

From Text to Trait: The (Re-)Emergence of the Picaresque at Society's Crossroads

An Archival Approach to Spanish Crises Past and Present

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Declarations

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Abstract

This thesis will look to examine how the term *picaresca* initially emerged, and subsequently continues to re-emerge during periods of crisis and concern in Spain, when society finds itself at a crossroads of mistrusting the authority that leads it, an often humorous and witty means of escapism, and defiantly implementing their own mechanism of self-defense; a social construct perceived as *la picaresca*. From text to trait, this thesis explores the evolution of *la picaresca* in two parts: from earmarking its prolific irruption onto the literary scene during the decline which followed the boom of the Spanish Golden Age, to, by contrast, documenting its subsequent permutations and variations over the course of more recent periods of crisis, reshaping itself as a discursive device viewed as being used by Spaniards in the struggles of a perpetually troubled modern-day world, in an attempt to confront a flawed top-down system.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to contextually frame canonical picaresque texts and archival resources, demonstrating the use of the term *picaresca* in light of the social plight of the period it emerged from and by contrast, today's contemporary world still very much at loggerheads with institutional and monarchical authorities. My research provides commentary on how the lexical meaning of *picaresca* has shifted over time, triggered by recent crises and periods of uncertainty in the 20th and 21st century. These include, but are not limited to: the transition to democracy after the fall of Franco, an array of political scandals, Spain's position in Europe, 15-M, the economic crash of 2008 and the corruption ensnaring the Spanish Royal family, which culminated in the abdication of King Juan Carlos in 2014.

Key terms: picaresque, *picaresca*, crisis, corruption, re-emergence, text, trait, social construction, discursive frame, archive.

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Preface

The initial idea behind the crux of this thesis came to me during my first supervision meeting with Duncan and María, after having spent the previous summer re-reading what can be argued as the three primary canonical works of the picaresque: *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *El Buscón*, alongside an array of work from renowned academics, such as Rico, Ife and Blackburn, in the realm of the genre. Of course, the picaresque has been studied extensively over time, and my supervisors were eager to know what new line of research I could pursue and how this would shed new light on such an ostensibly archaic literary genre.

I felt as though the picaresque was deserving of a much-needed revamp, removed from the cobwebs of time. I went about my dutiful role as a postgraduate researcher and delved into more wide spanning research on the picaresque, whilst attending a series of conferences that touched on the genre, or at least the literary domain it egressed from. My results were conclusive. Too often, the picaresque was being viewed by a lens from the past, which kept it there, like a museum piece. Through my research, I decided I wanted to find a way to see it from a present perspective, and bring it back to a state of modernity.

It comes as no secret that the texts in many ways are timeless. Although in the present-day, we no longer run into slaves and their corruptive masters out on the streets, or determine how honourably someone is dressed, the picaresque survives in multiple guises across all sectors of society. As a term, we can identify the picaresque in other ways to keep it relevant, such as how a prime minister governs their country, or how even the weightiest crown cannot disguise a person – or King – from who they really are. Its usage may have shifted over time, and we have ultimately strayed away from its artistic roots, but this has given the picaresque ample room to infer more meaning and keep it identifiable in modern times, as my research will lead us to discover throughout the second part of the body of this thesis, which uncovers the transitions that led the epitaph to be applied less in relation to texts than to character traits.

Introduction

I shall begin with a foreword on the structure of this thesis, as it has been divided into two parts in order to examine the duality of the term “picaresque” and place it within two different timeframes. Part I oversees the exploration of the cultural conditions from which the picaresque emerged as a ‘literary phenomenon’ (see Sieber 2018, 7) in the first chapter. Meanwhile, the rise of this often repentant¹ and always roguish literature coinciding with the social and economic decline faced by Spain at the turn of the 17th century is examined in chapter II. This then paves the way for the second part of the thesis, which goes on to contribute originally to the realm of picaresque research. Part II investigates the re-emergence of the picaresque as a modern-day social construction used in the press, which views the attitudes and behaviour of Spaniards in the current era of crisis and corruption. Earmarked as ‘la nueva picaresca ibérica’ (*ABC* 04/09/1985, 34), the transition period prompted by Franco’s death and fuelled by key events reaching up to the present day forms the basis of chapters III (1975- 1982), IV (1982- 2004) and V (2004- present day) in which the evolving lexical meaning of the picaresque undergoes a metamorphosis from its literary roots to a discursive frame on Spanish society, and is analysed archivally through a unique contemporary lens.

To draw a successful understanding from this thesis, it is imperative that we ascertain the terms “text” and “trait” on a broad scale. Both are used within the title and successively throughout the corpus of the thesis by way of a generalised approach, and it is within the realm of “text” i.e., the literary field which encompasses the canonical works and “trait” i.e., a characteristic perceived through a social construction that the picaresque is consistently designated. It should be stressed here that “text” does not refer to any one particular text as constituting the whole of the picaresque genre, just as “trait” does not mean that the picaresque is an inherent feature of Spaniards but rather one that is used as a discursive frame throughout the archival material I have dissected. I have avoided an essentialist stance on the matter as it would render the work carried out in this thesis as complete, when in fact I feel as though there are still many areas of my research that could be developed further in the future.

¹ Ramirez-Nieves (see 2015, iii) offers insight into how picaresque texts credited to Christian and Jewish authors from early modern Iberia represent the repentance of a rogue, and are indispensable in raising penitential questions within their respective religious, political and cultural milieux.

The term "re-emergence" is used to deal with a notable increase in both interest and attention received by the picaresque, and the re-emergence period I opted for was between the year of Franco's death (1975) and the current year (2021), given that there has been a collective archival recognition of this period as 'el Siglo de Oro de nuevo' (*La Vanguardia* 03/04/17, 33), interwoven with an increasing use of the term *picaresca* in the press to negatively depict the developments shaping it – and not just the artistic ones, but social and political too. Even if the discourse provided for the latter years of this timeframe remains limited due to the lack of academic endorsement available to aid in examining events of these recent years, it is probable that within the years to come there will be an influx of sources pertaining to this period. As a result, I envision myself returning to add commentary on how the picaresque continued to burgeon under the premiership of Pedro Sánchez in this new age of political disillusionment.

Finally, "society's crossroads" defines a substantial period of time whereby the social fabric of the nation is shaken up as a result of crisis; be it economic, political or a combination of the two, along with corruption, disorder and the general feeling of disillusionment and contempt towards the authority leading the country. It can be an attack on the statal, institutional, or monarchical authority or all three functioning synchronously. The imagery of a crossroads evokes a growing sense of uncertainty about not knowing which route to go down in terms of who is to trust and who is to blame, and this is reflected in press usage of the term "picaresque", as sometimes it describes society to be the victims, and other times as the villains. Most Spaniards probably find themselves somewhere between all options, evident, for example, by their staging of 15-M to showcase their disenchantment with Spain's corrupt politics, but still turning out to vote in their masses nonetheless.

By the twenty-first century, the word "picaresque" is no longer exclusively related to an ostensibly antiquated genre but that is not to say that the literary etymology has been jettisoned altogether. In fact, a notion that piqued my curiosity was that, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in Spain, Princesa Leonor and Infanta Sofía took to the virtual stage to read extracts of *Don Quijote* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* to the nation (*El País* 23/04/2020, 3) whilst going on to pay homage to the nation's healthcare workers in a video message that came during a point of crisis, not just for Spain but for the whole world. Just days later, author and journalist Xavi Ayén had an article published on recommended books to read during the lockdown in Spain: The picaresque came top of that list. (*La Vanguardia* 27/04/2020, 36).

Two thoughts occurred to me in quick succession. The first was that, the picaresque seemed to garner the most interest during times of crisis. After all, it had emerged as a genre most notably through Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, thus, its origins can be construed as a by-product of Spain's 17th century decline, favoured more than ever when the Kingdom of Castile was being ravaged by social plight and corruption. If the picaresque was once again attracting attention at a time of social upheaval, when the chaos of coronavirus had struck the nation, I wondered during which other moments of crisis it might have re-emerged, forming the basis of my research question and original line of investigation.

Secondly, I was beginning to realise how useful newspapers and the accessibility of their online archives were in aiding my preliminary research at this stage. Could they be the key to enriching my line of argument and in crucially enabling me to advance the picaresque into modern dimensions by exploring its ricocheting meanings in more recent periods? With the lexical meaning of the picaresque seemingly shifting to acquire new functions from what I had observed thus far, the implementation of periodical archives into my research would unearth this potential theory through a social framework and would allow me to hone in on particular moments of crisis with relative ease and expertise.

In terms of methodology, practice, however tentative, preceded theory. Yet, no methodological framework comes without its flaws, and I anticipated several problems that I would encounter. Which archives would I choose to utilize in my research, and how would I remain consistent with this? Would my research be influenced by the political or regional spectrum that any particular newspapers aligned themselves to? How could I best examine the crisis and corruption from which the picaresque originally emerged, and which subsequent crises would I chose to investigate in order to analyse the re-emergence of the picaresque? Finally, in recognition of the ever-evolving term "picaresque", how would it arrive at being perceived as a national social construction by the press? Was this change gradual or sudden, and what was the catalyst for this shift in its lexicality? As a reader, I hope you will bear these questions in mind as you embark upon the journey offered by this thesis: from how the picaresque evolved from text to trait by re-emerging at society's crossroads.

Part I: Text

Chapter I – Pinpointing Picaresque Beginnings

Introduction

Determining when something came into being is no straightforward task. After all, is it always possible to recall the exact moment a particular trend was set or an era began? We may now ask ourselves the same question when it comes to emerging genres of literature. Hindsight is a beautiful thing, and one which has aided the modern academic in identifying the time, the place and the reasons behind a literary boom, or by contrast, a sudden fluctuation in the reception of particular genres. My aim is to do precisely the same with a genre² of prose fiction known as the picaresque; a style of literary fiction which deals with the adventures of rogues and swindlers, originating predominantly from Spain (see Sieber 2018, i) and recognised as having emerged during the Spanish Golden Age. It can be summarised as a type of literature, in which a roguish protagonist tries unsuccessfully to carve a new life for himself, using trickery and ingenuity in frequent and outlandish attempts to cut the ties from his wretched past – only to bind himself further up in them. The more he tries to shake off his status as an outsider, the further he removes himself from any prospect of social acceptance. Guillén (2015, 120) outlines the key tropes of the genre in the following way:

It is the fictional confession of a liar. The picaresque tale begins not in *media res* but with the narrator's birth, it recounts in chronological order the orphaned hero's peregrinations from city to city and it usually ends – that is, it can end – with either the defeat or the conversion of the inner man who both narrates and experiences the events.

Most academics, including Miller and Bjornson, generally agree that the picaresque spanned a time frame of 1550 – 1750, and whilst it is universally acknowledged that the picaresque did not gain traction until the turn of the 17th century, it would be an error to omit the genre's germinal text *Lazarillo de Tormes* from this interval. For my purposes, however, the focus is how and why the genre boomed during the Spanish Golden Age. Therefore, I prefer to align with academics of theatre in constituting the Spanish Golden Age as 1550 – 1681³ instead,

² Guillén (2015, 71) warns of the ambiguous use of the term 'picaresque' and the ongoing need to distinguish the meaning in which it is being conveyed. It can be inferred wholly as 1) a genre or even a counter genre (to the pastoral, for example); 2) a group of novels in agreement with the original Spanish pattern, or 3) to be considered in a broader sense; and 4) finally a myth derived from the novels themselves. I will refer to Guillén's first definition for the crux of my thesis.

³ Whereby 1681 coincides with the death of distinguished playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

whereafter not only Spain but the entire European continent became plagued by depression and decline. This, in turn, saw the rise of the realistic novel, or fictional realism and a gradual yet consequential swing away from literature deemed as intrinsically picaresque.

So, what were the preconditions for the emergence and consolidation of the picaresque? Before we can consider the bigger picture of a Castilian landscape decimated by corruption and decline, we must first turn our attention to a smaller yet just as significant piece to the puzzle; the instrumentality of the literary conditions that the picaresque was born into, and subsequently came to thrive under. Literary genealogies reveal that the picaresque cannot be divorced from broader socio-historical considerations, but equally that artistic expression also has its own rules and traditions.

Evolving Literature

In order to ascertain why the Spanish Golden Age provided such ample opportunity for the picaresque genre to flourish, the prolificity of the literary scene at the time must be considered. Why was the creative scope offered in this early, wildly experimental era of prose fiction (see Fuchs 2020, 5) so imaginative amidst a time of chiefly scientific and philosophical advancement? This was an era that came to be labelled as one of intellectual uncertainty, whereby philosophy and science began to establish their own procedures, moving away from the preconceptions of Christianity and the rigidity of traditional authorities (see Robbins 1998, 13). As philosophers and scientists found their voices, so too would artists and authors, manifesting their scepticism through works that adopted ideas from a number of pre-existing literary sources. Uneasy amalgamations of romance laced with conflict, morality mixed with parody and honour met with satire began to materialise; drawing the reader in to a new, unparalleled literary age, yet leaving them brimming with questions and insatiable for answers. Thus, an air of unsettlement and anxiety ensued - and what better way to divulge uncertainty than through a seriocomic⁴ form, the picaresque, whereby the very prototype *Lazarillo de Tormes* juxtaposes a religious figure with the elemental rootlessness of a river (see Blackburn 1979, 12). And whereby a literary genus can simultaneously act as an outlet for the expression of human alienation and the yearning for the hollow semblance of honour and social solidarity.

⁴Blackburn (1979, 14) is the first to coin the term "seriocomic form" by way of introduction: 'A picaresque novel is a seriocomic form that tends to appear at times when literary imagination is usually threatened by catastrophe: that is, when the very idea of existence commingles with the world of illusion.'

So, against the backdrop of a Golden Age in the arts, how might philosophical and scientific advancements also have fed into the emergence of new literary genres; namely that of the picaresque? One specific example is how the discovery of the New World, in which Spain played a central role, was reinforced by the Aristotelian doctrine on the sphericity of the Earth. This bolstered the objective of creating and maintaining trade and commerce on a worldwide basis, with mathematicians, cosmographers and astronomers now emphasising the practice of navigation. Such a revived emphasis on exploration encouraged the circulation of texts on an international scale, thus enabling a fusion of literary ideas to occur, whilst the literary theme of journeying across new terrains unfolded in parallel with these events. The picaresque was the first genre to groundbreakingly incorporate this theme into its thematic framework, bringing into question the very etymological origins of its name; the word "picaresque".⁵

If we are to conform to the perspective of literary theorist Bakhtin, then the birth of the picaresque, could arguably have been shaped by the ongoing influence science and philosophy was having on contemporary society in all manner of ways. However, much more than this, is the irrefutable process of literary evolution that the cornerstone, and what was to be hailed as the precursor to the modern novel, the picaresque, would have undergone, like all literature before and after it. A pervasive experimentation with themes, forms and morality was in fact a stark reminder that writers were forced to devise new solutions if they wished to survive (see Ife 1985, 3), as fluctuations in public demand, critical response and the transmission of texts constantly exerted pressure on the 16th and 17th century author. Yet, with this Bakhtinian theory of genre in mind, reiteration or exact reproduction of a literary text is then theoretically impossible (see Shevtsova, 1992), and the picaresque was no exception to this. Rather than having a constant set of literary principles to comply with, writers sought for their work to take a discontinuous and protean form, finding a careful balance between taking advantage of an array of antecedent sources and striving to offer their reader something new.

As far as genres and literary forms are concerned, if a pre-existent form can't merely be adopted by a writer or transferred to a new form, then the creative process must instead be undertaken all over again (see Guillén 2015, 111). Nevertheless, this is not to say that new

⁵ It is interesting to note that although the picaresque as a genre was born on Spanish terrain, it may have actually originated in Northern France (see Dunn 1979, 13). There is no room to discuss such etymological connections within my thesis, but Jacques Darras (2020) explores them deftly in his work.

literary forms cannot imitate fragments of preliminary works in order to stitch up something new. After all, we must remind ourselves that there came a historical moment when the novel somehow differentiated itself from literary works preceding it and lent its shape thereafter to subsequent literary creations. That moment occurred in sixteenth century Spain, and the picaresque made it wholly possible (see Blackburn 1979, 4). So, to what extent did the picaresque replicate aspects of the works that came before it, and how successfully did it interweave these elements into its uniquely pseudo-biographical, episodic structure? We should now instead consider the pre-existing prose, poetry, epistles and even orated folklore tales that the picaresque; this 'hybrid with a greedy appetite for gobbling up other forms' (Van 2010, 157) borrowed from, galvanising it to become a literary phenomenon still lauded today.

The Picaresque in the Wider Literary Ecosystem

The picaresque emerged at a "crossroads" between oral and written narrative (see Reed 1984, 34), creating germane conditions for a genre to come into being. So, how and why did pre-existing oral narratives aid this process? For generations, fables and folktales were shared verbally, reaching those in lower social classes who were uneducated and could not read or write; given that most knowledge or education acquired by such members of society was not from reading books but in fact from hearing proverbs and passing them on (see Menéndez y Pelayo 1905, 215). The picaresque, like its Greek precedents, also inherited incidents from folkloric predecessors, seen in the early *tratados* of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, or by techniques such as the humanizing of animals as in Aesop's Fables, which Quevedo goes on to make good use of in *el Buscón* (1626) (see Deyermond 1993, 68); upholding a connection with one of its many belletristic influences. If the folkloric tradition managed to influence a *novela* as prominent as *Lazarillo*, then there's little wonder as to why many writers, including Cervantes, quickly started to integrate such material into the heart of their own literary works. (See Ferrera 1987, 72).

