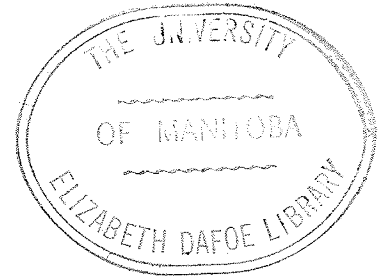
THE PICARESQUE SPIRIT IN ENGLISH FICTION
FROM NASHE TO THACKERAY

An Abstract of a Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English of

The University of Manitoba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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

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by

Paul Henry Anderson

September, 1962

This thesis examines the progress in eight English prose works of a literary genre, the picaresque, the roots of which developed in Spain in the sixteenth century. The study indicates that the relationship be-between the picaro, the central character of picaresque fiction, and the society in which he acts, is the focal interest of picaresque works. This relationship varies from work to work, but a distinction is made between picaros who struggle with a social environment which, in part, determines their actions and picaros whose actions stem more from their own misconceived views of life.

As the roots of English picaresque fiction are Spanish roots, Spanish picaresque literature is examined in chapter I. The Spanish picaresque spirit is seen as a reaction to chivalric literature and as a medium for a realistic appraisal of society. The Celestina, an early Renaissance work, is examined because it presents a character, Sempronio, who is the first real suggestion of a picaro figure in Spanish literature. He observes the love his master, Calisto, has for a young woman, Melibea, and decides to take advanrage of his master's infatuation. Sempronio's calculating mind is referred to as an "organ of computation". This term is used throughout the thesis to indicate the picaro's strong self-interest which, aided by a quick wit, prompts him to take advantage of circumstances. An interesting relationship exists between Sempronio and Celestina. This relationship is referred to as a picaresque bond, which is characterized chiefly by a shared recognition of the significance of material prosperity.

Three major aspects of Spanish picaresque fiction: realism, satire, and the picaro's odyssey from innocence to experience are examined in a

group of picaresque works. A distinction between picaresque works is noted in this general survey. In a work like Lazarillo de Tormes, a naïve picaro suffers from his lack of experience, but learns to sharpen his wits in his fight with society. In a work like The Life of the Great Knave, or as it is more commonly called, Don Pablos, the picaro is himself satirized because he misconceives experience and directs his life to gaining recognition in compensation for his early feeling of inferiority. Both of these works are satirical, but, while Lazarillo sympathizes with the "hidalgo," the dispossessed nobleman who represents a false code of honour, Don Pablos witnesses hidalgos who are only ridiculous and beyond sympathy.

The first English picaresque fiction is generally comic, and the picaro does not suffer in a struggle with society as does Lazarillo. Elizabethan picaros like Jack Wilton of Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller, Piers Plainness of Chettle's Piers Plainness: Seven Years' Prenticeship, and Dorindo of Breton's A Mad World My Masters, are generally disengaged from society and act as observers of society. The keenness of their observations varies; Jack Wilton has a shrewd wit which passes from observation to observation and Dorindo is very adept at assuming roles, a significant characteristic of the picaro. Piers, on the other hand, is a weak observer since he lacks energy. Piers Plainness is closer in external similarities to Lazarillo de Tormes, but it lacks the spirit of its Spanish model.

Defoe's Moll Flanders does recall this spirit in its depiction of a picara's fight for security in a competitive society. Realism of observation, found in the Elizabethan picaresque works, blends with realism

of character and plot in Moll's efforts to become a gentlewoman. Her fear of the law compares to Lazarillo's fear of starvation. Her urge to ascend the social scale gives her adventures a vertical direction as seen in the Elizabethan picaro's movement rather than a simply horizontal one from place to place or from master to master. Her view of life is a product of the society in which she acts. This social determinism for the picaro's actions is seen also in _Colonel Jack_ in which the picaro even though he becomes a thief, reveals a primitive goodness which he asserts against a corrupting social environment.

Fielding uses Jonathan Wild to embody a corrupt social principle, that of "greatness" which is opposed to "goodness". Unlike Lazarillo, his innocence is not emphasized; rather, he seems to bear an almost pre-determined evil. Picaresque qualities such as his role-playing ability and his empiricism only serve to make his criminality more pronounced, although Fielding uses some of these picaresque traits to aid his comic satire of Jonathan. As in _Don Pablos_ the picaro is himself satirized, and this satire is partly directed to Jonathan Wild's misinterpretation of experience.

Smollett's _Roderick Random_ considers the picaro sympathetically and sees him as an outsider who earnestly wishes to participate in society, but finds that society, represented especially by London society, does not want his honest efforts. He takes the sham role of a confidence man to further his ambition, but is ultimately revolted by the corruption of society, and, when he has a chance, withdraws to quieter existence on a country estate. Smollett uses Roderick's experience in London to reveal the sordidness of eighteenth century society. His descriptions of London society recall the

style of Spanish picaresque fiction.

Thackeray's Barry Lyndon recalls Jonathan Wild in its condemnation of the picaro. Thackeray uses his picaro to symbolize the false principle of "success" which Thackeray witnessed in his contemporary society. Barry Lyndon strives to claim the recognition that he felt was denied him as a boy, and so claims to be of the genteel class. In this way, his outlook compares to that of Don Pablos. Like Don Pablos, too, Barry Lyndon misconceives experience and does not recognize his own moral carelessness. His ambition is more aggressive than, for example, Moll Flanders' because it is based on a misconceived egotism rather than on a realistic appraisal of his position in society.

Although great variety exists in English picaresque fiction, this thesis follows one main line of development. The relationship between the picaro and society grows closer in the development of English picaresque fiction. In the three Elizabethan prose works he is seen primarily as an observer of society. In the two Defoe works he is a contender with society, and this struggle with society is again presented in Smollett's Roderick Random. The picaros of Fielding's Jonathan Wild and Thackeray's Barry Lyndon embody wrong social principles. Along this linear pattern of development, the significant contrast between the sympathetic consideration of the picaro and the condemnatory portrait of the picaro will be revealed.

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INTRODUCTION

Because the material in the chapter on Spanish picaresque fiction does not of itself present an adequate statement of intention, I am including this short introduction. In chapter I I examine representative Spanish picaresque works which prepare for the study of English picaresque fiction in succeeding chapters.

Study of a literature as varied and prolific as picaresque fiction demands a limiting of scope and a strict definition of terms. Throughout this thesis I attempt not to confuse picaresque literature with general rogue literature. F.W. Chandler in his book, The Literature of Roguery, traces the history of rogue fiction which includes the drama, romantic rogue tales, essays on criminal life, and picaresque fiction. My study is not nearly as extensive; it does not even attempt a history of picaresque fiction.

Misuse of the term "picaresque" has complicated study of this genre. Many apply the term to novels in which a wayward young man travels along roads full of adventurous episodes. Such novels as Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews have been termed picaresque because they resemble Cervante's Don Quixote. While the episodic structure of picaresque narrative is a significant characteristic of it, the meaning of the term "picaresque" hinges upon the nature of the chief character, the picaro, rather than on the form of the narrative, even though the episodic nature of his experiences influences the picaro.

What I attempt is a study of the qualities of Spanish picaresque

fiction and a close examination of eight English picaresque prose works. Most of these are commonly known, and they show the great variety in attitude of the writers of picaresque fiction. They range from what I have called the comic picaresque works of the Elizabethans to the sympathetic treatment of the picaro in the novels of Defoe and Smollett and the condemnatory portraits of the picaro by Fielding and Thackeray.

The principal aim of this thesis is to show that common ground exists among these works in the relationship of the picaro himself to the society in which he acts and that this relationship takes many forms according to the particular balance of characteristics in each picaro. Therefore, a consequent additional aim is to observe closely each picaro as he functions in each of the selected works. A minor aim is to show the particular social and literary background from which the picaresque works arise where such revelation has bearing upon the treatment of the picaresque material.

Picaresque fiction has its roots in the relationship between society and the individual. In the present age this relationship has become more significant and more analyzed than ever before. The appearance of the totalitarian state has revealed dangerous implications in the growing contact between the individual and the state. Even in a democracy, the proper balance between the rights of the individual and those of the state is continually being scrutinized and reassessed by political theorists in the light of the advance of the welfare state. In literature, the significance of the problem of communication between individuals is paramount. Some writers, such as E.M. Forster, insist, indeed, that the problem of relations between societies is really a problem of relations between individuals. Franz Kafka, among others, however, stresses the unique problems inherent

in the individual's relation to society.

Since the picaro is an outlaw to society, his position provides a good vantage point from which to observe it. R.W.B. Lewis, in his book, The Picaresque Saint, reveals the kind of hero that is typical of twentieth century literature and shows that this hero embodies the nature of both the picaro and the saint. This hero sees the absurdity of life as it has become for him and is a rebel to contemporary social values. In this respect he is an outlaw to the accepted norms of society and recalls the position of the picaro. Yet this modern hero also yearns for some kind of meaning in his relations with his fellows and, hence, in a world that denies the significance of the individual, becomes a martyr, if not a saint. Such a study of the contemporary novel suggests the lasting value of picaresque literature.

The numerous modern novels that are even more generically picaresque than those studied by Lewis testify to the importance of the genre. A comic picaresque novel, The Adventures of Augie March, by Saul Bellow, is one of these. Young Augie March, the boy narrator, at one point indicates the control that society exerts upon him: "All the influences were lined up waiting for me. I was born, and there they were to form me, which is why I tell you more of them than of myself."[1] In his distinction between himself and society and in his clear realization of the force of society, he speaks as a picaro who is aware of his separation from society and also aware that he must come to terms with it. (From this point on the term "picaro" used in general reference will also pertain to the feminine term "picara".)

The procedure followed in this thesis will be first to indicate what literary and social factors bear upon each of the picaresque works. I shall then examine the character of each picaro and show how this character is developed in his contact with society. The place of each picaresque work in the context of the whole thesis will be emphasized at the end of each chapter. Each work is analyzed only in so far as it is picaresque. This means that certain aspects are ignored or receive minimal attention. For example, even though Roderick Random is considered by many to be the earliest successful portrait of sea life in the English novel, this aspect is not treated as thoroughly as it would be in a more general study of this novel. I feel justified in making such a distinction because the term "picaresque spirit" alludes to the character of the picaro rather than to the literary form of the works. Questions of picaresque form are subordinate to study of picaresque character in this thesis.

