MEXICAN PICARESQUE NARRATIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Many Mexican narratives feature characteristics associated with the picaresque. Eight texts in particular seem to belong to the subgenre. All eight have the following attributes: their structure is episodic; a single protagonist provides the only link between episodes; he survives by cunning in a world marked by hunger and physical depravation; he serves many masters and/or acts in many roles; he is generally alienated; and he meets many characters which form a gallery of human types. Notwithstanding these traits in common, each text is a unique member of the picaresque family.

Naufragios (1542), Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's account of his journey through North America, is a forerunner of the subgenre. Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez (1690), the life story of the person Alonso Ramírez, narrated by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, employs narrative techniques which elicit readers' sympathy and caused the Viceroy to reward Ramírez with financial compensation. José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi wrote both El Periquillo Sarniento (1816) and

Don Catrín de la Fachenda (1832). Dr. Purgante and several other secondary characters in the Periquillo are memorable because of the author's skillful use of colorful names, physical description, and speech peculiarities. Don Catrín is successful due largely to irony arising from the substantial distance between the implied author and the narrator. The protagonist of La vida inútil de Pito Pérez (1938) by José Rubén Romero, though previously considered a simpleton, proves to be a complex character. El Canillitas (1941) by Artemio del Valle-Arizpe, set in Colonial Mexico, is filled with humor, including humorous names and nicknames, amusing comparisons, and comic episodes. Hasta no verte Jesús mío (1969), by Elena Poniatoska, chronicles numerous events from the full life of its protagonist, but features an unexpectedly leisurely narrative pace. Because of philosophical and anecdotal digressions, readers come to know intimately the protagonist's personality. El Chanfalla (1979) by Gonzalo Martré, features many episodes, situations, and ironies which alert readers as to discrepancies between appearance and reality.

Thus, although all eight narratives share many attributes as members of the picaresque family, each is a unique artistic creation with variations in

context, narrative technique, style, setting, characterization, and focus.

I dedicate this dissertation to the
people who have done the most by far to
introduce me to, give me an appreciation
for, and instill in me a thirst for
things Hispanic--my parents,
Merlin D. and Avon Allen Compton.

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Preface

Wherein the terms in the title of this dissertation are interpreted by its author, including an extended explanation of the term "picaresque," after which the mode of examining each of the Mexican narratives studied herein is briefly set forth.

Defining a genre or subgenre is an impossible but very useful task. Scholars and critics inevitably disagree on definitions, and some writers delight in producing texts which seem to have the sole purpose of challenging and defying notions of genre. Is La Celestina a novel or a play? Although this question will never be definitively resolved, asking the question and attempting to defend the answer help us focus on details which reveal a great deal about the nature of the text.

By claiming to write about Mexican picaresque narratives, I enter the dangerous world of definitions on three counts. First, what is a narrative? Second, what is Mexican? Third, what is picaresque? I use the word "narrative" rather than "novel" for several reasons. First, it seems easier to define: Something that is told--whether in an oral or written form. Second, it allows the examination of texts which were written before 1816--the magical year of birth of the

"novel" in Mexico and Spanish America. These conditions allow me to study texts such as Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez and Hasta no verte Jesús Mío without bickering about whether they are factual or fictional accounts.

I employ the term "Mexican" in spite of several factors which keep the term from being completely straightforward. First, even though the name "New Spain" was used until independence was gained early in the nineteenth century, I am using "Mexican" to include the period prior to as well as since Independence. This extension of the term allows me to include texts written before El Periquillo Sarniento. Second, I am allowing for changes in Mexico's geographical configuration over the years. By doing so, I am able to include texts such as Naufragios, which takes place largely in what is today the United States. At the time it was written, however, the setting was part of "New Spain." Third, I am allowing the term to include narratives about Mexico and Mexicans even though they may have been written by Spaniards or published in Spain. These situations are common for books dealing with the conquest, exploration and colonization of Mexico.

Having thus clarified my use of the terms

"Mexican" and "narrative," the most complex of my title's terms now merits our attention. The existence of "picaresque" narratives can hardly be challenged--critics have referred to them as such for many years. Lazarillo de Tormes, Guzmán de Alfarache and El buscón are the classics of the subgenre, and other narratives are almost universally accepted as such, but some texts seem to be picaresque to some critics while they are not to others. Tom Jones, for example, has a picaresque plot with a picaresque protagonist but lacks the first-person narrator of the picaresque classics mentioned above. Critics may differ over whether it qualifies as a picaresque narrative or not, but trying to decide how it is or is not helps us learn about the work.

Many critics have attempted to identify what makes a work picaresque. Their differing terminologies, approaches, and emphases attest to the difficulty in defining a genre. My purpose is not to resolve this ongoing debate, but to examine a group of Mexican narratives which seem to fall under the classification of picaresque either wholly or in part. Rather than add to the growing list of picaresque definitions, I here yield to the definitions given by some of the leading theorists on the subject. I have

found three approaches to the problem at hand especially helpful. The first is the classic "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque" by Claudio Guillén. In his discussion of the pure picaresque genre he focuses largely on the picaro and the narrative stance. The second is The Picaresque Novel by Stuart Miller. This approach "constructs an ideal type" based on eight standard picaresque novels. The focus here is mostly on the structure of picaresque narratives and recurring thematic patterns therein. Last is Ulrich Wicks's "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach." This work, as can be inferred from its title, departs from Robert Scholes's ideas on fictional modes. He defines the "essential picaresque situation" by a set of characteristics which include a certain narrative situation and structure, as well as a certain type of protagonist and thematic motifs. The three approaches mentioned here overlap and draw on one another. I have extracted and synthesized the following points as ones that seem to be basic to and easily observed in picaresque narratives.

1) Episodic Plot. Picaresque narratives are loosely episodic, with no cause-effect relationships occurring between episodes. Thus, characters

appear then disappear in rapid succession, rarely to be remembered again. This episodic nature is often emphasized by constant changes from milieu to milieu. Normally, the only common link between episodes is the picaro himself. (Miller 9-20; Guillén 84-85.)

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The episodic nature of picaresque narratives lends itself to a vertiginous pace. Events occur in "strikingly short compass." The result is the bedazzlement of both the reader and the picaro. (Miller 21-27.)

3) Fate Rules Supreme. The picaro stands unable to control his circumstances for any extended period of time. Chaos, fate, destiny and luck always reign in his life (Miller 28-35). At times good luck is his lot, but it never lasts for long, thus leading to what Wicks refers to as the "Sisyphus rhythm" (243-244).

4) Bodily Violence. This refers to particularly horrible and sometimes disgusting events which occasionally befall the picaro. These mishaps take their toll on the picaro in a direct, physical way. He seems to be violently punished for no particular reason (Miller 36-39). Wicks

refers to this as the "grotesque or horrible incident motif" (247).

5) The Picaro. Identifying what makes a protagonist a "picaro" is a particularly sticky business. Bjornson, Parker and others have written books which deal entirely with picaros and what qualifies a character as such. The following are suggestions from Miller, Wicks and Guillén.

5a) A Single Protagonist. Guillén states that "every roguish novel worthy of its salt could be described by a single name" (94). The presence of a single, anti-heroic protagonist is absolutely indispensable for a work to be truly picaresque.

5b) Uncommon Origins. "The circumstances surrounding the picaro's entrance into the world are often unusual and thus they are omens of a sort" (Wicks 246). Some picaros never know who their mother is. Still more lack the same knowledge with regard to their father. Some come from an underworld background. The picaro is almost always an orphan in either a literal or a figurative sense. Family relationships are non-existent. Thus, from his beginnings the picaro is thrust into chaos and instability. (Miller

47-55.)

5c) Cunning. The picaro is a "pragmatic, unprincipled, resilient, solitary figure who just manages to survive in his chaotic landscape, but who, in the ups and downs, can also put that world very much on the defensive" (Wicks 245). Guillén states that he is "not all picardía--the slyness of the trickster who lives on his wits, just short of delinquency if possibly he can. Guile and wile are only his offensive weapons. A stoical good humor is his defensive one" (76). The picaro is a survivor--he manages to get by no matter how difficult the situation.

5d) Protean Form. The picaro is typically forced into playing a number of different roles. These can be as servant to many masters or as a wearer of many professional masks and costumes. "There is no part a picaro won't play." However, in his ability to adapt to different roles, the picaro's personality itself is never clearly defined. Paradoxically, in the process of becoming "everyman" he has become no man. (Miller 70-77; Wicks 247; Guillén 92.)

5e) Alienation. Guillén speaks of the picaro as a "half-outsider" (80). Although he is placed

within society he is never able to become fully integrated into it. Because of the absence of love and loyalty in his life, he is unable to attach himself to any person or thing, and becomes what Miller calls an "unanchored self" (78). There are moments when the picaro seems to be on the brink of integration, but the Sisyphus rhythm prevails and he is usually left more alienated than before.

5f) Internal Instability. Given the picaro's chaotic origins, Protean form, and alienation, internal chaos is a natural result. He is unable to carry out his decisions. Sudden impulses, curiosity, and mischievousness rule him rather than resolve and determination. (Miller 86-94.)

5g) A Philosophical Bent. This characteristic stems in part from the narrative situation as well as from the picaro's curiosity and observant nature. Because the story is told long after it takes place, the teller tends to comment on the events in a philosophical way. His insightful reflections on society, politics and human nature are possible only because he was paying attention and was inquisitive in the first place. (Guillén 76, 81, 82.)

6) The First-person Point of View. Guillén sees this narrative situation as being absolutely essential for a work to be truly picaresque. Because the events are narrated retrospectively, the picaro is once again fragmented into a narrating self and an experiencing self. This combination adds to the reader's view of the picaro's interior instability, assures that the work will be partial and prejudiced, and is an excellent vehicle for irony. The reader can never fully trust the narrative because of the picaro's penchant and talent for invention and falsification. (Guillén 81-82; Miller 98-100; Wicks 244-45.)

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. The world in which the picaro lives is hostile and unforgiving. Therefore, many critics consider the picaresque classics to be "realistic." The society portrayed is just as picaresque and chaotic as the picaro himself. Miller claims the picaro is merely a reflection of the world in which he lives (56-69).

8) Physical Survival. "There is a general stress on the material level of existence or of subsistence, on sordid facts, hunger, money"

(Guillén 83). In spite of any philosophizing on the part of the picaro, one of his main concerns during the events narrated is merely finding his next meal. Much of his cunning is used precisely to fulfill this need. (Wicks 246.)

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. In his wanderings and travels, a picaro manages to come in contact with an impressive array of people from varying social classes, professions, regions and nationalities. Because of the picaresque plot structure, these are almost always types. Although they cannot be well-developed, their presence and presentation provide some of the most memorable moments of picaresque narratives. (Guillén 83-84; Wicks 245.)

Having explained my conception of the terms in the title of this study, I now turn to the texts themselves. Chapter One provides a panoramic view of the history of the picaresque in Mexico. It deals primarily with texts which are only partially picaresque, thus establishing a context for the eight texts which I find more fully picaresque. These eight narratives are examined in some depth in Chapters Two through Nine. A single text is examined in each of

these chapters, wherein my critical strategy involves a four-step process. First, I comment on the narrative's chronological place in Mexican literature, especially with regard to other picaresque novels. Second, I remark on the criticism the work has received. Third, I look at the text's elements by lining it up against basic elements of the picaresque as stated above. By doing this, I avoid entering into debates over whether the work is wholly, mostly, or to any other degree, picaresque. What becomes apparent is how many characteristics the text shares with the classic picaresque narratives. Last, I examine the narratives through analyses of language, narrative techniques, codes, or whatever approach I find illuminating with regard to the text. Chapter Ten provides observations, based on the foregoing analyses, on the relationships between the eight narratives and the manner in which each is a unique creation.

The guidance and influence of many teachers is patent in the pages of this dissertation. I gratefully acknowledge their hand therein. I am particularly indebted to three master teachers, whose influence on this study is especially evident--John S.

Brushwood, Joel C. Hancock, and Merlin D. Compton. Professor Brushwood's guidance as my dissertation advisor has made the experience of its preparation very enjoyable. He and the other members of my committee, Jon S. Vincent and Diana Alvarez, have offered many excellent suggestions on improving the text, for which I am grateful. I am also grateful to the Graduate School of the University of Kansas for a fellowship during the Summer of 1988, which allowed me to concentrate on this project at a key time. Finally, I thankfully acknowledge the support, patience, and love of my wife and children.

Chapter One

Wherein a survey is made of Mexican narratives which, although not fully picaresque, feature prominent elements of the subgenre, thereby establishing a context for the eight texts examined in Chapters Two through Nine of this study.

Eight narratives are individually examined at length in the body of this study. These eight are by no means the only Mexican texts with a healthy dose of picaresque elements or flavor. Many Mexican works feature notably picaresque characteristics. Depending on the criteria used to define the subgenre, some of these could be successfully classified as full members of the family. The eight narratives analyzed at length in later chapters were selected in light of the model established in the preface of this study. This introduction is meant to lessen the gaps between the eight texts by examining, albeit briefly, many of Mexico's additional narratives that have noteworthy picaresque characteristics.

