Towards a picaresque novel review.

Creation, parody and evolution of a narrative genre

By David Mañero-Lozano

University of Jaen, Spain

Preliminary

The study of the picaresque novel and, in particular, its evolution during the 17th century continues to give rise to many theoretical problems. As evidence of that, there are several theoretical approaches that, in each case, explain a different group of works. The disparity of critical expositions may be observed in the main approaches to the genre. Basically, the criteria employed to study the picaresque novel have focused both on semantic features, such as the problem of “delinquency”, the denial of honour or beggary, and formal resources, like the use of the autobiography or the “servicio a varios amos”, among others, as we will see in the following paragraphs. According to Parker (39), the subject of “delinquency”, considered the main feature of the picaresque novel, turns up in Quevedo’s Buscón or in Salas Barbadillo’s La ingenuosa Elena, whose protagonists might be considered “delinquents”. However, this social condition does not characterize the protagonists of Vicente Espinel’s Marcos de Obregón or Alcalá Yáñez’s Alonso, mozo de muchos amos, nor Lazarillo. In the words of Parker: “El Lazarillo no es novela picaresca propiamente dicha porque Lázaro no es pícaro” (Parker 16-7). In the same way, some ideological issues often associated with the genre, like the denial of honour —which is proposed by Bataillon

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2 See, for example, the review article by Eisenberg.
as a fundamental feature of pícaro—force us to exclude La pícara Justina and Marcos de Obregón from the genre. In fact, Bataillon calls the last character “perfecto anti-pícaro” (209). Social problems, like beggary, with an undoubted importance either in Mateo Alemán or in the apocryphal continuation of Guzmán de Alfarache, are not of interest in other works, such as La ingeniosa Elena or Vida de don Gregorio Guadaña. The rhetorical strategies with a moralizing function and, in particular, those originating from the sermon, on which Herrero García (349-50) bases his explanation of the genre, are ruled out as an ideological and structural resource in Buscón or Estebanillo González.

Regarding the definition of the genre based on formal criteria, we may observe that these features do not always affect the same group of works. Thus, the so-called “caso”, which refers to “la vida del héroe contemplada retrospectivamente por él como justificación o explicación de su estado [actual]” (Lázaro Carreter 1968: 210), only occurs in both Lazarillo and Guzmán. Likewise, the “servicio a varios amos”, which is considered one of the most distinctive resources of the genre, disappears entirely in La pícara Justina, La ingeniosa Elena or Vida de don Gregorio Guadaña. In relation to the autobiographical form, which is inherently associated with the picaresque novel, Lázaro Carreter points out: “Otro caso límite puede ser La hija de Celestina, que funde el testimonio autobiográfico de Elena con el relato en tercera persona […]” (1968: 200). These circumstances did not go unnoticed by this critic (1968: 198-9), who proposed a “dynamic” consideration of the genre. Nevertheless, the definition of the genre from “una toma de posición distinta ante una misma poética” does not seem to explain the continuous modification of the genre and the addition of new features, nor those works depending on several narrative models, like La niña de los embustes, which is influenced simultaneously by Lazarillo and Pícara Justina.

Therefore, we cannot assess that each manifestation of the genre is a reaction to an unalterable and unique theoretical model (Cabo Aseguinolaza 1992: 144), but a response to a literary formula that is

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3 See on this point Cros (1967a: 80-3 and 1967b: 412-6), Cavillac (207-31 and 353-94) and Rubio Árquez (1996: 467, n. 25).
different each time.

Let us examine then those factors that are in my opinion more significant in the process of creation and evolution of the genre. In the following pages, I will examine a group of works, by means of which I will intend to delimit the relationships established between the different conceptions of the picaresque novel and their evolution in the temporal axis. In particular, I will distinguish the following stages. The first stage, between 1599 and 1604, consists of the collection of works that gave rise to the creation of the genre. From 1604 to 1613, we have a second phase made up of those works intending to question the genre or to parody it from different perspectives. Afterwards, between 1614 and 1644, we observe the development of the literary formula that I will call here “idealistic picaresque novel”. This formula does not parody the genre, but idealizes it by means of the incorporation of features from other narrative genres, like the Byzantine novel, the Moorish novel and the short story, among others.