Further oral influences on the picaresque came in the shape of theatrical form. So, how did the resounding popularity of plays and courtyard performances, (culminating in the opening of Madrid's first theatre *Corral de la Cruz* in 1579), and their accessibility as an art form also make their mark on the picaresque? Originating with *el auto*, a form usually reserved for biblical and saintly characters and content, it wasn't long until *la farsa*, a crude, grotesque and altogether zany form of theatre (see Díez Borque 1987, 38) emerged. This would in turn, galvanise the *comedia* form we so often affiliate the Spanish Golden Age with today. However, of less

eminence and arguably of most momentousness came the *entremés*; a short performance of one act, usually performed during the interlude of a longer performance, in order to keep audiences entertained. The *entremés*, '[con su] facecias, la glorificación de astucia, engaño e instintos, la caricatura social, la parodia del teatro serio, la utilización y burla del habla cotidiana' (Díez Borque 1987, 69) was used as a distraction for audiences then, just as the picaresque became a subsequent distraction for a society grappling with statal negligence and chicanery. The farcical dialogues and overall vulgarity of such pieces of prose draw explicit parallels with the quick wit and low style the rabble-rousing *pícaros* would go on to use (see Rico 1984, 64).

Having dealt with the oral influences of the picaresque, we should now turn our attention back to the written junction at this "crossroads" and the resurgence in its relevancy. If we are to consider the literary predecessors of the picaresque in a chronological fashion, then a number of texts should be acknowledged, which although fall short of picaresque conventionalities, such as their being written in verse and before the time frame associated with the genre, still exhibit implicit picaresque characteristics through theme and form all the same. *Libro de buen amor* (Ruiz 1330-1343?), *Espill Llibre de les Dones* (Roig 1460), *La Celestina* (Rojas 1499) and *La Lozana andaluza* (Delicado 1528) can all be categorised in this way, and full commentary on these texts can be found in the section: Typical/Atypical *Lazarillo* and Picaresque Progression.

Archaic Latin and Greek prose was at this time circulating widely in Castile, inspiring many great writers, including Cervantes, to emulate it (see Ferreras 1987, 62). A particularly significant *grecolatino* text whose episodic yet clearly organised literary structure served as a paradigm for *Lazarillo de Tormes* was *The Golden Ass*⁶. Parallel to the *Lazarillo*, the work shows the transition from poverty to prosperity, thereby establishing it as one of the picaresque precursor's most important sources (see Deyermond 1993, 35). Similarly, Zappala (1989, 1) highlights many convincing similarities in regard to 'the organization of the adventures *en sarta* around a series of masters and the analogous role of fortune in the *Lazarillo* and fate in

⁶Zappala (1989, 1) in his essay, gives insight into two versions of this tale which circulated in the sixteenth century: 'the *Metamorphoses* or the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius which was translated by the Erasmist canon of Seville, Diego López de Cortegana, and published around 1525 in that city, and Lucian's shorter *Asinus* in the facile Latin version of Poggio Bracciolini which circulated in *separata*, in small anthologies and in the 1538 *Opera Omnia* of Lucian prepared by Jacobus Micyllus.' Although a fascinating read, in this thesis I will refrain from affiliating *el Lazarillo* with one particular version.

the Golden Ass.' Such observations act as a due reminder that the picaresque was enriched by imitating literary content, structures and forms that preceded it. In fact, Greek romances of antiquity including none other than Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* itself resumed folktale elements, such as metamorphosis and moral implication which could be found in folkloric tales orated by all members within society.

The twelve years spanning 1548 – 1560 were ones of intense literary innovation, and in a period 'that had a taste for linguistic referentiality, the pastoral, Moorish, Greek and chivalric genres spawned imitations of themselves immediately after their appearance' (Brownlee 1994, 31). The first Greek romance *Clareo y Florisea* (1552) was published in Spanish alongside the first Moorish romance *El Abencerraje* (1560) at the same time that *La Diana*, the first Spanish pastoral romance was being written (see Brownlee 1994, 31); giving good reason to brand the 16th century 'el siglo de los libros amatorios y de caballerías' (see Ferreras 1987, 34). The episodic plot and satirical realism embodied by the picaresque may not have conformed to the favoured literary tropes of the time, but this didn't stop authors from parodying such works instead; with *Lazarillo de Tormes* seemingly resembling a parody of the chivalresque romances from the first page to the last. Language of courtly love poetry as seen in the fifteenth and early sixteenth-century *cancioneros* (see Deyermond 1993, 52-53) is used mockingly in *Lazarillo's* reverential attitude to the bread he longs for locked away in the Cleric's chest, rather than for any matters concerning romance or love. Even in his brief final mentioning of his wife, there is no declaration of love, only a rebuttal of the gossip spread by the *malas lenguas* in order to defend his honour and position in society (see Anon ed. Rico [1987] 2016, 130-134).

Chronologically speaking, the final point to be made on the evolution of written works throughout this period shall be assigned to the epistolary form. In the first half of the sixteenth century, the art of letter writing flourished, which may well have supplemented classical texts and oral folklore in supplying the picaresque with literary precedents, especially given that *La historia de los dos amantes* and *El proceso de cartas de amores* first appeared in 1548 and 1552 respectively⁷, a few short years before the publication of *el Lazarillo*. If the artistic conditions of the 16th century helped stimulate the invention of the essay and the novel (see Guillén 2015,

⁷Ferreras (1987, 18) hails *La historia de los dos amantes* as being 'quizás una de las primeras novelas epistolares europeas [que] tuvo repercusión universal' whilst Brownlee (1994, 30) contrarily asserts that it was 'In 1548 the first epistolary novel in Europe (the *Proceso de Cartas*) appeared'.

121) then we must consider how, in its autobiographical epistolary form, *Lazarillo de Tormes* uniquely managed to blend the two together simply by Lázaro putting his case forward to *Vuestra Merced*. Furthermore, letters were especially a popular means of communication for those who made the voyage to the New World, and wanted to share their perceived success with their humble families back home in the Kingdom of Castille. Lázaro himself exemplifies this boastful attitude perfectly. The narrative form of *Lazarillo* may be a letter ostensibly written in response to a request by a friend and superior of the archpriest, for a detailed account of *el caso*, but that does not stop him from using this opportunity to ultimately take pride in his position 'en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna' (see Anon, ed. Rico [1987] 2016, 135).

Typical/Atypical *Lazarillo* and Picaresque Progression

Guillén (2015, 72) offers a swift reminder that 'no work embodies completely the picaresque', that being said, *el Lazarillo* determines a primitive starting point to the picaresque genre. How, then, did *Lazarillo de Tormes* come to be regarded as the precursor of the picaresque genre and not one of the multitudes of works that came before it? It can be said that early texts preceding *el Lazarillo*, including *Libro de buen amor* (Ruiz 1330-1343?) and *Espill Llibre de les Dones* (Roig 1460) although written in verse, certainly exhibit picaresque characteristics through theme and content. The former is an autobiographical account of an Archpriest who finds himself a go-between (servant) and thereafter conducts his affairs with varying degrees of success (see Whitbourn 1974, 1-3), and the latter accounts for a protagonist who starts life poorly as an orphan, and goes on to have a series of picaresque adventures whereby he suffers almost entirely at the hands of women. However, if we are to be guided by Guillén's picaresque classification, whereby he offers eight distinct features to ultimately delineate a definition of the genre,⁸⁸ then both of the aforementioned texts would fail to satisfy all of the generic conditions of the picaresque due to being compromised by their form. Rather, they would foreshadow and even germinate the literary phenomenon instead.

⁸⁸ Guillén's eight characteristics of the picaresque could be summarised in the following way: 1) Defining the pícaro (to him, this is most crucial), 2) A pseudoautobiographical frame, 3) An unreliable narrator, 4) A reflective pícaro – either morally or religiously, 5) The stress on the pícaro's existence through material means, 6) The pícaro's awareness and subsequent mockery of different social classes and conditions, 7) The pícaro's journey horizontally through space and vertically through society, and 8) the loosely episodic nature of the plot. (See Guillén's Essay 3: Toward a Definition of the picaresque pp.71-106 for a more exhaustive overview.)

Meanwhile, Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina* (1499) and the connections it bears to the picaresque are definitely of note. *La Celestina* weaves drama, dialogue and prose into its remarkable structure, and there is little doubt about the influence that the literary themes within *La Celestina* would later have on the picaresque (see Ferreras 1987, 24). Praised as a *novela abierta*⁹ ahead of its time, Ferreras laments that paradoxically, *La Celestina* ushered in an age of chivalresque romance that was 'condenada a ser una novela cerrada'. So, with most characters in the work ill-fatedly tempted into falling in love, metaphorically, sixteenth-century Spain was tempted into, or at least inclined towards a somewhat doomed age of romance literature. However, the affirmation still rings true that 'la novela abierta estaba ya ahí, y quizás algún día los estudiosos pondrán en claro la existencia de una línea continua que fue desde *La Celestina* de 1499, al *Lazarillo de Tormes* de 1554.' (Ferrera 1987, 33).

Stylistically, *La Celestina*'s close imitation *La Lozana andaluza*, written by Francisco Delicado and published in 1528, also bore a very plausible resemblance to the picaresque; and in her recent work, Fuchs (2020, 4) nods at these picaresque roots, offering the reader a canon which is provisional rather than exhaustive, but 'still part of the picaresque vein one may wish to draw blood from all the same.' The character of Rampín (along with *La Celestina*'s Pármeno) are arguably depicted as forerunners of the Golden Age *pícaros* Lazarillo, Guzmán and Pablos we have canonically grown so accustomed to, and Delicado's work has been recognised by some academics (see Damiani 1994, 57) as a fitting transition between *La Celestina* and *el Lazarillo*. Aside from its characters, *La Lozana* successfully touched upon a vestige of the episodic plot and humour, social satire and realism that the picaresque would later embody; after all, 'el autor español se distingue por un gran realismo, lo que hace prever el camino que iba a tomar la novela española picaresca en el Siglo de Oro' (Oostendorp 1962, 103).

In spite of all the precursory works studied, it is *Lazarillo de Tormes* that is generally seen as being the seed planted from which the picaresque's disreputable tradition would bloom, as it fell to this anonymous *novela* to skilfully integrate elements borrowed from numerous popular and literary sources into the pseudo-autobiographical perspective of this semi-credible account (see Bjornson 1977, 21). The author of *Lazarillo* seems unaware that his work would

⁹ Ferreras (1987, 46) defines *novela abierta* 'con el sentido de la aparición de técnicas combinatorias, del triunfo de la imaginación y de la reflexión, del abandono; en una palabra, de fórmulas que se conformaban en trazar paralelos entre realidad objetiva y universo novelesco.'

go on to earmark the emergence of the picaresque novel, even though his successors could immediately pinpoint his achievement, and would begin coining the term *pícaro* in association with it (see Deyermond 1993, 95). It can be argued there are two reasons as to why Mateo Alemán seems to be aware of it as he opens his *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599); and Cervantes alludes to it six years later in a famous sentence of the *Quixote*: 'mal año para *Lazarillo de Tormes*, y para todos cuantos de aquel género se han escrito o escribieren' (as cited in Guillen 2015, 72-73). The first is a question of honour, and picaresque authors would know only too well that at a time in which lineage rendered so much importance, it was not honourable to come into the world alone. Therefore, as an extension of themselves, their work was no exception to this rule.¹⁰ And the second? To attract a wider audience by way of generating a surge in picaresque print and production.

In Circulation: The Print Turn

Owing to the accessibility of printed texts at the turn of the 17th century, the circulation of poetry, prose and the *novela* was boosted significantly both at home and abroad, so how did this affect the revival of *Lazarillo* and finally earmark the picaresque as an established genre on the literary radar? After all, *Lazarillo de Tormes* had seen itself relatively sidelined for almost half a century in favour of romances and literary works which coincided with the fantastical aura exuding from Spain during her ostensible Golden Age boom. Brownlee (1994, 31) contemplates the circumstances that led to the re-publication of *Lazarillo* after this hiatus:

From our twentieth-century, pan-European perspective, it is remarkable that the *Lazarillo* had to wait half a century before it gained a wide readership, a fact that has been directly attributed to the appearance of the second picaresque narrative, *Guzmán de Alfarache* in 1599. [Thereby] forming a small but critical mass that created an audience for this type of literature – hence the notable increase in the *Lazarillo*'s popularity fifty years after its initial production.

To some extent, *Lazarillo*'s limited popularity upon its immediate publication could be blamed on the reign of Philip II (1556-1598), as under his strict ruling, the book was banned in Spain and condemned by the Grand Inquisitor's *Index librorum prohibitorum* (Valladolid, 1559).

¹⁰ As Pope (1994, 69) reveals, *Guzmán* was not published alone with no antecedents, but rather alongside a regenerated edition of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, proving Alemán 'was clearly concerned about ancestry, both in his family and in his intellectual activities', reinforced by the evocative frontispiece of his work.

Despite reception and publication in Italy, the Low Countries and France shortly afterwards¹¹, pockets of popularity for the original *pícaro* were relatively few and far between. Whether the brilliance of *Lazarillo*, referred to in hindsight as a creature ahead of its time (see Miller 1967, 110) was misunderstood or its singularity as a literary piece was destined to be met with inevitable indifference, its time would come, and Spain's downfall held the key to this. A shift in social attitudes, away from illusion and aestheticism towards disenchantment and decline would be palpable by 1599, and would be met by the publication of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, ushering in the moment of the *novela picaresca* at last.

Nowadays, whereas *Celestina*, *Lazarillo* and *Don Quijote* constantly find new readers, outside Spain *Guzmán* is all but forgotten (see Blackburn 1979, 60) but at the turn of the 17th century, this couldn't have been further from the truth. *Guzmán de Alfarache* was one of the first genuine bestsellers in the history of printing, and by the time Alemán had penned *la segunda parte* in 1604, 'twenty-six different editions and no less than fifty thousand copies had appeared in four or five years' (Guillén 2015, 143). If the 17th century reader had their head turned by *Guzmán*, then a resurgence of interest in *Lazarillo de Tormes* was inevitable, given the convergence¹² of the two works by a number of printing houses across the Iberian Peninsula¹³. This was disputably due to the death of Philip II in 1598, which had brought either fresh hopes or a greater degree of boldness to writers and printers – or perhaps an admixture of both (see Guillén 2015, 144) across the kingdom of Castile. It should be duly noted that the success of Miguel de Cervantes' entry *Don Quijote* (1605) in the publishing race as an inspired response to the new-founded picaresque genre was so well-received that *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the best seller, would not reappear until 1615 in Milan (see Guillén 2015, 146). Yet, circulation of the picaresque was advancing all the same, posing an important question: in the

¹¹ Perhaps the amalgamation of favourable publishing dimensions in these countries coincided with their mercantile support for the Hispanic conquest and colonization of America (see Guillén 2015, 141), thereby fostering a surge of interest in printing Spanish texts.

¹² Guillén (2015, 144-145) explains: '*Guzmán de Alfarache* was published for the first time in Madrid, where it began to be sold around the first week of March 1599. Now, exactly nine weeks later, the printing house in Madrid offered to the public an edition of *Lazarillo de Tormes*... In the meantime, *Guzmán* had begun to appear in the other kingdoms of the peninsula, as several alert publishers outside of Madrid tried to capitalize on the success; *Lazarillo* followed precisely the same itinerary.'

¹³ An expunged version of *Lazarillo de Tormes* was circulating, ridded of any anticlerical material, to appease the demands of the Inquisition in response to the banning of the original publication.

contemporary society of the Golden Age, which readers found themselves attracted to tales of the *pícaro*, a modern anti-hero descending from the medieval rogue? (See Reed 1984, 23).

The Picaresque Appeal

As we have seen thus far, the importance of print in the transmission and circulation of written narratives cannot be overstated. That being said, the beneficial effects of printing which slowly democratized reading and brought the minor gentry and later the middle and lower classes into contact with written literature (see Reed 1984, 17) were not to be seen until the turn of the 17th century. So, how did the timely emergence of the picaresque feed into the interests of the ever-growing contemporary readership and who did it appeal to most?

Up until the end of the 16th century, reading remained an elite activity; it is therefore no surprise that authors of the picaresque then relied on ideology from texts contemporary writers and esteemed academics could obtain, many of which had been translated from sophisticated poetry and classical prose: 'Aparte del libro religioso, común a todas las bibliotecas, encontramos en las gentes de hábitos clásicos grecolatinos (Plutarco, Salustio, Catulo, Cicerón), gramáticas y retóricas, con algún margen para lo profano (Petrarca, Bandello)' (Díez Borque 2007, 184). Although there is still relatively little concrete information about the readership of the early picaresque novel, one can assume that it comprised aristocrats, gentry, the urban bourgeoisie, clergy, students – and virtually no *pícaros* (see Reed 1984, 17).