Naufragios (1542) is not the only text from the period of discovery and conquest with attributes which suggest close kinship to the picaresque family. The "Carta segunda" of Hernán Cortés's Cartas de relación de la conquista de México, written in 1520, has a picaresque quality. To begin with, it is narrated

from the first-person, retrospective point of view. Furthermore, the document is addressed to the king in much the same way that Lazarillo de Tormes is addressed to "vuestra merced." Cortés acts as a picaro in several ways. Of particular note is his astounding cunning. The odds he and his handful of fellow Spaniards overcome to conquer the Aztecs is legendary. His skillful manipulation of Malinche, Moctezuma, opposing Indian groups, and even his own men for his own purposes is worthy of any picaro. Moreover, in his letter he cleverly tells the story in such a way as to lead the king to overlook his military disobedience to Pánfilo de Narváez, the king's representative. Another way in which he is reminiscent of a picaro is that he is completely alienated from those around him. Not only does he mistrust and maintain emotional distance from all factions of the native Americans he meets, including Malinche, but he does the same with his fellow Europeans. Even though his maneuvers are performed in company with his men and often with many Indians, in the text he rarely refers to events in the "nosotros" form, opting instead for the "yo" form. Such avoidance of the first-person plural constitutes linguistic evidence of his alienation. Physical

survival, an unkind, chaotic world, and the presentation of many human types are also part of Cortés's narrative. Thus, as with Cabeza de Vaca's narrative, although it predates the classic picaresque novels, Cortés's letter shares many similarities with the tradition.

Although to a lesser extent, Bernal Díaz de Castillo's account of the conquest, published as Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España in 1632, more than fifty years after his death, also contains features of the picaresque. Díaz's account is more picaresque than Cortés's in two significant ways: first, its structure is episodic, and second, his gallery of types is both more extensive and better developed individually. As in Cortés's account, the story is told from the first-person point of view and physical survival is a recurring theme. On the other hand, whereas in the Cartas de relación Cortés clearly presents himself as the narrative's main character, such is not the case in Historia verdadera. Although in some episodes Díaz certainly highlights himself and his role in the conquest, he is not the only major character who provides coherence to the narrative, as would a picaro.

In Mexican prose, Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez

(1690) stands alone as the only significantly picaresque narrative between Historia verdadera and El Periquillo Sarniento (1816). José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi distinguished himself not only by the quality of his narratives that belong to the picaresque family, but also as the most prolific in number of texts. Lizardi flanked the Periquillo with another full member of the family, Don Catrín de la Fachenda (written 1819, published 1832) and La Quijotita y su prima, which has minor kinship in the subgenre.

In a strict sense, La educación de las mujeres o la Quijotita y su prima, published in 1818, has none of the picaresque characteristics set forth in the preface of this study. In a loose way, Pomposa, whose nickname is Quijotita, has the potential to be a female picaro in the cast of Catrín. She is as spoiled and presumptuous as her cousin, Pudenciana, is modest and virtuous. A touch of picaresque satire and flavor surfaces periodically in the text, especially in the presentation of character types. Nonetheless, the book is associated with the picaresque family primarily because its author is Mexico's most prominent cultivator of the subgenre.

Applying the term picaresque to any narrative

written in Mexico between Fernández de Lizardi and Rubén Romero merits a strong qualifying explanation. Some of the literary "-isms" of the period, namely realism, naturalism and "costumbrismo," led narrative away from the picaresque in several ways. First, episodic structure wherein the episodes are joined only by a single protagonist is replaced by a more complex, interwoven structure in which many characters tie the plot together. Second, the first-person point of view is almost completely displaced by narration in the third-person. Third, in place of fate and chance being major factors in the plot, cause and effect relationships are sought in realist narratives. Conversely, these same "-isms" manifest other attributes associated with the picaresque. For example, the less than perfect settings which are often highlighted in realism and naturalism are similar to the "unkind, chaotic world" of the picaresque. "Costumbrista" sketches do not limit themselves to the description of customs only, but lend themselves to the portrayal of types as well, thus reminiscent of the presentation of "a vast gallery of human types" in the picaresque. Thus, although the "-isms" of the nineteenth century do not lend themselves to the cultivation of fully picaresque

works, some of the narratives do have characteristics and/or flavor of the subgenre.

Tras un mal nos vienen ciento, published in 1839 by Ignacio Rodríguez Galván, is an enjoyable little piece with interesting variations on several picaresque elements. Even though it has no formal divisions, the story is structured like a picaresque narrative in that the protagonist, Don Gregorio Ventrículo, holds the story together. In this tale, however, Don Gregorio is not even vaguely a picaro, but rather an established, well-to-do, older bachelor. Instead, the protagonist is victimized by picaresque types that surround him, such as a boy swindler posing as a salesman, a coachman who charges him an exorbitant fee for a minimal ride, some furniture movers who at first unwittingly and then uncaringly bruise him as they work, several overly talkative acquaintances who delay him, and so forth. These misfortunes and many others befall Don Gregorio as he tries to make good on a dinner appointment. Thus, as in picaresque novels, hunger is a backdrop to the action, and this backdrop intensifies as the protagonist is hindered in his purpose. To make matters worse, the eventual meal is completely unsatisfying. A striking variation from picaresque

conventions is that the story is related in an almost completely dialogued form. This technique gives the narrative nearly dramatic life and avoids a complete break with the first-person point of view by giving the protagonist some voice.

El fistol del diablo, published in 1845 and 1846 by Manuel Payno, and Astucia, published in 1865 by Luis G. Inclán, share similar characteristics with the picaresque. The fact that both were published in installments in newspapers suggests that they should both have episodic plot structure, which is indeed the case. However, although they are heavily episodic, they do not rely on a single protagonist to link the episodes, but rather have a large number of characters who are followed throughout extended sections of the text. While Astucia has a clear protagonist with minor picaresque traits, such as Protean form, Arturo, the central figure of El fistol del diablo, does not dominate the text and is not a picaro in any sense. The outstanding characteristic of each book is the presentation of numerous characters, forming a vast, although rarely satiric, gallery of human types. Any picaresque characteristics in the books of this period are minimal.

Monja y casada, virgen y mártir, and Martín

Garatuza, are a two-part historical novel published by Vicente Riva Palacio in 1868. The novel's most prominent picaro type, in spite of having the second volume of the work named after him, is not a structurally unifying element. He displays occasional cunning in his chaotic surroundings, but the focus of the text is not Garatuza and his dealings, but intrigues and schemings in early seventeenth century Mexico.

Several of the short sketches which make up José T. de Cuéllar's La linterna mágica have marked picaresque flavor. They excel in satiric presentation of human types, as suggested in the following titles: Las jamonas, Los mariditos, and Ensalada de pollos. In spite of its name, Historia de Chucho el Ninfo, published in 1871, is not exclusively Chucho's story. Since he disappears from the story's focus during large portions of the text, the structure is not even remotely picaresque. Chucho qualifies as a picaro in that he is an illegitimate child, he is entirely irresponsible, he has a penchant for donning costumes and personalities, and his cunning with women is famous. In spite of the presence of a picaro, the way in which the text most closely resembles the picaresque is in the entertaining presentation of an

alcoholic priest, a spoiling mother, naive daughters, and so forth, in a satiric gallery of human types.

Memorias de un muerto, published by Manuel Balbontín in 1874, is noteworthy because the narrative situation approximates that of the picaresque. It is narrated with a first-person point of view, as suggested by its title. In fact, Pascual Pintó Pasos, the author's dead friend, writes his memoirs, some of which deal with life in Hell, which happens to be on the planet Jupiter. The narrative pretext and some of the items narrated are imbued with strong picaresque flavor.

Novelas mexicanas, published by Emilio Rabasa in 1887 and 1888, constitute a set of four full length novels linked by their narrator, Juan Quiñones. In the first novel he acts as a soldier, in the second as a student, and in the last two as a journalist. Thus, role playing, occasional flashes of cunning, a sometimes philosophical bent, and a tendency toward alienation make the narrator a sort of picaro. The narrative point of view is first-person, a small gallery of types in the town is presented, and the society the narrator faces is most unkind. Most importantly, the novels feature heavy doses of satire with regard to politics and journalism.

Pacotillas, published by Porfirio Parra in 1900, lacks almost all of the formal picaresque characteristics set forth in the preface of this study. Nonetheless, three things make it noteworthy for this study. First, several of the characters in the text are picaro types. Second, many of the characters are baptized with colorful nicknames which seem to be appropriate to picaresque novels. Third, the satiric intent of the book gives it a picaresque flavor. Thus, though its structure is not episodic, and it lacks a dominant picaro protagonist as well as a first-person point of view, it seems to have kinship with the picaresque family.

El señor gobernador, published in 1901 by Manuel H. San Juan, is another novel of political satire. Although the Díaz regime did not bear fruit in picaresque novels per se, for obvious reasons political satire found voice. The first-person point of view is used in the text, but the narrator is not the protagonist. The protagonist, as indicated in the book's title, is the governor, Don Candelario Aceituno, who before becoming a politician had been in the military. Like a picaro, Aceituno is self-serving and manipulative, and although he does not stand alone in unifying the parts of the text, he is the major

factor. Also like a picaro, in spite of his high visibility and being constantly surrounded by people, he is completely alienated from his fellow beings because they treat him not as a person but only as a politician. In fact, shortly after leaving office he is completely forgotten. Many of the people on Aceituno's staff have humorous or suggestive names, such as Bermejo (who plays to the governor), Dr. Remigio Chirona, Modesto Rapiña (the state treasurer), Críspulo Canaleón, and Rodríguez Istiércol. Thus, a satiric gallery of governmental types is nicely presented.

Avant-garde tendencies and the revolution dominated the narratives of the first forty years of the twentieth century. Although some of the experimentation of the avant-garde shares a certain spirit of cunning with the picaresque, no noteworthy picaresque characteristics are incorporated in any narratives between El señor gobernador and La vida inútil de Pito Pérez (1938). Before Rubén Romero's novel, as has been detailed herein, the picaresque had become nearly extinct. Over a century had passed since the publication of Don Catrín de la Fachenda, the previous fully picaresque novel. Fully developed picaros became rare, the first-person point of view

was seldom used, and the episodic structure in its pure form was nonexistent. Even the picaresque spirit seems to be absent from narratives written in the first part of this century.

In light of the foregoing literary scenario, the proliferation since 1938 of narratives with a great many picaresque traits could hardly have been expected. Although it is a contributing factor, the skyrocketing number of all varieties of novels in Mexico since 1940 cannot be the only reason for the resurgence of the picaresque. José Rubén Romero's success with La vida inútil also contributes, but neither does it explain the phenomenon. In the era since its publication, many texts seem to have moved away from the concept of focusing on entire groups or networks of people, as in realism and many narratives with social orientation. Rather, a great many narratives feature one dominating character surrounded by many minor characters, as in Pedro Páramo and La muerte de Artemio Cruz, to name but two prominent representatives of this tendency. The step from this type of narrative to the picaresque is a minor structural one, and has been taken many times in the last five decades.

El Canillitas (1941) appeared within a few years

of La vida inútil and in some ways remains one of Mexico's purest picaresque narratives. Four other narratives with prominent picaresque elements were also published during the decade of the forties, making it Mexico's most prolific decade for the picaresque to date. In 1944, Jesús R. Guerrero published Los olvidados. Carol Blackburn describes it as "A pessimistic novel of the Mexican Revolution which prostitutes a picaresque tale in the name of propaganda" (127). Although the novel does not have a clear cut protagonist, a prominent character, Martín Gay, is a picaro in several ways. Abandoned early in life, he was raised in a brothel, he is proficient at playing multiple roles, and he survives thanks to his cunning both within and outside the bounds of the law.

Quince uñas y Casanova, aventureros, published by Leopoldo Zamora Plowes in 1945, is a monumental, two volume work which carries the subtitle Novela histórica picaresca. The two characters mentioned in the title make reference to two picaresque types, the real-life general, Santa Anna, and the fictional Juan Jacobo Casanova. Casanova is closer to being a full-fledged picaro than Santa Anna, though he is not the novel's protagonist. He is the linking element to the complex, interwoven plot, though the structure of the

text is not episodic in the strict picaresque sense. Casanova's aim to "tratar de llegar al máximo con un mínimo esfuerzo" seems to guide Santa Anna's life as well (Casas de Faunce 141). Both are self-serving opportunists who are willing to take any pose, play any role, resort to any trick, and claim allegiance to any cause if they think it will benefit them. Hundreds of characters are presented in a truly vast gallery of human types, most of whom embrace the same self-serving philosophy of life as Casanova. Doctors, women, common soldiers, military leaders, dramatists and poets are but a few of the types that are needled in the text. Quince uñas is not fully picaresque, but it is a truly outstanding narrative.

Garambullo: Historia de un pícaro sin fortuna, published in 1945 by Enrique García Campos, does not fully live up to its subtitle. Carol Blackburn calls it "a costumbrista work picaresque in structure" (127). Garambullo is an adult character who links the episodes of the narrative in the manner of the picaresque. Nonetheless, the narrative does not focus on the protagonist in typical picaresque situations, but in his reformation. Secondary characters, though stereotypes, are not presented with satire characteristic of the picaresque.

Río humano, published by Rogelio Barriga Rivas in 1949, professes no family tie to the Periquillo. Nevertheless, the structure and narrative situation resemble picaresque conventions. With regard to structure, the text is reminiscent of Tras un mal nos vienen ciento in that the protagonist, though not a picaro, is the only tie between the episodes and characters in the novel. Using the first-person point of view, the protagonist/narrator tells of his experiences while working at a police detention center. The physical conditions of the center are degrading and the atmosphere is chaotic. As is implied in the book's title, a river of human types is presented. However, unlike most picaresque texts, in this one the portrait of the characters is largely sympathetic rather than satiric.