The terms "picaresque spirit" and "English fiction" in the title demand explanation. In studies of individual picaresque works, the word "spirit" will often be found and it may apply to any of a number of characteristics that the picaro exhibits. The dictionary meanings of the word that apply to the picaro's spirit are: "stimulated or high spirits, liveliness, energy, vivacity, ardor, enthusiasm, courage."[2] The picaro's "spirit" is shown in his ability to counter the force of society with energy and resilience and, even when the picaro is the least appealing, this energy may at least lend humour to his actions. His resilience is akin to Henri Bergson's "jack-in-the-box" theory of laughter. In Bergson's view, the stubborn ability of human nature to reassert itself after each set-back

is a principal inspiration to laughter.[3] The energy of the picaro may be retarded for a moment just as the jack is compressed when the lid of the box is snapped upon him. But little prompting is needed before the picaro snaps back to action with the same vitality as the jack snaps out of his box when it is opened. This strength of the picaro is a prime source of his appeal. The picaro's episodic viewpoint, by which he sees experience as a series of episodes rather than as a closely integrated development, is based upon the same principle as the jack-in-the-box theory. The picaro's spirit is manifested in the energy with which he faces each new venture.

The second term "English fiction" needs less explanation. I do not wish to enter the classical argument as to when prose fiction becomes the novel in English literary history. I use the blanket term "English fiction" for the English works that I examine.

A third term that may be given tentative definition here is the word "picaro." Although the many facets of the picaro will be observed throughout the thesis and a true picture of him is not complete without a realization of his variety, a few basic suggestions of his character may prove useful before the full study is launched. A principal source of the picaro's energy comes from his firm faith in his own importance. He stands outside society to an extent because he knows that it poses a threat to him, but he also knows that he must come to terms with it, and his behaviour may even be a reflection of society because he is conditioned by it. His difficulty in making personal relationships is due to his constant task of facing society as a whole or, at least, his idea of what society is. A very interesting aspect of his nature, however, is that he does make bonds with other individuals when he is sure that he will not be harmed in such

relationships.

Although I apply the term "criminal" to certain of the picaro's acts, I use this term only in so far as society defines these acts as criminal. The picaro should not be confused with the criminal because of the differences in motive between the acts of the criminal and those of the picaro. I reserve a full revelation of the variety of the picaro's motives to the thesis itself except to indicate that the more the picaro seeks power or material gain in itself, the closer he comes to being a criminal. Henry Fielding's Jonathan Wild is, indeed, a criminal, but he also has a picaresque nature which influences his villainy. I have drawn upon the "humours" theory of characterization because each of the picaros manifests a particular quality of his own.

I believe that a study of picaresque fiction is rewarding and that the picaresque genre is one of the principal roots of the English novel.

NOTES

1 Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* (New York: The Viking Press, 1953), p. 43.

2 William Allan Neilson, editor in chief, *Webster's New International Dictionary*, (2nd edition, Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1958), p. 2428.

3 Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, translators, London: MacMillan and Company, 1911), p. 70.

CHAPTER I

SPANISH PICARESQUE FICTION

1. Social and Literary Background. Much against the reader's best intentions, he often experiences, when considering characters such as Milton's Satan or Comus, a sympathy with and interest in these figures in spite of their scurillous natures. He is tempted to suspend judgment upon evil-doers who are courageous, resourceful, and persevering. For the modern reader, this "moral holiday" is made easier because he has come to attribute, at least in part, a character's proclivity to immorality to the social atmosphere in which he acts. Sixteenth century Spain produced a literary genre, that of picaresque fiction, which encourages such a relaxation of judgment.

The strain of revering wholly virtuous characters, on the other hand, becomes too great for the reader. He knows that the altruistic knight's armour rusts from the "winter and rough weather" of actual conditions. When literature constantly asserts standards of morality beyond the reach of human nature, it petrifies; its heroes become puppets, and its heroines too good to be true. This departure of art from life is quite evident in chivalric literature, especially in the Spanish chivalric romances of the fifteenth century. Ever more ardent knights, more doomed and exquisite ladies, and more grotesque monsters crowd out truth and light from the pages of these works.

Yet the influence that chivalric literature had upon the aristocracy was great. There were Quixotes outside Cervantes' novel who

believed that such fantasy was fact. For example, the chronicler Juan del Castillo, writing of Philip II's marriage to Mary Tudor and the possibility of his gaining the English throne, indicates that Philip promised to abdicate this throne if King Arthur returned to claim it.[1]

By the sixteenth century the chivalric romance had become the literary preserve of the Spanish upper classes who did not care to see the real conditions of the national life. Throughout this century a gradually disintegrating economy loosened the social fabric. The wealth garnered in the New World by Spanish conquistadors was not channeled into use for the general welfare of the poor. Among these poor were many vagrant adventurers who sought sustenance from the royal court. This court's delusion was that full coffers from the Indies reflected general well-being. The full effect of this situation was not felt until the end of the century when the defeat of the Armada disclosed the nadir of the national fortune.

Even while the effete chivalric romance was in vogue among the gentry, a literature developed in reaction to it. During the decade 1550-1560 the picaresque genre sprang to life in Spain. Picaresque literature had an influence which would be lasting and would make the difficult ascent over the Pyrenees to France and England. Its utility as a literary form helped it reach even to the shores of the Mississippi in the pages of Huckleberry Finn. The picaresque genre is distinct from romantic Spanish literature in its hard tone of realism.

Picaresque matter exists both in the drama and the poetry of the period, but is chiefly to be found in prose fiction. The term itself

derives from the principal figure of these works who is known as a "picaro". The etymology of this word is still debated.[2] Some scholars trace it to the Spanish word "picar" which means "to pick up", and so suggests the picaro's identity as a thief. Other scholars stress the use of the word picaro as a synonym for "pinche", a cook's boy or a spit-turner. The authorities of Spanish towns like Seville applied the term to boys who became scullions and "bearers of light burdens". While these last occupations seem innocent enough, they could serve an opportunistic imagination. The number of this fraternity grew so alarmingly in the Spanish cities that the municipal authorities ruled that these boys wear a special costume of green or red.[3] Difficulty arose in distinguishing between boys who legitimately worked as porters and similar public helpers and those who took these roles for less reputable purposes. Association of the word with these occupations is useful because in such roles the picaro met transients of all kinds, especially the vagrants mentioned earlier. These vagrants were sometimes dispossessed lords known best by the Spanish term "hidalgos", who found that service from young picaros helped to soothe their wounded self-respect.

Spanish picaresque literature has various forms, and the particular Spanish picaresque works to be examined reflect this variety. The germ of picaresque fiction is found in The Tragi-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea, or The Celestina, as it is more commonly called, a Renaissance work which mixes the typical conceits and rarefied passion of Petarchan love with a graphic picture of Spanish low life. The first definitive picaresque work, The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes: His Fortunes and Adversities,

hereafter referred to as Lazarillo, resembles a sociological tract with its scathing but good-humoured depiction of the weaknesses of mid-sixteenth century Spanish society. The Life of Guzman de Alfarache, appearing fifty years after Lazarillo, is heavy with verbose but pointed moralizing. Cervantes, in his "exemplary novel", Rinconete and Cortadillo, uses the form of the Italian novella. Francisco de Quevedo's The Life of the Great Rascal, or, as it is more popularly known, Don Pablos, exhibits a vitriolic spirit quite distinct from the milder tone of Lazarillo and Rinconete and Cortadillo.

Where are the common factors in this chameleon-like form? Three salient features are inherent in the genre. These are realism, satire, and a narrative pattern which may best be described as the odyssey of a character of low life. Before these are treated in the other picaresque works mentioned, The Celestina, which is not generically a picaresque work and yet has picaresque elements in it, will be examined. While the emphasis will be upon the nature and function of the picaro himself, the social conditions in which he acts will also be observed.

2. An early example of Spanish picaresque characteristics: The Celestina. The Tragi-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea or, as it has become known, The Celestina, was written probably about 1480, although it was not published until 1499. Its authorship is debated, but many have attributed it to Fernando de Rojas. It is a reflection of the Renaissance interest in all shades of human nature. The reader witnesses a tragedy of love that involves the fortunes of both low and noble persons.

Celestina, a procuress, assists Calisto, a nobleman, in his love for the beautiful, young Melibea. Calisto's two servants, Parmeno and Sempronio, assist Celestina in this affair, and all these characters eventually are destroyed by the results of this love.

In this tragi-comedy is the first evidence of the picaresque spirit in Spanish literature. All the characters of low life have what Charlotte Brontë calls the "organ of computation,"[4] derived from the instinct for self-preservation which is a basic motive of the picaro. The splendid Celestina adopts a role for whatever purpose she wishes and is the first of many witches and wizards who inhabit the picaresque world. She dominates the book and is intensely intriguing, yet very human. She pities herself and complains of the trouble that her skirt gives her as she speeds along her way, seeking new objects for her talents.

But Sempronio is most typical of the picaro's attitude. He makes no outright theft, but he is the first to see that profit can be made from his master's passion. Calisto's expression of love is ridiculous, full of lofty Petrarchan conceits. Sempronio judges this language as that of a madman. As a dramatic counterpoint to Calisto's hyperboles, are Sempronio's crude, animalistic images: "I'll let him fester a while and come to a head. I've heard that it's dangerous to open or press a boil while it's green, for it only gets the more inflamed."[5] The language preferred by Sempronio is concrete and straightforward, and he admonishes his master for his extravagant verbosity. Calisto speaks of day's end: "Apollo's horses have been put to pasture after

their daily run."[6] Sempronio replies:

> Leave off these high-flown phrases, sir, this poetizing. Speech that's not common to all, or shared by all, or understood by all, is not good speech. Just say "until sunset" and we'll know what you mean.[7]

Irony results when these two forms of diction are juxtaposed. Calisto, overjoyed by Sempronio's offer to help him meet Melibea, calls his mission to Celestina "pious work"[8] and later in prayer compares Sempronio's trip to the journey of the kings to Bethlehem. He knows who Celestina is, because Sempronio describes her to him as a "witch, astute and wise in all evil things."[9] "She can move the very stones to lechery if she sets her mind to it!"[10]

Sempronio revels in the hypocrisy of others, even Celestina's:

> She uses her beads to count the number of maidenheads she's got on hand for repair, how many lovers there are in the city, how many girls she has contracted for, and what almoners and canons are the youngest and most free with their money.[11]

Such hypocrisy in others helps the picaro to justify his own materialism.