Creation and parody of the picaresque novel

As is known, in spite of the undoubted originality of *La vida del Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (1554), its literary contribution went virtually unnoticed until almost the end of the century, when *Primera parte de Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599) by Mateo Alemán was published (Lázaro Carreter 1968: 204-5 and Rico 1970: 114). In my view, the proximity of *Segunda parte de la vida del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache* (1602) to the literary model of Alemán responds, for the first time, to a conscious approach to the picaresque novel as a literary formula, that is to say, as a sequence of resources that are available for potential imitation. The title itself “implica la conciencia oficial de un tipo de narración caracterizado por la presencia de un pícaro como protagonista […]” (Rey 1987: 103). On the other hand, the outstanding editorial achievement of the apocryphal *Guzmán* is evidence of the interest motivated by the ascription of this work to the successful genre of *Guzmán de Alfarache*. In competition with Alemán, the main reference among

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4 In addition, the conscious of the picaresque novel is studied by Guillén 1966.
his contemporaries\(^5\), the apocryphal work had eleven editions in the short period between 1602 and 1604\(^6\), the year in which Alemán’s *Segunda parte de la vida de Guzmán de Alfarache* appeared in Lisbon. The reaction of Alemán against the apocryphal *Guzmán*\(^7\) shows, among other things, how “Luján” managed to take the picaresque novel formula.

As of 1604, and until 1613, year of the publication of *Coloquio de los perros*, we may observe the appearance of a group of works in which, one way or another, the features of the picaresque novel are parodied. With regard to the so-called “género burlesco”, humorous modality of “estilización literaria”, Weisstein points out:

> Cuando con la imitación se pretende difamar los modelos literarios, se habla de parodia, la cual suele conducir inevitablemente a deformaciones […] En la parodia sucede con frecuencia que la imitación consciente de los modelos literarios, deformados conscientemente, se convierte en originalidad artística (162).

According to these observations, we count on several elements associated with parody: defamation, deformation, imitation and originality. Let us take note of the reach of each one of these elements. In my opinion, the features of parody can affect (a) the parodied object (on which the mentioned defamation or deformation falls), but also affect (b) the very process or mechanism of parody (that consists of the imitation of a model), as well as (c) the result of parody, which adds a different element to the literary sequence, from which derives its originality—at best. According to this exposition, I think that the deformation or defamation, the imitation and the change of a literary model are complementary mechanisms from the point of view of parody. However, previous critics

\(^5\) Regarding the editorial diffusion of *Guzmán de Alfarache* in its first printings, see Rico (2005: 392-3).

\(^6\) Cf. Rubio Árquez 2001 and Mañero Lozano 2005 and 2007. In the words of Friedman (100): ‘A spurious continuation by Mateo Luján de Sayavedra […] rode the wave of success, selling more copies than Alemán’s sequel’. See also Whinnom.

\(^7\) For the sake of simplicity, we only highlight Rubio Árquez 1996 and Brancaforte 2002, among other later works.
have focused very often on isolated aspects, like deformation or imitation, from which simplistic expositions result. Thus, the deformation of some features of the picaresque novel is argued sometimes to exclude certain titles from the genre, whereas the imitation of other features by the same works is maintained other times as a sign of inclusion in the genre. In the group of works that I will study here, the destruction, imitation and change of the model represented by Lazarillo and Guzmanes take place simultaneously. That is the reason why I believe it necessary to consider parody as a master key to the understanding of literary contributions made by the genre.