Tata Lobo, published in 1952 by Ermilo Abreu Gómez, has many of the major elements thought of as necessary to be considered picaresque. It has a simple, episodic plot and a protagonist/picaro in an unkind, chaotic world populated by a cast of character types with ridiculous names. Nonetheless, the novel seems not to belong fully to the Periquillo's literary sub-family, perhaps because, as María Casas de Faunce has stated, "Ermilo Abreu recurrió a las posibilidades

de la picaresca como género literario para utilizarlas en la configuración de un cuadro costumbista. . ." (196).

Two of the cornerstone narratives of the "Onda," La tumba and Gazapo, have some prominent characteristics which tie them to the picaresque. José Agustín published La tumba: revelaciones de un adolescente in 1964. This book uses the first-person point of view, which had overwhelmingly given way to third-person narratives for many years. Gabriel Guía, the protagonist/narrator, does not come from the lower classes as do most picaros, but from the upper classes of Mexico City. Like a picaro, he is completely alienated from the people around him. This is especially striking since much of the book he describes his quest for physical love. Ironically, his sexual encounters make him feel alone and humiliated. His penchant for chicanery is best seen in the form of speech he uses, which is often laced with pointed double meanings. Though many picaresque elements are lacking in the text, as evidenced in the lack of a gallery of human types and an inadequate variety of situations for the protagonist, La tumba's youthful narrator seems to have kinship with the subgenre.

Like Agustín's novel, Gustavo Sainz's Gazapo, published in 1965, shares some characteristics with the picaresque. It too uses a first-person point of view to narrate the tale. Its protagonist is also an alienated adolescent who resorts to cunning in a variety of situations, among them his amorous pursuit of Gisela and the creation of the narrative. The small circle of friends surrounding the narrator comes across as a small gallery of youthful, human types.

Four years after Gazapo, Hasta no verte Jesús mío was published. Thus, it was not until 1969 that a woman writer in Mexico tried her hand at the picaresque. The book's protagonist, Jesusa Palancares is the most developed case of a female picaro in Mexican literature.

The major reason Chin-Chin el teporocho, published in 1972 by Armando Ramírez, cannot be considered a picaresque novel is that the plot structure is not episodic. The fact that the ups and downs of the relationship between Rogelio González and Michele is followed throughout the text rather than showing Rogelio in a variety of places and situations is indicative of how the plot is not picaresque. On the other hand, Rogelio, whose nickname is the title of the book, is a full-blown, developed picaro, who

dominates the text as its only protagonist. Like the traditional picaro he tells his own story in a retrospective, first-person point of view. Orphaned at age eight, he lives with his aunt and uncle in a poor, chaotic part of Mexico City. As a result, he learns early to scrap and use his wiles to survive. Although for a time he works in a supermarket, he is not stable enough to keep the job. He is later a marijuana runner, but only for a short while. In spite of his developing relationship with Michele, he experiences loneliness and alienation. When he finally marries her, it is not out of love but because she is pregnant. After a miscarriage, their unhappy, shaky marriage crumbles. He turns to alcohol and subsequently becomes a "teporocho," an alcoholic in the lower class neighborhoods in Mexico City. The process of alienation has become complete: "ser teporocho es llegar a ser nadie" (82).

Gustavo Sainz's third novel, La princesa del palacio de hierro, published in 1974, is another narrative featuring a woman's voice. The story is narrated from the first-person point of view by the "princess" mentioned in the book's title. She is a female picaro of sorts--although she is from a seemingly stable family situation, she is a very

unstable, alienated, self-serving person. She resorts to trickery to see her boyfriend by getting a job first as a sales person and later as a model at a department store, although she does not need the money. Perhaps the most picaresque element of the text is the offbeat gallery of friends she has. The group includes some with colorful names such as Guapo Guapo, La Vestida de Hombre, La Tapatía Grande, and La Tapatía Chica, whose names are less flamboyant than the characters.

In 1979, the same year in which El Chanfalla appeared, Luis Zapata published Las aventuras, desventuras y sueños de Adonis García, El vampiro de la colonia Roma. The protagonist in this novel is homosexual, and his homosexual history and activities are its main concern. The narrative structure is absolutely episodic in the picaresque sense--Adonis García is the only consistent link between episodes. He tells his own story in a retrospective, first-person point of view. Left without parents in his early teens, and feeling doubly alone because of his homosexual tendencies, he goes to Mexico City and becomes a vampiro, or homosexual prostitute. He eventually turns to alcohol and drugs and despite many relationships both in and out of his profession, he

feels no love or emotional support from anyone. The narrators in this novel and Chin-Chin el teporocho are beset by more loneliness and alienation than any of their Mexican counterparts. The protagonists of La tumba, Gazapo, and La princesa del palacio de hierro also suffer from extreme loneliness, which suggests a relationship between sexual obsession and alienation. In addition to emotional yearning, Adonís occasionally suffers from hunger and usually lives in shabby surroundings. Unlike most picaresque novels, this narrative is lacking in ironic or satiric tone. Adonís García, though having several picaresque traits, somehow does not seem to be a picaro.

Sobre esta piedra, published in 1981 by Carlos Eduardo Turón, follows the pattern of the narratives just discussed in its first-person narrative point of view and an alienated protagonist/narrator living in an unkind, chaotic world. The main action in the novel involves its narrator, Pedro Jiménez, trying to avoid coming to justice for a murder he committed. He encounters corruption in a wide variety of people and places. More than his recent counterparts, he has a penchant for philosophizing, but he seems totally lacking in cunning and picaresque charm. Furthermore, the structure is not episodic.

Finally, Arráncame la vida, published by Angeles Mastretta in 1985, has several picaresque characteristics. To begin with, the plot is largely episodic and is linked primarily by the narrative's protagonist and narrator, Catalina Guzmán. Thus, the first-person point of view is employed. Catalina also is an alienated individual, whose personality seems to be based almost entirely on her husband's public/political standing. She manages to survive challenging situations through her cunning. An intriguing cast of public figures is introduced, including an irreverent view of the Mexican president Manuel Avila Camacho, referred to by the narrator as Fito or the fat president.

As has been shown here in a very abbreviated form, Mexico boasts numerous narratives which feature prominent picaresque elements. Even though additional narratives with picaresque ingredients have undoubtedly been overlooked in this survey, the resilience of the subgenre and the usefulness of its conventions in creating literature are patent. This survey also makes evident that the eight narratives studied hereafter were not alone in their tendencies--they merely represent the narratives which make use of the greatest number of picaresque characteristics.

Chapter Two

Wherein Cabeza de Vaca's Naufragios is presented as representative of the type of text which, by revealing a reality so extraordinary as to render fictionalization unnecessary, is at least partly responsible for the dearth of novels in Spanish America during the Colonial Era, after which its divers picaresque elements are pointed out and illustrated, leading to the hypothesis that travel narratives share close kinship with the picaresque subgenre and therefore Naufragios is a forebear of Mexican picaresque novels.

More than one historian of Spanish American literature has tried to explain the absence of novels during the colonial era (e.g. Alegría 7-13; Curcio Altamar). However, no one disputes the fact that some of Spanish America's most fascinating narratives were written prior to Independence. The time of discovery and conquest was especially fruitful in this regard, as can be seen by consulting any anthology of Spanish American literature. In his famous speech delivered before the Swedish Academy prior to receiving the Nobel prize for literature, Gabriel García Márquez acknowledged that in many of these narratives "se vislumbran los gérmenes de nuestras novelas de hoy." I believe that such histories, which García Márquez calls "rigurosa[s] que sin embargo parece[n]. . . aventura[s] de la imaginación," constitute a major

reason for the absence of the "novel" in Colonial Spanish America. The reality was so overwhelming that there was no need to transform it into fiction.

One of the narratives to which García Márquez referred specifically in his speech was Naufragios by Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. It was published with the title Relación in 1542, just seven years after Cabeza de Vaca completed the adventures he narrates in the text. Further comments on its place in literary history follow discussion of critical attention it has received and its picaresque elements.

Naufragios has stirred the interest of many people in many disciplines. Much of the attention given to the text is due to its obvious historical value. In the preface to his translation of the work, Cyclone Covey touches on both the work's appeal as an exceptional story and the unique historical position held by Cabeza de Vaca and the other survivors of his expedition:

> Four out of a land-force of 300 men--by wits, stamina and luck--found their way back to civilization after eight harrowing years and roughly 6,000 miles over mostly unknown reaches of North America. They were the

> first Europeans to see--and live to record--the interior of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and northernmost Mexico; the 'possum and the buffalo, the Mississippi and the Pecos; pine-nut mash and mesquite-bean flour; and a long string of Indian tribes whose Stone age cultures had never before been intruded by Europeans (7).

Covey goes on to indicate that scholars of archeology, anthropology, cartography, geology, climatology, botany, zoology and history have found Naufragios to be a useful source of information (7). Much of this interest stems from efforts early in this century by several individuals to discover the exact route taken by Cabeza de Vaca on his expedition.

Scholars are not the only ones who have been engaged by the narrative, as evidenced by the number of editions and translations it has had. The fact that a second edition was published just thirteen years after the first seems to indicate that the book was of interest even in its day. Since then, many editions have followed, including five published by Espasa-Calpe alone, in this century. Naufragios has been translated into Italian, French, German and English. In fact, there are three complete

translations in English (Smith, Bandelier, Covey) as well as a partial translation (Long) and two paraphrased versions (Purchas, Hallenbeck).[1] Spin offs based on the narrative have included several biographies (Terrell; Fernández, Alvar Núñez. . .; Urdapilleta; Lacalle; Bellogín García), studies on Cabeza de Vaca's route (Hallenbeck; Baskett; Williams; Coopwood), several historical novels (Campbell; Bishop; Hall; Slaughter; Wojciechowscka), including one told from the point of view of one of Cabeza de Vaca's travel companions (Panger), a canto of an epic poem (Henderson), and a group of paintings (De Grazia). Among the historical studies based on the work, the recent article by José B. Fernández is of special interest to scholars of Spanish American literature. In it, he compares the presentation of Florida in Naufragios with the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's in La Florida del Inca. He finds the Inca's presentation unreliable because he had never been to Florida. Fernández also finds that the Peruvian's description of Florida and its inhabitants is flowery and not unlike a pastoral novel, while Cabeza de Vaca presents it as an inferno.

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[1] A brief summary of some of the major editions of Naufragios and its translations is found on pages 51-53 of Barrera.

Although Covey mentions many disciplines for which Naufragios is of great interest, he seems to ignore the fact that scholars of literature find value in the work as well. Anthologies of Spanish American literature generally include portions of the work as representative of the prose of discovery and conquest. Some literary historians recognize the work as novelesque (Téllez, 44-45). Regarding Cabeza de Vaca, Englekirk et al. state that "with great narrative skill in clear, rapid prose he provides a descriptive chronicle of adventures with genuine literary power" (14).

Approximately a decade ago, the first literary studies dedicated solely to the work appeared. Perhaps predictably, most of these studies have focused on either the relationship between history and art in Naufragios, or artistic aspects of the work. Lagmanovich approaches its artistic value by focusing on characteristics it shares with other works of literature. He mentions its clear style, use of foreshadowing, the presence of common literary motifs, and last applies literary typology to several episodes. One episode he identifies as "real maravilloso," another as "extraño," one as "fantástico," and three as "testimonial." Robert E.

Lewis examines the relationship between history and fiction in Naufragios through careful analysis of the work's "Prohemio."[22] He finds that because Cabeza de Vaca's journey is not characterized by exploits considered heroic in his day, he must pay extra attention to the text's narrative quality. He observes that another source of the history vs. fiction tension comes from Cabeza de Vaca's use of novelesque techniques to refer to "cossas muy nuevas" and to present himself as the work's protagonist. Galeota uses a structural approach to categorize Naufragios as travel literature. Dowling examines the work through speech-act theory, focusing on evaluative clauses. He notes that through such clauses Cabeza de Vaca sets himself up as the unerring hero of the story. He presents this as a basic reason why the fact vs. fiction issue of the work seems to persist--readers want to know whether the narrator has colored the events of the story to justify his actions to the king or whether he simply tells it as it was. Lastra examines Naufragios in conjunction with Cabeza de Vaca's other work, Comentarios. The conclusion he

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[22] This "Prohemio," written to Carlos V, appeared in the first two editions of the text (1542, 1555). Very few editions of the text since that time have included the "Prohemio."

draws is that the two constitute a literary unity, even though the "yo" in the former is an "él" in the latter. One additional work of note is Billy T. Hart's dissertation. In addition to being a critical edition of Naufragios, it includes a study of the text's style.

Let us now turn to an examination of the picaresque elements in the text.