While he denies the existence of any non-material nature, Sempronio knows how to manipulate the belief that others may have in the validity of emotional or religious experience. When Calisto rewards Celestina with a hundred pieces of gold, he asks for Sempronio's opinion of such generosity. Sempronio replies that Calisto's generosity is honourable. He twists the argument to his own advantage and, in doing so, expresses the sententiousness common among the low characters in the work: "Honor is sullied by the heaping up of earthly treasures, but magnificence and

liberality win honor for you and raise it to sublimity."[12] He is an opportunist, in tune with Celestina's Machiavellian observation that, "Fortune always favors the bold and defeats the timid."[13]

A positive aspect of Sempronio's character is his admiration for Celestina. Her machinations are attractive to him, and he enjoys her calculating imagination. She loves to share her joys and, as long as it does not cost her anything, she enjoys others' happiness. Her conviviality is crystallized in her question, "is there any pleasure without company?"[14] Sempronio later answers her question affirmatively in conversation with Parmeno with whom he is allied by Celestina: "Oh my friend Parmeno, how good it is to have a companion to share one's thoughts! Even if Celestina did nothing else for us, this would be enough."[15] When Parmeno criticizes Celestina, Sempronio defends her: "She's greedy; that's her only weakness. Leave her alone. Let her thatch her own house, and later on she'll thatch ours, or it will be the worse for her."[16]

Unfortunately, this "only weakness" leads to her defeat. Celestina's greed and deception, when she conceals a gold chain that Calisto gives her, are too damning for the materialistic Sempronio. Sempronio and Parmeno brutally murder her.

These characters of low life are betrayed by their own failure to surrender self-interest. At a level upon which sacrifice is not necessary, conviviality is possible: as Sempronio says, "we're all in the family."[17] But each is primarily motivated by self-interest. Sempronio says of his master whose wits are strained by love: "<u>It's better for</u>

him to die whose life is a burden than for me who enjoy it."[18]

The association of Sempronio with Celestina is an example of a relationship between the picaro and other individuals which, throughout the thesis, will be called the picaresque bond. This bond can be vitalized from several sources, but a shared recognition of the primary importance of material fortune is essential to it. The confidence that the faithful may gain from religion or, at least, from an optimistic view of life, the picaro lacks, and he may compensate for this lack in the recognition of a kindred spirit who shares his distrust of society. Normal sexual motivation is not necessary to support this relationship, as the bond between the young Sempronio and the old witch Celestina proves. But what makes a picaresque bond precarious is the primary self-interest of the parties in it. Each, although hoping for conviviality, may slip back to a self-concern which will rupture the bond.

Sempronio has many of the picaro's characteristics. He manipulates others, chiefly Calisto, and seizes opportunities to turn his master's actions to his own advantage. Like Celestina, he enjoys role-playing, as evinced by his sententious moralizing to Calisto on the glory of giving. This role-playing is very strong in the picaro's nature because, to gain from society, he knows that his character must be supple enough to take the outward expression that circumstances demand. His ridicule of pretentious language is similar to the satirizing of pretentious persons in later picaresque works. He is a somewhat pathetic man because his self-interest leads him to destroy the woman whose influence has made him more

humane.

The Celestina has elements of the picaresque genre: pointed satire, a prototype of later witch or wizard figures in the person of Celestina, and a fairly well-developed picaro, Sempronio. It is at times brutally realistic. But Sempronio remains a secondary character, and his activities do not have the order of an odyssey from innocence to experience as is customary in generically picaresque fiction.

3. A general survey of Spanish picaresque fiction. Not until 1554 does the first pure picaresque fiction appear. Lazarillo presents a sharp contrast to the chivalric fantasy world of knights and kings. Its hero, the youthful Lazarillo, suffers in the actual, contemporary world of the Spanish cities, and his sorrows reflect the poverty of the Spanish masses. In its opening pages, Lazarillo gives the rationale for all picaresque works that follow it. His purpose is stated boldly: "no circumstance ought to be omitted, how insignificant soever it may be, but all should be made known, especially as some fruit might be plucked from such a tree."[19] This deliberate moral intent is blurred in later picaresque works; it becomes a mere tag to Don Pablos and the example in Cervantes' exemplary novel, Rinconete and Cortadillo, is difficult to find. Of the works examined, Guzman de Alfarache is the notable exception. But the frankness remains. A strong desire to give a realistic image of life is common to the writers of picaresque literature. They refer to the chivalric world chiefly in an ironical vein. While Don Quixote is only

partially a picaresque work, Cervantes taps this vein in his treatment of his fantasy-possessed figure.

A picaro's view of Don Quixote would see him as only ridiculous, for the picaro would judge his character by his outward actions such as his misplaced adoration of the wench whom the gracious knight refers to as Dulcinea del Toboso. The picaro could not see the subtler meanings of Don Quixote whose essential intention is to remake the world after a nobler pattern and to people it with a better human race. For the picaro, the world is an established, immutable fact which he must gird himself to challenge. His impression of this world is based on its outer appearance and his impression of men is based on their outward manner.

This limited view of the picaro produces a limited realism in picaresque fiction. The picaro's understanding stops far short of any spiritual interpretation of life because it insists upon the physical nature of men and is concerned with the minds of men basically in terms of their practical, hedonistic calculations. This limited realism of picaresque fiction ignores the soul; the chivalric romance ignores the body. Together they reflect the central problem of Spanish literature which is "the difficulty of living, when it tries to integrate body, soul, and mind — which is different from giving preference to the latter at the expense of the other two."[20]

The image of man in picaresque fiction is that of a creature controlled by the demands of necessity which limit his aspirations. In Chapter VII of <u>Guzman de Alfarache</u>, a mythical tableau is presented in

which a heavenly conversation develops. The gods discuss the condition of man and agree upon the justice of the act which deprived man of the content with which he was originally invested. Discontent was substituted for it so that men will know:

> ...their own misery, and thy [Jupiter's] mercy; thy happy state, and their own wretched condition; thy ease, and their trouble; their paine, and thy glory; thy power, and their own weaknesse.[21]

The picaro is fully aware of this discontent which can serve as a motivation for his endeavours in such a work as Lazarillo. Usually, however, the discontent does not encourage him to seek a reconciliation with God.

Lazarillo's prime necessity and what he seeks is a full stomach. At the end of his arduous apprenticeship to life, his benefactor, the Archpriest of St. Saviour's, gives him a "load of wheat, meat on festivals, sometimes loaves of fine bread."[22] This provision is symbolic of the boy's success. Each of his masters is evaluated by the degree to which he satisfies Lazarillo's hunger. He is served by none of them, and he soon learns that he must outwit them to prevent starvation.

His first temptation occurs with the blind man, his first master. He sends Lazarillo to the inn to purchase wine which the old man will drink with the sausage that he hoards. Because the sausage tempts Lazarillo, he substitutes a turnip for it and devours it on the way to the inn. On his return, the blind man accuses Lazarillo of the theft, forces his nose into the boy's mouth, and reclaims the sausage which is thrown up.[23] It is an ugly picture, but it vividly reflects the torture of extreme hunger.

This hunger is even more grotesquely presented in Quevedo's

Don Pablos. Lazarillo constantly appeals to the reader's sympathy, but often Don Pablos merely shocks. Quevedo has a penchant for bizarre figures. For example, Don Pablos is faced with a schoolmaster whose "beard had lost its colour from fear of his mouth, which being so near seemed to threaten to eat its neighbour from sheer hunger. . . ."[24]

In a short cameo scene, Lazarillo goes to the water-side. He notices his master, this time an impoverished hidalgo, with two fair ladies. They return his compliments with a suggestion that he pay their breakfast bill. Finding him penniless, they pass to those who can pay.[25] Social relations are determined by physical advantage, and ladies are not so concerned that their stomachs be hidden, as that they should be filled.

Hunger erodes the picaro's morality and shapes his individuality. While serving an avaricious clergyman, his second master, Lazarillo prays for funerals: "Then we could eat well, and I wished, and even prayed to God that he would kill someone every day."[26] Guzman finds that "Hunger and Shame could never yet be made friends."[27]

Yet this portrait of poverty is not unrelieved. Comic distance is created at times, especially in Lazarillo, to bring grim events into perspective. In his struggle with the clergyman to gain a share of his bread-hoard, Lazarillo poses as a rat who at night nibbles through the chest containing bread. Like a rat, he makes a hole in the chest and then opens it with a key that he has had a locksmith make for him. He tears the bread as a rat would tear it. The clergyman tries to repair the damage during the day, but gets nowhere, for Lazarillo continues his work at night.[28]

This comic interplay transforms the real anguish into a game of wits. Comparison to Penelope's weaving helps to put the action into a lighter frame.

Such humour produces objectivity. Cervantes' Rinconete and Cortadillo also attempts to present an objective portrait. After they have become friends through a number of shared adventures, two boys, Rinconete, the older, and Cortadillo, the younger, encounter a criminal organization in Seville. It is operated by Monipodio, who is described as "the picture of the most rustic and ill-shapen barbarian in the world."[29] Cruelty is common in the establishment; in fact, the general public pay its members to beat their enemies. The police are bribed to overlook this work. Monipodio encourages his gang to live by their wits, creates a sense of pride in their ability to gull the public, and builds a brotherhood from self-directed individuals. All this intrigues and delights the boys, for their own talents can be recognized in such a gang. Monipodio's society of thieves is far more tolerable than the one depicted in Don Pablos; it shares Celestina's "pleasure in company" principle. Quevedo's criminals lose none of their self-interest. When they sleep, they lie "as close together as knives in their sheathes."[30]

Quevedo's picture is not more realistic. By being vehemently cynical, he misses the possibilities of human nature even in its most primitive form. Cervantes preserves at least a sense of good cheer among his rogues.

That picaresque realism is limited is generally true. It by-passes or treats superficially certain profound facts of life. The picaro cannot

get too involved in personal and spiritual relationships if he is to keep resilient. He is a constant witness to the distortion of emotions and naturally learns to deny the possibility of love.

A common picaresque joke is that in which the terms of love are used to describe the material bonds between people. Don Pablos' little brother dies and his father moans because the "lad was a gifted and willing thief."[31] After a wench named Juliana is beaten by her lover, Monipodio chastises the man and sings Juliana's praise in terms of her value as a wench.[32] This irony diverts attention away from the possibility of legitimate feeling.

Spanish picaresque fiction realizes the force of passion, but gives it only one dimension. Sex is sometimes presented frankly, but never maturely. When Juliana complains of her beating, Granciosa, an older prostitute, who is wiser in the wages of love, advises her "that he who loves well chastises well, and when these brutes strike us, leather us and kick us, it is then that they adore us."[33]

Sempronio ridicules Calisto's passion partly because it is exaggerated, but partly, also, because he cannot comprehend the source of it. Don Pablos, too, is blinded by the ridiculous manner of love and does not try to evaluate its nature. He dissociates the manner from the intention of a group of lovers who come to a convent in search of their beloved nuns. He sees that:

> ... this one was staring hard, without so much as winking; that one stood with a hand on his sword and another on his rosary, like a statue on a tomb, another would have his arms stretched out angelically. . . . [34]

This convent scene from Don Pablos has a cynical tone. To find nuns who secretively undermine the vow of chastity is a shock.