First, let us analyze Primera parte del guitón Honofre (1604) by Gregorio González. In spite of the incomprehension or disappearance of certain features of its predecessors—which is compatible according to Oltra Tomás (1984) with an attempt to change and overcome Guzmán de Alfarache—, the relationship with the genre is pointed out by the protagonist in order to highlight the parodic aspects of the work (Cabo Aseguinolaza 1988: 170). In addition, Cabo Aseguinolaza associates these references to Alemán’s model with the purpose of questioning the employment of a character of lower social status, which is traditionally rejected in the treatment of high matters:

“Hay una evidente proximidad al Guzmán de Alfarache, pero tal cercanía no se traduce en un dócil mimetismo, sino en un afán de contradicción e ironía” (1986: 381). This contradiction and irony responds to a parody of the genre that is motivated by ideological convictions shared by the author of La pícara Justina, Quevedo and Cervantes. As already noted by Damiani with regard to La pícara Justina:

Lo que López de Úbeda sugiere es que la narración de una vida picaresca, “alegre” y para “entretenimiento” debería ser presentada en “picaral estilo”, reiterando así el dicho, ya

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8 In Dunn’s words: “Even if we detect in these pieces an impulse to parody, we have to take into account the fact that parody involves a degree of complicity with its object, and a very evident intertextuality. What is parodied is incorporated, preserved, memorialized in the parody, even when the mimetic act of the parodist becomes a transfiguration” (1982a: 111). Satire and irony in the picaresque novel will not be treated here. See, for instance, Coronel Ramos.
expresado en La vida del pícaro, de seguir “en bajo estilo bajos fines” (1982: 17).

Let us then focus on Libro de entretenimiento de la pícara Justina, which was published a year after Guitón was written. Bataillon, who defines the work as a “roman à clef”, maintained that: “el episodio central de La Pícara Justina fue concebido, maliciosamente, como una crónica burlesca, indirecta y alusiva, del viaje de Felipe III a León (1602)”, to which he adds that “la idea le pudo ser sugerida a nuestro autor por el de aquella Segunda parte [del Guzmán de Alfarache apócrifo]” (162). Besides this and other links with the content of Guzmanes, the connections of the work with the genre are demonstrated via the narrative development. From the beginning of the narration, the employment of the autobiographical form becomes blurred because of the interest in parodying the distinctively literary resources of Guzmán de Alfarache. I will not treat here the review of the parodied generic features, like the birth of pícaro or the continuous insertion of digressions by Alemán. As was pointed out by Rico (1967 and 1970), Alemán assigned a clear structural function to the digressive materials of Guzmán. This compositional technique, as the rest of the features associated with Guzmán de Alfarache, has a parodying reflection in numerous passages of La pícara Justina, as in Damiani (1982: 362-3, 377, etc.). In addition, the configuration of the female character gave rise to a new typology to which other works, like Salas Barbadillo’s La ingeniosa Elena and Castillo Solórzano’s La niña de los embustes, Teresa de Manzanares, would be added afterwards (Welles 1986 and Schwartz Lerner 1989). I will treat these works later.

Around the same year in which La pícara Justina appeared (1605), Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas’s Historia de la vida del Buscón was written, although it was not published until 1626. According to Lazaro Carreter (1961) and Rico (1970), the configuration of this work as a verbal artifice, close to the Quevedo’s “obras festivas”, manifests a lack of narrative coherence, and thus does not conform to the model of Lazarillo. In effect, although Quevedo adopted some features of
preceding works in *Buscón*\(^9\), this work responds to a compositional design very distant from Alemán’s proposal (Dunn 1982b and Chevalier); this is the reason why the work has been considered an inaugural exponent of an alternative generic model (Taravacci). One way or another, the distortion of the features shared by *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán* shows a parodying intention analogous to the rest of the titles commented above. It will be enough to initiate the reading of the text to find—as in *La pícara Justina*—a distortional treatment of the topic of “origen vil”, which places us again in the scope of parody. The “origen vil” does not correspond any more to the explanation of the first stage in the evolution of the character, but turns into a literary reference whose immediate association with the picaresque novel facilitated the parodying treatment of the genre. Perhaps the parodic intent, both in *La pícara Justina* and in *Buscón*, was more prioritized than any other literary exposition.