1) Episodic Plot. The plot of Naufragios is entirely episodic. This fact is revealed by considering the overall storyline of the text: Cabeza de Vaca departs from Spain as part of an expedition to the New World. After stops in Santo Domingo and Cuba, the expedition goes to Florida. There, most of his travel companions fall victim to the elements, and he journeys on foot for eight years until reaching Mexico City. He eventually returns to the Iberian Peninsula. The most transparent episodic element in the text is the constant shift from milieu to milieu. No protagonist from the "classic" picaresque novels can claim to have traveled more extensively than Cabeza de Vaca. In terms both of miles traveled and variety of cultures he encounters, he far outdistances the champion traveler of picaresque novels--Guzmán de

Alfarache. With just three exceptions, the people Cabeza de Vaca meets disappear forever when he renews his journey. The exceptions are his three surviving companions who also eventually return to Spain with him. However, these men play very minor roles in the narrative; therefore, they do not bring stability to Cabeza de Vaca's world. Cause and effect relationships do not occur between episodes. Thus, single episodes become entirely insulated, and the field of possibilities for subsequent episodes is infinite. I find the structure of Naufragios to be as episodic as that of any "purely" picaresque novel.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The rapid narration of Cabeza de Vaca's journey is attested to in that the narrative spans less than 150 pages. Let us remember that his is a journey which lasted eight years and covered six thousand miles, and that he tells not only of the tragic events of his expedition but of his personal experiences with many native Indian tribes and his eventual return to "civilization." In a global perspective, the narrative's rhythm is vertiginous. To illustrate the rapid rhythm of the text, let us consider the action of Chapters Six and Seven (seven pages). At the outset of these chapters the expedition approaches a town. Cabeza de Vaca is sent

to ascertain whether the group can approach safely. Upon finding only women and children, the expedition enters the town. Shortly thereafter they are attacked. They take the women and children hostage, but free them just hours later. As a result, they suffer a series of attacks during the twenty-five days they spend in the area. During this period three expeditions of reconnaissance are conducted. They depart to another town. For nine days they travel with difficulty across lagoons, rivers, and swamps. They are threatened constantly by hostile natives. Upon reaching the other town Cabeza de Vaca is once again sent on a mission of reconnaissance. Two days later he returns to find his companions sick and wounded as the result of an Indian ambush more brutal than any previous. In a matter of a few pages, we accompany Cabeza de Vaca for more than a month, seeing through his pen several expeditions of reconnaissance, nine days of march, and numerous altercations with the Indians. In spite of the abundance of action, he manages to describe the terrain, the animals, the agricultural products, and the tactics of war used by the Indians. I find the rhythm as vertiginous as in any picaresque work.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Cabeza de Vaca is victimized

by the capriciousness of fate. The change in the work's name from Relación to Naufragios is evidence of Cabeza de Vaca's hard luck. His survival attests to the fact that at times good luck can also be his lot. Chapters eleven and twelve provide an excellent example of the Sisyphus rhythm. At this point in the narration, the expedition has suffered two shipwrecks, numerous assaults from Indians, the loss of many men, separation from the main body of the group, and intense hunger. Cabeza de Vaca has been wounded twice in altercations with Indians. In chapter eleven our hero finds himself along with eighty companions on an island after a shipwreck. Everyone is cold, hungry, and physically debilitated. Suddenly one hundred Indians arrive carrying bows and arrows. Their stature intimidates the Spaniards: "agora ellos fuesen grandes o no, nuestro miedo les hacía parecer gigantes" (41).[3] This predicament could easily have led to the end of the Europeans, but fortunately the natives present their arrows to them as a token of peace. They are provided with food for many days until they recover sufficient strength to launch their crafts once again. Luck has smiled on the expedition.

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[3] All references in this text to Naufragios come from the 1922 Espasa-Calpe edition of the work.

Nonetheless, shortly after renewing their voyage, a storm rocks them mercilessly. Now bad luck humiliates them, leaving them once again naked, hungry and cold. Eventually sixty-five of the eighty Spaniards who reached the island die. When they finally leave the island for good, the survivors, recognizing fate's hand in their lives, christen it "la isla de Mal Hado" (50). Fate pursues Cabeza de Vaca to the end of his journey. After his eight-year trek he arrives in Mexico City. When he finally departs for Spain, a storm destroys his ship and he must wait several more months to return. The next ship proves to be unseaworthy, and he must wait two additional weeks. He finally leaves in a three-ship flotilla, but within a few days the other two ships are lost from their view and they are forced to drop anchor in Cuba for another period of time. Again he departs for Spain, but arrives only after being threatened by pirates. As with any picaresque protagonist, Cabeza de Vaca is controlled by events rather than controlling them himself. Fate is a central part of the narrative.

4) Bodily Violence. Although Cabeza de Vaca does not present most of the difficulties which befall him as disgusting or grotesque, many incidents indicate that he and his companions were frequently subjected

to bodily violence. We could say that anyone who undertakes an expedition into unknown regions could expect hardships. However, sudden and violent tropical storms, multiple shipwrecks and Indian ambushes seem to be more than any one person deserves. Cabeza de Vaca surpasses most picaresque heroes in the physical punishment to which he is subjected.

5a) A Single Protagonist. As with the "classic" picaresque novels, Cabeza de Vaca is the unifying element of the text. He towers far above all secondary characters. A title such as "The Adventures of Cabeza de Vaca in North America" would reflect accurately the content of the work.

5b) Uncommon Origins. No mention is made of Cabeza de Vaca's origin in Naufragios.

5c) Cunning. Cabeza de Vaca shows a great capacity to adapt to the customs of the different Indian tribes he encounters. His Protean form, as is shown in the following section, makes his cunning transparent. Another evidence of his cunning is his almost unbelievable ability to communicate with many tribes of Indians in spite of their different languages. At one point he claims to have learned six of the languages. When verbal communication is impossible, he manages adequate communication through gestures.

5d) Protean Form. As with the classic picaro, Cabeza de Vaca takes upon himself varying masks and roles in order to survive. Among several tribes he plays the part of doctor/healer (and meets with some success because some of his patients are healed--he even claims to have raised one from the dead!). On one occasion he becomes a successful businessman, functioning as a middleman in trade between tribes. In a later episode he blesses the food and children like a clergyman. In another he promises rain, thus taking the role of rainmaker. He becomes a religious symbol to some tribes by presenting to them a certain type of gourd. He feigns anger to one tribe; by chance (once again, fate rules supreme) eight members of the tribe die shortly thereafter. As a result, the tribe fears him and gives him everything he desires. Cabeza de Vaca is able to change roles with the skill of a picaro. However, I do not see evidence to indicate that such adaptability signifies interior chaos or loss of personality. Rather, I think he plays these parts merely to survive.

5e) Alienation. In Pedro Lastra's study, he touches on the fascinating issue of the "Other" in Cabeza de Vaca's writings (93-94). The major "Others" I see in the text are his fellow Spaniards and the natives he

encounters on his way. As the text begins, he seems to be firmly bonded to his fellows. The first signs of any breakdown in this relationship come when his superior officer does not honor his advice and sends him on dangerous missions among the Indians. When he becomes separated from his companions, his loneliness and alienation become unbearable: "Dejo aquí de contar esto más largo, porque cada uno puede pensar lo que se pasaría en tierra tan extraña y tan mala, y tan sin ningún remedio de ninguna cosa, ni para estar ni para salir de ella" (27). His constant shift from milieu to milieu does not allow him to establish any lasting relationships. In fact, he does not want to establish any. Claudio Guillén's term "half-outsider," which refers to the picaro's state of alienation without being expelled from society, fits Cabeza de Vaca perfectly after the first part of his narration. He adapts so well to the customs and practices of the Indians that they come to respect him, and he them. Nevertheless, although he dresses like the Indians, speaks their language, practices their customs, and admires their generosity, in his heart he continues being a Spaniard and a Christian and yearns to be among his fellow Europeans. Whereas irony in most picaresque novels is linguistic, the

greatest irony of Naufragios is situational. When he is finally reunited with the "Christians" in Northern Mexico, they have treated the Indians cruelly and their conduct is hardly Christian. The Spaniards' behavior alienates him; although he is once again among his countrymen, he continues to be a "half-outsider."

5f) Internal Instability. Cabeza de Vaca does not seem to show signs of internal instability as do most picaros. His eight years of perseverance to arrive in Mexico City testify of his resolve. Also of note is his religious stability. He attributes all successes to God and toward the end of his narrative he even preaches to the Indians. The hero of Naufragios seems to enjoy great interior stability.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. Naufragios is very poor in passages which reflect a philosophical bent on the part of its narrator. Any trace of philosophy is strictly Christian. The following is the most extended passage in the text dealing with Christian philosophy:

> No tenía, cuando en estos trabajos me veía, otro remedio ni consuelo sino pensar en la pasión de nuestro redemptor Jesucristo y en la sangre que por mí derramó, y considerar

> cuánto más sería el tormento que de las espinas él padesció que no aquél que yo entonces sufría (86).

Similar shorter passages are scarce; rather than wax philosophical in his writings, Cabeza de Vaca prefers to tell of the events of his travels and to describe the people and places he visited.

6) The First-person Point of View. Naufragios is indeed narrated from the first-person point of view. It is not a journal being written while the events described occur, but an account of past adventures. We do not find a fragmentation of the narrator into a narrating self and a participating self.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. From the sections above on fate and bodily violence, it is apparent that the world described by Cabeza de Vaca is both unkind and chaotic. The chaos of the world is seen in that he never knows whether the next Indian tribe will be friendly or hostile, or whether the next geographical area will bring physical relief or deprivation. The world's unrelenting, unkind nature can be seen in numerous passages, such as the following:

> . . .hallamos por la tierra muy gran cantidad de mosquitos de tres maneras, que

> son muy malos y enojosos, y todo lo más del verano nos daban mucha fatiga; y para defendernos de ellos hacíamos al derredor de la gente muchos fuegos de leña podrida y mojada, para que no ardiesen y hiciesen humo; y esta defensión nos daba otro trabajo, porque en toda la noche no hacíamos sino llorar, del humo que en los ojos nos daba, y sobre eso, gran calor que nos causaban los muchos fuegos, y salíamos a dormir a la costa; y si alguna vez podíamos dormir, recordábannos a palos, para que tornásemos a encender los fuegos (68).

8) Physical Survival. Certainly staying alive is one of the major recurring themes in Naufragios. David Lagmanovich finds in his study on Naufragios that the word "hambre" occurs forty-six times in the text and that many other times the concept of hunger is conveyed through expressions such as "sin hallar otra cosa que comer" (29). The problem of food becomes so extreme that the expedition is forced to eat its horses. Still more extreme is the situation in which members of the group resort to cannibalism. References to extreme thirst, bodily exposure to the elements, assaults by Indians, and regaining strength

after illness, injury, or long marches are manifold. Physical survival is a recurring theme of utmost importance in the narrative.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. Certainly Cabeza de Vaca makes mention of a great many types of people in Naufragios. However, with the possible exception of Pánfilo de Narvaez, the leader of the original expedition, emphasis is not on individuals but on groups. In addition, little effort is expended on characterization through description and analysis; we come to know people mostly through their actions. For example, among the Spaniards, the "types" would include Narvaez, the hard-luck, hardheaded leader; the desperates, who turn to cannibalism when faced with extreme hunger; the survivors, who adapt to each situation and return to civilization, as does the narrator; and the slave-traders, who are driven by greed and treat Indians as subhuman. Types of Indian tribes include those that are overtly hostile and warfaring; those that are more cunning and treacherous in their military operations; those that are amicable to the Spaniards and supply them with protection and means of subsistence; those that are superstitious and accept Cabeza de Vaca as a "Child of the Sun"; those that seem receptive to Christian teachings; those that

are roguish; and those that loot other Indian tribes. Never do we encounter types such as the squire or blind man in Lazarillo or the schoolmaster in El buscón. Neither do we find characters presented with a satiric or parodic intent, as happens in many picaresque texts. Nonetheless, in Naufragios we certainly are presented with a vast gallery of human types.

More space than usual has been dedicated to the picaresque elements of Naufragios. This has been done to illustrate in a concrete way the existence of a strong relationship between the picaresque and travel literature. Critics of travel literature seem most able to see this relationship, as evidenced by this statement by Sandra Rosenberg: "The particular form of fiction the travel-book most resembles is the picaresque novel" (40).[4]

By way of contrast, literary historians who deal with the picaresque novel seem unaware of any kinship with travel literature as they are driven to seek possible influences, attempt to outline development of

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[4] Percy G. Adams makes a similar statement: "Of all satiric fiction the kind perhaps most closely and most often associated with travel literature is that vaguely and uncertainly called 'picaresque'. . ." (198-199).

the genre, or identify elements common to the picaresque and literature which precedes it. The works most commonly mentioned as probable ancestors of the picaresque are El libro de buen amor and La Celestina (Chandler 184-87; Whitbourn 1-5). In both these cases, the relationship between the works and the picaresque tradition is thematic. Trotaconventos in Juan Ruiz's masterpiece, and several of the characters in La Celestina are picaresque types in that they participate in discreditable activities and are aided in such by their cunning.

Other critics have linked the picaresque tradition to classical literature, especially to The Golden Ass by Lucius Apuleius. Some find similarities with other non-Spanish literatures, such as Arabic, Catalan, French, German, Portuguese and Italian.[35]

I have found no reference in writings on the picaresque to the similarities between travel literature and the picaresque. Nonetheless, as has been shown in the preceding pages, Naufragios, as a representative of travel literature, shares many

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[35] The bulk of Jesús Helí Hernández's book deals with possible ties the picaresque tradition has with Italian literature. His introductory chapter provides a summary of what other critics have written regarding the picaresque's relationship to the literatures mentioned above.

elements with picaresque literature. The relationship I am suggesting here is not primarily thematic, as with El libro de buen amor and La Celestina, but rather structural. The episodic plot, which seems to be the only possible way to narrate a journey, lends itself to having just one protagonist who struggles with feelings of alienation, to showing the strength of fate, and to meeting an array of types of people.

Obviously, since Lazarillo de Tormes's author is unknown, the matter of influence cannot be pursued with any authority. Notwithstanding this obstacle, speculation on the subject has been fecund and stimulating. Parallelisms between the Adam of the picaresque and works published before it certainly exist. Suggesting that Naufragios had an influence on Lazarillo would be an unpromising conjecture, although the possibility exists. Suggesting that travel literature had an influence on Lazarillo is a much more promising hypothesis. The fact that the traditional date of publication given for Lazarillo is 1554 increases the possibility of placing travel literature in the line of development of the picaresque. The narratives of the conquerors and explorers of the New World were coming to light in the first half of the sixteenth century. For example,

Naufragios, as has been mentioned, was published in Spain in 1542. Thus, travel literature, especially with regard to structure, may have had an impact on the origins of the picaresque tradition.