Rarely does the Spanish picaro confront the essential problem of love, described by C.S. Lewis as the passage in an individual's consciousness from the realization of himself as subject to the realization of himself as object.[35] In a developed sensibility, this passage often produces profound concern about one's value to another human being. The picaro cannot sacrifice his self-concern to this degree.

The picaro's religion is superficial. Guzman goes to Mass regularly, but for apparently no reason other than custom.[36] When Don Pablos is caught by the law, he searches for an escape:

> ... sometimes I decided to beg mercy for Jesus Christ's sake and then, reflecting how our good Lord was used, when alive, by members of the legal profession, I soon gave that the go-by.[37]

The picaro's mind is almost ironically prosaic, incapable of committing itself to the non-material. A religious corner of the mind exists in some picaros, but no sorties are made from this corner to influence either his calculations or his actions. His nominal religious loyalty is at best an effort to identify himself with what he thinks society deems proper.

The limitation of picaresque realism is disclosed by its deficiencies. But this limitation also produces positive elements. Fascinating minor characters are found in the genre who are almost of a romantic hue. Monipodio, for example, is something of a Blackbeard in his pronounced virility: "He wore neither jacket nor vest, and through the aperture in front of his shirt, one could see a veritable forest -- so much hair had

he on his breast."[38] He shows a humorous discretion, not a usual accompaniment to cruelty, when he discusses the "memoranda" of attacks to be made on the public: "it is enough to do the job without having it mentioned in public, as it is a great charge upon the conscience."[39]

Another advantage of limited realism that is absolutely necessary in the revelation of the picaro's character is that the picaro can be gay even when he is not expected to be. The picaro is very often prosaic, but he can make a game of language. An actual criminal rarely uses euphemism, and when a modern Monipodio such as James Hoffa dresses his questionable acts in idealistic clothes, he is considered more impertinent than comic. But the picaro's euphemism adds strong humour to his actions. The innkeeper in Don Quixote, part I, chapter III, describes his former adventures as a picaro in Don Quixote's language:

> . . . he himself, in the days of his youth had betaken himself to that honourable employ, wandering through divers parts of the world in search of adventures, not omitting. . . the hedge taverns of Toledo. . . where he had exercised the agility of his feet and the dexterity of his hands. . . making himself known to most of the tribunals and courts of judicature in Spain: and that at last he had retired to this castle. . . .[40]

Style can be an aid to picaresque realism. Spanish picaresque works often lack detailed, specific description, and prefer flat photographic accuracy. Everything is delineated neatly and consistently, but not precisely. The simple is preferred to the complex, and various devices are used to develop concreteness. There is generally an understating, almost suppression, of emotion and abstraction.

The sausage scene in Lazarillo is vivid in its scatology. The

narrative style of such episodes is direct and telling in its simplicity. An example of the understatement of emotions is his mother's farewell to Lazarillo. It is the epitomé of stoicism: "I shall see you no more. Strive to be good, and may God direct your ways. You have been brought up, and are now put with a good master. Farewell!"[41]

The abstract phrase is often turned into a joke by a concrete interpretation of it. In order that he be acquitted of a crime, Don Pablos surreptitiously bribes the constable: "I grasped his meaning and he grasped fifty more of my silver crowns."[42]

The writers of Spanish picaresque fiction have a passion for realism which derives from their social consciousness. At times, such as in Don Pablos, this passion becomes too vehement. Life just can't be that nasty, even in sixteenth century Spain. But the portrayal of Spanish society remains forcible and intriguing. Against this social background emerges the picaro, marked by the materialism of this society, with an intense interest in the ways of the world.

A consequent product of picaresque realism is its satire. The picaro, as an outsider, without a vested interest in any social position, can comment objectively on society. His suffering from the abuse of his different masters is testimony to the ferocity of those who represent an un-Christian church, an unjust law, and a warped aristrocracy. His pragmatic sense of values provides him with a ready weapon to puncture the hypocrisy of his social superiors. His adventures throw the deficiencies of society into stark relief.

The avarice of Lazarillo's priest and the passion of Don Pablos' nuns have been observed. One other picture of the decayed Church can be drawn from Lazarillo. His fifth master is a pardoner who by adroit craft sells indulgences. When sales are not going well, he connives with a constable to foil the poor folk of a village near Toledo. Before the congregation the constable first condemns the indulgences as false and then, after the pardoner has prayed for divine intervention, pretends that he has been struck by God's wrath and falls into a frothing, kicking fit. The pardoner is shaken from his "delirious dream"[43] to ask God's forgiveness on the man. He is perfect in his mock piety: "My master raised his hands to heaven, and turned his eyes up until scarcely anything could be seen but the whites."[44] After this scene the people urgently buy indulgences. Lazarillo speaks with the voice of Chaucer, Sinclair Lewis and all others who have seen mock piety at work: "How many tricks will the rogues play on these innocent people!"[45] Lazarillo's witness of such corruption prompts him to distrust those who pretend to believe in a spiritual world.

The separation of law enforcement from natural justice is the fundamental weakness of sixteenth century Spanish law. This dissociation turns law enforcement into privileged banditry. The picaro's view of the catchpole, or police man, is precisely this. Upon leaving an inn with a carrier whom he has met there, Guzman is overtaken by the police who condemn the pair as thieves and brutally beat them. Guzman suffers many blows before an officer, recognizing that both still possess their left thumbs, stops

any further legal proceedings because the man whom they search is without his. Guzman comments: "But questionlesse, they had a great desire to beat somebody, and so fell upon him that came first to hand."[46] The existence of a mean and ferocious law does much to promote sympathy for the picaro. In the misapplication of justice, society's agents become cruel and give a natural logic to the picaro's acts.

The satirical tone varies from one picaresque work to another. Don Pablos and Lazarillo show a difference in their depiction of the dispossessed hidalgo who struggles to maintain his honour.

The hidalgo of Lazarillo is the boy's third master and their relationship marks the lowest point in Lazarillo's fortune. After Lazarillo is beguiled by the hidalgo's appearance into hope that at last he will be treated well, he is shocked when the esquire asks for a portion of his bread. The man is foolishly concerned about the purity of the bread, but has no shame in taking it. Lazarillo sympathizes with him because he is deluded by his misconceived honour, his idée fixe. The esquire washes his hands religiously, but has to use the end of his cloak to dry them;[47] he marches with his cap "well cocked", though without a coin to his name;[48] he is a fusion of desperate want and refined bearing: "thinner than a greyhound of good breed."[49] Lazarillo gives the man a portion of what he begs to keep himself from starvation, but he cannot understand the hidalgo's stubborn unwillingness to face necessity. He is respectful of the man, though, and objectifies his misplaced dignity by referring to it as a fatal disease.

Quevedo's treatment of the hidalgo is much more harsh. Don Pablos

witnesses a character who is not merely ridiculous, but is almost obscenely grotesque. On the road to Segovia, Don Pablos meets a gentleman who seems to be finely attired, complete with the stiff collar of the gentry. After conversation, they decide to stop awhile and Don Pablos, about to help the man from his horse, discovers his naked, cold posterior. The man's defence betrays him as an impoverished hidalgo:

> Mr. Graduate, all is not gold that glitters: no doubt when you saw my collar and my imposing presence you imagined I looked like some Count from a romance. How many fraudulent exteriors there are in the world to posteriors such as the one you have touched![50]

This hidalgo, Don Toribio, and his fellow bankrupt noblemen aggressively raid banquets and cookshops, and they are not aloof nor stoical like _Lazarillo_'s hidalgo. Don Toribio is defiant: "We look upon the sun as our declared enemy because he shows up our darns, stitches and patches."[51] Quevedo's hidalgos make every effort to maintain contact with the social stream; they may even become beggars. They show great agility in the roles that they take:

> If our fleas bite us in the presence of ladies, we know a trick of scratching in public without attracting notice; for if it happens to be on the thigh we tell the tale of a soldier we saw shot there, clapping our hand on the place that itches and clawing with our fingers instead of pointing. . . .[52]

Lazarillo can lift the hidalgo's cloak of false dignity and see that the skin and bones underneath are not different from his own. He can also see that the hidalgo is a dispossessed wanderer and without a true home in Spanish society as is Lazarillo himself. They are both fellow-sufferers and a tenuous bond exists between them, but it is not a picaresque

bond because the hidalgo cherishes his past and ignores the material needs of the present. Quevedo, on the other hand, sets his hidalgos in the stocks, as disgusting, squirming scoundrels.

The picaro's sharp ability to distinguish between appearance and reality and his materialistic view-point make him a good satirical agent because he sees the hypocrisy of those who maintain the shabby Spanish social structure. His suffering is a measure of the abuses in society. The distinction in satirical tone between _Don Pablos_ and _Lazarillo_ is significant, for it shows that the picaresque viewpoint can either condemn or sympathize with the delusion that results from ideals that ignore the actual conditions of existence.

Matters of form and style related to the whole picaresque genre were discussed in the examination of realism and satire. Now it is necessary to focus exclusively on the picaro himself. His life is a voyage from innocence to experience, and into this life the author threads a series of adventures which reveal the picaro's maturing process. The word "experience" must be qualified. A picaro's "experience" is a vulgarized _savoir-faire_, gained from the development of ingenuity and resourcefulness, which the picaro must have if he wishes to survive in a corrupt society.

The picaresque works to be examined differ in the points at which each of their hero's adventures begin. Don Pablos realizes the criminality of his parents. His father poses as a barber, but is really a thief while his mother hides the calculations of a procuress behind a "sweet smile".[53] The boy witnesses his father's imprisonment and becomes embarrassed and

ashamed of his family. In revenge he leaves home in search of "virtue".[54] That he only sees virtue as a dignity opposed to the degradation of his family is evident in his association of virtue with the socially desirable position of a gentleman.[55] He does not define it as a result of inward moral growth.

An awareness of criminal experience is also felt by Rinconete and Cortadillo who, after they have become acquainted with each other, confess that they have each tried petty thievery. Cortadillo is equipped with the resources of a thief. When asked if he possesses a trade, he replies that he can "run like a hare, jump like a deer, and can wield the scissors with great dexterity."[56] The boys are prepared for a greater awakening to criminal life, but have not yet met Monipodio who exposes this life to them.

Unlike Don Pablos's parents, Lazarillo's mother is essentially honest and protects Lazarillo from external evils. However, she is poor and puts the young Lazarillo into service with the blind man.[57] Lazarillo does not guess this man's real character until the boy's awakening at the bridge at Salamanca. The blind man asks Lazarillo to place his ear against a stone bull at the entrance of the bridge. Suspecting nothing, the hapless boy does so and is pummeled against the stone. He realizes immediately the hard life he has entered:

> It seemed to me that, in an instant, I awoke from my simplicity in which I had reposed from childhood. I said to myself, 'This man says truly that it behoves [sic] me to keep my eyes open, for I am alone and have to think for myself.'[58]

The blind man, because the world has forced him to be shrewd and ingenious, actually "sees" better than Lazarillo who has to be made more observant.