Nevertheless, the acceleration of printing throughout Europe gave rise to a number of advantages which included the accessibility of texts to those lower down in the social hierarchy. For one, printing brought the minor gentry, soon followed by the middle and lower classes, into contact with written literature for the very first time. It is thought that urban Spain underwent an educational revolution in the sixteenth-century, partly inspired by King Fernando II and Queen Isabella I's policy of recruiting civil servants from the middle classes (see Reed 1984, 17). Curiously, Ferreras (1987, 86) describes how a printed copy of a book could be read by an uneducated or even illiterate member of the public:

La presentación tipográfica de la mayor parte de las novelas del XVI (palabras unidas sin espacios blancos, signos caprichosos de abreviación o abreviaturas, y de puntuación etc.) nos lleva a la conclusión de que estos libros se leían en voz alta, deletreando palabra por palabra, única

manera de separarlas. Se leía por el oído y no por la vista... como leen los niños que están aprendiendo a leer.

Levels of illiteracy throughout Spain and the rest of Europe nevertheless remained high, and a stark socioeconomic divide between classes continued to exist. The transmission of texts through print helped to lower the cost of reading overall through the affordability of books: 'la invención de la imprenta ayudó, pues, casi definitivamente a la expansión de la novela, a su popularidad; sobre todo abarató considerablemente las copias de la misma' (Ferrerías 1987, 85). However, generally speaking, the rise of the novel in sixteenth-century Spain seems to have been rooted not in the triumph but in the frustration of the lower classes who were experiencing an amalgamation of economic insecurity, corruption or social ostracism as their country swung into decline. The picaresque rightly earned its name as a genre of realism, leaving little surprise that the contemporary readership opted for 'una literatura de crisis sin salida... un testimonio en el que se refleja una imagen mental de la sociedad de aquel tiempo' (Maravall 1986, 12-13).

Chapter II – The Picaresque in an Age of Corruption and Contradiction

Introduction

When envisaging the Spanish Golden Age, the old Shakespearian aphorism ‘all that glitters is not gold’ comes to mind. Whilst academics, such as Maravall are quick to remind us of the so-called glories Spain fruitlessly clung to at this time (see 1986, 8-9)¹⁴, we should look far beyond the tip of the iceberg to consider how the 16th century was an amalgamation of not only triumphs, but disappointments and miseries too. In contrast to the innovative output of Spain at this time, which had been brought about by the severe artistic climate of the Baroque, and used as an important instrument in spreading faith during the Counter-Reformation, an antiquated and thoroughly unjust social model, known as the Three Estates was being adhered to (see section: A Corrupt and Corrupting Social Structure). The ruling classes failed to respond to the social and political problems of the age as creatively as its writers and artists, strangling the nation’s feudal social contract with aggressive economic measures which plunged Spanish society to new depths of degeneracy. What appeared, or may well have started as an era of triumph and dominance in the Kingdom of Castile would soon be fettered by corruption from the top down. Spain’s position as the predominant European superpower of that time began to falter, and a burgeoning sense of uncertainty seemed to tinge Spanish thoughts and minds.

Both national and intellectual crises began to unfold almost synchronously at the turn of the seventeenth century, as until ‘[los] comienzos del siglo XVII no estaban dadas las condiciones para que se desarrollara esa figura del pícaro, en la novela y en la vida de las ciudades castellanas’ (Maravall 1986, 10). So why would the corruption and contradiction spearheaded by such crises inspire a picaresque phenomenon which would garner a mass readership seemingly out of nowhere? As mentioned in the previous chapter, Robbins (see 1998, 13) ascertains that art held the key to confronting change, whether through assimilation or outright rejection, and could draw widespread public attention to a matter thanks to its ever-increasing accessibility. Thus, it is little wonder that the picaresque genre succeeded in painting a picture of the inevitable yet slow and lamentable Spanish decline through the encounters and misfortunes of its *pícaro* protagonist. Although such adventures were outlandishly

¹⁴According to Maravall (1986, 9) many Spaniards at this time were ‘apegados a las pretendidas glorias de la tradición [de su país], era una fértil altiplanicie en la que se contemplaban elevadas cumbres... [a ellos parecía] en conjunto, todo un jerarquizado y unánime Siglo de Oro.’

exaggerated by authors to promote satire and to entertain readers, they were still far-reaching, even going so far as to provoke empathy in a number of readers¹⁵.

We are now familiar with the literary factors that fashioned the picaresque into being; having already explored the intellectual crisis as a framework for paradoxical literary ideas, but what about the impact of corruption on a literary genre laden with hypocrisy and satire? In this chapter we must look through a corruptive lens to consider how a number of external circumstances affected the emergence and subsequent rise in popularity of the picaresque at this time – statal and monarchical dishonesty, religious malfeasance, the volatility of Spain's position in Europe and the complexities of the Spanish imperial domain. We must also acknowledge how conditions in Spain, and not anywhere else, were the most fitting for the genre to develop under and what the precise reason for this was.

Pan-Continental Corruption

In order to pinpoint Spain's position on a global stage, and the effect this had on the emergence of the picaresque, it is necessary for us to backpedal to conditions of not only Golden Age Spain, but the empire amassed at this time and within surrounding Europe that could be deemed contributory. Robbins affirmed that living in Golden Age Spain was both a disturbing and an exciting experience as it was exhilarating and also profoundly unsettling (see 1998, 12). Indeed, nothing caused these tumultuous highs and lows quite like Spain's position from an international stance, especially given that the optimism prompted by conquests and military victories abroad proved to be short-lived (see Kagan 1990, 91). If we examine later variations of the picaresque through a transnational lens, Grimmelhausen's work of *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (1668) has several features fundamentally different from its Spanish predecessors, namely the strong emphasis on the corrupting influence of war (see Whitbourn 1974, xii). So then, if the German variant of the picaresque came to be moulded by the suffering and sobering death toll the country endured during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), it is important to learn of what was happening with Spanish-European relations and

¹⁵ According to Reed (1984, 50), many readers felt they could relate to the themes of 'economic insecurity, social ostracism or society's corruption and therefore would have regarded Lazarillo as a kindred spirit' - whilst others, less accustomed as we are to the obscurity in the picaresque novels, could have taken the hyperbolic happenings in the *tratados* to be facts (see Deyermond 1993, 74).

within the Spanish Empire at this time, in order to begin to understand why the picaresque novel first emerged here. As recognised by Thompson and Yun-Casalilla (1994, 1-2):

Spain's role in early-modern Europe was pivotal... Not only did it sustain, as long as it was able, the military and political hegemony of the Spanish monarchy, which was in itself the *raison d'être* of so much of Europe's international finance and exchange, it was also the link between the North and the Mediterranean and between Europe and America.

Therefore, the Castilian economy took centre stage in Europe during this epoch, heavily relied on by surrounding nations. Whilst Spain channelled all efforts into maintaining such an influential position and contenting the landscape of Europe which bristled with men and nations envious of the Spanish power (see Blackburn 1979, 15), the growing tensions and hostility between the nations would only continue to escalate. Along with their differing political and religious standpoints, involvement in a number of wars would follow, including the gruesome Thirty Years War, which would deplete Spanish resources and political fortunes to unprecedented levels. The aftermath prompted the sense of national disillusionment that had been simmering for quite some time to boil over altogether, especially given that 'aquí la Guerra de los Treinta Años no había arrasado el país, pero las penosas y más duraderas manifestaciones de una crisis social habían llegado a crear las condiciones para el surgimiento y desarrollo de la picaresca española' (Maravall 1986, 65). Notwithstanding, it was against this backdrop of slow decline that the magnificent cultural achievements of the Spanish Baroque shone so brightly (see Robbins 1998, 19) with its repercussions to be reflected in picaresque works which gained a newfound momentum after the publication of *La Primera Parte de Guzmán de Alfarache*; marking a new age of disenchantment with contemporary life.

As the 17th century was ushered in, along with the foundations for what would become modern day Europe as we know it, it is important to consider how it was Spain's social structure amongst others in Europe, to be the one to incite conditions in which the picaresque genre would flourish. Even before the far-reaching effects of the Thirty Years War were to be felt across the Kingdom of Castile, Maravall argues that Spain was still reeling from the Hundred Years War of 1337-1453 'que tuvo consecuencias paralelas en los siglos XVI-XVII – guerras, pesta, sequías, hambres etc, pero también el atractivo de más fáciles ganancias en otras tierras [que] trajeron otra vez condiciones de abandono de los lugares familiares' (1986, 249).

Wars and conflicts of the sixteenth century resumed in the one that followed – they were not new phenomena by any means. However, whereas before, any revolutions had been absorbed and disorder averted, the seventeenth century came along as ‘the final thunderstorm after a series of downpours’, (see Trevor-Roper 1959, 33-34) to permanently change the temperature of Europe. Wars provoked political struggle, namely a power contest between the “mixed monarchy” – the Crown and the Estate, and these qualms would be projected onto the social structure which could easily collapse amidst the turmoil. As Trevor-Roper (1959, 34) explains:

All revolutions, even though they may be occasioned by external causes, and expressed in intellectual form, are made real and formidable by defects of social structure. The universality of revolution in the seventeenth century suggests that the European monarchies, especially Spain, which had been strong enough to absorb so many strains in the previous century, had by now developed serious structural weaknesses: weaknesses which the renewal of general war exposed and accentuated.

A Corrupt and Corrupting Social Structure

Spain’s biggest structural weakness was undoubtedly the social structure known as the Three Estates. Implemented in pre-revolutionary France, and adopted by many European countries and territories throughout the mid to late Middle Ages, the Three Estates was a model whereby society was divided into three distinct classes. The First Estate was made up of the clergy and the Second Estate entailed nobility and highly ranked citizens. The Third Estate, usually consisting of the vast majority of the population, including peasants and the rest of the lower-class citizens, was expected to pay taxes to the other Estates and was left devoid of any privileges, duties or rights. It was little wonder that as a result, urban troubles were endemic throughout the country (see Hollen Lees and Hohenberg 1989, 439). These social ills which obstinately occurred included, but were not limited to: population explosion, widespread poverty, prostitution, beggars, wandering orphans, impoverished *hidalgos*, and the misbehaviour of pardoners (see Deyermond 1993, 19-20). Such common problems listed in the documents of the *Cortes* of Spain thus became the ideal grounds for the founding of a literary phenomenon whereby the usurper protagonist could contribute to the sum of social malaise and at the same time have his own distorted image reflected back to him from a society that beleaguered him. The *pícaro* was to be the “Juan Pérez” of the Third Estate.

Although Spain was hardly the only nation plagued with a coercive and chaotic social order in the burgeoning towns and cities, there had to have been an unfavourable climate sweeping

hold of the nation to exacerbate the situation there. Parker (1967, 12-13) inferred that the 'new realistic [picaresque] novel of the sixteenth century needed a society in which vagrancy and delinquency were prominent... That Spain felt the initiative must mean that conditions or influences prevailed or operated there which were peculiar to Spain and therefore cultural.' So, what exactly was it about this contemporary Spain that enabled the emergence of the picaresque literary phenomenon to occur so capaciously here? Sat at the helm of the world's largest amassed Empire, Spain's global position was evidently as impressive as it was precarious. However bright the veneer of imperial grandeur seemed, it could not disguise the internal problems the country faced (see Maiorino 1996, 5) and even the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* could foresee this, ironically juxtaposing Lázaro's seemingly prosperous but actually vulnerable situation with the glorious victories of the Spanish Empire (see Reed 1984, 37). If, like Fernández Álvarez we are to ask ourselves the question: '¿Podía esa España famélica alzarse con un Imperio?' (1983, 491) The answer is a resounding no.

With the progressive downturn of the Castilian economy arguably triggering the economic crisis that would wash over the whole European continent by the end of the seventeenth century (see Thompson and Yun-Casalilla 1994, 2), which as we know, was a time earmarked by feudal failings and the instability of the *vellón*, it is important not to forget the social failings which would also lead to the successive surfacing of the picaresque throughout Europe¹⁶. Thus, whereby a domino effect of domestic neglect and consequential poverty and famine rippled across European nations, rogue narratives manifesting an admixture of moralization, fiction and historiography (see Cruz 1996, 260) would also begin sweeping across these countries in due course; undergoing cultural modifications, but nevertheless acting as faithful representations of the picaresque literary phenomenon.

As we know, the circulation and revival of the picaresque arises in times of crisis and chaos whenever we need to find vehicles to express our own varied senses of disorder (see Miller 1967, 133), which is what the original authors and creators of this literary phenomenon did in Spain's ever-more unfavourable position. To arrive at the picaresque, the likes of Mateo Alemán and Fransisco de Quevedo had to take on Spain's predicament and address the

¹⁶ As Benito-Vessels and Zappala (1994, 11) highlight in their preface, 'it is Alberto del Monte's (1971) opinion that social desperation and its immediate consequence – moral abjection – contributed to the forging of the rogue as a literary character' throughout European literary works of this era.

Spanish quandary – ‘the arbitrary government, bad religion, the tyrannical Inquisition, reactionary *hidalgo* values, the wretched laziness of the people, the absence of a capitalist spirit and failings of national character’ (Thompson and Yun 1994, 3), using it to their strengths by capturing the mood of a country riddled with corruption and socioeconomic failings by creating identifiable literary characters that would be forced to confront the same issues.

Corruption at the Top

As we are aware, Spain’s economic and political decline was half a century away from the publication of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, but by the time the real archetype of the picaresque, *Guzmán de Alfarache* went to press, corruption in Spain was extensive and rife. If it occurred at the top of the social hierarchy, then it should hardly be surprising that it trickled down into all classes, sects and professions: nobody, it seemed, was immune. Just as the literary phenomenon of the picaresque reaches its zenith at the hands of literary genius Francisco de Quevedo, in the form of his sole novel *La vida del Buscón* of 1626 (see Parker 1967, 56), coincidentally so do the levels of corruption in a Spanish society teeming with hypocrisy and deceit. Not least due to a number of bureaucratic failings, which ultimately led to the economy being effectively strangled by the minting of the *vellón* coin (see Maravall 1983, 131)¹⁷. In this section the corruption and overall unscrupulousness of the monarchy and state will be analysed in order to ‘resolver la cuestión de si la aparición de la figura literaria del pícaro alude o no a la formación de una sociedad en que aquel pudo surgir’ (Maravall 1986, 10).

Evidently during this time span, ‘toda Europa se lanza a la búsqueda de nuevas formas políticas. España apunta ya con verdadera fuerza, la forma política nacional que se aglutina bajo el poder del Príncipe’ (Fernández Álvarez 1983, 9-10) leaving the monarchy in possession of unprecedented levels of power. It is crucial to remember that Spain was wholly involved in the creation of modern polity and the rise of the bureaucratic state (see Casey 1999, 1) but found it virtually impossible to disentangle the two, owing to the archaic yet still ubiquitous feudal function of kinship and clientage, whereby the state is weak and where politics cannot easily be separated from the business of everyday life (see Casey 1999, 1). Spain also found it

¹⁷ The widespread implications of the minting of the *vellón* will be discussed later in this section, but for now we can merely be cognizant that the *vellón* was ‘la triste moneda de cobre, en el país que había dispuesto de mayor masa de metales preciosos’ (Maravall 1986, 131).

difficult to shake off backwards economical structures such as seigniorialism, or manorism, which rendered peasants dependent on their lords and land, and provided aristocracy, nobility and wealthy landowners a strengthened grip on the distribution of wealth.

Unable to keep up with the demands of running an empire, The Kingdom of Castile was effectively bankrupt at the turn of the seventeenth century. By the reign of Philip III (1598-1621), the semblant inability of monarch and state to lead and exercise power in favour of national interest would be proven once and for all by the King's involvement in the *política de vellón*. As summarised by economists Cendejas Bueno and Font de Villanueva (2015, 1664):

Monetary instability in this century is commonly known as inflation of the *vellón* and consisted of a series of both inflationary and deflationary measures that resulted in extremely variable prices. This fact along with lower average inflation rates compared to those of the sixteenth century, would make it more appropriate to speak of the "instability of the *vellón*".

Thus, Phillip III's attempts to try and solve Spain's perennial economic problems by minting the *vellón* and increasing its use backfired to a catastrophic extent, instead causing substantial devaluation and debasement of the coinage. Thinking this would stabilise the waves of inflation and deflation brought about by the plague, it instead exposed a corroding economy and pernicious sovereign authority.¹⁸ As boldly diagnosed by Maravall (1986, 131-134):

Me atrevería a decir que la picaresca, en su forma española, se debió al golpe fatal que sobre la sociedad produjeran las fraudulentas maquinaciones del gobierno de la Monarquía sobre el vellón. Esa política monetaria constituyó cada vez más, un factor de corrosión del sistema social que nos ayuda a comprender el carácter anómico y aberrante de la conducta picaresca.

So, how were such economic shortcomings registered back in Castile? Alongside economic stagnation, famine and high levels of unemployment, there was a noticeably steady demographic shift in peasants moving to key urban centres such as Madrid, Toledo and Seville to try and find work. As the *pícaro* protagonists made clear throughout their literary journeys, the lure of finding a job in the city soon dwindled, so the experience of Spanish peasants could not have been all too different. But if then, the *pícaro* pretended to live as well as possible

¹⁸ Interestingly, according to Cendejas Bueno and Font de Villanueva (2015, 1662-3) the greatest dispersion does not occur at the end of the sixteenth century, when the first pure copper *vellón* coin was minted, but around 1636, when the coin was restamped to three times its value for the first time.

whilst working as little as possible could the same also be said for the historical lower classes? Such a demographic shift only deepened class divisions further, and Maravall (1986, 28-29) describes how the situation led to:

Tantos testimonios de repulsa del estado de pobreza, por parte de quienes la sufren, y también, paralelamente, de condenación de esa repulsa por parte de los ricos que se ven amenazados en el disfrute indisputado de sus patrimonios. Es el panorama en el que se divisa la aparición de la picaresca.