Returning to the matter of Naufragios' place in Mexico's literary history, perhaps it should not be viewed merely as a forerunner of the novel, thus relegating it to a nebulous, undefined status, but as a proud great uncle of El Periquillo Sarniento. Without question, the Periquillo is a direct descendant in the picaresque family. If travel literature did indeed have an influence on Lazarillo, then Naufragios, as a full-blooded member of that family, can boast of at least association with that influence. The Periquillo and all other heirs of the picaresque tradition in Mexico likely have Naufragios in their family tree. Thus, in a way heretofore unseen, Naufragios plays an important role in the emergence of the novel in Mexico.

Chapter Three

> Wherein the genre of Sigüenza y Góngora's Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez is discussed and its picaresque qualities pointed out succinctly, after which we see how the hero of this tale of misfortunes (or at any rate, the narrator of them) elicited the sympathy of readers (implied and otherwise) by using cleverly devised stratagems that, while not necessarily evoking tearful responses, might well have brought to the hero a greatly needed material recompense.

The original title of Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez, published in 1690 by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, is an unwieldy monstrosity appropriate to the baroque tendencies of its day: Infortunios que Alonso Ramírez, natural de la ciudad de San Juan de Puerto Rico, padeció, así en poder de ingleses piratas que lo apresaron en las Islas Filipinas como navegando por sí solo, y sin derrota, hasta varar en la costa de Yucatán: Consiguiendo por este medio dar vuelta al mundo.[1]

Infortunios is a bothersome text to literary historians who seek tidy solutions to the matter of genre. As with Naufragios, it far predates the

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[1] All references to Infortunios by page number in this study refer to the 1967 Editorial Cordillera edition edited by Alba Vallés Formosa.

publication of El Periquillo Sarniento, the text overwhelmingly recognized as Spanish America's and Mexico's first novel. The idea that any prose written or published in Spanish America before Lizardi's masterpiece can be no more than a forerunner of the novel seems to be firmly entrenched among scholars of Spanish American narrative. This idea is understandable, given the exceptionally small number of texts written in Spanish America before the Periquillo which even remotely resemble a novel.

In addition to Infortunios's date of publication, which disqualifies it for many from the ranks of novels, the circumstances behind its writing further complicate its generic classification. Alonso Ramírez is believed to have been a real person. The narrative scenario revealed in the final pages of the text--Ramírez goes to Sigüenza y Góngora after his adventures to have the savant record them-- is considered accurate. Thus, some critics take the text to be a factual travel narrative--a "relación." However, since Sigüenza y Góngora is acknowledged as the text's author, but the book is narrated in the first-person, from Ramírez's point of view, at least some degree of narrative transformation has occurred. Without a transcription of the oral account given by

Ramírez, we are unable to ascertain with certainty how much of the narrative is Ramírez's ("factual"), and how much is Sigüenza y Góngora's ("fictional"). This narrative situation strikes me as one that could only be found in a novel.[2] Infortunios holds a unique place in Mexican narrative--we have either a strikingly "novelistic" precursor of the Periquillo or a novel which precedes it.

Not surprisingly, much of the critical discussion devoted to Sigüenza y Góngora's text centers around the topic of generic classification. That topic typically surfaces when it is discussed in literary histories and anthologies. The following statements are representative of these types of writing: Carlos González Peña calls Infortunios "nuestra primera novela" (99); Fernando Alegría includes it in a long list of works written prior to the Periquillo, admitting that critics see in them novelistic characteristics, but stating emphatically that "Ninguna de las obras citadas es novela y toda discusión al respecto es enteramente ociosa" (16);

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[2] I find the narrative situation in Hasta no verte Jesús Mío, published by Elena Poniatowska in 1969, to be exactly parallel to that of Infortunios. However, the classification of Poniatowska's book as a novel has never been questioned. Hasta no verte is discussed in a later chapter.

Angel Flores states that "In Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez Sigüenza y Góngora gave Latin America its first novel" (The Literature of Spanish America 1:212-13); John Brushwood says of the referent that "A novelist might indeed have made a real novel of it" (Mexico in Its Novel 62); Heriberto García Rivas classifies the text as a "libro de viajes" (1:355); Galo René Pérez insists that the Periquillo is Spanish America's first novel and mentions Infortunios in a long list of works he calls "antecedentes del género" (17). This rapid sampling from histories and an anthology seems to show that most critics think that the work is not a novel. However, this judgement is by no means unanimous.

Literary critics who have devoted entire articles to the work tend to look at it as a novel, as evidenced in the writings of Willebaldo Bazarte Cerdán, Raúl Castagnino and Lucrecio Pérez Blanco. In fact, the focus of Bazarte Cerdán's study is literary history and Infortunios's place therein. Although he argues that the text is a "novela histórica de aventuras," he is unwilling to divorce himself completely from the traditional view of Spanish American literary history: "Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez es nuestra primera novela, y. . . El

Periquillo Sarniento es nuestra primera novela por cuanto a su técnica, estilo, desarrollo, envergadura, tema, tratado, etc." (106).

Most of the studies devoted to Infortunios deal with its relationship to the picaresque tradition. Alba Vallés Formosa comments on the refined language and baroque tropes used in the book, links it to Robinson Crusoe, and notes its picaresque plot and the picaresque theme of serving many masters. However, she cautions against seeing the text as wholly picaresque because of its non-picaresque tone.

The title of Raúl Castagnino's study, "Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora o la picaresca a la inversa" is based on his view that the work's protagonist is not a picaro. This opinion has its basis in the fact that Alonso Ramírez lacks uncommon origins and that he enjoys internal stability.

David Lagmanovich finds that three elements of the work link it closely to the picaresque tradition: the constant comings and goings of the protagonist, the theme of hunger, and the presence of humor. In another vein, Lagmanovich sees similarities between certain passages of the work and "tremendismo" and others as having characteristics similar to the "novelas de la tierra." He also comments on the

narrative situation of the book, calling the episode in which Ramírez asks Sigüenza y Góngora to write his story "inusitadamente unamunesco" (8).

María Casas de Faunce is the most thorough critic in pointing out Infortunios's ties to the picaresque. She sees the following picaresque characteristics in the work:

> 1) su punto de vista narrativo en primera persona; 2) la edad del protagonista; 3) sus viajes; 4) el hambre como tema recurrente; 5) el servir a varios amos; 6) algunas burlas y pillerías, tanto del protagonista como de otros personajes y algunas observaciones chistosas del narrador; 7) el sector social examinado corresponde a una esfera baja; 8) algunas evaluaciones críticas sobre ciertos tipos mencionados (20).

Casas de Faunce further states that the book is not entirely picaresque because it is not exactly a novel, the protagonist does not have the ignoble outlook of a picaro, there is no satiric look at a gallery of social types, and the work's tone is subdued.

Julie Greer Johnson's study finds that

Infortunios has a striking affinity to Guzmán de Alfarache. She points out several remarkably parallel episodes in the works, and calls Infortunios "Sigüenza y Góngora's clever adaptation of certain picaresque elements for his historical presentation" an effective narrative technique.

Raquel Chang-Rodríguez recognizes that Infortunios draws on the picaresque tradition, but she claims that it also subverts and transgresses that same tradition. She bases this claim on Alexander A. Parker's very limited view of the picaresque. Contrary to one of Parker's listed characteristics of the picaro, Alonso Ramírez stays within the bounds of the law.

Aníbal González approaches Infortunios's relationship with the picaresque in terms of its narrative voice. He finds that its narrative voice differs from the typical picaresque voice in that it is humble, respectful of higher authority, and it is rarely critical. He also states that there are no extra-textual references to the person Alonso Ramírez, which makes discussion of whether the work is a novel or not even more difficult. He claims that in spite of the non-traditional quality of the narrative voice, as well as differences as to whether the work is a

novel or not, it should be considered a full member of the picaresque family.

The articles of Alan Soons, James Cummins, and Lucrecio Pérez Blanco deal with matters other than literary history and the picaresque tradition. Soons sees Infortunios as a text which shows "the intersection of two conceptions of the world" (201). The Viceroy and pirates are representative of the old-world view of an "enchanted world," while the shore-dwellers in the Yucatán see the world as "disenchanted."

James Cummins's articles on Infortunios deal with the historical context of the work, especially with regard to the Philippines. In his most recent article he cites circumstantial evidence indicating that the text is historically accurate. He also claims that Sigüenza's purpose in writing the book, besides educating people with regard to geographical and navigational information, was to "stimulate general concern as he sounded a warning of Spanish vulnerability both in the colonial territories and on the seas" (300).

Pérez Blanco notes elements in the text which are common in novels, including the first person point of view and the themes of journey, searching for

paradise, shipwreck, and virtue. He claims that rather than being based on the picaresque tradition, its model is the Greek novel. Elements it shares with the Greek novel include a military episode, a judgement episode, a geographical explanation, secondary intrigues, pathos, circular structure, and a quest.

Because Infortunios's picaresque nature, or lack thereof, has been discussed at length by other critics, I do so here in a very abbreviated form.

1) Episodic Plot. Infortunios's plot is indeed episodic. Alonso's extensive travels take us to many different milieus, but his constant presence unifies the text.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The pace of the book's narration is certainly vertiginous. We are whisked with the protagonist from place to place, from situation to situation at a breakneck pace.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Alonso refers more than once to his "estrella," thus acknowledging luck's influence in his life. This is evidenced by the obvious Sisyphus rhythm of several episodes.

4) Bodily Violence. As with Naufragios, the title of the text at hand testifies as to the misfortunes of

the protagonist. Alonso's time as a prisoner of pirates is a time of extreme physical and psychological horror for him and his companions. Many times they are threatened, beaten, whipped and tortured. One man is forced to eat human excrement and at one point human flesh is served. Several of Alonso's companions die as a result of the pirates' cruel treatment.

5a) A Single Protagonist. Alonso Ramírez is the work's only major character. All other characters are secondary.

5b) Uncommon Origins. Alonso's origins are not uncommon. He knows who his parents are, is not an orphan, and seems to have had a reasonably stable childhood.

5c) Cunning. Since our protagonist survives his ordeals he obviously has some degree of intelligence and mettle. However, Alonso's cunning is not emphasized in the text.

5d) Protean Form. As has been noted by other critics, Alonso is servant to many masters. In fact, in the course of his short narrative, he exercises twelve professions. Although he does not don masks, his ability to change professional hats numerous times attests to his protean form.

5e) Alienation. Our protagonist's alienation is never emphasized in the text, but he is never a complete insider with any group of people. He is even rejected by his relatives. Loneliness is by no means unknown to Alonso.

5f) Internal Instability. Unlike the typical picaro, Alonso maintains firm internal stability. His religious convictions constitute an anchor to him throughout the text.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. The narrator Alonso is not given to philosophizing; rather, he narrates his life's events as he remembers them.

6) The First-person Point of View. As has been noted, Infortunios is indeed narrated in the autobiographical, first-person form typical of picaresque narratives as well as travel narratives.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. David Lagmanovich describes the bleak world of our protagonist: "pobreza inaudita, general crueldad, inhumanas diversiones de los opresores, antropofagia, coprología; un compendio de deshumanización, contado con los colores del más descarnado realismo" (9).

8) Physical Survival. The theme of physical survival surfaces with great regularity in the text. Hunger is a constant presence, and not unknown to the

protagonist and his readers are intensely cold weather, thirst, and sickness.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. Although not vast and not presented satirically, we meet a number of human types in Infortunios, including Alonso's masters, pirates, Spanish traitors, and wife-sellers.

In the initial paragraph of Infortunios, the narrator states that his purpose in writing the text is twofold: to entertain and to arouse the reader's compassion. Throughout the text our narrator fulfills his promise to entertain with little effort by merely telling of his harrowing experiences; on the other hand, his goal of arousing the reader's compassion receives his constant attention.

A letter from Sigüenza y Góngora to New Spain's viceroy precedes the text. This letter gives us insight into why the narrator is so anxious to have the reader feel sorry for him. We learn that the Viceroy is the implied reader of Infortunios. After praising the Viceroy's excellence, prudence, heritage and generosity, Sigüenza y Góngora asks rhetorically "quién dudará el que sea [Alonso Ramírez] objeto de su munificencia en lo de adelante" (32). Before closing, he calls Alonso's travels a "peregrinación lastimosa,"

thus adding a religious connotation to the protagonist's sufferings. The letter ends with reiterative gratitude for the Viceroy's liberality. In a nutshell, Sigüenza y Góngora is flattering New Spain's highest government official and preparing him to find such heartfelt sympathy for Alonso that he will reward him in monetary terms. The narrator's ability to elicit compassion is hoped to be reflected in a generous financial gift from the Viceroy.

Let us now examine the devices the narrator uses in the text to arouse the reader's sympathy. The process begins in the work's opening paragraph:

> Quiero que se entretenga el curioso que esto leyere por algunas horas con las noticias de lo que a mí me causó tribulaciones de muerte por muchos años. Y aunque de sucesos que sólo subsistieron en la idea de quien los finge se suelen deducir máximas y aforismos que entre lo deleitable de la narración que entretiene cultiven la razón de quien en ello se ocupa, no será esto lo que yo aquí intente, sino solicitar lástimas que, aunque posteriores a mis trabajos, harán por lo menos tolerable su memoria, trayéndolas a compañía de las que

> me tenía a mí mismo cuando me aquejaban. No por esto estoy tan de parte de mi dolor que quiera incurrir en la fea nota de pusilánime y así omitiendo menudencias que a otros menos atribulados que yo lo estuve pudieran dar asunto de muchas quejas, diré lo primero que me ocurriere por ser en la serie de mis sucesos lo más notable (41).

