



The Picaresque Vision

with special reference to

Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*

and

Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*

By

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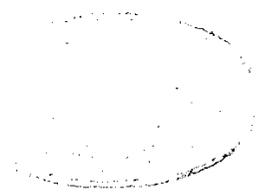
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PREFACE

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The main purpose of this thesis is to trace the realistic phenomenon of the picaresque, a mode of portraying the behaviour of a certain individual at a specific time and place who has to face life alone, if temporarily, with no social ties, no relations, and no money. When a defenceless person is forced to roam the land without having the least idea about the dangers of the road, he is liable to meet hostile forces, and therefore discovers the real nature of the society in which he lives. Three writers have tackled this issue, each faced with different circumstances, and therefore each offering a different solution. While Don Quixote has to die, Parson Adams returns to resume his duty, and Huck Finn chooses to escape from a dehumanizing society that would have him conform to a distasteful image. In each case, the factor of place and time affects the protagonist's decision. Cervantes's protagonist has no way out of his predicament in a deteriorating and decadent Spain. Fielding's Parson Adams has a duty to perform in a thriving country and a changing society. Twain discovers that law is inferior to conscience, and therefore sets his protagonist free from the bonds of law at the end of his novel.

This study, to my knowledge, is the first to compare *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews* and *Huckleberry Finn* with the purpose of tracing the picaresque elements in them, showing how similar these three novels are in essence, despite the various differences.

The thesis consists of four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter traces the picaresque genre to its beginning in A. D. 1554, marking the development of the protagonist and pointing out

certain changes in his ethics, closely connected with the changes in place and time.

The second chapter deals with *Don Quixote*, the picaresque aspects of Sancho's character, Cervantes's depiction of social circumstance, and the problem of narration which appeared with the adoption of the realistic mode, and how Cervantes tackled this problem.

The third chapter deals with *Joseph Andrews*, showing why Fielding started it as a parody, and points out the similarities between *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*. The chapter also deals with the atmosphere of chaos which prevails in every picaresque novel.

The fourth chapter deals with *Huckleberry Finn* where the road is a river. It also tackles the controversial issue of the ending in every picaresque novel and especially in *Huckleberry Finn*, and considers the function of language in Twain's novel.

The conclusion points out the findings of the thesis, and sums up the aspects common to all three novels despite the various differences.

Chapter I

THE PICARESQUE NOVEL

ITS BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Picaresque Novel

Its Beginning and Development

The picaresque novel is the type of novel that thrived in Spain in the middle of the 16th century and the beginning of the seventeenth. The word "picaresque" is a derivative of the word "picaro", which in its turn has no clear etymological meaning and a non-definite semantic history. It is said to have come from the word "picar" in Spanish, which means nowadays (*in Hugo's Spanish Dictionary* published in 1968) "to prick, to sting, to nibble, to peck, to itch"; but Harry Sieber tells us that when the word first appeared, it was in 1525, twenty nine years before the publishing of *Lazarillo de Tormes* (although some critics like Robert Fiore put the time of *Lazarillo's* writing back to 1526). The word "picaro" at that time had no relation to delinquency or mischief doing. It meant basket carrier, as Harry Sieber tells us (p.5), or a kitchen boy, as mentioned by Parker (p.4). In 1525 the word "picaro" was used to describe a person who does menial jobs, or a person who takes to begging temporarily, but does not adopt begging as a life-long profession. Cervantes used the word in this sense in his exemplary novel *Rinconete and Cortadillo* (1613). In this novel, the two boy-protagonists of the novel identify themselves as picaros, which means nothing more than that they are beggars on a very limited scale, and for a temporary duration. The two boys seek the picaresque life in quest for freedom as they come from good families, and they do not need to beg.

As Sieber tells us (p.6), the word "picaro" also might have taken its origin from pike men in the Spanish army, who turned to vagrancy when the economic crisis forced the crown to limit its

expenditure. The pike men, among other soldiers, were forced to beg and sometimes steal in order to survive when the crown stopped the payment of their wages.