In addition to this, the decision taken by Philip II to triple the *alcabala*¹⁹ (Royal tax) in 1574 and its potentiality in aggravating the situation further cannot be overlooked, as such a steep increase in taxation was felt immediately by cities and urban centres, and the effects would be long-lasting. The suddenness of the tax rise and the fact that it coincided with the recession at the end of the century must have dealt the cities a severe blow (see Thompson and Yun 1994, 193), but the process the monarchy had to go through to start reacquiring these taxes – an uneasy mixture of threats and promises - only further outlined the continuing delicacy of the political equilibrium (see Casey 1999, 135). Measures such as this painted an unsympathetic and out of touch picture of the monarchy, and only provoked further dissent and social unrest amongst the working classes; perfectly demonstrating that the rise of the picaresque novel in seventeenth century Spain was rooted not in the triumph but ultimately in the frustration and plight of the lower classes (see Reed 1984, 50).

Corruption and The Church

When the picaresque novel appeared in Spain, the country was suffering from a demographic decline, a lack of public funding and acute impoverishment which affected the entire nation. But if Spanish society was failed by unsuccessful royal decrees which sought to combat mendicity and the overall number of beggars in cities (see Benito-Vessels and Zappala 1994, 11), then it wasn't to fare much better under the authority of the Church. Given the ties between the lower social classes and their reliance on the aid of the ecclesiastical authorities, one would expect the Church to look out for those it was so used to protecting. Yet instead,

¹⁹ For an insightful overview of the tax collection of *alcabalas*, *encabezamientos* and *millones* through a case study on Valladolid, see Felipe Ruiz Martín's chapter *Credit procedures for the collection of taxes in the cities of Castile during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the case of Valladolid* in Thompson and Yun 1994, 169-181).

Italian Hispanist Del Monte boldly claims that the life of Lázaro, and the beggars, rogues, outsiders and even just lowly citizens he would become a literary representation of 'casi se desarrolla bajo la protección de la Iglesia' as far as their picaresque tendencies were to be concerned (as cited in Deyermond 1993, 45).

The act of almsgiving was considered almost as a law unto itself (see Maravall 1986, 24) and the clergy took it upon themselves to act as *padres de los pobres* and supposedly distribute the alms to those who needed it most, which at the time accounted for a large proportion of the population. However, due to the rise of feudalism and urban resettlement, Edmond Cros (as cited in Reed 1984, 60) suggests that instead, the swathes of urban poor inspired new pejorative attitudes toward poverty, which was now regarded as a social ill, and the Christian act of almsgiving lost its value. This meant that the clergy would keep the majority of what few alms were received for themselves – 'en mayor proporción a la Iglesia y a sus representantes' (see Maravall 1986, 23). To note, the crusade movement was nothing new in Spain, or across Europe in general at this time, but the Spanish crusade indulgence – or *bula de la cruzada* – whereby a crusade indulgence could be gained through giving alms was adopted under King Philip's reign, and would go on to become a norm beyond the Sixteenth century (see O'Banion 2012, 555-6). Such egocentric behaviour on the part of both the Church and the King²⁰ did not go unnoticed, and prompted what little faith society did have to nosedive into the spiritual deadness of Quevedo's *pícaro*, Don Pablos (see Blackburn 1979, 87).

Although conformity apparently offered a refuge to those wanting to escape the misery and corruption they were surrounded by (see Blackburn 1979, 75) turning to religion would only end up exacerbating the problem, as Parker (1967, 29) reminds us that 'the profession of religion, charity, or the show of honour and respectability are cloaks covering cruelty, avarice, pride and fraud.' Although such an analogy may seem contentious going solely off the evidence of the unreliable narratives of the *pícaros* Lázaro, Guzmán and Pablos, in literature there are always truths to be unearthed. Ever since the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church, fearing further heresy, had tried to suppress most forms of individual religious expression (see Kagan 1990, 10) along with Judaism and Islam, whereby under the Alhambra

²⁰ As pointed out by O'Banion (2012, 557) in his fascinating article piece, 'For the king, the *cruzada* was equally difficult to do without. At the end of the sixteenth century, it would generate about 750,000 ducats each year, which made it a vital part of his annual budget of about 6,000,000 ducats.'

Decree of 1492, a choice of conversion to Christianity or formal expulsion from the Kingdom of Castile were the only options given. Meanwhile, the Inquisition was keeping a close and constant watch over the populace, and was quick to ban *Lazarillo* after its initial publication, owing to its satirically charged religious content and undertones of homosexuality, as summarised by Deyermond (1993, 16):

[In *Lazarillo de Tormes*] theft and fraud are prevalent, and the Ministers of Justice and of The Church are deeply involved. We are given the strongest hints that the clergy take advantage of their status to indulge their lusts, whether homosexual²¹ or adulterous. Most serious of all, the clergy and the gentry are shown as betraying their essential functions – we are a long way from what was the still prevailing social theory of The Three Estates.

Although Spain did not suffer at the hands of the Inquisition as much as her peninsular neighbour Portugal, the ongoing investigations still continued to instil a sense of fear into society. This is delineated perfectly in *El Buscón* through a number of Pablos's tricks that aim to terrify and serve as a reminder of the Inquisition's ongoing existence (see Ettinghausen 1987, 250). Nevertheless, more often than not, the strict orders issued by the powerful office were met with appeasement in order for everyone, writers included, to dodge any form of persecution. Hence why both the reader and Guzmán frequently forget the lessons of Christian doctrine and are duly reminded of their negligence by the continual chiding of Mateo Alemán (see Reed 1984, 79).

Afterthought

The emergence of the picaresque at the turn of the 17th century through Alemán's moral epistle *Guzmán de Alfarache*, consolidated the idea that the picaresque '[era] una consecuencia derivada de toda grave situación de la crisis, un producto típico de las épocas de desencaje social' (Maravall 1986, 251). Not forgetting that spiritual unrest too formed the basis of this unhinged society, Alemán's aim was quite different to that of the author of *Lazarillo* as he interspersed serious sermons throughout his work to remind the reader that entertainment

²¹ As Shipley probes in his iconoclastic article *Otras cosillas que no digo: Lazarillo's dirty sex* (see 1996, 50-52), 'Lázaro's malicious code depends on readers' awareness of homosexual proclivities, real or alleged, among those of religious vocation... if Lázaro's *por esto* refers to an exhausting week of buggery, what other and worse experiences can he allude to? A tabooed complement of sodomy and a form of deviance would be oral homosexual intercourse.'

was to be the subsidiary purpose of *Guzmán*. The infamous image of a boatman facing back to the shore of the picaresque narration, but rowing towards moral good, was used as a stark warning by Alemán 'in fear that the reader will misunderstand his intentions, and think he wants to disembark on the land of the picaresque adventures' (Reed 1984, 67). Whether Alemán, outwardly and sincerely orthodox, was conditioned by his converso background (see Blackburn 1979, 63) and like many writers at the time, was actively suppressing inner fears and suspicions engendered by this forced conversion to Christianity is a question worth deliberating, but sadly there is no space for it within the body of this thesis.

Ultimately, literature and life reflected one another and the two cannot be divorced in Golden Age Spain, just as the *pícaro* cannot be divorced from his homeland, despite the fatal picaresque trope of abandoning the birthplace in favour of other horizons: with the prospect of an unknown journey or destination bringing wealth and good fortune. Guzmán fled Seville and Lazarillo was led away from Salamanca, whilst Pablos even headed for the New World. But if we turn to Pablos, we realise that his fate was sealed²²; he was born in Spain and destined to stay there, and the same could be argued for *picaresca* as a social construction, as we will see in the second part of the thesis. If the literary form of *picaresca* was used as a vehicle to carry around the anguish and sorrow felt by the authors of a society seriously divided, flawed and marred by corruption from the prevailing authorities²³, then reconfigured discursive paradigms that reappeared in contemporary Spain served the same purpose. *Picaresca* in its textual form, then, explored a world no better off than its *pícaro* protagonist. As a metaphor for the human condition and an affront and challenge to the exalted but hollow ideals championed by the authorities in Golden Age Spain, the picaresque genre is of interest to the historian and literary scholar alike. Often internalised as inherent to the Spanish character, how would the construct of the actual and literary picaroon be reconfigured as an archetype in periods of crisis in contemporary Spain since it's etymological beginnings in France?

²² As Friedman (1996, 221) analyses: 'Quevedo's *pícaro* was never in fact able to shed the trappings of his lowly birth. Figuratively it might be said that the author never allows him [Pablos] to remove himself from the dirt. To do so – or to give Pablos the opportunity to do so – would be to redistribute power.

²³A good example of this is Quevedo's hostile attitude in *El Buscón*, which may well have sprung from the way he felt about his country at the time. In 1604, in a letter to his friend, Quevedo wrote 'As for my Spain, I cannot speak of it without grief. If you are a prey to war, we are a prey to idleness and ignorance. In your country we consume our soldiers and our gold; here we consume ourselves' (as cited in Blackburn 1979, 80). He cruelly portrays all those responsible for Spain in her grief – no one is excused.

Part II: Trait

Chapter III – 1975-1982: The *picaresca*: A Discursive Frame in a New Democracy

Introduction

Following the death of Francisco Franco on 20th November 1975, Spain was plunged into uncertainty. 'Tens of thousands of Spaniards queued to see the dictator as he lay in state; some joked that they did so in order to ensure that he was really dead' (Chislett 2013, 74) but others really were sad, as life under the Caudillo was all they had ever known. Such a juxtaposition of opinion highlighted the stark incongruity between Spaniards. After living under a dictatorship for several decades, the country now not only had to find its way towards a stable democracy, but also had to discover a way to come together and be united. In this new era, what would Spain, and the Spanish people stand for? How could a nation be brought together under a new monarchical leadership – something the country hadn't seen for almost half a century – into a modern society underpinned by the values of democracy?

The economic prosperity witnessed by Spaniards under Franco's dictatorship, referred to by many as the "Spanish miracle"²⁴, would soon be all but forgotten as it came to an abrupt end due to the oil price shock of 1973-4:

The higher prices were particularly damaging for Spain because of its heavy reliance on oil and gas, which supplied over two-thirds of its energy requirements... The economy grew by only one percent in 1975, the year that Franco died. Inflation rose from 17.4 percent in 1974 to 24.5 percent in 1977 and the number of unemployed more than doubled between 1973 and 1977 (Chislett 2013, 90-91).

If 'el periodo entre 1975 y 2000 podría llegar a ser considerado en retrospectiva como un periodo dorado de la historia de España' (Elliot 2011, 83)²⁵ then it seems inevitable that the picaresque, which emerged in its textual form at the downturn of the Spanish Golden Age in the 17th century, would once again re-emerge during Spain's "second Golden Age". But how would it ultimately break away from its literary roots and come to re-emerge by way of a national social construction? In order to get to that point, it would have to draw from its artistic lineage, whilst shapeshifting to take on new meanings, as the newspapers at that time would

²⁴The "Spanish miracle" was a term adopted by historians and economists alike to refer to the period of economic prosperity under Franco's final years (see De la Torre and García-Zúñiga (2014, 162-183).

²⁵ Even if it didn't necessarily feel like that for citizens at the time, as it is crucial to recall Spain's economy grew exponentially under the Franco regime (see section: Politics: Paving the Way for la picaresca).

go on to demonstrate. An amalgamation of Franco's death, which would pave the way for the abolition of strict censorship, the cultural conditions of an ever-more socialist Spain and the increasing use of the word in the press would together prove that:

La influencia de la picaresca todavía existe. Es un género que ni ha muerto, ni pertenece al pasado, ni ha perdido su capacidad de creación de nuevos temas... el pícaro y la literatura picaresca son, cómo nace ésta y cómo se desarrolla con toda la carga de crítica social y en qué condicionamiento se desenvuelve (*El País* 22/06/1976, 1).

The word *picaresca*²⁶, for the most part, tended not to stray from its literary archetype in articles printed leading up to the death of Franco, before briefly disappearing from the press for the several months that surrounded his demise. Yet by 1977, two years into the transition period, 'la ya conocida picaresca española' (*La Vanguardia* 16/02/1977, 29), evolving from its literary roots, was showing signs of a transformation. The term began to be used in a much more negative way, and not just to deal with artistic developments of this period. *La picaresca* had become 'nuestra picaresca' (*La Vanguardia* 20/01/1980, 56); a collective way of responding to a multitude of issues: given that corruption in politics had gained traction, petty crime was on the rise and Spain was tumbling towards a worsening economic and unemployment situation.

The Arts: Liberation and Experimentation

Lexically rooted in Golden Age literature²⁷, the term *picaresca* would go on to assume a broader meaning within the realm of the arts during the transition years, instead of remaining largely confined to its literary precedents. After years of artistic censorship, film and theatre reviews acknowledging the term *picaresca* would become commonplace in the media after the passing of the Caudillo. His death signalled 'la apertura del cine, una fecunda conquista de la libertad... que autorice impunemente la picaresca y el cinismo, el afán desmedido del lucro y la incalificable explotación de la pornografía' (*La Vanguardia* 05/01/1977, 34).

²⁶ Due to carrying out my *ABC*, *La Vanguardia* and *El País* *hemeroteca* searches entirely in Spanish, I will use *picaresca* over its English translation 'picaresque' when referring to content from these articles so as to remain consistent with my research and avoid any lexical discrepancies.

²⁷ As discussed in the first part of my thesis, the picaresque literary core is generally considered amongst academics to date between 1550-1750 [or theatrically speaking, 1550-1680]; and should adhere to the eight guidelines laid out in Guillén's 'picaresque model' (see *Literature as System: Essays Toward the Theory of Literary History*, 2015) in order to be classified in this way.

The ever-evolving brazenness of cinematic works was viewed by the Spanish Catholic Church as a danger to the moral values it struggled to uphold. Under Franco's rule, The Church urged for films such as *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972) and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Norman Jewison, 1973) not to be released in Spain on the grounds of their licentiousness and depravity (see Wheeler 2020, 20). Nevertheless, this did not stop Spaniards flocking over the French border to Perpignan where such films were being shown at the time (see Chislett 2013, 75), demonstrating an underlying craving felt by Spaniards for candour and unconstraint 'al erotismo explícito y a los desnudos, una de las novedades de la Transición y evidente gancho para un público al que la decencia impuesta por el regimen franquista había escatimado libertades' (Bastianes 2020, 212). While Franco could not recover from ongoing illness and fragility, his demise was a boon for the arts. They would bounce back more fervently than ever before, with long overdue showings of *The Great Dictator* (Charlie Chaplin, 1940) and *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) surfacing the week of his death. Thus, the world of film was also quick to react to this new scope for artistic freedom, proving that "...esencial en el [re]nacimiento de la picaresca, se evidencia una tradición de rebeldía popular, un alzamiento moral de los humildes' (*El País* 08/05/1976, 13).

Although this revived version of *la picaresca* 'sigue 'inspirándose en relatos de la novela picaresca' (like in Mariano Ozores' show *Cuentos de las sábanas blancas* [*La Vanguardia* 29/10/1977]), some artists and authors preferred to cut ties with the *picaresca* of the past, opting for a coalescence of different themes and genres, just as the writers of the seventh-century had strived for through their literary experimentation. In an interview about his new book, novelist Camilo José Cela asserted *la novela picaresca* as being 'un tema muy trabajado, un fenómeno de los siglos XVI y XVII. Naturalmente sigue habiendo pícaros que tienen otras características y matices, pero ya no hay novela picaresca' (*ABC* 13/09/1980, 33). The lexical attachment to its Golden Age corpus of texts that *la picaresca* had always been bound to was indeed still there, but in the newspapers, it had already begun to hold a new lease of life, being utilized as a pejorative discursive frame for the individualistic tendencies that Spaniards were capable of displaying, not least the Spaniards who were known as being individualistic to the very core: politicians.

Sería divertido ahora que ya tenemos una cierta libertad de Prensa – nuestro único progreso, desde la muerte del general Franco – aplicar las categorías de "rogué", "dandy" y "pícaro" ... a algunos

de los personajes que más han sonado, en un momento decisivo, en los aledaños de la desgraciada vida política española' (*La Vanguardia* 21/04/1976, 17).

Thus, a new Golden Age called for a new era of *la picaresca*²⁸, and only time and a series of unfolding crises would tell how its usage in the press would diversify, as would its meaning.

Politics: Paving the Way for *la picaresca*

Most Spaniards hoped that post-Franco, democratic Spain would not only be a peaceful place, but an exciting one too (see Chislett 2013, 1) and there is no doubt that a flourish within the realm of the arts brought long-awaited excitement to many who wanted their own taste of the "roaring sixties". It seemed *los años setenta* had some catching up to do. Yet, it shouldn't be forgotten that excitement in the form of economic prosperity had already reached Spain under Franco's rule, with the *años de desarrollo* having previously taken place between 1961 and 1973, during which time 'the economy grew at 7 per cent a year – faster than any in the non-communist world except Japan's... by the time Spain's economic miracle had ended, it was the world's ninth industrial power' (Hooper 2006, 16). Nonetheless, it was this fervent economic change that aroused a national sense of pent-up frustration and impatience for subsequent social and democratic change (see Chislett 2013, 74-75): the country had waited long enough. Headed tentatively by Franco's chosen successor, Don Juan Carlos I, the transition period would pave the way for the passage from dictatorship to democracy.