His connection with the blind man is a rough but very profitable schooling.

Like Don Pablos' misinterpretation of "virtue", Guzman de Alfarache oversimplifies "life" and confuses it with geography:

> . . . who would thinke that the world were so large and so long as it is? I had seene it in some Maps, and me thought it was all plaine and smooth. . . without any great either difference, or distance.[59]

The confusion in both cases derives from the picaro's empirical mental outlook which prefers external concrete measurement to personal and private experience.

Naïveté is common to all these picaros. In some, such as Guzman and Don Pablos, this naïveté is caused by a misinterpretation of experience while in others, notably Lazarillo, it is the result of complete lack of experience. The growth from this naïveté usually must be very quick because society abuses the naïve. Just as Lazarillo suffers from the blind man, so does Guzman suffer from card-sharpers who strip him of the small wealth with which he left home. Early loss of fortune through a card game is a constant motif in picaresque fiction. The poor, stripped Guzman is left to nature and his pathetic loneliness is emblematic of Spanish poverty:

> The night was now shut up, and with it my imaginations, but not the teares, that trickled from mine eyes: In this melancholy humour I fell at last asleepe upon a seat without in the church-porch."[60]

The picaro's empiricism develops as he gains more experience. He learns more about human nature and how to manipulate it. He is not concerned to find why people act as they do, but simply how they act. The mental qualities, ingenuity and resourcefulness, that he must build are

those of the wits rather than of the whole mind. When he gains some command of these functions, he no longer is the child of Fortune but, rather, masters it. Lazarillo is an ungrateful graduate of the blind man's school. The boy outwits his master by persuading him to jump over an imaginary pond which stands before an actual stone pillar. The blind man jumps and smashes his head against the pillar.[61] This coup de grace leads Lazarillo to his cat and rat game with the priest, and his wits quickly sharpen. Cortadillo's ingenuity is turned from cutting cloth for his father to cutting purses for himself.[62] Very soon in Don Pablos' career, he becomes both ingenious and brave. With great zest and sword in hand, he rushes into a confectioner's shop, shouts, "You are a dead man," and stabs a box of sweetmeats which he spirits away.[63]

This zest is a direct result of the picaro's pride in his ability to outwit others. His acumen causes him to be instinctively "careless and joyous"[64] even if circumstances often cause him to be more calculating and careful. Besides developing his wits to take advantage of circumstances, he must also have a physical talent, namely dexterity. Monipodio warns the boys that, "to be a master in one's profession, there is as much need of good tools to work with as of ingenuity to learn it."[65]

With these talents the picaro can crack the limits of his social background and stand as an individual. His success adds an "ease and apparent sweetness"[66] to evil. The colour and zest of the picaro create a more tolerable world between the extremes of sin and virtue. Material gain is the only aim of the true criminal, but for the picaro the means by which he gains is just as important. His view of himself is that of a clever man

who wishes to outsmart the society with which he contends. In Don Pablos' case this desire results from the picaro's wish to retrieve the dignity lost by his family.[67] In Lazarillo's case it comes from exposure to society's ferocity. But whatever its cause, this desire, if satisfied, produces a self-confidence in the picaro which releases him from a sense of guilt. He can even imitate the manner of others. Don Quixote's picaro, Gines de Pasamonte, shows strange discretion. He warns his critics that he "will flay them where I care not at present to say."[68] Don Pablos expresses a contorted faith in Providence,[69] quite foreign to the picaro's usual wish to control Fortune. The picaro can even rationalize. Don Pablos implies that virtue is materially determined when he states that he cannot afford to be virtuous as can a rich man.[70]

Gines de Pasamonte, with the picaro's typical pride, keeps a record of his exploits which he calls The Life of Gines de Pasamonte. Don Quixote asks him if it is finished. He answers:

> How can it be finished?. . . since my life is not yet finished? What is written, is from my cradle to the moment of my being sent this last time to the galleys.[71]

His reply is typical of the picaresque character, a character that is never satisfied unless there is an adventure to satisfy it. The episode is the picaro's life, and his life is not complete until the last episode, for each contains a stage for his unbounded vitality. He responds to any setback with a wit made finer and surer by experience. The picaro's actions are not really criminal because of their peculiar motive. Lazarillo fights those who deny sympathy and sustenance for the wretched of mankind whom he represents. Colouring the picaro's acts is a picaresque spirit which

redeems him, for he is as interested in the fight as in its rewards. The "picaro implies flippancy; harassments rather than serious attacks; the trick-or-treat prankster; seduction rather than rape."[72]

Yet the heartlessness of society necessarily means that the picaro must be calculating. Sempronio aims at the possible rewards from his master's infatuation; Lazarillo measures his masters by their ability to feed him. His own need is the picaro's basic motive even if he can at times establish a bond with those who recognize the primary importance of material satisfaction. However, Don Pablos' need to be recognized as a gentleman is as strong as his material need. Although the picaro is usually immune to emotional involvement, he can be hurt if he feels that his basic identity is attacked and his birthright of normal recognition is denied.

Don Pablos witnesses a constant savagery in Spanish society. Because of the boy's early experience with his parents, the reader is inclined to think that the boy's tale is a product of a distorted sensitivity. Lazarillo's view of society, while also condemnatory, seems to be more balanced. He is concerned more with his own fortune than with social abuse even though he can sympathize with the hidalgo who is afflicted with false pride or with the pardoner's congregation who are gulled by him. There is a difference both in intention and tone in the picaresque fiction of Quevedo and Mendoza which will be reflected in English picaresque literature. Quevedo's intention is primarily satirical and his tone is harsh. Mendoza's intention is to present a sympathetic picture of the sufferings of the picaro and his tone objectively reveals the reality of Spanish life.

Sherman Eoff, writing of the picaresque element in Oliver Twist, suggests that much of Lazarillo's experience is pre-picaresque because he does not take the course of the thief or any other recognizably criminal course.[73] While his naïveté wins the reader's sympathy, Lazarillo is equipped with the "organ of computation" which is revealed in his first service to the blind man and especially in his ingenious trick to rid himself of the blind man. This "organ of computation", with its implied self-interest, is the essential spring of the picaro's actions. If its effect is violent, this violence is only symptomatic of the society that the picaro reflects. Lazarillo's ability to both shock and command sympathy testifies to the success of the picaresque writers whose intention is to awaken the social conscience.

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CHAPTER II

ELIZABETHAN PICARESQUE FICTION

1. Social and literary background. One of James Barrie's characters remarks that "circumstances alter cases". This truism often applies to a literary genre which makes the hazardous journey from one nation to another. A translation of Lazarillo by David Rouland of Anglesey was entered on the Stationers' Register in 1568-9,[1] and, through succeeding years, translations of other Spanish picaresque works became very popular in England. But English picaresque fiction, while maintaining much of the essential spirit of its Spanish progenitors, differs in some striking respects from the Spanish.

One difference is in number. Only one picaresque work written before Defoe's series of picaresque works in the early eighteenth century has lasting significance. This is Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller. The "circumstances" of English social and economic life during Elizabeth's reign showed signs of decay similar to those of Spain. But the attitude of the reading public to this decay was a greater sense of shame. The pamphlets by such writers as Thomas Dekker and Robert Greene reveal a sordid Elizabethan underworld which the public could not find amusing. The Elizabethan audience could laugh at Shakespeare's Falstaff or Autolycus because these figures were removed by their creator from actual contemporary life. However, writers found that they exposed the Elizabethan underworld better by documentary rather than by a more truly

literary approach. Nashe's removal of his picaro from England to a series of continental adventures and Henry Chettle's placing of his picaro in Greece seem to indicate the Elizabethan picaresque writers' unwillingness to deal directly with English conditions.

The concept of a moral order which Shakespeare knew and absorbed into his dramatic purpose was difficult to achieve in actual English society. The growing towns were blemished with the crimes that festered in them. An Italian writes of his visit to England:

> ... there is no country in the world where there are so many thieves and robbers as in England; insomuch that few venture to go alone in the country, excepting in the middle of the day, and fewer still in the towns at night and least of all in London.[2]

These "thieves and robbers" had from the fourteenth century formed a society which included every type of criminal. Dekker, in his Bellman of London, cites "some eighteen or nineteen several offices for men, and about seven or eight for women"[3] in an establishment resembling Monipodio's. Robert Greene writes of the plight of simple conies or country persons who in their sojourns in cities like London were bedevilled by the cony-catchers, gifted card-sharpers.

Toward the end of his life, Greene attempted to expose criminal life in fiction rather than in the documentary pamphlet. In his Groatsworth of Wit, a father who has two sons leaves all his wealth to one of them, except for one groat which he leaves to the other to purchase some wit. The neglected son, Roberto, by a clever device, gains the fortune of the other, but wastes his "groatsworth of wit" in lewd living sustained by his brother's inheritance. Roberto repents of his folly, and, in this repentance, he

may speak for Greene.[4] He does not, however, speak as a picaro, for a picaro is never conscious of a loss of wit because his resource of it is unlimited. There are few suggestions of the picaresque genre in the works of the pamphleteers.

The picaresque spirit can be preserved only where there is a margin of tolerance and a willingness to allow the picaro to go unpunished while he entertains. Consequently picaresque fiction has only a small corner of the Elizabethan pleasure dome from which to shed its light. The particular "humour" of Elizabethan picaresque fiction is comic. This fiction does not emphasize the suffering of the picaro or the social determinism behind his actions. Jack Wilton or Piers Plainness or Nicholas Breton's Dorindo are primarily observers and satirists of society.

2. Thomas Nashe's Unfortunate Traveller: the witty picaro. Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller, published in 1594, is the first work in English to fuse history with fiction in the adventures of its hero, Jack Wilton, who travels throughout Europe and meets such notable persons as Luther, More, Erasmus, and the Earl of Surrey. Nashe uses his character to observe the panorama of European events and society. Jack sometimes praises what he sees. For example, he defends the Roman Catholics: "if good workes may merite heaven, they doe them, we talke of them."[5] Sometimes he is almost splenetic in his harsh criticism. The author's presence is felt in diatribes against the ignorant and dull types that Jack meets. But most often the picaro's outlook gives comic colour to the satire.