In the case of *Novela y coloquio que pasó entre Cipión y Berganza* (1613) by Cervantes\(^10\), which shows the main characteristics of the picaresque novel (Sobejano 1975a: 35-37), the goal of parody focuses on the distinctive rhetorical features of *Guzmán de Alfarache* (Mañero Lozano 2004). As was exemplified above for *La pícara Justina*, also in *Coloquio de los perros* we may find continuous parodying references to Alemán’s technique of digression (Rey Hazas 1983a). In this sense, the following observation from Cipión is significant. The dog recognizes its propensity to digression, in spite of the fact that it censures Berganza in other cases because of the same habit:


> [...] si no fuera por no hacer ahora una larga digresión, con mil ejemplos probara lo mucho que las dádivas pueden; mas quizá lo diré, si el cielo me concede tiempo, lugar y habla para

\(^9\) In relation to the literary influences of *Buscón*, Rico exclaims ‘¡hasta la división en tres libros y el número aproximado de capítulos en cada uno estaban prefijados por los Guzmanes!’ (1984: 236).

\(^10\) The picaresque novel has been studied by Dunn 1982a in other works by Cervantes. See also Ricapito 1985. The relations between Cervantes and Alemán have been amply reviewed by Ricapito 1988.
contarte mi vida (Sieber 1980: 322).

On the other hand, Berganza also criticizes the tendency of Cipión to interrupt the linearity of the story, and sometimes the former dog is forced to silence the latter:

CIPIÓN.—Digo que me la cuentes antes que pases más adelante en el cuento de tu vida.

BERGANZA.—Eso no haré yo, por cierto, hasta su tiempo; ten paciencia, y escucha por su orden mis sucesos, que así te darán más gusto, si ya no te fatiga querer saber los medios antes de los principios (Sieber 1980: 310).

BERGANZA.—Todo eso es predicar, Cipión amigo.

CIPÓN.—Así me lo parece a mí, y así, callo (Sieber 1980: 312).

In effect, the last one of these passages reminds us of the previous words of Justin a (Damiani 1982: 363), who goes quiet for the same reason. Of course, Cervantes would consider it even more absurd to give the protagonist function to a pair of dogs “a lo divino”, unless he wanted to ridicule Guzmanillo. In sum, between 1604 and 1613, a sequence of works (Guitón Honofre, La pícara Justina, Buscón and Coloquio de los perros) arose with the shared intention of parodying the genre represented by Lazarillo and the three Guzmanes.

Idealistic picaresque novel. A fusion with other narrative forms

In 1612, Salas Barbadillo’s La hija de Celestina, a work that appeared two years later in an extended version titled La ingeniosa Elena, was published. Apart from the Celestinesque tradition,

11 In view of this quotation and the two subsequent ones, we have to refuse the conclusions of Sevilla Arroyo and Rey Hazas: ‘Podríamos, en consecuencia, y sin forzar en absoluto los términos, identificar, metanovelescamente, a Berganza con Mateo Alemán y a Cipión con Cervantes’ (XLII-XLIII).
enunciated in the title of the first version (La Grone), the picaresque story is framed within a short story (Rey Hazas 1983b). As is already known, Salas Barbadillo inserted his autobiographical narration, which is compatible with the generic design of the picaresque novel, in the third chapter of the novel. In addition, the work was composed in the third person and according to the pattern of the short story. *La ingeniosa Elena*, the fruit of an experienced novelist —until this moment, we have authors of only one work—, constitutes the birth of a hybrid genre, which takes shape as a result of the intersection of the picaresque novel and the so-called idealistic narrative, in which, according to Hurtado Torres, “se incluirían la novela de caballerías, la pastoril, la bizantina o griega, la morisca y la novella o novela corta (y posteriormente novela cortesana)” (11). This hybrid genre gives rise, in my opinion, to a new category that I will denominate *idealistic picaresque novel*. The idealistic picaresque novel agglutinates, since Salas Barbadillo, a group of works that, although containing part of the generic features of the picaresque novel, responds at the same time to the guidelines of the idealistic novel. Apart from *La ingeniosa Elena*, it is also the case of Vicente Espinel’s *Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* (1618); Juan Cortés de Tolosa’s *Lazarillo de Manzanares, con otras cinco novelas* (1620); Jerónimo de Alcalá Yáñez’s *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (1624); Alonso de Castillo Solórzano’s *La niña de los embustes, Teresa de Manzanares* (1632); and, lastly, Antonio Henríquez Gómez’s *Vida de don Gregorio Guadaña*, which is inserted in *El siglo pitagórico* (1644).