Before the passing of the Caudillo, any parallelism between politics and *la picaresca* in the press was scarce. There was little room for a social pact to be re-negotiated in pre-democracy Spain, given that all politics and the entirety of the country's affairs for that matter were run by one man and the system he had implemented. The main newspapers of the period, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* were centrist or centre-rightist and loyal to the state. The first centre-leftist newspaper *El País* would not be founded until the year after Franco's death, and the straying of *La Vanguardia* towards Catalanian separatism would come much later on. Thus, the branding of Spanish politicians and their antics as *picaresca* would have to wait until the series

²⁸ In the article *picaresca y neopicaresca* (see *La Vanguardia* 21/04/1976, 17), the use of the term *neopicaresca* is considered as an alternate way to approach modern iterations of *la picaresca*. Notwithstanding, I will avoid using this term in my work as its modern-day capacity lies too much with recent literary adaptations (for further reading on this see Shelley Godsland's chapter *The neopicaresque: The picaresque myth in the twentieth-century novel* [Ardila, 2015]).

of political reforms and elections that would eventually go on to shape the transition period; offering 'countless political parties, [which] provided a collective voice for the mainstream opposition during the transfer of powers from Franco to Juan Carlos' (Wheeler 2020, 21).

It would have been forgiven to think that Juan Carlos's accession as Franco's chosen heir would have signified a continuation of Francoism through the establishment of a Francoist monarchy (see Tremlett 2012, 70), validating *ABC's* disparaging article on politics (see above). However:

In fact, Juan Carlos had been secretly meeting the pro-democracy for some time. Over the next four years, he would lead Spaniards to write themselves a democratic constitution, freely elect a parliament and – at a referendum – choose to have a constitutional monarch, himself, as head of state. It was a time of breathless change, intrigue and excitement' (Tremlett 2012, 71).

Juan Carlos, 'for his rather gauche manner belied a penetrating and receptive mind' (Hooper 2006, 27) and knew such change would have to be implemented gradually. Inciting revolutionaries would do little in the way of uniting an already disjointed country marred by years of political and cultural oppression; and so, he bided his time by appointing Carlos Arias Navarro as the first Prime Minister of the new democratic Spain. The King would give until July 1976 for Spaniards to adjust to a prosaic start to the transition period under the cautious and impassive nature of Navarro, before naming centrist Adolfo Suárez as Navarro's successor. 'His choice of Suárez was not, as some observers had suspected, simply a matter of taking the best name on offer from the Council of the Realm. It was a culmination of months of assiduous conspiracy' (Hooper 2006, 31). The decision was quick to be denounced by Judge Pascual Estevill²⁹ as 'un intrincado mecanismo lleno de picaresca' (*La Vanguardia* 13/07/1976, 34).

Indeed, Suárez's appointment was met with a generally negative response: he was tainted for those on the left by his Francoist past, whilst those on the right saw him as a traitor. Unlike Navarro, he believed serious reform was key to the transition period, and went about implementing it immediately. By December 1976, the Political Reform Act had been passed and ratified by a referendum, which paved way for the first free election in Spain since February 1936. It was in this moment that Spanish politics established its *picaresca* discursive frame, with ex-Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro admitting that his lack of the trait was a principal

²⁹ This defamatory remark made by judge Luis Pascual Estevill can now be viewed ironically in light of him being sentenced to nine years of prison for various crimes of corruption; an inherent picaresque trait. (See *El País* 03/01/2005).

reason for his inability to succeed in politics: 'Es verdad: no sé manejar la picaresca para engañar a todos, o para engañar a unos sí a otros no. Y eso en la política a veces es indispensable' (*ABC* 22/04/1977). More than indispensable, *la picaresca* became the theme of the 1977 general election, and *La Vanguardia* (15/06/1977) captured the mood by offering readers a *diccionario de la picaresca electoral* to round off three weeks of 'tremenda lección y advertencia para tratar de evitar todo lo que sea polarización, división abrupta en dos mitades, actitudes de desprecio, operaciones de desprestigio, recurso a las malas artes y a una picaresca que no sólo en la literatura, sino en la vida, tiene arraigo' (*La Vanguardia* 24/05/1977, 7).

The winning majority fell to Suárez and his *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD), a progressive yet fragmented coalition of political alliances. Despite strengthening their popularity in a subsequent election called in 1979³⁰, the UCD only became more synonymous with the term *picaresca* during their time in office, as it began appearing in newspapers on an increasingly frequent basis³¹, referring to administrative, and fiscal problems mounting under the party's feet. It seemed unthinkable that everything would culminate in a failed coup d'état in 1981, whose figurehead leader Antonio Tejero 'tendría un lugar en Lazarillo de Tormes' (*La Vanguardia* 16/10/1982, 10). Before Spain went to the polls for a third time in 1982, the leader of the opposition party *el Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), Felipe González, vowed to his supporters 'no puede continuar la desmoralización que existe en la sociedad española ni podemos seguir viviendo de la picaresca' (*La Vanguardia* 17/10/1982, 10).

Due to a worsening economic crisis that was sweeping across Spain, it was not only politicians that found themselves ensnared in a new social construction of *la picaresca* but society too. Unsurprisingly, a country so used to a top-down approach was like Guzmán, 'prepared to ape the manners of his erstwhile enemies' (Ife 1985, 115), eventuating in being tarnished by the same brush as their leaders in the press. Unemployment, inflation and petty crime were rife throughout the country by the end of the transition period, and the lack of fulfilled promises on extensive reforms for divorce and abortion laws left a lot to be desired by Spaniards. So

³⁰ The first general election after the passing of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, which was regarded as 'the culmination of the difficult and delicate transition to democracy following the death of General Franco in 1975, [despite] its framers having to deal with several problematic issues.' (Casey 1990, 26)

³¹ Evaluating a cross section of archives from *ABC*, *La Vanguardia* and *El País* has led to my findings that the term *picaresca* increased by approximately 20% from the seven years prior to the Transition compared with the seven years during the Transition, and political usage increased by 70%.

how was the social implication of this captured by the press? And how did it continue to alter the meaning of a word which was externalising itself more and more as a pejoratively perceived trait, but one Spaniards could find themselves relating to all the same?

Economic Policy, Poverty and *la picaresca*

Still widely ascribed to the arts, 'incluso el arte político refinado a condición de que no lo cojan a uno con las manos en la masa.' (*El País* 05/07/1978, 4), *la picaresca* had yet to be formulated as a discursive construct for democratic times. It was still regarded as a literary genre, even if it was one that had spanned to encompass other artistic forms. Nevertheless, the resounding effect politics was having on hindering the progress of social laws in Spain, and the shattering reality of an economic slump meant that to live through this period was like living in a *tratado* of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Most Spaniards would find themselves on the periphery, but for some their plight would bound them for centre stage in this *narrativa picaresca*, unearthing the prediction that 'en realidad, mucha de la narrativa del país desde la posguerra española será propiamente novela picaresca' (*La Vanguardia* 05/10/1978, 39). Associating *la picaresca* with a narrative function may seem to constrain it to its literary origins, but we must remember that every discursive framing device has to stem from a narrative that fits.

Instead of scaling down Spain's dependence on imported oil or invoking any measures that would fortify the Spanish economy, democratisation politics remained the sole focus of Suárez's centrist government, with the drafting and enacting of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 absorbing most of Spain's politics and administration at the expense of economic policy. (See Solsten and Meditz 1990, 144). Such economic failings were summarised with retrospect after the resignation of Adolfo Suárez and the UCD's swift decline in popularity in 1981. It was in this moment that the press gave rise to the notion of *la picaresca* as a way of dealing with the state of economic and social decline:

La picaresca es un efecto económico, es una forma irregular de subempleo. Aquella economía, debatiéndose entre los impuestos opresivos y la limosna indiscriminada, soportando a la vez las manos muertas y los vagabundos, herencia de la centuria anterior en la que el Estado quebró tres veces, imprimió carácter de decadencia a los siglos que siguieron, hasta hoy. (*ABC* 15/05/1981, 11)

Leading up to this point, Spain had spent years struggling with an escalating rate of unemployment, with businesses and companies resorting to laying off staff in the face of the

ongoing economic crisis: only to be shambolically met by an inadequate tax and benefit system that could not support those out of work. The picture painted was a bleak one, like in the article *La vida cotidiana española* (*La Vanguardia* 04/07/1978), which emphasised 'el mercado negro, el racionamiento y su picaresca, las restricciones...un mundo trágico'. There was also the glaring problem of begging and homelessness spreading epidemically throughout cities and urban centres. The desperation of many Spaniards who found themselves without a job or a home was real, and many ended up on the streets enduring 'la miseria, el hambre, los niños callejeros, famélicos, enfermos [que] no son fantasmas de un problema que los optimistas reducen a una simple cuestión de picaresca.' (*ABC* 02/07/1981, 34). Such a *cuestión de picaresca* caused for an evaluation and readjustment of personal and moral values. Why should Spaniards be looking out for others when their very own government couldn't put the interests of a nation before their own?

The 1978 Moncloa Pacts did set out a blueprint for fundamental tax reforms that would address unemployment and inflation in the country, but the UCD stalled such reforms in favour of focusing their efforts elsewhere, and tax administration was effectively frozen altogether (see Martínez-Vázquez 2007, 535). It was no secret that 'España posee uno de los sistemas fiscales menos actualizados de los países desarrollados [debido a] la poca aportación de los grandes capitalistas al fisco y a la picaresca española para eludir el cumplimiento de las obligaciones tributarias' (*La Vanguardia* 07/10/1976, 29). There was little wonder then, that 'la picaresca del paro nacer del hecho de que nunca existió un censo real, bien elaborado y controlado' (*ABC*, 26/05/1979, 36); resulting in a record number of unemployment benefits being subsidised by the welfare state.³²

Social measures brought in by the UCD also did little to live up to expectations, proving to be the final straw in highlighting the incapability of Suárez's government to reconstruct a country still reeling from the imbued spirit of a totalitarian regime (see Hooper 2006, 40). In contrast to more progressive stances on divorce and abortion adopted by other European nations, both social practices were still forbidden in Spain, and were the source of growing contempt between the diverse political alliances the UCD was comprised of. Unhappy couples looking

³² According to *ABC* (23/02/1978), 'las pérdidas que la picaresca en el seguro de desempleo supone para la Seguridad Social, cuyas cifras se elevan a la importante cifra de 1.400 millones de pesetas mensuales.'

to rectify their broken marriages would often turn to 'las separaciones extrajudiciales, que pueden ser un semillero de picaresca legal' (*La Vanguardia* 13/12/1977) although this was usually a timely and costly process with no guarantee that that desired outcome would be achieved. By 1980, 'a gap that was to prove unbridgeable had begun to open up between the Social and Christian Democrats within the UCD over the government's plan to legalise divorce.' (Hooper 2006, 41), whilst the consideration of abortion even on the strictest of terms was outright rejected by the religious and more conservative factions within the party.

With an in-party revolt staged against him, Suárez had little choice but to resign from his premiership. He was unsuspecting of the coup d'état that was being planned against both government and monarchy by senior army officials, the final nail in the coffin after the financial crisis, 'which exposed the political elites as being singularly unimpressive at providing moral or economic leadership' (Wheeler 2020, 1). A lack of leadership when the country needed it most was to become a theme that would recur incessantly throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, as we will see throughout the remainder of this thesis. It was also a necessary one in the overarching development of *la picaresca* as a national social construction. Spaniards would call on their ability to laugh off a bad situation, depicted in the press as a nation that was always happy in the knowledge there was someone worse off than them. After all 'el nuestro es el único país en donde la gente se ríe cuando alguien se resbala y se da una costalada. Es la picaresca triste y despiadada.' (*ABC* 22/04/1980, 3).

La picaresca, un ameno deporte nacional³³

In a country still very much divided on political views, varying desire for regional autonomy and the extent to which the economic crisis had interfered with their daily lives, the brief unison Spaniards felt in the wake of Franco's death had a limited shelf life. 'Shedding the ghosts of the Civil War (1936-39) and boosting national self-esteem' (Wheeler 2020, 3) were both on the countrywide agenda, but transition and democratisation politics aside, what else could unify Spaniards during this tumultuous time? Conversations surrounding the national character returned repeatedly to a purported national character trait, *la picaresca*. Shaped by an uneasy counterbalance of the harrowing experiences they had been through and their anxiousness to look forward rather than dwell on the past, and further emboldened by the literary

³³ Cited in *La Vanguardia* (04/08/1978, 5).

phenomenon which had emerged in their country as a by-product of corruption and crises, *la picaresca* was re-emerging as a discursive frame reserved for those of Spanish descent, 'una picaresca nacional que no sabe de fronteras' (*La Vanguardia* 01/02/1979, 32).

During the Transition, we are aware that the bond between text and trait had not been completely severed, with *ABC* (12/10/1980, 71) paying homage to 'Quevedo, genial liquidador, o creador del saldo de nuestra picaresca' but what exactly defined and determined *nuestra picaresca* as a modern social discourse on Spaniards by the press? If this *picaresca* trait mirrors the texts it is etymologically derived from, then like the figure of the *pícaro*, there is perceived good and guaranteed bad to be found. 'Como estamos en un país de picaresca, siempre se busca un elemento positivo para después acumular una serie de problemas que enmascaran la situación real' (*La Vanguardia* 21/05/1981), a baroque mirroring of appearances and reality.

However, as with *Lázaro*, who tricks himself into thinking he's reached *la cumbre de buena fortuna* in life, there can be limitations to concealing a bad situation, or worse, feigning that it's not as bad as it really is – the very outlook Suárez conveyed whilst manoeuvring his country through an economic crisis. It seemed as though Spaniards were getting the balance right given that, 'España tiene una hermosa tradición de picaresca y haraganería, pero nunca alcanzó altas cotas en la delincuencia' (*La Vanguardia* 07/12/1998, 16), but would such modesty continue in the forthcoming face of crisis and corruption?

The traumatic violence and oppression some Spaniards had lived through under years of Franco rule contrasted sharply to the liberties that were restored during the transition period. Nevertheless, the 1977³⁴ *Pacto del Olvido* symbolised the hushed, even secretive tone that many preferred to keep: after all, 'los relatos de nuestra picaresca están rellenos de alusiones, de anécdotas, de condenas y de abominaciones' (*La Vanguardia* 20/07/1980, 13). Over time, Spaniards would learn to be more brazen when recounting the narrative of their past, and *nuestra picaresca* would become bolder. In the eyes of the press, it was as inauspicious as it was inescapable, and 'la picaresca nacional, es el dar gato por liebre, vicio del que parece no nos libraremos nunca' (*La Vanguardia* 27/11/1979, 37). It had effectively re-emerged as a social construction, and one that would seemingly impact Spaniards further in the years to come.

³⁴ Although the pact was given a legal basis in the 1977 Spanish Amnesty Law, it was an ongoing attempt to move on from the Civil War which was not pinned to a particular date.

Chapter IV – 1982-2004: The *picaresca* as a By-Product of Seesawing Economics and Political Scandal

Introduction

The October 1982 general election would see a landslide victory for Spain's leftist political party, *el Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), and would usher in thirteen years of Socialist rule, whilst the PP would take until 1996 to 'complete the long process whereby it has transformed itself out of what was originally a party with strong Francoist roots into a respected conservative party' (Prevost 1995, 193). So how did the Spanish economy fare under the dynamic Socialists, headed by the charismatic *liderazgo* Felipe González, and subsequently under the reliable administration of José María Aznar and his steadfast conservative government during this timeframe? And how did a miscellany of developments during this period continue 'imperando en el español la agilidad mental de la picaresca y los reflejos, características muy habituales en el español medio'? (*ABC* 20/01/1983, 56), with a boost in press perception of *la picaresca* as a social construction at this time.

If we are to take into account the precarious economic situation the country faced when the Socialists came into office, the advances in social policy, taxation and the *européismo* of Spain that González and his cabinets strove towards are resolute; even if the singular main economic objective to reduce unemployment failed (see Recio and Roca 1998, 139). The same can be said for Aznar and his coming into power after the economic slump of 1992-1996, whilst having to face a nation whose confidence in politics was in tatters thanks to a wave of high-profile scandals which ultimately led to the Socialist demise, and a consequent wave of headlines encapsulating 'la picaresca delictiva española' (*ABC* 21/12/1987, 15) and the politicians at the helm as the very 'anti héroe de nuestra picaresca' (09/07/1995, 18).

Nevertheless, for all their external successes in Europe, both the Socialists and the Conservatives neglected the growing domestic issues that enveloped much of Spanish society. Parallel to the governing and reign of Philip III in the 17th century, the Socialists and their conservative successors obsessed with Spain's position in the wider world and would cut corners in order to bolster the economy, including those of worker's rights and aid to the underprivileged or the unemployed. In all instances, pursuing the construction of the welfare state with greater protection for the working classes would have been a viable path (see

Provost 1995, 196) but it was a path never taken. The gap between rich and poor was greater in the 1990s than it had been when Franco died.