Notable differences exist between Nashe's story and Spanish picaresque fiction. The first is that, unlike Lazarillo, the series of episodes in The Unfortunate Traveller is not based upon a cycle of master and servant relationships. In Lazarillo this cycle, which may be compared to the mediaeval wheel of fortune, provides the stimulus for Lazarillo's development of character and the focus for Lazarillo's fight with society. In The Unfortunate Traveller change is limited to change in external circumstances such as time and place. From the tale's outset, Jack is a mature man in full command of his wits. Lazarillo attaches himself to his masters through the force of circumstances, but Jack chooses to be a hanger-on to people like Surrey. In one instance Jack is caught by circumstance in the person of Zadoch, a Jew, who contrives to sell him as his bondsman to Zachary, a doctor. This doctor plans to use Jack's body in an anatomical experiment.[6] The effect of this debacle is melodrama rather than pathos. Jack has the capacity to dodge death, but how he will do it is a question.

Lazarillo usually leaves a master because of harsh treatment that he can no longer endure. Jack abandons Surrey to satisfy Jack's sheer mischief, or Juliana (a woman whose love saves him from Zadoch) because her constant sexual demands bore him. The source of Jack's actions is less dramatic than that of Lazarillo's; the pervading tone of his adventures is comic.

Lazarillo is propelled by his search for food. Jack, too, has a keen interest in his own sustenance, but he looks for drink rather than food. His plight is never as urgent as Lazarillo's, but he needs ale to make him a virile, witty picaro. At Charles V's court, he insists upon

the importance of drink: "our entertainment was everyway plentiful; carouses we had in whole galons in sted of quart pots. Not a health was given us but contained well neere a hogshead."[7] As a connoisseur he is irked by the deterioration of wine: "at the verie name of sider I can but sigh, there is so much of it in renish wine now a daies."[8]

Each episode with masters teaches Lazarillo to develop ingenuity and resourcefulness. In contrast, Jack does not seem to develop much although his shock at the rape of a chaste matron, Heraclide, toward the end of his account, contrasts with his flippancy at the beginning of it. Plot development occurs when Jack is separated from his love, Diamante, and struggles to reunite with her. The lascivious Spaniard, Esdras de Granada, who rapes Heraclide, features in two episodes separated by other material. This plot development is only rudimentary, but it brings Nashe's work closer to the modern novel than is Lazarillo.

Because of these differences with such a Spanish work as Lazarillo, Nashe produces a comic picaro who is actively interested in all whom he meets and everything that he experiences. He evaluates his observations by the same material standards as Lazarillo and, indeed, as all Spanish picaros, but because he does not suffer, like Lazarillo, from his encounters with society, he has more energy to direct his wit to less immediate concerns than food. The particular aspect of his picaresque spirit is "stimulated or high spirits".

He is chiefly interested, though, in himself. Not for him is a useless humility. When he abandons Surrey, he preserves the agreement

between them that Jack would take Surrey's name so that Surrey could observe Italy less impeded by admirers. He plays the role up to the hilt:

> Through all the cities past I by no other name but the young Earle of Surry; my pomp, my apparel, traine and expense, was nothing inferior to his, my looks were as loftie, my wordes as magnificall.[9]

Like Don Pablos, he feels that the most desirable role in life is that of a gentleman.

At one point Jack faces execution because Heraclide's husband has accused him of her murder. Like Gines de Pasamonte, he knows that the custom among imprisoned gentlemen who face execution is to write a memoir. Accordingly, he writes a ballad called, "Wiltons wontoness".[10] After his rescue from prison, he sheds comic light upon the danger that faced him when he says: "He that hath gone through many perils and returned safe from them, makes but a merriment to dilate them."[11]

He knows other values besides his own personality. Money, for instance, has great social utility: "any man is a fine fellow as long as he hath any money in his purse."[12] He steals once from Juliana and is assisted in this theft by Diamante. He is not a confirmed thief; he steals only to suit his purpose. Jack is not immoral, for he simply has no time for morality. He is also indifferent to spiritual life, because, as far as he can see, the spirit is wholly dependent upon physical nature. He turns to God only when he is threatened by Zachary:

> ... theres no such readie way to make a man a true Christian, as to persuade himselfe he is taken up for an anatomie. Ile depose I praid then more than I did in seven yeare before.[13]

This cynicism he shows whenever he encounters others who have religious

belief.

Jack's pity for Heraclide does not necessarily imply a deepening moral sensibility. He describes in detail the assaults upon her, and this description suggests not so much a revulsion as a desire that his account be complete. The grotesque torture of Zadoch is described almost phlegmatically, and Jack understates the cruelty of battle: "the French King himselfe. . . was much distressed, the brains of his owne men sprinkled in his face."[14] War for him is essentially a game, for he cannot see any real causes involved in it. He thinks "to thrust my selfe into that Faction that was strongest."[15] Although Nashe might intend to condemn war, his hero, to be comic, is a true picaro with limited emotional sensitivity.

Jack's language startles the reader. It is far from the bland photographic style of Lazarillo or Rinconete and Cortadillo. It is almost self-motivating; constantly growing clusters of simile and metaphor describe objects, movement, and character. Jack's free-wheeling wit passes rapidly from one suggestion to another and, in this process, reworks and amplifies old clichés:

> Much companie, much knavery, as true as that olde adage, Much curtesie, much subtiltie. Those companies, lyke a greate deale of corne, do yeeld some chaffe; the corne are cormorants, the chaffe are good fellowes, which are quickly blowen to nothing wyth bearing a light heart in a lyght purse. Amongest this chaffe was I winnowing my wittes to live merrily, and by my troth so I did: the prince could but command men spend their bloud in his service, I could make them spend al the money they had for my pleasure. But povertie in the end partes friends; though I was prince of their purses, & [sic] exacted of my unthrifte subiects as much liquid alleageance as any keisar in the world could doe, yet where it is not to bee had the king must loose his right: want cannot be withstoode, men can

> doe no more than they can doe: what remained then, but the foxes case must help, when the lions skin is out at the elbowes?[16]

L.C. Knights' comment that for Nashe "the ostensible theme is merely an occasion for the performance"[17] is clearly evident in The Unfortunate Traveller.

In the picaro, Nashe finds an excellent vehicle for his metaphorical power. The picaro is witty not only to exist, but also to make his view of the world identifiable. He proudly presents his experience to those who have an ear for a good story told with rich detail which emanates as much from his imagination as from his observations. All subjects come within the beam of Jack's attention, and he is eager to express himself with a complete arsenal of literary devices. Nashe gives his picaro a fund of knowledge which is used as grist for his mill of wit. A good portion of the imagery is drawn from literary sources as well as from observations of daily life.[18]

This daily life is often low life and, hence, provides suitable material for a picaro. As thorough a knowledge of gambling, drinking and wenching as Greene has, Nashe has. The muscularity and vigour of the prose is immediately apparent in the invocation to "gallant squires" to "straight crie Sic respondeo, and give him the stockado" if they should meet anyone who criticizes the work.[19] It is intended primarily for masculine ears.

Jack has free rein for his picaresque forcibleness and directness. Don Pablos often ridicules an abstract phrase by a concrete interpretation

of it.[20] Jack, too, forces our attention to a concrete expression which contrasts ironically to an abstract one. This is done often by a sharp elliptical phrase: "I, beeing by nature inclined to Mercie (for in deede I knewe two or three good wenches of that name),"[21] and "God be mercifull to our pandor (and that were for God to worke a miracle)."[22] Comments like these exemplify the rigorous criticism of any sign of cant which comes within Nashe's purview.

Closely related to an insistence upon concrete expression is the emphasis of the physical aspect in intellectual and spiritual matters. Jack uses this emphasis to ridicule whoever he thinks seems pretentious. Henri Bergson suggests that it would only take a deformity like a crooked nose or an obvious wart to make a character such as Hamlet seem ridiculous.[23] Similar accentuation of the physical nature of famous persons becomes a satirical and comic device in The Unfortunate Traveller. The debate between Luther and Carolostadius is described by Jack in this way: "Luther had the louder voyce, Carolostadius went beyond him in beating and bounsing with his fists."[24] Each contender is backed by his academic and clerical supporters:

> One peckt with his fore-finger at everie halfe sillable hee brought forth, and nodded with his nose like an olde singing man teaching a yong querister to keepe time. Another woulde be sure to wipe his mouth with his handkercher at ye ende of every ful point. . . .[25]

This separation of manner from matter compares with Don Pablos' observation of the nuns' lovers.[26] V.S. Pritchett says that both Lazarillo and The Unfortunate Traveller have "an overpowering sense of the body; over-

powering in the sense that the body alone exists, that it is the body (not the mind or the soul) which is brought into history to be knocked about."[27] This one dimensional viewpoint is obvious when Jack is the eye-witness to historic events.

The literary task itself is described in physical terms. Jack tells of Heraclide's rape until "my words sticke fast in the myre and are cleane tyred."[28] Jack's enthusiasm for digression must be checked continually: "My principall subject pluckes me by the elbowe."[29]

The distance between the physical and the crude is short in Jack's descriptions. To balance the involved metaphors, he makes blunt statements fit only for the hardiest of ears. He tells of his affairs in Rome: "I was at Pontius Pilates [sic] house and pist against it."[30] This kind of expression is an integral part of his speech. Jack does not say that a play was badly acted, but that it was "filthily acted".[31]

Nashe states that he had read <u>Euphues</u> at Cambridge, but, after he matured, he turned against Lyly's style. He criticizes those who follow in Lyly's direction. But, as if to show that he could adopt euphuism as well as any man, he interpolates, amid more candid writing, rich praise of Surrey's beloved Geraldine. Jack observes that when Surrey

> ... came to the chamber where his Geraldines [sic] cleere Sunbeames first thrust themselves into this cloud of flesh, and acquainted mortalitie with the purity of Angels, then did his mouth overflow with magnificats. . . .[32]

This comment mixes strangely the sublime and the physical. Jack thinks that a lover responds to beauty only physically; the aesthetic element in

Surrey's praise is tempered by the operation of speech. The mouth and the tongue react almost before the heart. In another passage Jack recalls Sempronio as he suggests that Surrey:

> ...was more in love with his own curious forming fancie than her face; and truth it is, many become passionate lovers only to winne praise to theyr wits.[33]

That Jack, as a picaro, can recognize beauty is significant, however. This recognition encourages him to love Diamante, and, hence, he becomes more directly concerned with life. Lazarillo marries at the end of his tale, but this marriage is more a sign of the crowning success of his life than something he attempts to gain for itself. Jack finds a more convincing interest in Diamante as a person with a similar outlook to his own. A picaresque bond exists between them even if Nashe understates its significance and uses it primarily as a device to end the tale.

