteenth century begin to formulate it a posteriori.

Through Ginés de Pasamonte, Cervantes gives us the first theory of the picaresque, defining it aesthetically by its autobiographical form, sociologically by its democratic readership—and authorship, and even ideologically by its subject matter—which is clearly subversive, given Ginés's arrogant character, his past behavior, and his present and future behavior as revealed in the tricks he will play on Don Quixote. The seasoned criminal, reader of picaresques and would-be author of them, confronts the self-deluded *hidalgo*, reader of romances who anticipates an *historiador* writing his life even as he sets out on his first sally. Having read *Lazarillo*, Ginés must see in Quixote much of the equally deluded *hidalgo* in the third chapter of that work; reading *Don Quixote*, Cervantes's reader cannot avoid making the connection. *Lazarillo* sees through his *hidalgo* (though with a great deal of sympathy) as much as Ginés sees through his. In their stances, the two pizaros represent a new order defying an old. Their upstart tone must have satisfied a need in what Guillén suggests was the core audience of the picaresque: "the discontented middle class" (*Literature as System*, 144).

With the appearance of López de Ubeda's *La pícara Justina* in that same year, the picaresque as a narrative genre is firmly established, for *Justina* is among other things a parody of picaresque fiction itself. Parody assumes its audience's familiarity with the conventions of the literary tradition or specific work that is its parodic object, and *Justina* works successfully only in contextuality with *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *Lazarillo de Tormes*. In addition to its conscious (and self-conscious) parody, which demands generic awareness in the reader, and its introduction of a pícara, or female rogue, *Justina* is also significant in the picaresque tradition for a more or less extratextual contribution, which has been much reproduced and from which a number of critics have drawn important conclusions about the picaresque genre: the frontispiece to its first edition, which depicts "La nave de la vida picaresca" (the ship of picaresque life). On board, the principal figures are Guzmán, Justina, and Celestina (Justina's literary "mother"); *Lazarillo* is by himself in a little rowboat connected by a rope to the larger vessel. Classical divinities, proverbial sayings, allegorical figures, and pictorial emblems constituting the paraphernalia of the picaresque life complete the crowded scene. We can derive a number of moralistic readings from this interesting engraving, some of them mutually contradictory; and the perspective is such that we cannot be entirely sure if *Lazarillo* is towing the ship. But what is most significant in this picture is that *Lazarillo*, Guzmán, and Justina are all inside the same frame. In both this engraving and its text, *La pícara Justina* establishes its genre; by bringing two superficially unlike texts into contact with

a third—itself—*Justina* forces readers into seeking out deeper similarities, in the course of which they cannot avoid constructing a generic type, or abstract extratext, which governs all three. Once the third text acknowledges as models the first and second texts, generic identity and awareness regulate both the writing and the reading of the fiction, and a genre exists.

The works belonging to this genre were not fully enumerated until the late nineteenth century, when Fonger de Haan and Frank Wadleigh Chandler published their doctoral dissertations on the picaresque. The generally accepted canon of Spanish picaresque fictions was established by Angel Valbuena Prat who in 1943 produced a two-thousand-page anthology, *La novela picaresca española*. This anthology, which has gone through more than a half-dozen editions, contains twenty-three works of fiction in their entirety. In addition to *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán*, and *Justina*, Valbuena Prat includes Juan de Luna's *Segunda parte de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1620) and Juan Martí's *Segunda parte de Guzmán de Alfarache* (1602), published under the pseudonym Mateo Luján de Sayavedra; and four *novelas ejemplares* by Cervantes: "La ilustre fregona," "Rinconete y Cortadillo," "El casamiento engañoso," and "Coloquio de los perros" (published in 1613 but written earlier). The other works anthologized are Salas Barbadillo, *Le hija de Celestina* (1612); Vicente Espinel, *Vida de Marcos de Obregón* (1618); Quevedo, *El Buscón* (1626); Carlos García, *La desordenada codicia de los bienes ajenos* (1619); Jerónimo de Alcalá, *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (*El donado hablador*) (1624, 1626); Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, *La niña de los embustes*, *Teresa de Manzanares* (1632), *Adventuras del Bachiller Trapaza* (1637), and *La garduña de Sevilla* (1642); María de Zayas, "El castigo de la miseria" (1637); Guevara, *El diablo Cojuelo* (1641); Antonio Enriquez Gomez, *Vida de don Gregorio Guadaña* (part of *El siglo pitagórico*, 1644); the anonymous *Vida y hechos de Estebanillo Gonzalez* (1646); Francisco Santos, *Periquillo el de las gallineras* (1688); and Torres Villarroel, *Su vida* (1743, 1752, 1758). There is considerable lack of consensus among scholars that this collection indeed constitutes a generic canon. Torres Villarroel's *Vida* and Santos's *Periquillo el de las gallineras*, for example, are almost universally rejected as picaresques, or just simply ignored, while Guevara's *El diablo Cojuelo* is, more properly speaking and as Valbuena Prat himself says in his introduction, a formal satire with picaresque characteristics. The critical emphasis among scholars has been and continues to be overwhelmingly on *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán*, and *El Buscón*, with *Justina* trailing behind, and even lesser attention to the other writers except, perhaps, for Cervantes. As the only collection of its kind in any language, *La novela picaresca española*, immensely useful and helpful as it is, has proved frustrating to critics looking there for a clear genre definition. Putting twenty-three works together inside the same covers does not yield as strong a sense of generic identity as did putting *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán*, and *Justina* inside the same frame in the frontispiece to *Justina*, which Valbuena Prat also uses as his frontispiece.