Similarities can be established with the 17th century when 'duraderas manifestaciones de una crisis social habían llegado crear las condiciones para el surgimiento y desarrollo de la picaresca española' (Maravall 1986, 65). Just as the *picaresca* emerged as a literary phenomenon at the onset of the social and economic decline of the 17th century, the fluctuating conditions at the end of the 21st century would similarly 'resucita la tradición de la narrativa picaresca del Siglo de Oro' (ABC 11/10/1986, 3) and continue to establish 'el doble sentido que a esta palabra podemos darle' (ABC 07/12/1993, 28): as not only an artistic genre, but as a social construction implemented by Spaniards.

Feats and False Promises

On the one hand, resentment against the PSOE can be seen as surprising given their achievements in government had been plentiful, after all 'ha sido el socialismo el que ha llevado a España a la Comunidad Económica Europea (EEC)' (Foix 1986, 6). From the day they took office, their effect on the Spanish political landscape was immediate:

El aprendizaje político comenzó de inmediato y en él [Felipe González] la figura del presidente resultó decisiva. Con su carisma, su liderazgo innovador y su indiscutible autoridad sobre el partido desde el congreso extraordinario de 1979, había reconducido al PSOE hacia el reformismo y el posibilismo, forjando una nueva identidad para el socialismo español basada en los conceptos ligados de democracia, modernización, europeísmo y moderación' (Sanz 2011, 83-84).

The Socialists played a key role in the urbanisation of the country too, by transforming the industrial sector so as to appeal to a wider demographic (see Perez 2011, 101) whilst paving the way for progressive changes to the role of women in society by passing legislation to legalise divorce and abortion³⁵ in their first few years in power. However, from an economic perspective, the 80s were a difficult time, given that González's government had inherited a stagnant and import-dependent economy with high levels of unemployment and inflation (see Chislett 2013, 105). As conditions deteriorated and the PSOE's promise of creating 800,000 new jobs slipped further out of reach, there is little wonder that insecurity came to be identified

³⁵ 'Las leyes del divorcio de 1981 y de despenalización parcial del aborto de 1985' (Pérez 2011, 104) were introduced, and were hailed by many as the progressive step forward that Spanish society had been waiting for.

by 'la droga, los delitos sexuales, el paro laboral, y la picaresca a destacar esta inestabilidad existente en nuestras calles' (ABC 10/11/1984, 20). But such uncertainty and instability was also etched onto the minds of a nation whose elected party was turning out not only to be resting on a growing number of false promises, but to also have a pro-Capitalist agenda not too different from Thatcherism in Britain (see Provost 1995, 196); alienating the true Left-wing Socialist supporters and even its very own working-class roots.

Spaniards dug deep to find their own *picaresca interna* (ABC 17/10/1985, 23) and instead of channelling this through the means of literary escapism, they were now using it as a tool to defend themselves from social upheaval. In response to poorer working conditions³⁶, 'se ha evaporado el orgullo del trabajo y la obra bien hecha. La picaresca, o sea, la inmoralidad ha invadido hasta las actividades más nobles' (ABC 21/06/1985, 42). Although workers were promised a "worse before it gets better" scenario by the government, stripped back rights and unemployment looming at large offered little incentive to encourage productivity. Meanwhile, 'in a society with virtually no tradition of saving and in which entitlement to unemployment pay was severely limited, the effects were dire. The fall from relative prosperity to utter destitution could take just months, even weeks' (Hooper 2006, 47). Out of desperation, many found no choice but to fight back against their situation by turning to tax fraud, begging or even petty crime: relatando a las magníficas novelas picarescas [en cuales] es capaz el español para vivir orgullosamente al margen de la legalidad' (*La Vanguardia* 09/02/1984, 6).

Following Spain's long sought-after entry into the EEC in 1986, economic growth quickly became evident, with the country benefitting exponentially from a more open import market and an increase in structural funding. Nevertheless, González was so fixated on Spain's burgeoning position as a wealthy European nation that he was starting to lose focus on internal matters as a result; instead, maintaining a somewhat arrogant outlook that domestic wealth would flow down the social pyramid without the need for government intervention:

[In the run-up to the general election of October 1989] Felipe González told a rally that Spain was enjoying greater international prestige than at any time since the reign of Emperor Charles V in the sixteenth century. His claim was possibly true, but it brought criticism that he and his ministers were

³⁶ According to Recio and Roca (1998, 139), the most negative element of González's entire premiership was 'the push to change the labour market, promoting the casualization of labour relations, eroding the trade unions and strengthening the power of employers.'

becoming prey to delusions of grandeur. In a newspaper interview, the Communist leader Julio Anguita also resorted for inspiration to Spain's Golden Age, but compared the state of the country to a Habsburg caravel – its glitteringly decorated façade concealing the rottenness within (Hooper 2006, 58-59).

To the outside world, Spain was to be envied: she shone as brightly as her former Golden Age self, but to Spaniards living within, the *madre patria* was just as cruel and unforgiving as she was back then. Once again, she had become 'el terreno abonado ideal para la picaresca y la corrupción' (*La Vanguardia* 06/12/1996, 18). Unemployment, inflation, crime, unyielding social hierarchies, endless cycles of urban poverty and destitution and *la picaresca* as a model of survival – key components of the Baroque era were now re-emerging in this present-day Spain (see *La Vanguardia* 11/05/1990, 6).

The tensions between internationally strong and internally weak Spain would come to a head in 1992, when "Spain's year" would take the world stage by hosting the Olympics in Barcelona, Expo '92 in Seville and having Madrid being named as European Capital of Culture. Instead of laying to rest what Felipe González had labelled the Spanish ghost of inefficiency (see Hooper 2006, 62), 'el 92 ha generado así una nueva picaresca' (*ABC*, 24/02/1993, 19) with chaos and crime in Seville 'recalling precisely the image of Spain that the events of 1992 were meant to dispel' (Hooper 2006, 62) and the whole debacle even inspired 'Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón to direct 'una obra teatral sobre la picaresca del 92' (*El País* 12/09/1991, 12) [for further *picaresca* artistic and literary works during this time, see section: More Culture, Less Character]. To cap things off, the excessive public spending that went into "Spain's year" created macroeconomic imbalances and an overheated economy, and the government were left with no choice but to devalue the peseta by 5 per cent in an unsuccessful bid to salvage the country's economic competitiveness (see Chislett 2013, 119). Spain would slump back into recession, but this time the government seemed blind to it, maybe because they were too busy clinging onto previous achievements. As *La Vanguardia* (18/06/1995, 7) concluded, 'este es un país de picaresca que sigue viviendo en el barroco, aunque en el 92 creyó haber entrado en la modernidad.'

Scandal, Shame and Taking the Blame

The PSOE seemed to go from scandal to scandal during their fourteen years in power (see Prevost 1995, 193), unwilling to take the blame for the demise of their party. But then, they had also failed to take the blame for the social implications their externally-focused

macroeconomics had had on the country, even if they had been accredited with it by their natural enemies in the centrist-right newspaper, *ABC* (14/01/1988, 20).³⁷ Thus, it should have come as no surprise that, as a nation, 'nuestro individualismo es el de la picaresca, no el de la responsabilidad y el esfuerzo personal. Y uno de los mayores males de esta década socialista es que ha cultivado precisamente esta picaresca' (*ABC* 27/09/1991, 18). If the Socialists were looking out for their own interests in order to guard their party's now tarnished reputation, it was inevitable that Spaniards would follow their lead, and similarly use their *picaresca* as a mechanism of self-defence. After all, irrespective of who they are or what they do, every Spaniard can always rely on the social construction of 'la picaresca española [como] una cualidad específica. [After all,] es el vengador de una de las partes más esenciales de la estructura social, los que llamaríamos humildes' (*ABC* 11/11/1990, 3).

By the PSOE's fourth term in office, hardly a day passed without a ridiculing headline or mocking article about the latest scandal they were somehow involved in (see Chislett 2013, 127), such as the scandal involving Juan Guerra González, the brother of the PSOE's vice-president, being compared to the plot of a *novela picaresca*:

Si Quevedo tuviera que volver a inspirarse y regresar al futuro de 1990, encontraría en Juan Guerra González un sevillano siempre oculto tras unos oscuros quevedos al prototipo posmodernista de su Buscón. Juan Guerra vive hoy con el mismo espíritu de supervivencia que adornó a Rinconete y Cortadillo, a Estebanillo González o a Guzmán de Alfarache... todo un prototipo de la picaresca posmoderna en la Era Socialista (*ABC* 14/01/1990, 82).

In 'ese río incesante de la picaresca' (*ABC* 12/10/1992, 16) every new crime that came to light seemed more farcical than even the most ostentatious *tratado of Lazarillo de Tormes*. Additional scandals ensued, involving high profile officials including Luis Roldan, the Director-General of the Civil Guard, and Mario Rubio, head of the government-run Bank of Spain (see Provost 1995, 193). The stage was set for a new *cultura de pelotazo*³⁸, where anything went and where getting rich quick was easier to achieve the further up the social scale you climbed

³⁷ In this article, *ABC* labels the PSOE as 'maestros de la manipulación, los felipistas echan la culpa de estos tres millones de parados, que son otros tantos fracasos políticos y a la picaresca suya.'

³⁸ Just as *picaresca* became a word increasingly associated with Spanish political jargon, after 'había caído en la política, envileciéndola' (*ABC* 25/01/1992), *pelotazo* was a brand-new word created for this purpose. It was defined in the dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy in the 1990s as "a business of doubtful legality with which a lot of money is made quickly.'" (Cited in Chislett 2013, 128).

– after all ‘el dinero se ha cruzado siempre con la picaresca’ (*La Vanguardia* 30/08/1993). There was no sense of guilt or shame, the government seemed immune to taking the blame, and ‘party officials were reluctant to accept their political responsibilities in the scandals until magistrates had determined whether there were criminal charges to face’ (Chislett 2013, 129).

Frustration mounted for Spaniards, who were being ever-increasingly depicted as the ones to ‘promover la picaresca’ (*ABC* 11/01/1991, 52) through their turning to crime, unemployment benefits or charity handouts as a way of combatting their dire situation. It seemed that instead of the government officials, it was the lower echelons of society being used as the ‘emblema de la miserable picaresca urbana’ (*La Vanguardia* 19/06/1990, 12), eventuating in the start of a rise in political disenchantment³⁹. ‘Los personajes que aparecen en la literatura picaresca son los más deteriorados y embarrados de la sociedad, eso le acerca al público’ (*El País* 30/01/2001, 63): It was little wonder Spaniards took such an interest in *pícaros* then, when to some extent they had become their real-life counterparts. But instead of being Guzmanes with a *plan engañoso*, they were Lazarillos still awaiting the moment of ‘aquel instante [en cuál] desperté de la simpleza en que como niño dormido estaba’ (Anon ed. Rico [1987] 2016, 7).

If living in this era of shame and slander wasn’t appalling enough, Spaniards had to face up to the secretive nature of those running their country, further exacerbating their dismay. On the government’s dirty war with Basque terrorist movement *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), high government officials including González himself, denied any knowledge of the secret police operation named as the *Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación* (GAL). The nation was justifiably furious when it unravelled and judge Baltasar Garzon sentenced Julian Sancristobal and several other government officials swept up in the case to prison (see Provost 1995, 193). By staying silent in the midst of this new unfolding scandal, González tipped the peseta currency and Madrid stock market into crisis, further damaging the PSOE’s reputation and hindering any economic recovery that Spain had been attempting to make during this time. This was Spain, this was a country where ‘la picaresca ha conocido ámbitos tan amplios, que se ha apoderado

³⁹ As explained by Wheeler (2017, 15) it is important to establish that, ‘in contrast to the recession-prone period between 1975 and 1981, disenchantment with politics experienced during the 1980s did not translate into open disdain for democracy’. In fact, a national survey carried out by *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* in 1994, reported quite the contrary. Three quarters of the Spanish population affirmed that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with how the Transition had been handled, alongside the socio-economic changes of the past two decades (see Wheeler 2017, 14).

[a dar] un sentido nuevo' (*La Vanguardia* 03/01/1983) and *la picaresca* had now successfully transitioned from text to trait, no longer only affiliated with its literary roots but to real life attributes demonstrated by those in every sect of society, and discursively framed in the press. Only, one thing remained glaringly obvious by the way in which *la picaresca* displayed up and down the hierarchy was being received: 'La picaresca nos enseñó que aquellas transgresiones que eran licencias cuando las cometían los poderosos eran delitos o pecados cuando los cometían los oprimidos' (*La Vanguardia* 22/10/2004, 42).

The PP, when their time to take centre-stage as Spain's main political party came to fruition under the premiership of José María Aznar in March 1996, wanted to disassociate themselves from the previous era of Socialist scandals and lies. Aznar had taken on the leadership of his party and his country with the promise to make politics boring, and for the most part he did arguably keep to his word. However, a number of crucial setbacks to occur during their tenure would prove that the Conservatives were just as incapable of keeping the nation informed on key matters⁴⁰, which always appeared to be the fault of someone, or something else (see Hooper 2006, 74). Despite being a lot more politically tuned in to their *conciudadanos* than their Socialist counterpart, the PP still managed to show that 'la picaresca no descansa' (*La Vanguardia* 06/01/2000, 1) and that this egoistic trait Spaniards were seemingly equipped with to fight their own battles in the face of adversity was ineludible: 'Fue en España donde nacieron la picaresca y el esperpento. No podía ser de otro modo' (*ABC* 08/09/1998, 22).

More Culture, Less Character

The fact that the PP's abrupt exit from office in 2004 came as an upset to many, and sent shockwaves around the country should not be overlooked, given that the achievements of Aznar's Conservative government were abundant and clear:

There is no escaping the significance of the character of José María Aznar, prime minister of Spain from 1996 [until last April]. He has been the driving force behind sweeping policy shifts, at home and abroad. Verdicts from diverse sources attest to the extraordinary weight that commentators have

⁴⁰ The government's attempts to play down the gravity of the *Prestige* oil tanker spillage in 2002, and to wrongly accuse ETA to be behind the 11-M bombings, Spain's worst ever terrorist attack, would ultimately lead to their undoing at the 2004 general election. Evading responsibility, it seemed, was the worst kind of manifestation of *la picaresca*.

given to what we might call the "Aznar factor." He deserves his place in Spain's post-Franco pantheon (Woodworth 2004, 8).

Under Aznar, the conservatives had not only guided Spain into the new European single currency market, the Eurozone, but could also add the impressive accomplishment of creating half of all the new jobs in the EU to their legacy during the eight years they were in power (see Hooper 2006, 77). Spaniards were richer⁴¹, safer⁴² and more universally protected – with the PP 'giving substance to its claim that it could reach across class divisions to be the party of the majority of Spaniards (Hooper 2006, 71). Despite Aznar's ambitions to forge close ties with both the European Community and the United States, for the majority of his premiership he never looked away from the state of internal affairs in Spain either, keeping a close watch on both matters; a balancing act that was never quite managed by the preceding Socialist government. So how did these positive figures being generated by the Conservatives translate in terms of the nation's 'picaresca hispánica habitual'? (*La Vanguardia* 15/02/1986, 36).

If press coverage at the time is anything to go by, then a general interest in *la picaresca* did remain, but it nevertheless dwindled somewhat during the Aznar years⁴³. However, whilst the term had evolved so capaciously since the start of Spain's transition to democracy to become *nuestra picaresca postmoderna*, a trait that Spaniards were viewed as having the ability to use in an act of evasion or self-defence, *la picaresca* was now seeing a return to its artistic origins from which it initially emerged. Indeed, 'la picaresca no pierde valor ni actualidad. Esa forma de literatura, que estaba de moda en el siglo XVI, existe todavía' (*ABC* 19/01/2001, 73) and the Spanish penchant for 'oral culture' meant that *la picaresca* was not only being revived through a literary medium, but by TV, film and theatre productions too: 'al teatro le debe muchísimas cosas, el resurgimiento de los clásicos, por ejemplo, de los pícaros, con todas las versiones que ha hecho de la picaresca en teatro y en cine' (*ABC* 29/08/2001, 38).

⁴¹ Spanish GDP per capita increased from 79 per cent in 1996 to 89 per cent in 2004 and inflation dropped to just 2 per cent (See Chislett 2013, 136).

⁴² In 2003, for example, just three people were killed by ETA after a government-led crackdown on support for the Basque terrorist network.

⁴³ The artistic penchant of *La picaresca* was still reported on frequently through interviews with directors and authors, and film and book reviews featured in the cultural sections of the newspapers. However, according to my research, its usage in articles on crime, politics and depiction of the national social construction had started to surpass this by the late 1990s.

In an article on Almodóvar and the rise of the movie industry, *La Vanguardia* (11/04/1999, 33) insists that 'hay ahí una línea que va de la novela picaresca – Quevedo, el Lazarillo, etcétera – a la producción novelesca, cinematográfica y teatral [en que] el alma del país respira por esta boca: hambre, patetismo, sumisión, garrotazo...' proving that the age-old ideals of *la picaresca* are just as relevant today as ever. This is resonated further by the directorial duo Dibildos and González-Sinde, who viewed their film *A la pálida luz de la luna* (1985) as a way back into 'contarnos la picaresca española, que no es cosa solamente del Lazarillo, del viejo Madrid galdosiano o de la posguerra, sino de siempre, principal característica de solar hispano' (*ABC* 15/10/1985, 17), correlating the artistic genre to its new "*double entendre*", but still paradigmatically grounding it to its beginnings.