Jack is satirical as well as comic. His satire is shown not only in exaggeration, but also in subtler effects. Jack's comic satire is seen first when he meets the cider merchant who is the supplier of the English army to which Jack is attached. Jack tricks the merchant into thinking that he is suspected of subterfuge by the king and his lords. He advises the merchant to be liberal with his cider in order to dispel this suspicion. Jack's friends benefit from this trick, and, until the plot is discovered, they all have a roaring party at the merchant's expense. The trick reflects the influence of the jest books by Scoggin and Skelton which were widely read in the period, but there is true picaresque ingenuity in the act.

The merchant is immediately shocked by Jack's mention "of some

dangers that have beset you and your barrels."[34] Nashe very subtly equates the man with his "barrels", and reduces the figure for comic possibilities. Does the equation suggest that the man, too, is wooden or is shaped like a barrel? A comic juxtaposition follows in which the shocked merchant bangs upon the table. To the waiter this indicates that he wants something: "At the name of dangers hee start up, and bounst with his fist on the board so hard that his tapster overhearing him, cried, anone, anone, sir, by and by. . . ."[35] The seeming indifference of the waiter gives a humorous foil to the merchant's bombast. Jack's manipulation of the merchant is assisted by a knowledge of what motivates the man. Jack bellows into the merchant's ear to bring him out of his shock: "Hoe, hoste, whats to pay? will no man looke to the reckoning here?"[36] To be ingenious, Jack, as a picaro, must know how men operate. The satire here develops from comic reduction of the figure; it is not invective.

Harsher criticism is reserved for the pedantic clerics of Wittenburg. They are as bad as court fops in their servility to the Duke of Saxony who has helped them against the Pope. They meet him "in their hooded hypocrisie and doctorly accoustrements"[37], and their oration to him is "by patch and by peecemeale stolne out of Tully."[38] The disparity between their supposed spiritual dedication and their physical needs is exposed during the play performed for the Duke: "The onely thing they did well was the prodigall childs hunger, most of their schollers being hungerly kept. . . ."[39] Hunger is made to appear grotesque as in Don Pablos' description of his schoolmaster.[40] What is most damning in these men is their lack of wit. Jack finds that their heads are crammed with "learned lumber", but that

they have "no wit to make use of it."[41] In their pretentiousness, they make an ideal target for picaresque satire.

Doctor Zachary is the wizard figure of Nashe's work. An obvious difference between him and Celestina is the monstrous scatological picture he presents:

> Of the ashie parings of his bread, he would make conserve of chippings. Out of bones, after the meate was eaten off, hee would alchumize an oyle, that hee sold for a shilling a dram. His snot and spittle a hundred times hee hath put over to his Apothecarie for snow water.[42]

Doctor Zachary, as a wizard, is a useful figure in Jack's tale. His genius for the manipulation of physical nature gives colour and variety to Jack's own concentration upon the physical aspect of experience. At the same time Jack satirizes Zachary's dishonesty in falsifying the things that he sells.

Jack does not suffer as does Lazarillo, but he does share the viewpoint of the Spanish picaros. This viewpoint, of course, is characterized by its strong emphasis upon the physical measurement of experience. To the picaro only the body and "things" count, not the spirit and "essences". Jack uses the satirical advantage that such a view gives him, as does Don Pablos. They both drastically separate manner from intention in the figures whom they satirize and hold the physical appearance of these figures under their microscopes designed to ridicule. But the emphasis on "things" also simplifies experience for Jack and assists his comic purpose. He can be extremely witty in his observations because he does not become emotionally involved in what he observes. His most effective wit is a product of his keen observation of society, and he is eager to reveal this wit to

society.

Nashe's characterization of his picaro may be criticized because Jack's activities and interests are too varied and numerous to give him clear outline. For example, Jack displays enthusiastically a wide book knowledge that a picaro would not normally have. This is, however, a criticism of Nashe's style, and in this case it is even more true than usual to say that style makes the man. In his own terms, his work is a success, for Nashe says: "That no winde that blowes strong but is boystrous, no speech or wordes of any power or force to confute or perswade but must bee swelling and boystrous."[43] The essence of the picaro Nashe has caught. Jack Wilton bounds before our eyes as an energetic, keen-witted picaro, indifferent to moral scruples, but an enemy of pretence.

3. Henry Chettle's Piers Plainness: Seven Years' Prenticeship: the cynical picaro. Henry Chettle's picaresque work, Piers Plainness: Seven Years' Prenticeship, hereafter referred to as Piers, was published in 1595, just a year after The Unfortunate Traveller's publication. Like Jack Wilton, Piers witnesses significant events, but these events are of fantasy rather than of history because he inhabits a real country, Greece, but observes people and situations strictly of Chettle's invention. Moreover, Piers' attitude is more cynical and condemnatory, quite unlike Jack's witty satire. Piers stands apart, disengaged from the events he relates. This disengagement helps to maintain his unprejudiced viewpoint and to keep him innocent of the corruption he describes. But his observations lack

sharpness chiefly because he himself lacks energy. He has little of Jack's metaphorical flourish. Unlike Jack, he never attempts to direct events, but is passed as a piece of property from one master to another. After one dire event he finds that "my selfe (as a moveable) was solde, and Flavius quondam [former] Baylie the Customer became my master."[44]

A particular misfortune of Piers is its attempt to combine too many different modes. Its brief introduction, leading to Pier's account of his experiences, has a pastoral setting. Piers chooses to live in pastoral quietude after encounters with the noise of conflicting ambitions in the court of Thrace. His account consists of two stories: one tells of the corruption and chicanery of Thracian politics, and the other of an Arcadian romance on the island of Crete. Intertwined with these two is Piers' own experience with a series of masters. The Arcadian romance will not be examined because it has nothing to do with the picaresque aspect of the work aside from Piers' narration of it.

Piers is closer to Lazarillo in its basic structure than is The Unfortunate Traveller. Both Lazarillo and Piers endure seven masters who are at times very much alike. For example, Piers suggests to Flavius, his second master, who steeps himself in political intrigue, that he should work after he has been despoiled by his borrowings from money lenders. But Flavius is too proud: "that was too base, hee swore no small oaths, hee could neither beg nor worke. . . ."[45] In his scorn for the middle class virtue of work, Flavius is like Lazarillo's hidalgo. Piers' life with his masters is continually disturbed by hunger as is Lazarillo's. Ulpian, the

usurer, is so sparing with food that "not Niggardize her selfe can well expresse."[46] He makes his daughter Ursula's sickness the excuse for "a long Lent."[47] However, this hunger is not a motivating impulse in Piers' relation with society as it is in Lazarillo's. Piers acts passively even though he observes keenly. He shows some opportunism in his talk with Menalcas and Corydon, his shepherd audience, to whom he relates his experiences at court in return for food and drink. But during his life in Thrace, Piers exhibits little determination.

Chettle uses his picaro primarily for his own satirical observation, and Piers' masters represent certain faults which Chettle wishes to condemn. In the political tale, action springs from the usurpation of Hylenus' throne by Celinus and Celydon. Piers' first master is Thrasilio, the jester of Flavius, one of Celydon's retainers. Thrasilio is described on the eve of the plot:

> . . . he that had seene the pitifull plight my master was in, when these tidings of fighting came, might well have gest his valour by his visage: yet he bragd it out, saying the palenes of his colour came from the anger of his heart, and swore the quaking of hys joynts onely presaged his impatience.[48]

As a true picaro, Piers shows that behind the false professions of loyalty by her subjects, Thrace is really composed of very small men who would prefer not to endanger their lives. Piers, like a valet, sees his masters in their physical and moral underclothes before they don their armour. Piers is happy enough when he is sold by Thrasilio to Flavius. Thrasilio represents the very worst of the courtier kind, for "he was ever begging, still beggarly, prying, complaining, soothing, swearing, bold to accuse,

fearefull to continue accusations."[49]

Lazarillo's corrupt masters are very often clerics, but Piers' are either politicians or merchants. The focus for satire has become secularized. Chettle likely has in mind distinct abuses among the merchant class when he draws the condemning picture of the usurer, Ulpian. Piers overhears Ulpian one day while he makes his "orizons":

> O gold, adored gold, my soules cheefe soveraigne, my lives best Genius, for whom the needy vassaile toyles, the Souldier fightes, the Scholler studieth, howe doth thy divine essence comfort my troubled spirite, against whose opulencie the envious beggars of the earth repine. O bee thou resident with me in spite of all their rage: for where thou art there envy cannot hurt. Close up my senses from all other thoughts than of thy exelence. . . .[50]

His prayer has an almost diabolical tone, for it closely parodies the rhythm and language of a true religious prayer. It reflects the dominating mercenary outlook that is at the centre of the political corruption in Thrace.

Piers does not only witness this corruption, but also, when he can, judges it. He does not act against the court life while he is in it, but his seven years' experience with it produce a sour taste and a wish to adopt the pastoral life when circumstances make this life available to him. In Tempe, the "Paradice of Greece,"[51] he observes the friendship of twenty years between Corydon and Menalcas and fittingly contrasts it to the life that he has known:

> . . . in Thrace and Creete have I seven yeares beene a prentice. . . but in al that time could I never be acquainted with any man so happie, that had a true friend of tenne dayes standing.[52]

Throughout his experience, Piers keeps untainted. He does not even share

the guilt of his masters by association with them, because court society does not make a true community, and in it few bonds exist between men. His masters' actions mean little to Piers, and he remains cynical and aloof in his outlook, even if physically bound to service.

Piers seems at first almost alien to the pastoral life. Menalcas describes him as: "of body strong, of wit prompt, of speech not altogether rude, but exceeding Satyrical."[53] When Menalcas introduces them to each other, Piers immediately defends himself from Corydon's hint that he is lax in his duty as a shepherd. He cannot help the bluntness of his defence, since he confesses that he is "plaine by name and nature."[54]

His "plaine" nature does not make him aggressive when he is in Thrace although he does make an initial move from one order of society to another. After experimenting with many trades, he finds that "they had no small delight in goodness."[55] He does not reject the tradesman's life for the same reason as does Flavius. The corruption of this life, not its work is what he rejects. However, because he is then drawn by the false glow of the court, he is still unsuccessful in finding any "goodness" in society.

His succeeding movement is from master to master and finally from Thrace to Crete. It is movement only in social and geographical breadth, not in personal depth. By simplifying his picaro, Chettle makes him a mirror held up to debased society, and this mirror remains unclouded by any peculiar characteristics of its own. It continually reflects reality behind appearance. In explaining the craft of brokerage as a mystery, Piers tells Menalcas:

> . . . the terme was not much a misse, for there are more mysts used therein, than in anie Trade beside. They cover their craft with charitie, pietie, pitie, neighborhood, friendship, equitie, and what not that good is, although in it there be no one poynt of goodnes.[56]

Play upon words in this passage -- "mystery", "misse", "mysts" -- is common throughout the tale and helps to keep the mirror from becoming dull.