In his "Zur Chronologie und Verbreitung des spanischen Schelmenromans"

(1928), Helmut Petriconi chronologically lists thirty-seven works of fiction published between 1528 (*La lozana andaluza*) and 1680 (*Trabajo del vicio*) and in a parallel chronology lists the thirty-one editions of *Lazarillo de Tormes* published between 1554 and 1664. With a basic definition of the picaresque guiding his selection of fictional works, Petriconi demonstrates that there is a thoroughly traceable development, which peaks around 1620. *Lazarillo* continues to be widely read as new picaresque fictions appear, reinforcing its position as generic prototype and suggesting a generic impulse in readers to connect with what must have been perceived even then as the earliest text in the tradition.

Among a certain group of readers, the picaresque even became what today we would call trendy. Bjornson says that picaresque life as viewed by the upper-class reader "exercised an undeniable appeal in the increasingly secular atmosphere at Philip III's court, where women even adopted the custom of disguising themselves in ragged clothes and claiming to be dressed 'a lo picaresco' (in picaresque fashion)" (*The Picaresque Hero in European Fiction*, 69). Works that parodied the picaresque, such as *La pícara Justina* and *El Buscón* (the latter already circulating in manuscript before *Justina* was published), were thus intended in large part as in-jokes for a highly select audience, and the more frivolous picaresques, like the adventure stories of Salas Barbadillo and Castillo Solórzano, were aimed at a leisure-class readership seeking vicarious excitement. It has therefore sometimes been argued that highly self-conscious, even precious, works such as *Justina* and *El Buscón* and superficially derivative works such as *La hija de Celestina* and *La garduña de Sevilla*, for example, cannot be considered genuine picaresques. Specifically targeted for an elite audience, such works either caricature their genre through clever exaggeration of its characteristics or seek to cash in on the genre's success by spinning off its most popular conventions. Such arguments, valid though they may be in some cases, are primarily value judgments of individual works rather than generic assessments. In the end, such a line of thinking leaves us with a genre comprised of a mere two or three works. But a new genre does not remain naive for long; after *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán*, generic self-consciousness itself becomes a major convention of the picaresque genre. A genre would be truly sterile if every work in it recapitulated the prototype. Genres evolve through the tension between generic constraints and the demands of the unique work, a tension that itself may become the center of interest, as it does in *Justina* and *El Buscón*, or that may be erased altogether in favor of emphasizing and embellishing those characteristics of the genre that were proving most popular, as it is in the superficial imitations. Both kinds of generic perpetuation rely on and in turn enhance the reader's generic awareness. A parody is probably one of the most revealing things that can happen to a genre. By their very act of expending clever literary force against a grouped body of literary works, parodies like *Justina* and *El Buscón* sharpen the reader's sense of the genre being spoofed—just as we have a better grasp, for example, of the gothic novel after reading Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* or just as through *Don Quixote* we get an excellent sense of what a *libro de caballería* is

without ever having read one. The copycat works are equally revealing generically. By their formulaic reduction of generic conventions, they can give us a more coherent understanding of a genre than can the more complex and creative works in that genre.

When Guzmán de Alfarache becomes Justina's husband in *La pícara Justina* in 1605, the picaresque genre has fully emerged in Spanish literature. The frontispiece to the book explicitly connects both of them with *Lazarillo*. In that same year, readers were also meeting Ginés de Pasamonte, whose life closely resembles Guzmán's and whose literary goal is to surpass *Lazarillo de Tormes* when he finishes writing his own *vida*. In the course of the development of the picaresque genre, both *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán* remain exemplary fictions; they continue together to be the generic prototypes, providing the models against which many subsequent works measure themselves, no matter how freely they play variations on the genre through self-conscious parody, unauthorized continuation, exploitive mimicking, and epigonic imitation. In 1646, the picaro in *Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor* still measures his work (albeit ironically) against the generic models when he claims to be writing a "true" story, not "la fingida Guzmán de Alfarache, ni la fabulosa de *Lazarillo de Tormes*."