Although his avowed aim in this statement is to entertain and arouse sympathy, our narrator spends much more time and effort in the paragraph on the latter than on the former. Even as he expresses a desire to entertain he uses tragic terms to describe what he is going to narrate: "tribulaciones de muerte." In the same sentence, he cleverly sets up a temporal contrast between how long the reader will enjoy the text ("horas") and the time he spent in death's throes ("años"). In the next sentence, he contrasts his text with imaginary events, indicating that his tribulations are not just a story, but real. This distinction is obviously crucial to obtaining a sympathetic response from the reader. He marks this contrast by stating that while fictional accounts elicit proverbial sayings, this is not his intent, since his text is not based on imaginary events. When

he finally solicits sympathy overtly, he claims that the suffering brought about by the events narrated continues merely by recollection. The idea that the reader's compassion will make his memory of the events he narrates more tolerable seems especially pathetic. In the third sentence, he contrasts himself with other men who would complain at length over what have been mere trifles to our narrator. One underlying message in this sentence is that he has no need for exaggeration. His disgust for faintheartedness seems designed to keep the reader from seeing him as a whiner even though he is requesting sympathy. Thus, in the first paragraph of Infortunios, although his promise of a good story remains only a promise, the narrator's attempt to arouse the reader's compassion has already begun.

Several of the tactics the narrator employs to elicit sympathy in the opening paragraph are used frequently throughout the text. Perhaps the most effective of these stratagems is the use of contrast or counterpoint. The strength of this technique probably lies in the baroque tendency to base works of art on tension and counterpoint. One manifestation of this device has been mentioned as typical of picaresque texts-- the Sisyphus rhythm --which is

especially apparent in the first half of Infortunios.

The first time Alonso starts to feel that he is in control of his life and can stop worrying about his physical survival is when he is employed by a merchant, Juan López. This stability is threatened when López falls deathly ill, but Alonso is able to nurse him back to health. With his future stability seemingly ensured, his master suddenly dies. His plight seems especially tragic because he appeared to be on the verge of perpetual prosperity.

Some time thereafter Alonso manages to marry into an honorable, established, affluent family. This again seems to render secure his financial position. Not only does he enjoy economic steadiness, but his wife nurtures him with love, thus providing for his emotional security. Nonetheless, she dies in childbirth less than a year after their marriage. All of his ties to the family are permanently cut. His return to rootlessness and struggles is made worse because it comes in the wake of a taste of stability.

The moment in which the Sisyphus rhythm jolts Alonso most violently occurs near the Philippines. For some time he has worked diligently as a seafaring merchant and is eventually rewarded by becoming the commander of a ship and its crew of twenty-five men.

His outlook on life is entirely positive: "Conseguí por este medio, no sólo mercadear en cosas en que hallé ganancia y en que me prometía para lo venidero bastante logro, sino el ver diversas ciudades y puertos de la India en diferentes viajes" (54). However, on his first voyage as commander, having now a future full of hope, his ship and crew fall captive to pirates. Once again, the tragedy is more tragic because it is contrasted with a hard-earned moment of great promise.

Another type of contrast the narrator uses skillfully as a counterpoint to his travails is the presentation of various settings as beautiful and attractive. The first such description is of his homeland, Puerto Rico:

> Hácenla célebre los refrescos que hallan en su deleitosa aguada cuantos desde la antigua navegan sedientos a la Nueva España; la hermosura de su bahía, lo incontrastable del Morro que la defiende; las cortinas y baluartes coronados de artillería que la aseguran (42).

After painting this beautiful picture of Puerto Rico, he explains that hard times have come to the island

and caused poverty among its inhabitants. Thus, at the age of thirteen he leaves his homeland. His struggles somehow seem more intense because they are contrasted with the beauties of the island.

Alonso's capture and subsequent nightmarish interval as a prisoner of the pirates is contrasted not only with his former economic stability, but with the beauty of Manila:

> Hállase allí para el sustento y vestuario cuanto se quiere a moderado precio. . . Esto, y lo hermoso y fortalecido de la ciudad, coadyuvado con la amenidad de su río y huertas, y lo demás que la hace célebre entre las colonias que tienen los europeos en el Oriente, obliga a pasar gustosos a los que en ella viven (54).

Alonso's frequent reference to a site's defenses reveals his yearning for stability. Once again, his plight seems more pitiable because it contrasts with beautiful, and secure, surroundings.

The structure of Infortunios is another device which is effectively used to arouse the compassion of the reader. The text is divided into seven sections. The first recounts Alonso's childhood and his

struggles in many towns and with many masters in Mexico. The second section gives nautical information for the trip Alonso takes from Acapulco to the Philippines, tells of the places he visits after arriving in the Orient, and relates his capture by pirates. Part three describes Alonso's agonizing experiences as a captive of the pirates. Part four gives a brief account of how he and his men are finally released from the bondage of the buccaneers, but most of the chapter consists of the narrator's reflections on his time with the pirates. In part five Alonso and his company sail and eventually find their way to the Caribbean Sea, where a tropical storm destroys their ship. Part six tells of Alonso's heroism at sea when he helps his companions reach shore safely. They travel northward and discover they are in the Yucatán peninsula. In the final section Alonso and his men travel to a number of Mexican cities. Alonso eventually tells his story to the Viceroy and Sigüenza y Góngora.

In the Cordillera edition of the text, the length of each section is as follows:

Section	Number of Pages
I	9
II	8
III	15
IV	10
V	8
VI	10
VII	12

Section three, the text's longest, is the part in which Alonso recounts the majority of his most horrifying experiences. In terms of structure, he allows himself extra opportunity to tell in full detail the most startling events of his life.

Section four begins with Alonso's final, and most life-threatening experience with the pirates. His captors finally decide that their captives are no longer of use to them. They meet in council to decide their victims' fate. The discussion as to whether to free Alonso and his men or kill them becomes so heated that the pirates almost come to blows among themselves. At this moment, the narrator overtly seeks the empathy of his reader: "póngase en mi lugar quien aquí llegare y discurra de qué tamaño sería el susto y la congoja con que yo estuve" (76). The narrator could not have found a more effective moment for such a plea. If the reader heeds his advice, sympathy for the protagonist seems inevitable.

Section four is unique to the text in terms of

structure because while events are narrated in chronological order throughout almost the entire text, in this section the narrator suspends the chronology. During most of the text, preterite is the predominant tense. This allows the narrator to move swiftly from event to event. However, in section four of the text imperfect becomes the prevalent tense. This change allows the narrator to look retrospectively at his entire time of captivity rather each individual event. Thus, not only is Alonso's horrifying time with the pirates given full account in the longest section of the book, but its horror is extended by breaking the narrative's verbal and chronological norms in the following section.

Section seven is the text's second longest section. Although the adventures described therein are not as horrifying as those related in section three, the narrator gives himself ample opportunity to show that his suffering continues into the present. This focus on the present brings immediacy to his pleas for sympathy and financial relief. Thus, although the structure of Infortunios is simple, the narrator astutely makes use of its possibilities for his purposes.

David Lagmanovich calls the tone of Infortunios

"realismo naturalista, afín al concepto contemporáneo de 'tremendismo'" ("Para una Caracterización. . . 8). I consider this to be one of the text's most effective devices in eliciting the reader's emotional response. The following is an example of the many "tremendista" passages found in the text:

> . . .metiéronme a mí y a los míos en la bodega, desde donde percibí grandes voces y un trabucazo; pasado un rato y habiéndome hecho salir afuera, vide mucha sangre, y mostrándomela, dijeron ser de uno de los míos a quien habían muerto, y que lo mismo sería de mí si no respondía a propósito de lo que me preguntaban. . . (61).

The narrator does not save his reader from the sight of blood or horror. However, rather than expounding on these rather violent and shocking scenes, the narrator tells of the events without focusing on his emotions, as is exemplified in the above passage. The narrator seems to glide past repulsive events without great ado, thus giving the reader the impression that he has suffered so greatly that occurrences which are shocking to us are commonplace to him.

Note the narrator's apparent emotional detachment

in the narration of the following horrifying scenes:

> . . .desenvainados los alfanges con muy grandes voces y vituperios dieron en mí.
>
> Jamás me recelé de la muerte con mayor susto que en este instante; pero conmutáronla en tantas patadas y pescozones que descargaron en mí, que me dejaron incapaz de movimiento por muchos días (62).

> Entre los despojos. . . estaba un brazo humano de los que perecieron en el incendio; de éste cortó cada uno una pequeña presa, y alabando el gusto de tan linda carne entre repetidas saludes le dieron fin.
>
> Miraba yo con escándalo y congoja de tan bestial acción. . . (64).

> . . .les cortó las manos a dos caballeros portugueses que allí asistían, por leves causas (65).

> Contravinieron a este mandato dos de mis compañeros. . . y mostrándose piadosos en no quitarles la vida luego al instante los condenaron a recibir seis azotes de cada

> uno. Por ser ellos, ciento cincuenta, llegaron los azotes a novecientos, y fue tal el rebenque y tan violento el impulso con que los daban, que amanecieron muertos los pobres al siguiente día (72).

With the exception of the passage describing the pirates' cannibalism, the narrator never intervenes with his personal reaction to the event. Inclusion of these and other graphically violent scenes, with very little emotional intervention by the narrator, shocks and inspires pathos in the reader.

The final strategy for arousing the reader's sympathy which is examined here has to do with the character of the protagonist. Several critics do not see Alonso as a picaresque character because he is far too responsible, specifically because the motive of his self-imposed travels is to improve his station in life through hard work. His theory is that "sería a medida del trabajo la recompensa" (47). Thus, he works hard to serve his masters and he is loyal to them as well. What is more, rather than hold a cynical outlook on his fellow beings, he is quick to praise those he finds worthy of commendation. These details about the character of our protagonist are crucial to his gaining the reader's compassion.

Alonso has obviously not brought his trials upon himself through his caprice; rather, fate has dealt him heavy blows. The reader is much more apt to feel sorry for someone who is a victim of extenuating circumstances than for one who is a victim of his own doing.

In summary, the narrator has done a very effective job at arousing the reader's sympathy by the use of many devices, among them the use of contrast and counterpoint, skillful utilization of the text's structure, stark narration of violent events with a minimum of emotional commentary from the narrator, and the presentation of the protagonist as a loyal, hard-working individual who is a victim of circumstances.

When, in the third to the last paragraph of the text, Alonso relates that he visits Sigüenza y Góngora and tells him his story, the result of this visit and narration is then given:

> Compadecido [Sigüenza] de mis trabajos, no sólo formó esta Relación en que se contienen, sino que me consiguió con la intercesión y súplicas que en mi presencia hizo al Excmo. Sr. Virrey, Decreto para que D. Sebastián de Guzmán y Córdoba, factor veedor y proveedor de las cajas reales me

> socorriese, como se hizo.
>
> Otro para que se me entretenga en la Real Armada de Barlovento hasta acomodarme. . .
>
> Ayudóme para mi viaje con lo que pudo. . . (114).

These comments seem to have been added to the text after it was originally sent to the Viceroy. We see here that Alonso's efforts to arouse compassion in Sigüenza y Góngora are successful. Of more importance, we learn that the narrator's efforts to do the same with the text's implied reader, the Viceroy, are not only successful but profitable. This postlude signals triumph for the narrator-- he has indeed accomplished his aim to entertain the reader and arouse his compassion.

Chapter Four

Wherein note is made of the historical importance of El Periquillo Sarniento, the renowned symbol of the emergence of the novel in Spanish America, and its picaresque elements examined, after which the art of secondary character portrayal in the text is studied, with particular attention paid to the noteworthy depiction of Celidonio Matamoros, alias Dr. Purgante.

The year of publication of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's masterpiece, El Periquillo Sarniento, is one of the best known in Mexico and Spanish America's literary history. Because of the Periquillo's appearance in 1816, most literary historians recognize this as the year of the birth of the novel in Mexico and Spanish America.

The Periquillo's literary significance further increases in the scope of this study, since it is by far the best known of Mexico's picaresque narratives. It is the point of reference for all the other texts referred to herein. Rather than expound on its context, it seems most useful merely to state that the Periquillo creates a literary point of reference for all other Mexican picaresque narratives.[1]

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[1] Pages 143-48 of Spell's Bridging the Gap and 32-34 of Casas de Faunce expound on the literary and historical context of the Periquillo.

As can be expected, since the Periquillo is a well known and complex work, it has received considerable critical attention.[2] The critic who has done the most extensive work on Fernández de Lizardi and his literary production is Jefferson Rea Spell. In fact, his dissertation, entitled "The Life and Works of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi," is "the first work based on a Mexican writer offered to the academic English-speaking world" (Spell, Bridging 8). In this book, Bridging The Gap, and many additional articles, Spell not only gives considerable information about El Pensador Mexicano's life, but tells of the Periquillo's genesis, its socio-historical background, its possible sources, and differences among its first four editions. Spell states that Lizardi holds a unique place in Mexican literature:

> He created the first Mexican novel; he brought that form of fiction down to the level of the common people; he linked the Mexican novel in peculiar fashion with that of a typical form of Spanish literature; in

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[2] See David William Foster, pages 126-34 for bibliographical information on the text's criticism.

> his attention to realistic detail and color, he was a forerunner of the costumbristas; and he turned the attention of later Mexican writers to the fascinating material offered by the colorful life about them (Bridging 271).

Another critic who has done a great deal of work with the Periquillo is Jack Emory Davis, who has worked with the text from a linguistic perspective. He has shown how uniquely Mexican expressions and vocabulary are employed extensively in the text.