The release of more *funciones picarescas*, notably *Los alegres pícaros* (1987) and *Picaresca club* (1997), further proved that *la picaresca* could shapeshift into a form that was still current to the modern viewer, especially since it was a trait they could recognise in themselves, in their fellow citizens and especially in those leading their country; 'así metiendo la novela Española en la modernidad, sin desenterrar sus raíces de la picaresca, ni podar sus ramas del casticismo, aceptando lo que hay y narrándolo con un estilo moderno' (*ABC* 06/05/1991, 3). It was arguably also a way of celebrating the Spanish capacity for humour and the vivacity of the booming nineties Aznar had led them through, as Bastianes (2020, 321) contemplates on the performance of *Celestina*, a text bearing strong connections to the picaresque⁴⁴: 'en este período se caracteriza especialmente por la aparición de lecturas escénicas más alegres y «gozosas» del texto [...] quizás por el clima de euforia que se vivía, sobre todo desde mediados de los noventa, en aquella España que, para recordar el eslogan acuñado por Aznar, iba bien.'

Director of *Los alegres pícaros*, Mario Monicelli, affirmed that to him, the *picaresca* could be used as a way to get your voice heard, as a cry for help even, juxtaposing a reckless sense of adventure with the gravity of finding the means to survive:

La literatura picaresca española es un canto de Libertad; fue la otra cara del esplendor del Siglo de Oro... [y que] no hay diferencia entre los pícaros de ayer y los de hoy, pues la picaresca recoge el espíritu de aventuras a la vez que las situaciones de pobreza que hacen que lo importante sea sobrevivir a toda costa, sin fronteras entre lo bueno y lo malo (*La Vanguardia* 06/06/1987, 46).

⁴⁴ See Part I, Chapter I, section: 'Typical/Atypical *Lazarillo* and Picaresque Progression'.

The leaders of Spain, their country and their people, the Spaniards themselves had been on a mettlesome journey through their unpredictable transition to democracy, but at times they too had found this interwoven with the need to survive – be it financially, globally or electorally, so they could readily identify with their ancestor, the *pícaro*. Naturally, who better to take an interest in than the very *pícaro* prototype himself; *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

At the turn of the 21st century, it appeared that Spaniards were becoming more engrossed in the very *novela* which pinpointed *la picaresca* on the literary map, reflected by the surge of enthusiasm over the discovery of an original edition which had been hidden inside the wall of a derelict house in Extremadura for over four centuries (see *ABC* 18/12/1996, 20)⁴⁵. The quest to find out who originally penned *el Lazarillo* also resurfaced, with 'El profesor Francisco Calero [atribuyendo] la autoría del Lazarillo a Luis Vives... Siendo la tercera asignación en un año, tras la de José Luis Madrigal (a Francisco Cervantes de Salazar) y Rosa Navarro (a Alfonso de Valdés)' (*ABC*, 29/12/2003, 54), opening up the floor for further academic debates on the authorship of *Lazarillo* that would span the years to come. Finally in 2000, after years of staged renditions of *Lazarillo de Tormes* in countless theatres throughout the country, Fernando Fernán Gómez directed a film version of the canonical *novela*, with Rafael Álvarez best known as *El Brujo* taking centre stage once again. For him, it was the ideal culmination of years of performances as the eponymous *pícaro* protagonist, and for Spain, it was the perfect way to epitomise how, quite deservedly, 'la picaresca ha adquirido en nuestro país aires de modernidad' (*La Vanguardia* 12/06/1990, 88). Indeed, *Lázaro vive*.

The End of the Beginning, or the Beginning of the End?

Discussing his acclaim for having played *Lázaro of Lazarillo de Tormes* a multitude of times, *El Brujo* was asked in an interview with *La Vanguardia* (22/01/1993, 41) to consider how the role of 'el pícaro, obra ambientada en la España del siglo XVII contiene numerosas referencias a la actualidad.' His reply: 'la picaresca es un género en declive porque todos la practican' was unexpected. The arts had been modernised, providing ample opportunity to relish and escape to the *picaresca* not only through its traditional literary form, but through theatre, TV and film. However, it seemed no accident that articles in the newspapers chose words such as *recrea*

⁴⁵ Curiously, (although not entirely relevant to my main argument) 'los expertos creen que el primer propietario de los libros, un clérigo, podría haber decidido emparedarlos por tratarse de obras que figuraban en el índice de lecturas prohibidas por la Inquisición' (*La Vanguardia*, 28/12/1995, 36).

and *resucita*⁴⁶ to foreshadow the transition of *la picaresca*, which by now, was clinging to its literary origins, soon to retract them altogether in favour of its new significance within the realm of social constructionism.

As Prime Minister José María Aznar wrote himself, during his premiership 'ha existido y sigue existiendo una voluntad de los españoles por vivir mejor en un país mejor. Con más libertad y más estabilidad, con más confianza y más bienestar. Es lo que el Partido Popular propuso hace ocho años a los ciudadanos' (Aznar 2004, 3-4). Thus, certainly from an economic perspective there seemed little need for *la picaresca*, even if from a political standpoint he and his cabinet's insufferable haughtiness and delusion over ETA's involvement in the 11-M bombings proved that ultimately 'greatness, which was within his grasp, eluded him and his character was to blame' (Woodworth 2004, 8). Moreover, in 1998, King Juan Carlos recognised the improving levels of unemployment and reassured his people that 'no todo es picaresca' (ABC 27/12/1998). If the most important figure in society was effectively calling a truce on the nation's *picaresca*, then surely El Brujo's prediction was coming true.

Yet, in that very same year, Prince Felipe attended a book fair and a book on none other than *la España picaresca y fámelica* of the Golden Age caught his eye, being sold by historian Manuel Fernández Álvarez, who recounts the experience (*La Vanguardia* 21/04/2002, 4):

Antes de que en 1998 el príncipe Felipe de Borbón se interesase por mi libro sobre Felipe II, el siglo XVI y el contraste entre la España imperial y la España picaresca y famélica en la Feria del Libro y lo pagase de su propio bolsillo ante la prensa y las cámaras de televisión, no me conocía ni mi familia.'

In front of the press and national television, Prince Felipe hadn't tried to disguise his attraction to *la picaresca*, and had instead displayed it for the whole country to see. Was he sending a message to the nation, to be proud of Spain's unique *raíces picarescas* from which their social archetype had been constructed? In what could appear as a symbolic act, Prince Felipe had taken an artistic form of *la picaresca* and transferred it unto himself, welcoming *la picaresca* as a way for himself, his family and his compatriots to be viewed by each other, by onlookers abroad and especially by the Spanish press. This signalled the conclusive moment when the meaning behind *la picaresca* would shift for good – from text to trait.

⁴⁶ Cited in the following *El País* articles: "La Cuadrilla recrea la picaresca española' (08/04/1996, 15) and "Manuel Vidal resucita la novela picaresca en 'Lo que hay que tener' (10/12/2002, 60).

Chapter V – 2004-Present Day: A Question of Confidence, a *Picaresca* Response

Introduction

Derived from the roguish literature which parodied the onset of Spain's seventeenth-century decline, *la picaresca* was no longer ensnared by its literary beginnings, and had gone on to become a social construction surrounding Spanishness and what it meant to be Spanish. Retired as a literary text⁴⁷, *la picaresca* was instead rejuvenated as a perceived trait or discursive frame: 'la novela picaresca en su version 2.0.' (*La Vanguardia* 16/11/2008, 36); showcasing the deviance and wit, and the strong sense of *individualismo* that, according to some academics⁴⁸ the modern-day Spaniard had come to be associated with⁴⁹. Every Spaniard had the capacity to deploy this social construction, and the press was eager to remind us of this.

If 'la picaresca forma parte de nuestro ADN españolismo' (*La Vanguardia* 05/09/2011, 5) then a certain degree of fatality or inevitability set in. Not even Infanta Cristina, her husband, the Duke of Palma de Mallorca, Iñaki Urdangarin nor the King, Juan Carlos I himself could evade a trait deemed by the Spanish press itself as intrinsic to the nation. The Royal Family could be no better role models to their citizens when they themselves were 'los últimos protagonistas vivos de la novela picaresca' (*ABC* 22/07/2017, 5); just as capable of being bound to the discursive frame of *la picaresca* as the rest of their country (see section: Juanillo Carlos de la Zarzuela). In hindsight, if we look back to an article in *ABC* (13/06/1976, 52) describing the initial meeting between Don Juan Carlos and Doña Sofía, 'todo empezó con una sonrisa picaresca' and the same could be said for the relationship between Spaniards and their own perception of themselves. What started as light-hearted humour at a much-loved literary

⁴⁷ Interestingly, during my archival research I found that literary publications and film/TV productions were no longer being marketed as part of the *picaresca* genre, in stark contrast to the two prior periods. Instead, there was a noticeable shift towards *picaresca* merely being tossed around to loosely connect a subplot or character to the general notion of the genre. On average, 85% of mentions of '*la picaresca*' in the press now lent themselves entirely to its growing influence as a social construction

⁴⁸ Hooper (2006, 435) summarises *individualismo* in the following way: '*Individualismo* in Spanish guise means putting your own interests first, and those of the rest of society nowhere. At its worst, *individualismo* prompts that intolerance of other people's ideas that has repeatedly driven the Spanish to arms. At its best, it is self-reliance, self-respect and the bedrock underlying personal dignity – one of the Spaniards' most appealing characteristics.'

⁴⁹ It is crucial here not to confuse *individualismo* with being individualistic and doing things only for oneself. If we take the recent coronavirus outbreak as an example, Spaniards were much more careful in obeying lockdown rules and wearing masks than for example, the United Kingdom or USA, proving that their so-called *individualismo* has more a societal intention.

genre had evolved into a defensive discursive frame, most notably observed during times of crisis and corruption.

So, in order to fully embrace their unique 'estampa de picaresca democrática' (ABC 30/07/2008, 10), let alone manifest it, Spaniards would not only have to endure their worst economic crisis to date but as a nation, fully accept their very own model of being. The Southern European family model⁵⁰ which fed off socio-economic situations (see Guerrero and Naldini 1996, 60-62); having been adopted by Spain, created the perfect condition for this discursive frame to be construed both by journalists at home and abroad. Although foreign commentary often left Spaniards susceptible to more criticism than they deserved.⁵¹

Spaniards would also have to be stripped of all confidence in their very own country up to its highest echelons: the monarchical and political systems, ergo democracy itself in order to reveal the true extent of *la picaresca* as a social construction. This could only be achieved by the acknowledgment of how, inherited from the Francoist regime, 'the "top down" Transition, the hierarchical political parties and a statist political culture in which Spaniards look to the state to solve their problems' (Radcliff 2017, 478) were to blame for 'las infinitas ramificaciones de sus picarescas carpetovetónicas' (ABC 21/04/2006, 7). Consequently, this would urge Spaniards to make a national call for a "bottom-up" approach through their taking to grassroots movements in favour of old established ones. It was confirmation that the trust and dependence of the nation had finally diminished, and that even the most robust or reliable structures can eventually topple, no matter how familiar they seem.

Political Disaffection versus *la picaresca*

By now, Spaniards had more than good reason to be wary of their political system, given that 'la corrupción, en este país, no penaliza a nadie, ni a los partidos de derecha ni a los de izquierda. Se aceptan teorías de todo tipo, desde echar mano de la tradición picaresca hasta constatar que la lucha política acaba trivializando todo' (*La Vanguardia* 05/08/2009, 15). From

⁵⁰ Up to the point of Zapatero's inauguration, it is important to remember that Spain's social progress had been slow. Low fertility rates, the preference to live in a large family and a lack of ambitious careers for women to aspire to, combined with a constant stop-start economic outlook all helped to fuel the creation of *la picaresca* as a social construction in modern-day Spain.

⁵¹ Owing to the journalistic mechanism of averting domestic problems to those further afield. For example, the UK press focusing on rising coronavirus cases in Europe rather than the blunders made by politicians at home in delaying a national lockdown and subsequently allowing coronavirus to spread.

this point on, what would start as a hairline fracture in the confidence of Spaniards in their political system could only splinter further and further. The damage had already gone way beyond repair:

The “great recession” hit Spain particularly hard in two vulnerable areas: high levels of unemployment and inequality, as to be expected. And, partly as a result of these economic woes, the political crisis, also including the territorial challenge and declining faith in major parties. The crisis exacerbated existing schisms, destabilized what had been common points of reference, but at the same time showcased Spaniards’ capacity for grassroots mobilization in a crisis (Radcliff 2017, 480).

No episode better captured the individual and collective exasperation than Spain’s grassroots movement 15-M, also known as *los indignados* which came to a head on 15th May 2011. Thousands of mainly young people, disillusioned with the high levels of unemployment and austerity and the implication of corruption of bankers and politicians in the collapse of the *cajas*, initiated a month-long occupation of Madrid’s Puerta del Sol; quickly replicated in Barcelona’s Plaça de Catalunya and countless other cities across the country (see Preston 2020, 553-554). Soon, its supporters grew to include university students with no future prospects, unemployed workers, the elderly hit by reductions in pension payments and dispossessed home owners.

Up to 80 per cent of Spaniards backed the movement (see Chislett 2013, 180), which took advantage of technology, channelling its message to supporters through mobile networks and the Internet. It also played up to the widespread attention it received from the media. Madrid, ‘donde la picaresca es el deporte nacional’ (*La Vanguardia* 19/05/2011, 14) for politicians and the business elite, had now become a *picaresca* playground for those ready to fight back against the *Buscones y Guzmanes de Alfarache* in charge, united through a sense of disgust and venality. 15-M also made its mark by rejecting traditional top-down politics in favour of a bottom-up approach, boldly striving to broaden an electoral system which appeared to be hopelessly locked into a closed two-party alternation (see Field and Botti 2013, 220). It worked. The *los indignados* movement ‘led to the emergence, under the leadership of the pugnacious Pablo Iglesias, of the left-wing party Podemos... it also fostered the Spanish nationalist party Ciudadanos that originally came to prominence in Catalonia in 2006’ (Preston 2020, 554). Both parties between them would go on to amass a third of the votes in the December 2015 and June 2016 general elections. The Spanish political system was to be both revived and realigned.

(Mis)Leading the Country

In order to consider Spain's political realignment to come, how it would affect the discursive frame of *la picaresca* that was already reshaping the views and attitudes of the country, and how the press were exhibiting this, it is worth retracing the steps of the two major Prime Ministers that were to take charge of the country over this period: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of the centre-left PSOE party and Mariano Rajoy of the centre-rightist PP.

Branded as the 'accidental'⁵² prime minister by the Conservatives after their shock electoral defeat in March 2004, the figure to return the Socialists back to Spain's political helm was Zapatero. Over time, Zapatero would become both a darling to Europe and a villain to the political right (see Field and Botti 2013, 1) as he steered his country through a number of trials and tribulations that were to shape the politics, society and economy of the early 21st Century. But how were he and his radical social measures to be regarded? Young and inexperienced, Zapatero could be viewed as refreshing proof of a capacity for renewal in Spanish politics, going from backbencher to party leader in the short space of four years. His appointment to office was cheered on by a newer generation of voters who urged him *No nos falles* (see Hooper 2006, 79) and his opening months as prime minister made it seem as though their message had been well-received; even if it did leave others wondering how long it would be until 'el gobierno destapó el tarro de las esencias de la picaresca' (ABC 08/05/2005, 15).

Zapatero's youth may have earned him the nickname "Bambi" amongst his peers, but it showed that he had the ability to relate to his younger electorate; ratifying some extremely progressive legislation which emerged from his philosophy of civil republicanism⁵³ as a result. The Socialists were determined to rid Spain of its *machismo* stereotype, and instantly placed particular emphasis on women's representation – demonstrated by the equal number of women and men appointed within the cabinet (see Field and Botti 2013, 1). Moreover, a succession of controversial laws and legislative reforms, including the divorce law, the

⁵² For years after the 2004 election, the PP maintained that the PSOE and Spanish media had united in their anti-war sentiment to dissuade voters from re-electing the Conservative party in light of the 11-M attacks which were carried out by Al-Qaeda in retaliation for Spain's involvement in the War on Terror.

⁵³ As explained by Chislett (see 2013, 156), Zapatero's political philosophy draws on the theories of freedom and non-denomination from Pettit's 1997 book *Republicanism* in which he brands "civil republicanism" as the respect for all communities, identities, collectives and ideas; avoiding domination.

domestic violence law and revolutionary amendments to the abortion and marriage laws were set in motion at a very early stage in Zapatero's premiership. With the exception of the church, who accused the government of promoting 'lay fundamentalism and agnostic totalitarianism' (Chislett 2013, 160), opinion generally favoured the dynamism of the Socialists. Yet, in hindsight, such laxity would become one of the government's greatest downfalls in betraying national trust and inciting a *picaresca* backlash, something Ho (2005, 28) warns of:

For a nation that has been marked by historical disunity and uncertainty, Zapatero's reforms dangerously strip away the layers of Spanish society. In his attempts to create a "new Spain" and bring Spain quickly in line with other European nations, Zapatero is sacrificing Spanish national identity and showing that he simply does not understand the distinctiveness of Spain's unique domestic needs.