Self-preservation is at all times the picaro's prime concern, and Piers clearly indicates this concern. As an inevitable result of the political plot, Celinus wishes to escape from the domineering Celydon. Celinus arranges with Piers' master Petrusio to escape Thrace by boat. When all three are out to sea, Celinus, thinking that Petrusio intends to betray him to Celydon, murders him and turns next upon Piers with a choice of being his servant or of sharing Petrusio's fate. Piers explains his reaction:

> I that was acquainted with Petrusioes trecherie, pitying his [Celinus'] youth, remembring his royall progenie, and in plaine tearmes fearing my owne tragedie, quicklie resolvd to provide for his escape. . . .[57]

The real reason makes the others seem facetious. At such a point, the picaro's polite regard for others is outweighed by his self-regard.

In the first scene, Piers, the worldly sage, is granted the "preheminence of the middle place"[58] between the two simple shepherds so that he can tell of his seven years' experience with the world. But he has not earned his bardic superiority because he has not actively involved himself in his relationship with society. This detachment is like Jack Wilton's, but where Jack is witty and anxious to show his wit, Piers is merely cynical. This cynicism is Chettle's cynicism, and, hence, his

picaro does not live. Almost everyone in Thrace is totally corrupt, and the morality by which Piers condemns them is Chettle's morality. Tension between self-concern and pity for others produces a dramatic, if elementary, social consciousness in Lazarillo when he shares his bread with the hidalgo. Chettle does not complicate his picaro by subjecting him to such tension. Piers is given his morality, and it serves to cut him off from society as it turns into an easy cynicism. In its satirical force, *Piers* stands closer to the condemnatory attitude of *Don Pablos* than to the drama of *Lazarillo*. *Piers'* comedy differs from that of *The Unfortunate Traveller* because it arises only from the characters that Piers sees rather than a witty interpretation of these characters.

4. *Nicholas Breton's A Mad World My Masters: the enlightened picaro.* An Elizabethan writer who uses the picaresque spirit in his portrait of the life and manners of his time is Nicholas Breton. His *A Mad World My Masters*, published in 1603, has the form of a dialogue between two symbolic characters.

Lorenzo, the "mistaker", misinterprets, at first, the manners of society and thinks that people are what they seem. In his gradual discovery of reality behind appearance, he uncovers an alarming society of shallow, conniving sinners who pretend to be the roles that they assume. A merchant poses as a good Samaritan but remains mercenary while a "fine mistresse" uses her beauty as a veil for covetousness. His discovery of society's deception is similar to the evolution from naïveté to experience in the typical picaro, but his discovery of fraud does not lead to a

development of wit.

Dorindo, "the taker", is more truly the picaro of the two. He, too, has seen the deception of the world, but he has sharpened his wits to "take" life as it is. He has feigned many roles to profit from society and has outwitted many shrewd criminals. However, his conclusion is a judgment against the life he has led.

These figures tell, from contrasting viewpoints, a series of encounters that they have had with society. An indication of these contrasting viewpoints comes early in the dialogue:

> Lorenzo: Indeed sometime the joy of taking helpes the miserie of mistaking.
>
> Dorindo: Yea, but when the theefe that hath taken a purse, if he be overtaken in the high way, and so take the gallowes for his Inne, that joyfull taking in the beginning brings a sorrowfull mistaking in the end.[59]

Before this wisdom is again expressed in Dorindo's advice at the end of his tale, he sketches his encounters with deftness and comic skill. His portrait of society is imbued with merriment, and he embodies this merriment in his own activity. Ursula Kentish-Wright compares Breton's portrait of society with Greene's and finds a difference in spirit between them: "to compare Breton's writing with Greene's is like comparing a gentle May breeze, laden with the scent of flowers, to a rude March wind blowing grit into one's face."[60] Dorindo is so subtle a character that he is continually misinterpreted, or, as he says: "taken up, and taken downe so many waies."[61] This misinterpretation does nothing for his reputation:

> If I but courted a wench, I was taken for a wencher; if I talked merily, I was taken for a jester; if I looked sadly, I was taken for a spie; if I were liberal, for a prodigall; if thriftie, for a snudge [miser]; if valiant, for a quarreller; if patient, a coward; if rich, wise; if poore, a foole. . . .[62]

Dorindo seems to have so much zest in his various activities that he becomes a comic victim of his own success. He is led to question his own identity: "I was taken so many waies, that I knew not well which way to take my selfe."[63]

This last statement indicates a limitation in the picaro's versatility. He is often thoroughly adept at disguise and at turning social manner to his own ends, but no matter how sure a knowledge he has of his social context, he cannot completely escape the effect of his role-playing upon himself. He may become confused with the roles that he takes or that he is thought to be by those to whom he exhibits the nuances of his character.

Dorindo's adventures show his quick-witted opportunism and sprightliness. At first he profits almost accidentally, for he is taken as a card-sharper, a "fine fin-gred companion," when he does not intend to be. Some players who have watched him give him money to gamble for them, but he finds more advantage in quitting their company and making off to Rouen with the money. Here he becomes a physician to profit from the plague which ravages the town: "I made a shew with a little Allume and Copresse, to perswade such wonders of my Art or studie; that who would not give me a good fee for a sore finger?"[64] But he soon loses this profit -- "ill gotten, ill spent"[65] --, some to a pirate and the rest to a doxy. Such profit and loss is really a game, though, and is matched by the constant alliterative play of Dorindo's language: "Oh, I was not onely so taken but so overtaken with this taking-mistresse, that she brought me into such a taking, as is scarce worth talking of."[66] His relationship with the doxy is only an affair, for, like Jack Wilton's

encounter with Juliana, he soon becomes bored with her.

In some of his adventures, Dorindo exposes the professions. Wit is essential in the legal profession, and Dorindo finds easy profit in it:

> When having gotten acquaintance with some setters (instigators) for Clients, rubbing over my poore French, having Litleton before me, and a booke of notes I know not of whose writing, I would set on such a conselling countenance, as if I had bin at the barre, before I knew the hall: when, what with a multitude of Clients and golden fees, I made such a game of my dissembling, that nere a Lawyer of my standing, but I carried it cleane from him, man and matter and all.[67]

Dorindo repents his conscienceless life, but he does not bemoan any loss of wit as does Greene's Roberto. He insists that, if one is to make his way in society, wits have to be sharp. His characteristic advice is for those who, like Lorenzo, mistake the world's intentions: "Oh, take heed of a wolfe in a lambes skinne, and talke not of hawking, till you have bene a Faulconer: for if a man have not his five wits, he may be a foole in foure of them."[68]

Both Piers and A Mad World My Masters set a pattern which Moll Flanders will also follow: that of the "experienced" life which leads to a retreat from society and advice for others. Breton's work is superior to Chettle's, however, because his picaro, Dorindo, displays a more original wit and sprightliness than does Piers. Dorindo's observations are lit with a comic spark. His comment upon false church men is typical: "But those may rather be called lurch-men pilferers then [sic] church-men, who as they are not troubled with much learning, so they have no more honesty, then they may well away withall."[69] The result of Dorindo's satirical observation and Lorenzo's social education is a common enlightenment.

They have seen the wiles of the world and both prefer the simple life with few entanglements, for the men whom they have met are most often perverse. Their advice is straightforward: "take good notice of every man you have to deale withall, and have to doe with as few as you can."[70]

In Elizabethan picaresque fiction, the picaro and the society in which he moves are clearly separated. He does not represent society, and his realistic outlook often opposes the pretentiousness of the characters that he meets. Jack Wilton and Dorindo move with great sprightliness, but they move only from place to place. Piers does not move even this much, for, as he says, he is often passed from one master to another. Their adventures are strongly episodic, for these picaros have no real ambition to integrate their lives. In fact, Piers and Dorindo find contentment when they can withdraw from society. All three remain disengaged from society, and this disengagement is the basis of the comic nature of their adventures and observations. Satire also is a natural result of this disengagement, and this satire can be broadly comic as in Jack's encounter with the victualler or more harsh as in Piers' observation of Thrasilio.

NOTES

1 Thomas Nashe, The Unfortunate Traveller (H.F.B. Brett-Smith, editor, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1920), p. vii.

2 A.V. Judges, editor, The Elizabethan Underworld (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1930), p. xv.

3 Thomas Dekker, "The Bellman of London" (Judges, op. cit.), p. 308.

4 Robert Greene, Groats-Worth of Witte and The Repentance of Robert Greene (G.B. Harrison, editor, London: Bodley Head, 1923), 34 pp.

5 Thomas Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller" (Robert B. McKerrow, editor, The Works of Thomas Nashe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), II, p. 285.

6 Ibid., pp. 303-306.

7 Ibid., p. 253.

8 Ibid., p. 210.

9 Ibid., p. 267.

10 Ibid., p. 295.

11 Loc. cit.

12 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller" (McKerrow, op. cit.), p. 218.

13 Ibid., p. 305.

14 Ibid., p. 231.

15 Loc. cit.

16 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller" (McKerrow, editor, op. cit.), p. 210.

17 L.C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson (London: Chatto & Windus), p. 312.

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18 A.K. Croston, "The Use of Imagery in Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller", The Review of English Studies, XXIV (April, 1948), 98.

19 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller" (McKerrow, op. cit.), p. 207.

20 Cf. ante p. 17.

21 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, op. cit.), p. 213.

22 Ibid., p. 260.

23 Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic (Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell, translators, London: Macmillan and Company, 1911), p. 23.

24 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, op. cit.), p. 250.

25 Loc. cit.

26 Cf. ante p. 14.

27 V.S. Pritchett, "Books in General", New Statesman and Nation, XXXV (April 10, 1948), 297.

28 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, op.cit.), p. 292.

29 Ibid., p. 266.

30 Ibid., p. 280.

31 Ibid., p. 241.

32 Ibid., p. 270.

33 Ibid., p. 262.

34 Ibid., p. 212.

35 Loc. cit.

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36 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, editor, *op. cit.*), p. 214.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 246.

38 *Loc. cit.*

39 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, *op. cit.*), p. 250.

40 *Cf. ante* p. 12.

41 Nashe, "The Unfortunate Traveller", (McKerrow, *op. cit.*), p. 251.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

43 Thomas Nashe, "Christs Teares Over Jerusalem" (Robert B. McKerrow, *op. cit.*), II, p. 184.

44 Henry Chettle, "Piers Plainness: Seven Years' Prenticeship" (James Winny, editor, *The Descent of Euphues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957, p. 160.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 158.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 124.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 144.