A recent article by Nancy Vogeley compares Lizardi to twentieth-century writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, and Guillermo Cabrera Infante in that they have all "attacked the pomposity and pretense of inherited literary taste and relied heavily on overlooked indigenous speech styles to create a hybrid product" (796). She points out that many voices from Colonial Mexico are heard in the text, whether they are represented directly or parroted through Periquillo's speech, even though at times it is in a parodic context. Thus, according to Vogeley, the Periquillo portrays, and symbolically reconciles, many of the diverse elements of Colonial Mexico.

Let us now turn to an examination of the work's picaresque elements.

1) Episodic Plot. The Periquillo's plot structure is not as purely episodic as the ideal picaresque model. It falls short in that Periquillo is not the only link between all of the episodes. Several secondary characters appear in more than one episode, especially in the first and last sections of the book. For example, Januario, better known by his nickname of Juan Largo, appears in an episode which takes place at a school, then later in another which takes place at a hacienda, then in a series of episodes in which he and Periquillo work together as gambling partners, and finally as a thief. In fact, many of the characters whom Periquillo meets during the course of his life appear again in the book's final episodes. In spite of the foregoing, the overall structure of the book is indeed episodic, and Periquillo is the only major link from beginning to end. Thus, although not absolutely episodic in the pure picaresque sense, the Periquillo remains effectively episodic.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The overall narrative pace of the Periquillo is not at all dizzying. It is well known that the bulk of the book's more than 400 pages

is made up of digressions which do not take the story forward at all. In the first chapter, following in the literary footsteps of Guzmán de Alfarache, the narrator even warns his readers of the digressive nature of the text: "Perdonad, pedazos míos, estas digresiones que rebosan naturalmente de mi pluma, y no serán muy de tarde en tarde en el discurso de mi obra" (13).[3] Even though short portions of the text feature rapid transitions between Periquillo's adventures, most notably during the book's second portion, these sections are insignificant compared to the pace of the majority of the text, which is not at all vertiginous.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. With some regularity, the narrator speaks of "la fortuna" or uses the expression "quiso Dios." Such expressions indicate that the narrator/protagonist at least perceives that he is not in complete control of his life, but rather is victim to the whims of fate or a higher being. A famous incident from Periquillo's life which indicates that he is subject to bad luck comes from the episode in which he is an apprentice to Nicolás, the pharmacist. He causes the death of a man when, through bad luck, he unintentionally gives the man arsenic instead of

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[3] I quote here and throughout this study from the Porrúa edition of the text.

the drug he thought he was providing. Furthermore, Periquillo's uncanny reunions with a great many of his former acquaintances, toward the book's end, provides added evidence of fate's hand. Although it is not a motif which maintains a high profile throughout the text, luck is a significant factor in Periquillo's life.

4) Bodily Violence. On occasion Periquillo is the victim of physical abuse; likewise, he occasionally metes out physical injury as well. Examples of the former include an unfortunate experience when he is victimized by a bull in a bullfight, a beating by a mother who suspects him of advances toward her daughter, and a thrashing at the hands of losing gambling opponents. An example of Periquillo causing injury is the episode in which he inflicts unbelievable pain on a woman with a toothache while serving as apprentice to a barbero. Thus, bodily violence is indeed a theme in the Periquillo.

5a) A Single Protagonist. Pedro Sarmiento, better known by his nickname of Periquillo Sarniento, is the work's only possible protagonist. All other characters in the book are clearly secondary.

5b) Uncommon Origins. Periquillo is a son in a middle class family. Both his parents are alive

during the early part of his life, although he perceives that their role in his upbringing was too minor. His mother spoils him by never disciplining him, and his father's good intentions for discipline are foiled because he defers to his wife. His father and then his mother die, thus, like the classic picaro, he is an orphan throughout most of the book. However, his parents' deaths come after they have provided him schooling and opportunities to continue in a middle class situation. Although his origins are not ideal, an effort seems to be made to portray him as an ordinary member of Mexico's middle class of the day.

5c) Cunning. When he is a small child, we see that Periquillo is developing a capacity for manipulation when he finds that by crying, his mother grants him whatever his whim dictates. On numerous occasions we see that he has a talent for falsifying and deceiving to benefit himself. At one point he even boasts: "cuando yo quería era capaz de engañar al demonio" (231).

5d) Protean Form. Of the picaros examined in this study, Periquillo excels in this category. Among the many professions he practices at some point are scribe, friar, student, beggar, thief, storekeeper,

writer, go-between, and servant or apprentice to many masters. The fact that he serves many masters and works in a variety of professions is only a starting point. Clothes are very important to Periquillo, and by virtue of the fact that he buys new clothing as often as he can afford, his physical appearance is always changing. In addition, "fingir" is a verb which he uses often to describe his interactions with people. One example of this is when he claims cowardice to a band of thieves to avoid participating in their raids. Thus, Periquillo's form, in his physical appearance, his actions, and his self-portrayal, is constantly changing.

5e) Alienation. Incredibly, in spite of Periquillo's disloyalty and unworthiness, several characters in the book treat him with unconditional friendship. However, until his repentance and reformation, he abuses the trust and charity of these friends and everyone he meets, thus thrusting himself into a realm of alienation. In fact, during most of the book, Periquillo surrounds himself with "friends" equally lacking in loyalty and human concern for others. Toward the end of the book he describes his state as: "despreciado de mis amigos y abandonado de todo el mundo" (403). However, following his repentance, his

capacity to love and accept love is dramatically increased, and he dies surrounded by loved ones.

5f) Internal Instability. We are given a clue as to Periquillo's internal instability early in the book when we see him spending his school time arguing with the teacher for the mere sake of arguing, rather than learning. Not only can he not hold down a job, he has a weakness for women and gambling. One of the major themes of the novel is that people need to train for a profession, which is where Periquillo's internal instability has led him to fall short.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. Early in the book Periquillo states: "voy escribiendo mi vida según me acuerdo, y adornándola con los consejos, crítica y erudición que puedo" (41). True to his word, Periquillo manages to adorn the history of his life with generous helpings of philosophizing. Critics recognize that Lizardi wrote the novel primarily to express his views on a variety of subjects, and although most have pointed to its sermonizing passages as its weakness, some critics, among them Nancy Vogeley, see them as an artistic and informational strength.

6) The First-person Point of View. The narrative situation of the Periquillo conforms to the classic

picaresque model in that it uses the first-person, retrospective perspective to narrate the picaro's life events and present tense when philosophizing. However, rather than addressing himself to a Señor, the narrator instead speaks to his children. In any event, first-person narration is indeed employed in the text.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. Some of the settings in which Periquillo finds himself are nothing short of revolting. Others are less offensive, but the overall perception we are given of late colonial Mexican society is less than ideal. Perhaps nowhere in the text is this so clear as when Periquillo leaves Mexico for the Orient. The contrast between Mexican society and the oriental societies he encounters is stark. Whereas order and industry reign in the latter, the former is chaotic and debilitated by indolence and incompetence. Thieves, swindlers, and quacks make the world not only chaotic, but dangerous as well.

8) Physical Survival. Hunger is Periquillo's most constant companion throughout the book. The following is perhaps the most eloquent expression of one of his periods of physical need:

> Desnudo y muerto de hambre sufrí algunos cuantos meses más de prisión, . . . mi salud

> se estragó en términos que estaba demasiado pálido y flaco, y con sobrada causa, porque yo comía mal y poco, y los piojos bien y bastante, como que eran infinitos (205).

Sickness, exposure, fatigue and hunger are often present in Periquillo's story.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. The long parade of human types presented in the Periquillo is one of its strongest suits. It begins with foolish parents, continues with different types of school teachers, and then with a wise vicar, an unfaithful friend, léperos, convicted felons, quack doctors, Indians, a military man, beggars, and so forth. The Periquillo does indeed feature a vast and outstanding gallery of character types.

Given the length of the Periquillo, it should come as no surprise that its list of secondary characters is a long one. Of more importance, the group of characters Periquillo meets distinguishes itself more in its variety of types than in its sheer length. For example, we are not introduced just to a school teacher type, but to three types of teachers: one whose mental capacity should have disqualified him for the work; one who, though intelligent, is so

strict and severe with his students as to make learning nearly impossible; and finally, one who combines intelligence, love for his students, and common sense to create an environment of learning. Nonetheless, even though the gallery of secondary characters is both extensive and varied, its greatest merit lies in the fact that many of these characters are brilliantly portrayed, even though the picaresque structure of the text prevents rounded, complete portraits. In spite of the brevity of their presence, many of them are memorable. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the examination of some of the techniques employed by the author to create vivid, memorable characters.

Let us begin by examining one of the best known characters in the novel, Dr. Purgante. As is often the case with memorable characters, this one begins with a memorable name. The first mention of Dr. Purgante in the text dwells on his name: "Había en aquella época en esta capital un médico viejo a quien llamaban por mal nombre el doctor Purgante, porque a todos los enfermos decía que facilitaba la curación con un purgante" (231). The fact that he has a nickname at all alerts us immediately to the fact that his reputation does not sparkle. Although we are

given an explanation of the nickname's origin, we are left on our own to consider the implications of the name. Even though he is supposed to be purging the sick of their illnesses, his reliance on purgatives is grotesque; instead, he is more effective at other types of purging, such as ridding the world of people and cleansing his patients of good humor and health. Dr. Purgante's real name complements the humorous suggestions of his nickname because not only does it seem pretentious, it adapts nicely to describing his practice of medicine: "en realidad se llamaba don Celidonio Matamoros; aunque con más verdad podía haberse llamado Matacristianos" (263).

The method used to describe Dr. Purgante's physical appearance is rapid sketch, verbal caricature:

> Era este sujeto alto, flaco de cara y piernas, y abultado de panza, trigueño y muy cejudo, ojos verdes, nariz de caballete, boca grande y despoblada de dientes, calvo, por cuya razón usaba en la calle peluquín con bucles (235).

This description could easily be converted to a comic strip figure, since no feature is too intricate, but

instead bold and entirely humorous. The counterpoint between absence and abundance in the description is especially effective: his elongated, frail legs and face are contrasted with a hefty midsection; his absence of hair is contrasted with both his thick eyebrows and ridiculous wig; and finally his large but toothless mouth is contrasted with a considerable nose. Dr. Purgante's attire is an appropriate extension of his caricatured physical appearance. When Periquillo meets with the doctor to propose that he become his servant, he is wearing a full-length, flowered robe, and a large, stiff, shiny beret. When he is out on medical business, he is sure to wear a big ruffled collar. Thus, Dr. Purgante's physical appearance is so grotesque as to be an important element in a memorable portrayal.

Dr. Purgante's flamboyant manner of speech is just as much a caricature as his physical appearance. The first words we hear directly from him are the following: "¡Oh, Periquillo, hijo! ¿Por qué extraños horizontes has venido a visitar este tugurio?" (235). We see immediately that his speech is marked by a dramatic flair combined with a penchant for unnatural, pedantic expressions. This penchant is best exemplified in his constant use of Latin: "En esta

domo tendrás *in primis* el *panem nostrum quotidianum*; *aliunde*, lo potable necesario; *tertio*, la cama *sic vel sic*. . ." (236). Of course, utilization of such terms makes communication virtually impossible.

Dr. Purgante's manner of speech is merely a smokescreen to hide his medical incompetence, in which his ignorance is exceeded only by his vanity: "Pudiera haberse desengañado a costa de algunas víctimas que sacrificó en las aras de su ignorancia; pero jamás pensó que era hombre; se creyó incapaz de engañarse. . ." (231). His complete confidence in Periquillo, who manipulates him mercilessly by means of boundless, insincere, unfounded praise, is undeniable evidence of his vanity.

His lack of concern for others is obvious, in that by virtue of his ignorance and apathy in exercising his profession, he discounts human suffering and exploits it for his personal gain. He and Nicolás, the pharmacist, highly recommend each other to their clients in spite of having full knowledge of their mutual incompetence. His incapacity for loyalty is seen in that he ends business ties with Nicolás, in spite of their economic interdependence, for increased income through Periquillo and an in-house pharmacy.

Curiously, we never see concrete encounters between Dr. Purgante and his patients. Nor do we have word of specific prescriptions or medical recommendations which he makes. Instead, we see his work mirrored in Periquillo. The crowning touch of the portrayal of Dr. Purgante is that Periquillo steals his medical garb, literature, learning, speech, and methods, and continues his characterization in his absence. Thus, although we never see Dr. Purgante personally at work, we see him through Periquillo, who uses large doses of Latin and luck to establish a medical practice in Tula. His method is described vividly as he works with a dying man in the presence of his grieving family:

> Inmediatamente me acerqué a la cama, le tomé el pulso, miré a las vigas del techo por largo rato, después le tomé otro pulso haciendo mil monerías, como eran arquear las cejas, arrugar la nariz, mirar al suelo, morderme los labios, mover la cabeza a uno y otro lado y hacer cuantas mudanzas pantomímicas me parecieron oportunas. . . Acabada la tocada del pulso, le miré el semblante atentamente, y le hice abrir la boca con una cuchara para verle la lengua,

> le alcé los párpados, le toqué el vientre y los pies, e hice dos mil preguntas a los asistentes sin acabar de ordenar ninguna cosa (243).

Finally, when the man nears death and a priest begins to perform last rites, Periquillo orders his assistant, Andrés, to perform a major bloodletting. Miraculously, the patient improves immediately, and Periquillo accepts a handsome sum of money.