The Great Recession of 2008 was beyond the control of even the most adept politician or leader and its calamitous aftermath would resonate globally; nobody was unaffected. But the way in which the Spanish administration dealt with such a catastrophe left a lot to be desired. When Zapatero told a meeting of Wall Street Bankers a matter of days after the US financial collapse that Spain's solid financial system was of too high quality and rigor to buckle under the same pressure (see Chislett 2013, 175), many Spaniards back at home lapped up this disinformation and breathed a sigh of relief. Indeed, Spain's economic outlook appeared as immaculate as Zapatero made it out to be, with an incessant inflow of EU funds and a construction boom fomenting GDP growth and a wealth of new jobs. But cracks had already started to appear, as Field and Botti (2013, 103) summarise:

Even though the first symptoms of deacceleration were already noticeable, the general feeling was that the Spanish economy was in a strong position to be able to manage the international economic deterioration. The impressive growth registered in the previous decade, together with record-low unemployment and healthy public finances made it difficult to think that Spain would suffer from the crisis to a greater extent than other EU countries.

The first signs of crisis were evident by mid-2007, when the Spanish economy, too dependent on the construction sector, became overheated and uncompetitive. 'Spaniards were living way beyond their means, and on borrowed money' (Chislett 2013, 167) but they had been wrongly led to believe they were in safe hands, something which would come to light in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crash, when they would learn that it was those at the very top who were behind 'la picaresca que ha proliferado al calor del boom constructor' (*La Vanguardia*

27/12/2005, 30) and the devastating chain of events that would follow its collapse. Given that Spain's prolonged economic boom prior to 2008 was quite literally built on bricks, mortar and corrupted money⁵⁴ (see Flamini 2012, 40), they were shaky foundations to begin with, and only exacerbated further by the financial implications Spain had to meet to retain her place in the Eurozone, coupled with Zapatero's willingness to appease Europe.

The period of "easy money" stemmed from membership of the Euro, which in turn led to falling interest rates, whilst German and French Banks lent a plethora of money to their Spanish counterparts (see Preston 2020, 549). As the European Central Bank set its monetary guidelines in accordance with the conditions of largest European economies, its inflation rate was much higher than that in Spain, encouraging borrowing to take place on an unrealistic scale. Zapatero and his cabinet would have been aware of the sheer discrepancy between Spain's situation and the rest of Europe's, but they were unable – or unwilling to put national interests first:

Zapatero's decision to embrace Europe ironically brought about a decline in Spain's economy, prestige and influence with the rest of the European Union... perhaps most disturbing about Zapatero's policy is his alacrity to sacrifice Spanish national interests to please "Old Europe"⁵⁵ (Ho 2005, 30).

Modern Spain was once again starting to be compared to the declining Imperial Spain *del siglo XVII* – 'la España de falacia, de filfa, patraña y estafa, lerda y falsa, clerical y oscurantista, que nunca concede al pícaro la gracia heroica del triunfo sobre el poder. Su astucia obligada solo le ayuda a sobrevivir' (*El País* 16/03/2009, 5). The two Spains were one and the same, and Spaniards were reverted back to suffering as a result; taking the place of the lowly *pícaro* – only this time they would use *la picaresca* as their retribution.

Once the implications of the 2008 economic crash did start surfacing in Spain, Zapatero's second-term in office had commenced and he was still in denial over the global extent of the crisis, viewing his country as sheltered from any real disaster. His outlook was bolstered by what could only be described as perceived nepotism on the EU's part, as although at times,

⁵⁴ Corruption within the construction sector was so commonplace Spaniards bitterly joked that the easiest way to become a millionaire was to invest in the market, or even become a mayor - as town halls were allocated a cut of the revenue created by vacant land being built upon (see Chislett 2013, 165).

⁵⁵ "Old Europe" is a reference to the Europe Spain desperately wanted to take centre stage in during the Golden Age. She sought to put international and imperial duties ahead of domestic ones, with Spanish society gravely suffering as a result (see Ho 2005, 31).

'Spanish yield reached more than 700 basis points, a level that triggered the bailouts of Greece, Portugal and Ireland in 2010 and 2011' (Chislett 2013, 171), Spain's financial direness never prompted an internal bailout. However, Zapatero was prompted to start taking the crisis seriously, and in 2010 he issued a U-turn, implementing a range of austerity measures. One unforeseen consequence of this was a national banking crisis, sparking the collapse of many local and communal *cajas*. An internal report found that too much of the bank's management "looked the other way" when indications of wrongdoing were discovered (see Chislett 2013, 176). But then, how could they be blamed when their prime minister was handling affairs with exactly the same reprehensible approach? As Field and Botti (2013, 6) conclude:

Change eventually began in May 2010 when Zapatero announced austerity measures under pressure from the European institutions. At this point Zapatero was reproached for a lack of leadership, the underestimation of the magnitude of the crisis, the delayed response, the drastic reduction of government spending and the cuts to the welfare state... it is in this context of severe economic crisis that support for the government and the Socialists eroded and political change occurred.

By the time the November 2011 general election came around, Spaniards were ready to oust Zapatero's government, making way for the PP to reclaim office under the stern and level-headed leader, Mariano Rajoy, whilst the PSOE retreated into the political wilderness. Yet, the fact that parallels were drawn between the likeness of Zapatero and his successor Rajoy before Spaniards even went to the polls did not bode well for Spain's next political instalment. If the November election results confirmed anything, it was that the country's political landscape had exhausted all options, and the alteration of government was due to the failures of the PSOE rather than the appeal of the PP. The electorate found themselves overwhelmingly disenchanted, and this was evidenced by 'the biggest increase in the number of null and blank voters since 1987' (Field and Botti 2013, 152). As for expectations of the Rajoy administration, 'en el mejor de los casos, cerrazón; en el peor, picaresca' (ABC 08/02/2013, 16): it seemed the country had lost hope, fearing it was time to 'revivir la novela picaresca' (ABC 16/01/2015, 3).

Rajoy was barely given a chance to settle into leading the country, when successive protests against his party began before the spring of 2012. His decision to implement harsh fiscal policies based on spending cuts and tax increases were not welcomed by a nation who had already endured endless austerity measures under 'a left-wing party, which in principle was supposed to be a defender of the welfare state, [but instead] set the stage for the enactment

of further retrenchment measures under the PP' (Field and Botti 2013, 197). He also faced further ire from a general strike which took place in March, the so-called *primavera valenciana* and the Asturian miners' demonstrations starting in May, but did not let these setbacks dissuade him from pressing on with his stringent plans. As Stehling (2015, 95-98) assesses:

Although most had expected this outcome and many considered the measures essential, people resented the fact that he was going about them so quickly... revitalisation of the economy and job creation topped the Rajoy government's agenda. It has since addressed these goals very consistently, demonstrating the courage to make unpopular decisions.

Juanillo Carlos de la Zarzuela

Rajoy could be considered a hardliner in his approach to tackling Spain's dismal economic situation, implementing the severest austerity measures the country had seen in the post-Franco era (see Chislett 2013, 186). But his stance against corruption was not so tenacious, proving once again that 'este es el país que elevó la novela picaresca a categoría literaria como reflejo de la política y la sociedad. Y con todos los honores' (*El País* 08/02/2014, 15). Within a matter of years, he and several prominent members and contacts of the PP had been swept up in a number of high-profile scandals, most notably the Bárcenas affair and the Gürtel corruption case. Rumours of secret cash payments, money laundering and tax evasion were splashed on the front pages of national newspapers whilst approval ratings plummeted to new depths - with 77.9 per cent of Spaniards claiming to have little or no confidence in the prime minister (see Field and Botti 2013, 219). The nation began to turn and ask itself:

Pero me pregunto si el Lazarillo de Tormes y los demás héroes de la novela picaresca no forman parte, también, de la genética peninsular. ¿Cuántos Buscones y Guzmanes de Alfarache no hemos visto desfilar por las páginas de los periódicos en los últimos años? Corrupción y financiación ilegal de los partidos las hay en muchos países, sin duda, pero las ocurrencias aquí tienen un colorido y un subconsciente español de verdad (*La Vanguardia* 30/07/2016, 24).

If having their prime minister implicated in a wave of scandals wasn't bad enough for the ever-receding confidence of the nation, then the mounting corruption encircling the royal family was to be the final straw. Once sheltered from the media and the press, the curtain of respectful silence that had protected the crown for so long was about to come crashing down (see Field and Botti 2013, 221), and with it, would come unravelling lies and sordid secret affairs, proving 'los casos de picaresca resultan tan diversos como sus protagonistas' (*El País* 07/11/2020, 2).

The hardship of enduring some of the worst austerity measures Spain had ever seen coincided with an investigation into the King's son-in-law Iñaki Urdangarin for financial fraud and embezzlement, through his non-profit foundation the Instituto Nóos. Whilst Infanta Cristina maintained her innocence in the case, leaked emails implied that the King had a part to play, along with his illicit lover Corinna zu Sayn-Wittegenstein, and the scale of his anxiety surrounding these scandals was evident through his shaky Christmas speech in 2011, in which he stammered that nobody would be exonerated from committing corruptive crimes (see Preston 2020, 560-561). Ironically, just months later he furtively jetted off to Botswana on an elephant hunting trip which became public knowledge after he had a fall and broke his hip. By now, Spaniards were furious at their King for abandoning them in the woeful straits of an economic crisis and 'his absence from Spain on a safari and his affair [with Corinna] massively undermined his popularity' (Preston 2020, 559), demonstrated during the 2012 Copa del Rey:

With King Juan Carlos present, the soccer fans of the two teams competing, Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona's Barça, booed and hissed during the playing of Spain's national anthem. The state television censored the protest, which with the presence of the sovereign signified its antimonarchical as well as anti-Spanish significance (Field and Botti 2013, 221).

Juan Carlos, once a national hero and the stabilising figure of the transition to democracy, had squandered his country's hard-earned trust on a series of misadventures, leading to his abrupt abdication in favour of his son Felipe in June 2014. His abdication left a bitter taste and left the nation wondering how 'en una generación de racionamiento, austeridad y picaresca... Lo peor que le ha pasado a Don Juan Carlos en los últimos tiempos es que lo llamen emérito' (ABC 04/08/2020, 4). A revival of interest in republicanism (see Radcliff 2017, 481) surged after an opinion poll carried out by *El País* revealed that the Spanish monarchy's approval rating dropped from 7.5 to 3.68 out of 10 between 1995 and 2013, and the question of how faith in the monarchy and political leaders of the country can be restored still hangs in the air. The confidence of the Spanish nation is well and truly in tatters, but we must not forget that 'it has been precisely during times of crisis, whether of vision for the future or economic, that the social and political fabric and the identity of the Iberian country have cracked or even broken' (Field and Botti 2013, 220), paving way for *la picaresca* to be used as a social construction of self-defence. After all, 'Que España es diferente lo sabemos todos: por su cultura, por sus costumbres y por su particular forma de ser – pura picaresca.' (*El País* 03/11/2018, 52).

Conclusion

This thesis successfully explores both the original emergence of the picaresque, pinpointed onto a literary map at the onset of crisis and social decline following Spain's Golden Age, and its re-emergence whereby it began transitioning into a discursive device perceived to be implemented by Spaniards during their very own transition to democracy, and subsequently at times of crisis and concern in modern-day Spain.

Aided by an archival approach, my research analyses how the lexical meaning of *picaresca* has shifted over time, arriving in this 'Siglo de Oro moderno' (*El País*, 22/02/2004, 16) ultimately as a social construction which has been implemented by the press to portray how Spaniards dealt, and continue to deal with the reigning corruption and resultant sense of disillusionment that their country has faced in modern times. My commentary assesses how *la picaresca* has become a self-defence mechanism "gifted"⁵⁶ to Spaniards through their Spanishness. Nonetheless, I believe that this line of argument could be used as a blueprint to inspire further research on the "victim versus villain" dilemma that the usage of the term "picaresque" as a perceived social construction poses in the press. The two readings are often juxtaposed, linking back to the question of who is to blame, as society and authority both arrive at a crossroads of uncertainty together. Is the *pícaro* more at fault than the conditions that he emerged from?

When I set out to undertake my research, I envisioned the questions that would have to be addressed, particularly those surrounding potential challenges and problems I would face with the methodology this study would be contingent on: newspaper archives. One significant problem that was unforeseen, however, was how the longstanding fallout of the coronavirus outbreak would impinge upon my research. I believe that optimum consistency in my research would have been achieved by my ability to access primary archives from 17th century Spain at the Archivo General de Simancas in Valladolid in order to find out if the term "picaresque" appeared in any correspondence or reportage from the period and if so, how it was employed.

⁵⁶ Although the term "gifted" may take on a more positive meaning than some readers would like it to, I imagine that to Spaniards, *la picaresca* can be "both a blessing and a curse" and this is the image that strikes me upon evaluating its usage throughout the archives I have studied. Ultimately, and paradoxically, it is the ability to fend for oneself and the inevitability of being cast as an outsider – in both cases the need for survival prevails.

As a result, a clear-cut comparison of how the perception of the term “picaresque” differed in these varying periods of crisis and the extent to which it did so would have been carried out effectively. I hope the work carried out in this thesis lays sufficient groundwork for such an investigation to be resumed by myself or by another picaresque researcher at a later date.

Although there are many periods of crisis from which I could have constructed my secondary argument, I opted for the one which was debatably the most significant in Spain’s more recent history, and also one which aligned with an area of my academic supervisor’s expertise. More than this though, I was intrigued by the parallels drawn in the press between this period of time, and the period of time in which the picaresque originally emerged: The Golden Age, with the newspapers consistently referring to modern-day Spain and a new or revived *Siglo de Oro*.

If the original Golden Age created the perfect breeding ground for the literary irruption of the picaresque, then it would be fair to make the assumption that this present-day Golden Age would manifest itself as the perfect climate for a re-emergence. After all, Spain’s transition to democracy and the subsequent political scandals and affairs that ensued did bear similarities to the crisis that took place in the country almost 500 years before. Whilst strands of disaffection towards the contemporary authority, corruption at all levels in the social hierarchy and a tendency for Spain’s position on a global scale to be put before national interests could also be found to be interwoven between the two. Notwithstanding, if I had had more time or a larger word count during my period of research, I would have delved into another period of crisis in Spain’s past to consider how the term “picaresque” was viewed then, and whether at that point its lexical metamorphosis to a social construction was still yet to be ascribed. Carrying out my research within the time frame of a year has provided me with relatively limited scope to address all key periods of corruption or crisis within Spain’s history, and thus I had to consider this by curtailing the eras to which I would apply my research question.

With regards to its etymology, my research has shown that the lexical shift in meaning behind the term “picaresque” happened gradually, rather than overnight. It was not driven by one singular incident or factor but rather the culmination of events, underpinned by social, political and economic factors. Furthermore, the evolution of the term “picaresque” was roused by the change in mood that swept across the nation prompted by the death of Franco and the fallout that ensued, and was further fuelled by the key events that were to follow over the next half a century, ultimately leading to new heights of national disenchantment – as examined in

the main body of my thesis. The use of newspaper archives has enabled me to capture this evolution of the “picaresque” through an original, if not wholly reliable or transparent lens.

Newspapers are dependable but not reliable. I could depend on the archives insofar as they were an accessible and consistent point of reference that could enhance the methodological framework of my research. By incorporating them into my study, I could build up an extensive portfolio to cross-examine the uses of the term “picaresque” throughout the entire period, in articles ranging from culture and the arts, political affairs, and of course the humdrum of everyday life in Spain and reflect these findings readily in my thesis. But I had to be careful to disregard any articles where the use of “picaresque” seemed purposefully journalistic. On the whole, I did not encounter too many problems with this, but I did when I initially included the term “pícaro” in my search, meaning that I decided to strike it out of my research at a relatively early stage. If time permitted, I would be intrigued to return to this decision and once again include the term “pícaro” but deftly work my way through the archives, or failing that, at least include the name of a *pícaro* instead to see how “Lazarillo de Tormes” “Guzmán de Alfarache” or “Don Pablos el Buscón” could enhance my research instead.

To confront any issue of journalistic bias, political alliance or nationalism/regionalism, I chose three major newspapers to be central to my research: *ABC* (centre-rightist), *La Vanguardia* (curiously once nationalist, but now highly separatist) and *El País* (which wasn’t actually established until 1976, but would provide me with a centre-leftist perspective.) There were limitations to be found in each newspaper when considered singularly, but utilizing the three together enabled the full spectrum of political views to be assessed. Where I found the reliability of one to be curtailed, another would aid me instead – for example, when *ABC* went through a phase of using “picaresque” in its crossword puzzles, *El País* started up its “Letter to the Author” segment in increasing fashion or *La Vanguardia* ramped up its Catalan publications from 2011 onwards – all of which impacted my research to varying degrees.

Moving forward, I believe that the research carried out in my thesis could be augmented by a more wide-ranging approach, whereby a larger selection of newspaper archives are accessed so that observations are potentially more accurate and less inclined to be affected by their political disposition. However, an even more exciting approach would be to cross-examine a selection of local and regional newspapers, thus, opening up the investigation of the term “picaresque” as a social construction not only in Spain as a whole nation, but to be inflected

locally, or even autonomously. A comparative exploration of each region and its relationship with the new "picaresque", would not only consolidate my research carried out in this thesis, which has concluded that the picaresque evolved from text to trait, but it would go on to identify the origins of this new form of *la picaresca*. Thus, begging the question whether the origins of this modern-day picaresque imitate those of its literary precedent: the urban centres of Seville, Salamanca, Segovia, and Toledo, or whether the re-emergence of the picaresque as a discursive device was initiated elsewhere, such as the regions of Catalonia or the Basque Country, and what cultural or especially provincial factors played a part in this.

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