For this reason also, Sieber writes that the word "picaro" might have been a derivative of the word "Picard" (p.7). A Picard is a native of Picardy in France, an area in which the Spanish army for many years waged war on the French and vice versa. It was an area which witnessed many battles between the Spanish and the French, in which the pike men inevitably took part. Also, people who were extremely poor might have moved from this place (Picardy) to Spain, begging on their way, and that might have brought them the name. Though the word "picaresque" did not originally involve the description of delinquency, it later came to mean a mischief-doer.

In literature, this word generally has a very vague meaning. To many critics, like Guillen, Blackburn, Witbourn, and Parker, the picaro is an unscrupulous scoundrel who cannot be good or make good, or at least started as one who was so. Hence they restricted the term "picaresque" to a very small number of novels, usually excluded from the main body of literature written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. Blackburn, for instance, considered that *none* of Defoe's novels could be picaresque (p.122). To other critics, like Bjornson and Alter, the picaro is a good person whose lapses from virtue could be excused. These critics apply the term to a very different genre of novels named "picaresque". There is also some ambiguity in the way critics deal with these novels. Some critics like Parker, Whitbourn and Blackburn start their books by adopting a very extremist stance, excluding most literature written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the picaresque genre, yet tackling the same novels

at great length as picaresque. Even views about the extent of picaresque elements in the individual novels varied among critics. While Parker considered *El-Buscon* as "the masterpiece of the picaresque tradition" (p.6), David P. Russi says that Quevedo did not adhere strictly to the norms of the picaresque tradition and that by deviating from that norm, Quevedo added more meaning to the novel (p.438). Judith A. Whitenack notes that even Hispanists who excluded almost all European and American literature from the picaresque cannot agree among themselves on a definition, and any "generic boundaries" they agreed upon from the beginning of the century were later "knocked down by those who came after them" (p.177).

Harry Sieber, among other critics, maintains that it is a matter of great difficulty to define what a *picaro* is and what should be chosen as part of the picaresque heritage, especially if one depends upon the opinions of literary critics. In this connection, Richard Bjornson writes:

Various described as a social conformist in avid pursuit of material possessions and a rebel who rejects society and its rewards, an optimist and a pessimist, a good for nothing, without scruples and a wanderer with potentials of sainthood, he has been called immoral, amoral and highly moral. In actuality, picaresque heroes have at one time or another exhibited all these and other many characteristics, their fictional lives have served as vehicles for the expression of diametrically opposed ideologies and moral systems. (p.5)

The history of the picaresque novel begins with the novel *Lazarillo De Tormes*, published almost simultaneously in Alcala, Burgos and Antwerp in A. D. 1554. Although the word "picaresque" (or "picaro") is not mentioned in that novel, *Lazarillo* was later grouped with *Guzman De Alfarache*, *El Buscon*, *Marcos De Obregon* and other novels that were called picaresque novels. As the first novel, *Lazarillo de Tormes* has set the norms for subsequent novels, and for the genre in general. Through studying this novel, we can identify the general characteristics of the picaresque novel.

Lazarillo De Tormes is about a boy whose father dies in an expedition by the Spanish against the Moors before the story begins. From the beginning, Lazarillo's identity is established as an isolated orphan, who is an innocent victim of fate, wandering from one place to another. Deprived of learning, the boy receives his first initiation in life and his first lessons from a blind beggar. He is a typical picaro since as Claudio Guillen says, "all values must be discovered by him anew, as if by a godless Adam". (p.79) We are reminded of Fielding who called his protagonist "Parson Adams", deriving the name from the first Adam who is a discoverer of life anew. The Parson is as ignorant as a babe in the woods. When he begins his journey, he is as naive and as trusting as Lazarillo.

Lazarillo and his master leave Salamanca. The first step in Lazarillo's education is when the blind man stops with Lazarillo in front of a big rock shaped as a bull, then asks Lazarillo to put his ear against the rock, so that he can hear a sound. Lazarillo obeys, and the blind man smashes Lazarillo's head against the bull with such vigour that Lazarillo's head hurts for three days afterwards. After giving the blow to Lazarillo, the blind man tells him that a blind man's servant should be astute, clever and cunning. Lazarillo