We may also find some features from the idealistic narrative in Vicente Espinel’s *Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* (1618). As is known, Alemán —and, in order to imitate him, Cervantes—, had inserted several narrations of the idealistic type in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. Let us remember, for instance, the insertion of “historia de los dos enamorados Ozmín y Daraja”, associated with the Moorish novel. These narrations had a purely digressive function, so that they did not have repercussions on the journey of the picaresque hero. On the contrary, Espinel gets a perfect integration of the idealistic features (from Byzantine novel, Moorish novel, short story, etc.) in the Marcos’ plot (Carrasco Urgoiti I, 45). In relation to the anomalous character of Marcos de
Obregón, designed as an idealization or counterexample of the pícaro, the critics have tried to explain it as an attempt to dignify the hidalgo figure (Rey Hazas 1996: 155-6). In any case, this incorporation of features in opposition to the configuration of the preceding titles offers an exceptional example, after Salas Barbadillo’s precedent, of the fusion of the picaresque novel with the different narrative forms from the idealistic narrative.

Other example of idealistic picaresque novel is Juan de Luna’s Segunda parte de la vida de Lazarillo de Tormes (1620). According to the author, the work left to one side the subject of the Lazarillo of 1555 and, in particular, “las guerras que los atunes hacían, siendo Lázaro el capitán, y otros disparates tan ridículos como mentirosos” (Piñero 266). Although the work introduces some elements that depend both on the original Lazarillo and on the continuation of 1555, we do not observe a true eagerness to imitate the literary models. On the one hand, the episodes of the first Lazarillo undergo a degradation process, but, on the other, the features depending on the continuation of 1555 are inserted with a parodying intention. These circumstances, then, connect to the model devised by Quevedo’s Buscón (Del Monte 113-4). Consequently, as in the cases analyzed before (Guitón Honofre, La pícara Justina, Buscón and Coloquio de los perros), the Segunda parte de la vida de Lazarillo de Tormes approaches the picaresque novel with a parodying motivation, although the objective of the parody is not Guzmán de Alfarache, but the weakening of the literary model of Lazarillo.

In the same year (1620), Juan Cortés de Tolosa’s Lazarillo de Manzanares, con otras cinco novelas is published. In addition to the model enunciated from the title, and without considering the relations with other genres, previous critics point out also the proximity with Quevedo’s Buscón (Chamorro Fernández 14). It is necessary to mention also the publication of the work with “otras cinco novelas”, composed according to the guidelines of the short story. The author, then, indicates from the title itself the affinity of the text with five other narrations of idealistic type. In addition, we observe the relationship of the work with other titles associated with the “idealistic picaresque novel”, as is the case of Marcos de Obregón. In particular, Lazarillo de Manzanares might take
Espinel as point of reference in the recreation of some episodes of Boccaccio (Parducci).