The enormous popularity of the picaresque in Spain soon spread to other European countries as translations made the major works widely accessible to English, French, German, and Italian readers who could not read Spanish. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the picaresque was an international literary phenomenon as translations gave way to narrative attempts to perpetuate the genre while simultaneously integrating it with indigenous literary conditions and conventions. In 1655 in England there was Head's *The English Rogue*, with a dedicatory verse that mentions *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán*, and *El Buscón*. In 1669 Germany produced its own major contribution to the picaresque genre in Grimmelshausen's *The Adventurous Simplicissimus*, which was just as explicitly influenced by Aleman's work (through Albertinus's translation) and a year later spun off one of its minor characters into *The Runagate Courage*, with a formidable picara who is successor to Justina and predecessor of Moll Flanders and whose birth out of the pages of *Simplicissimus* is the obverse of Guzmán's absorption into the pages of *La pícara Justina*. In 1683 and 1690, respectively, according to A. A. Parker in *Literature and the Delinquent*, appeared *The Dutch Rogue, or Guzman of Amsterdam* and *Teague O'Divelly, or The Irish Rogue*. In the eighteenth century, the picaresque underwent a significant transformation as Lesage in France shaped the Spanish tradition his own way in *The Adventures of Gil Blas* (1715, 1724, 1735). It is his version of the picaresque that became normative throughout the rest of the century and well into the nineteenth, especially in English literature. Lesage's English translator was Smollett, who was primarily responsible for establishing *Gil Blas* as the picaresque prototype, although in his own *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) he made explicit references to Guzmán de Alfarache and Petronius's *The Satyricon* in

addition to *Gil Blas*. In the early nineteenth century, Sir Walter Scott perpetuated the French model; he and Smollett were responsible for many of the major misconceptions of the picaresque that still haunt theory and criticism in English. The confusion was confounded by the English novelists' love for Cervantes, and in using both *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas* as models for their own fiction, the eighteenth-century novelists created a case of literary mistaken identity that continues today in the misapprehension of *Don Quixote* as a picaresque novel even among well-read critics, an error that Hispanists (despite their own lack of unanimity about the nature of the Spanish picaresque genre) would never make. Although the original Spanish picaresques continue to be read—there is evidence that Defoe read them, and in Fielding's *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743) Wild cites *The Spanish Rogue* (that is, *Guzmán*) as his favorite book—the indigenous narrative tradition of the criminal biography shapes whatever influence they may have had as distinctly as *Gil Blas* had shaped them.

Meanwhile, in 1822 there was *Der deutsche Gil Blas*, so titled by Goethe, and at midcentury there was even a *Russian Gil Blas*, by Vassily Narezhny. In the New World, Mexican writer José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi wrote *The Iching Parrot (Vida y hechos de Periquillo Sarniento, 1816, 1830)*, which alludes directly to *Periquillo el de las gallineras*; and a century later, also in Mexico, José Rubén Romero in *The Futile Life of Pito Pérez (La vida inútil de Pito Pérez, 1938)* alluded to both when Pito referred to himself as a *Periquillo*. Toward the end of the nineteenth century in the United States, William Dean Howells suggested that the picaresque might provide the appropriate narrative structure for rendering the American experience, but Howells read *Lazarillo* through *Don Quixote* and conjured up an image true to neither, like the earliest American attempt to mix the Cervantine and the picaresque, Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry*, the first two volumes of which had appeared a century before (1792). Nonetheless, a stable sense of the historical Spanish picaresque genre persisted, even in otherwise casual and unpretentious fictions like, for example, *The Picaroons* (1904), by Gelett Burgess and Will Irwin, which is prefaced by this note:

Picaroon—a petty rascal; one who lives by his wits; an adventurer. The Picaresque Tales, in Spanish literature of the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, dealt with the fortunes of beggars, imposters, thieves, etc., and chronicled the Romance of Roguery. Such stories were the precursors of the modern novel. The San Francisco Night's Entertainment is an attempt to render similar subjects with an essentially modern setting. (*The Picaroons*, p. v)

In the twentieth century, such self-conscious use of tradition continued. Mann's *Confessions of Felix Krull*, composed over a forty-year period, was written directly in the tradition of *Simplicissimus*. Oskar in Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* (1959) is a direct descendant of the drummer boy *Simplicissimus*. Hans Schmetterling, the character in Alfred Kern's only peripherally picaresque