We may mention the use of dialogue in Jerónimo de Alcalá Yáñez’s *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (1624) and *Segunda parte de Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (1626) as an important contribution to the genre\(^\text{12}\). The character, as in *Marcos de Obregón*, incarnates a moral pattern of honesty in opposition to the habitual configuration of the *pícaro* (Bjornson). In effect, this feature connects to the characterization of the hero in the idealistic novel.

Alonso de Castillo Solórzano’s *La niña de los embustes Teresa de Manzanares* (1632) combines once again the features of the picaresque novel with the short story (Dunn 1952). In addition, Castillo Solórzano wrote other works very far from the picaresque novel, like *Las aventuras del Bachiller Trapazas* (1637) and *La Garduña de Sevilla* (1642). According to Velasco, the features of *Teresa de Manzanares* from the short story “son abundantes, e impregnan casi la mitad de la novela. Sólo hay una narración completamente cortesana. Cuatro aventuras con elementos de este tipo, mezclados con otros. Y una estratagema cortesana dentro de una aventura picaresca” (128). This is not a detailed description, but rather shows the diversity of the narrative formulas used by Castillo Solórzano to combine the features of the picaresque novel with those of the short story.

Concerning the connection of Antonio Henríquez Gómez’s *Vida de don Gregorio Guadaña* (1644) with the picaresque novel, the protagonist himself expresses the literary models (Santos 132-3). However, as in other cited examples, the work is made up as a prototypical example of the hybridism among genres in the Baroque period. This demonstrates once again the fusion of the picaresque novel and the short story, which achieved a great acceptance in the years under consideration (Pacheco Ransanz). As Fez has indicated:

En el polo opuesto al pícaro “desclasado”, Gregorio va a ser aceptado en todas las esferas

\(^\text{12}\) As Sobejano 1975b studied, the dialogic form permitted the development of the *pícaro* as a chatterbox. See the recent “Estudio preliminar” of Donoso Rodríguez.
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sociales y librescas… Era, en suma, el personaje ideal para realizar la más auténtica conciliación de la novela cortesana y la picaresca. Lo hacía neutralizándolas desde el plano de la vida urbana y aburguesada (146).

Alonso de Castillo Solórzano was the author of two other novels with female protagonists, in which we may detect some affinities with the picara figure: Las harpías de Madrid (1631) and La garduña de Sevilla (1633). Contrary to what happens in La niña de los embustes, the autobiographical scheme, indissolubly associated with the picaresque novel, disappears in these works by Castillo Solórzano. That is the reason why I do not include these texts within the “idealistic picaresque novel”. From these works by Castillo Solórzano we find a last literary stage in which, once the picaresque formula disappeared, a group of works of “picaresque atmosphere” makes way—even though we may also include within this group some previous texts, such as Cervantes’s Rinconete y Cortadillo (1613) and Carlos García’s La desordenada codicia de los bienes ajenos (1619). It is the case, for instance, with María de Zayas’s El castigo de la miseria (1637), Alonso de Castillo Solórzano’s Las aventuras del Bachiller Trapaza (1637), La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González (1646), Francisco Santos’ Periquillo el de las Gallineras (1668), etc. It is difficult to be precise with the list of titles, mainly because the “picaresque atmosphere” does not correspond any more to a specific literary model, so it is blurred definitively in the pages of the customary novel.

In sum, I have reviewed a significant group of works to show the historical evolution of the picaresque novel from its birth to its disappearance. I have intended to demonstrate that the picaresque novels that were published from 1604 until 1613, after the period of the formation of the genre (1599-1604), questioned or parodied the genre in different ways. I have also examined the picaresque works from 1614 to 1644, which reflect the development of the literary formula that I called “idealistic picaresque novel”. In my view, the notion of idealistic captures the idea that the genre has assimilated several characteristics from the Byzantine novel, the Moorish novel and the
short story, among others. Lastly, I have proposed that the disappearance of the picaresque novel
genre is associated with the abandonment of the autobiographical scheme.


--- “El Quijote y la picaresca: la figura del hidalgo en el nacimiento de la novela moderna.”