Le Clown (1957), is referred to by the circus performers as "our *Simplicissimus*" and runs into Felix Krull in Paris. John Hawkes has acknowledged Quevedo as a major influence on his fiction. Camilo José Cela continues *Lazarillo*'s life almost four hundred years later, in his *Nuevas andanzas y desventuras de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1944). At midcentury in the United States, works such as Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), Donleavy's *The Ginger Man* (1955), Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), Purdy's *Malcolm* (1959), and Pynchon's *V.* (1963) were linked back to Nathanael West's *The Dream Life of Balzo Snell* (1931) and *A Cool Million* (1934) to signal the apparent emergence of a contemporary American picaresque as an assertive strand of twentieth-century narrative. In Canada, there is Mordecai Richler's *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959). In England, fictions like Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Malcolm Bradbury's *Eating People Is Wrong* (1959), and John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953) were grouped with such works as Evelyn Waugh's *Decline and Fall* (1928), eliciting similar speculations about a "neopicaresque" in contemporary British fiction. In Germany, *Felix Krull* and *The Tin Drum*, already linked extra- and intertextually with *Simplicissimus*, were compared to a whole roster of new fictions, including Heinrich Böll's *The Clown (Ansichten eines Clowns, 1963)*. The new fiction there was studied under such titles as "Picaro Today," "The Return of the Pícaros," and "The Eternal *Simplicissimus*." In Spanish literature itself, the persistence of the picaresque in twentieth-century fiction is demonstrated by the more than one hundred pages devoted to this topic in the proceedings of what billed itself as the First International Congress on the Picaresque (Madrid, July 1976), edited by Manuel Criado de Val as *La picaresca: Orígenes, Textos y Estructuras* (1979). In addition to Cela and Pio Baroja, writers like Ricardo León (*Los Centauros, 1912*), Juan Antonio de Zunzunegui (*La vida como es, 1954*), Sebastián Juan Arbó (*Martín de Caretas, 1955*), Darío Fernández-Flórez (*Lola, espejo oscuro, 1950*), and Juan Goytisolo (*Fiestas, 1958*) wrote fictions often explicitly rooted, through generic self-reference or indirect allusion, in the seventeenth-century Spanish picaresque narrative tradition. Among fictions written in French, Alfred Kern's *Le Clown* tries deliberately to be picaresque, and in France, too, there is talk of a *renaissance du roman picaresque* as critics look at Kern and at some of the new fictions being produced in Germany, England, and the United States.

Even this sketchiest of surveys over three and a half centuries of several major literatures makes it clear that the picaresque genre of *siglo de oro* Spain left a historically robust and geographically diverse narrative legacy. This culturally very coded narrative structure, which emerged, peaked, and declined under specific social, economic, political, religious, and literary conditions in Spain over the relatively short span of the first three decades of the seventeenth century (there being no genre until *Guzmán* and *Lazarillo* together created it in 1599), proved universally appealing to readers and writers outside Spain and has continued, despite a number of sea-changes, with traceable continuity up to the present. Today book reviewers, literary critics, and even film critics call works

"picaresque" with such frequency that any objective observer of the literary and film scenes cannot help but conclude that the picaresque is a thriving contemporary narrative form. Such an observer would also automatically assume that the term's ubiquity reflected unanimity about its meaning. But, in fact, disagreement about the precise nature of the Spanish picaresque genre, the definition of the concept *picaresque*, and the narratological usefulness of the term *picaresque novel* has never been more intense than it is now in the immediate wake of the perceived surge of contemporary picaresque fictions, as a brief survey of the picaresque in literary scholarship will illustrate.

CHAPTER 2

The Picaresque Genre in Literary Scholarship

The outer dimensions of the full range of critical approaches to the picaresque can be measured both diachronically and synchronically by the juxtaposition of the following two passages, written almost a century apart. The first is from an anonymous essay, "Picaresco Romances," which appeared in *The Southern Review* in 1867:

But . . . why disinter these fossil remains of an extinct literature? The picaresco novel is as dead as the dodo: why disturb its bones? We answer that a fossil literature is at least as interesting as a fossil fauna.

The second is from Walter Allen's *The English Novel* (1954), and it both reflects and in turn is reflected in any number of literary dictionaries, handbooks, and surveys of the history of the novel:

If the word "picaresque" is now stretched, as it commonly is, to mean any novel in which the hero takes a journey whose course plunges him into all sorts, conditions, and classes of men, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is not so different in form from the conventional picaresque novel. (18)

We might call the first approach extrinsic or historicist because it tends to see picaresque narrative primarily in its historical context as a segment in the development of the novel and as an episode of the social and literary history of Spain; it is primarily positivistic and sees picaresque fiction diachronically as a predominantly closed phenomenon. The second approach is intrinsic (as opposed to extrinsic) and formal (as opposed to historicist), and it sees picaresque narrative synchronically as an open phenomenon because it tends to lift the picaresque out of its geographic location in space and its historical location in time and sees it as a developing and influential form or convention that writers have at their disposal or as a tradition inside of which writers may work and on which they may build.