In summary, several techniques are used very effectively to make Dr. Purgante an unforgettable character. First, he is given a humorous name and a catchy nickname. Second, he is given a flamboyant, caricaturesque physical appearance. Third, in his speech we see a combination of humorous pedantry and pathetic lack of concern for his fellow beings. Related to this combination is the huge discrepancy between the high principles of his profession and the greedy, unfeeling way in which he works. Last, his actions, brilliantly mirrored through Periquillo, are overly dramatic for the purpose of hiding his medical incompetence. Although he is by no means a rounded, well-developed character, the foregoing methods of characterization come together to create a memorable type.

The same techniques which are skillfully used to portray Dr. Purgante are utilized in the creation of many of the other secondary characters in the text. For example, memorable names are given to several of the book's characters. Agustín Rapamentas seems a natural name for a barber. Periquillo's first master, Cosme Casalla is better known as Chanfaina, which Periquillo finds apt on two counts: "ya por la asonancia de esta palabra con su apellido, o ya por lo que sabía revolver" (211). Don Severo Justiniano is an appropriate name for an attorney. Juan Largo is the nickname of Periquillo's tall friend who, appropriate to the name, keeps him in trouble for a long time. A thief Periquillo meets in jail is nicknamed Aguilita for the following reason: "verdaderamente le convenía así por la rapidez de su genio, como por lo afilado de su garra" (195). Many characters are best known by their character type, as in El juicioso vicario, El profesor tonto, El indio macero, El subdelegado, El egoísta, and El misántropo. In most of these cases no name or nickname is given, but even when one is given, the subject is best remembered by a type name. In any event, many of the characters in the text attain instant recognizability by virtue of a conspicuously symbolic or humorous

given name, nickname, or type name.

Verbal caricature of physical attributes is a technique used in the portrayal of a number of characters in the text. Aguilita, for example, is described as: "gordo, aplastado, chato, cabezón, encuerado y demasiadamente vivo y atrevido" (195). The physical description of Periquillo's strict teacher moves rapidly into a description of his personality: "Era alto, seco, entrecano, bastante bilioso e hipocondríaco, hombre de bien a toda prueba, arrogante lector, famoso pendolista. . ." (23). At times very few penstrokes are needed to create a physical description which translates into a mental picture, as with Juan Largo: "Era de un cuerpo gallardo, alto y bien formado" (44). Thus, use of rapid, vivid description of physical attributes is an effective tool of characterization in the text.

Nancy Vogeley mentions that in the course of the novel many different character types are given voice either directly or through Periquillo. We have seen that such is the case with Dr. Purgante. Another group of characters who are characterized by their speech are the <u>léperos</u> with whom Periquillo comes in contact. The terms which they use are so different from common Spanish that when they speak to him, he

cannot understand them without an explanation from Juan Largo. After telling Periquillo that they have their own dialect, Juan Largo expounds on the meanings of many of their expressions, beginning with the following: "Por ahora sábete que hacer la mañana entre esta gente quiere decir desayunarse con aguardiente. . ." (136). The speech used by the Indian who is falsely accused by Periquillo is described by the narrative as a combination of Mexican and Castilian: "Tlacatecotl, mal diablo, lagrón, jijo de un dimoño; agora lo veremos quién es cada cual" (266). Ridiculous legal jargon is used by scribes and lawyers, foreigners have at least some accent, and a more full study of differing dialects in the book would undoubtedly yield fascinating results. In any event, an effective manner of character portrayal in the Periquillo is through speech.

Finally, some characters are made to stand out principally on the basis of their actions. Juan Largo is best remembered by virtue of the cruel practical jokes with which he victimizes Periquillo. Antonio Sánchez's importance is that out of the kindness of his heart he brings food and encouragement to Periquillo in jail. Although he appears in a variety of episodes, Andrés is most memorable for the way in

which, as Periquillo's medical sidekick, he makes their medical business prosper by selling the town on the new doctor. Showing a character perform a memorable role, even though it may be for only one episode, is another technique of characterization which is used effectively.

We have seen how four techniques for character portrayal are used skillfully and extensively in Lizardi's masterpiece. We have seen that all four techniques are memorable in the creation of Dr. Purgante, while most secondary characters in the text are remembered by virtue of skillful use of only one or two of the tactics. Because of the narrative structure of picaresque novels, the creation of memorable characters in a very reduced narrative space is a difficult task. The gallery of lively, varied, memorable secondary characters which is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Periquillo attests to the fact that Lizardi rose to the task. The techniques of characterization referred to in this study, though not earthshaking narrative tools, used skillfully in the hands of a master contain a major reason for much of the enduring charm of El Periquillo Sarniento.

Chapter Five

Wherein the invisibility, but not inferiority, complex suffered by Fernández de Lizardi's Don Catrín de la Fachenda is noted and its picaresque elements set forth, after which we see how, through skillful creation of a bombastically pretentious first-person narrator, whereby irony is created and sustained throughout the text, the author is able to examine many foibles of early nineteenth-century Mexican society without subjecting readers to dreary didacticism, but rather treating them to a highly entertaining work of art.

Vida y hechos del famoso caballero don Catrín de la Fachenda,[1] written in 1820 by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi and published posthumously in 1832, is the overlooked little brother of El Periquillo Sarniento (1816). The latter is better known primarily because it happened to be written and published before Don Catrín. The Periquillo's place in literary histories as the first Spanish American novel has made it the star of Lizardi's literary family. Its fame has guaranteed that the names of "El Pensador Mexicano's" other novelistic works will always be remembered; however, their automatic association with the Periquillo seems also to doom

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[1] All references to the novel by page number in this study refer to the 1958 Porrúa edition edited by Jefferson Rea Spell.

them. Lizardi's best known work shines in anthologies, but is practically inaccessible as a work on its own. Its didactic nature combined with its sheer length make a complete reading unattractive to all but masochists and specialists. These attributes make study of Lizardi's other works seem equally unattractive. La Quijotita y su prima (1818) and Noches tristes y día alegre (1818), Lizardi's other novelistic efforts, have also contributed to Don Catrín's oblivion. Although both works are very different in style and content from the Periquillo, neither of these intervening texts has received much favorable critical attention. Don Catrín, therefore, as a member of a family distinguished more by chronology than by literary merit, has nearly been forgotten.

Very few critical writings have focused on Lizardi's last novel. Such discussion is usually found in literary histories or anthology introductions, and always appears on the Periquillo's coattails. For example, Angel Flores mentions Don Catrín and La Quijotita at the end of his introductory paragraph on Lizardi before introducing an anthology piece from Periquillo. He lumps them together by saying that the later novels have the same moralizing

voice and satire as the earlier novel, but that their plot lacks the Periquillo's interest (11-12). John E. Englekirk et al. mention it along with La Quijotita as showing "the same didactic criticism of morals as the Periquillo" (48). Such a statement leads readers to believe that all three novels are basically similar. Enrique Anderson-Imbert was one of the first literary historians to recognize Don Catrín as a very different novel from its famous sibling (204-5). Although it is again mentioned on the heels of Periquillo, Anderson-Imbert claims it to be Lizardi's masterpiece. Among other things he observes the fact that it does not suffer from lengthy digressions as does Periquillo, that the action moves smoothly and rapidly, that the episodes are entertaining, and skillfully-used irony is one of the book's finest features. Fernando Alegría states that Don Catrín is Lizardi's novel most likely to satisfy the critic of today (25-6). He compliments Catrín's psychology and the narrative technique of transferring the narrative voice from him to his assistant in the novel's final chapter. John Brushwood focuses on the protagonist of Don Catrín, observing that he is very different from the Periquillo's picaro because Catrín is modeled after the "dandy" of his day (Mexico in its Novel, 67).

Jefferson Rea Spell is the critic who wrote earliest and most prolifically about Lizardi. However, most of his research and writings deal with Lizardi as a person and with El Periquillo Sarniento. His comments on Don Catrín in his 1931 book on Lizardi are limited to little more than a paragraph. This paragraph merely summarizes some of the highlights of the protagonist's life (231). In spite of editing and writing introductions to three editions of Don Catrín, his comments pertaining to the work itself are minimal. In the 1959 edition, Spell does venture to say that it is the most technically artistic of Lizardi's novels (x).

Almost all of the few critical articles that deal with Don Catrín do so within a framework of comparison with one or more of Lizardi's other novels. The following titles show how it has been unable to escape association with the Periquillo: "The Periquillo Sarniento and Don Catrín de la Fachenda: which is the masterpiece?" (Bancroft), "Periquillo and Catrín: comparison and contrast" (Pawlowski). Even Paul Borgeson, Jr.'s study on the narrative techniques in Don Catrín and Noches tristes refers constantly to the Periquillo as a point of comparison.

Bancroft's study, as indicated in its title,

delves into the issue suggested by Anderson-Imbert as to the relative greatness of the Periquillo and Don Catrín. His conclusion is that the latter is "más novela," but that in spite of the Periquillo's weaknesses, it must be considered Lizardi's masterpiece (538). Pawlowski compares the same two novels in terms of protagonists, secondary characters, parallel passages, and novelistic features. Of particular interest is the section on parallel passages. Twenty-four motifs are shown to be shared in the action of the novels. These similarities probably help account for the tendency we have seen to lump the works together. Borgeson has written the most recent study on Don Catrín. In it he examines the narrative situations in both Don Catrín and Noches tristes y día alegre. With regard to the former, he observes an integrity in the protagonist's basic autobiographical narrative stance. This integrity is marred only by three footnotes which could not logically have been written by Catrín. Nonetheless, he lauds the structural and narrative unity achieved in the work.

The section of María Casas de Faunce's book on the picaresque novel in Latin America dedicated to Don Catrín is indeed dedicated solely to Lizardi's last

novel. The implied reader of Casas's book has obviously not read the texts on which she is writing--as is the case throughout her book, her purpose in this chapter is to introduce the work. She gives a rather detailed summary which includes many quotes, but her critical observations are kept to a minimum.

In summary, in spite of Don Catrín's noble heritage, little substantive critical discussion is available on the novel at the time of this writing. This situation is especially curious in light of the very favorable judgements expressed by most of its critics. The novel is always mentioned in conjunction with Lizardi's other novelistic works, especially El Periquillo Sarniento. In fact, most critical work on Don Catrín involves comparing it with the Periquillo in some way or another. Lizardi's last, and perhaps finest, novel has been unduly neglected.

Let us now turn to the examination of Don Catrín de la Fachenda's picaresque qualities.

1) Episodic Plot. Don Catrín's fourteen brief chapters are filled with more than twenty-five episodes. Most of these include characters and locales unique to the episode. Several episodes are linked to another in some way. For example, the

episode which ends with the amputation of Catrin's leg provides much of the "cause" for the subsequent episode, in which he is a beggar. However, cause-effect relationships between episodes are minimal. The following chart illustrates the relative episodic nature of the different parts of the book:

Chapter Number	Number of Characters Other Than Catrin in the Chapter	Number of These Characters Which Reappear in Other Chapters	Number of Episodes in the Chapter
I	2	2	1
II	3	2	2
III	5	5	1
IV	3	3	2
V	4	2	3
VI	5	2	2
VII	4	1	2
VIII	2	0	1
IX	3	0	2
X	6	0	5
XI	3	1	3
XII	4	2	3
XIII	2	1	1
XIV	3	1	1

Of the thirty-four characters which interact with the protagonist, only seven appear in more than one chapter. These statistics show the novel to be highly, though not purely, episodic.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. Chapters four through twelve feature episodes which occur at a truly hectic pace. Their twenty-two episodes take place in just sixty-nine pages. The following may be the most rapid of

the novel's episodes:

> Hallé un monigote alquilón que se compadeció de mí y me llevó a su casa. Allí estuve algunos días. Tenía una hermana bonita; me gustó, la enamoré, condescendió, fuimos amigos; el monigote lo supo, nos espió, nos cogió y me dio tal tarea de trancazos, que volví a visitar el hospital (81).

In this case, as with others, an abundance of verbs is a clear indication of hurried rhythm. The reader and the picaro are rushed into new situations and then removed from them at a lightning pace.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. The title of chapter six reads as follows: "En el que se verá cómo empezó a perseguirlo la fortuna y los arbitrios que se dio para burlarse de ella" (47). This title reveals the notion that luck is one of the major governing forces in Catrín's life. In spite of his cunning, which is also suggested in the title, Catrín is never able to maintain control over his circumstances for any length of time. His penchant for gambling is representative of his willingness to give himself over wholly to fate (51, 57). At times luck smiles on him, but it always eventually exacts its toll, thus the "Sisyphus rhythm"

is very much a part of Catrín's life.

4) Bodily Violence. "¡Válgame Dios! ¡Qué suerte fue la mía, siempre me he visto en cárceles y hospitales!" (82). On seven occasions Catrín suffers severe bodily harm. He is kicked, stripped and beaten with a stick, thrown down stairs, whipped, stabbed with a sword, knifed, and has boiling water thrown on him. Catrín precipitates some of these acts of violence, but others he does not. Whatever the case may be, the punishment always seems greater than the crime.

5a) A Single Protagonist. The novel is well-named. Don Catrín dominates the entire work.

5b) Uncommon Origins. Catrín's origins seem to be more "normal" than those of the classical picaros. Not only does he have parents as he grows up, but he also claims nobility and has documents as proof (84). However, doubt is cast on these claims in light of his mother's "dowry" which included two illegitimate children (4). Although they were not rich, his parents were able to provide for Catrín's physical and educational needs.

5c) Cunning. Catrín is a clever, resilient individual who thinks on his feet whenever his personal gain is at stake. Some of the book's most

memorable episodes feature his cunning. For example, in one episode Catrín tricks "Simplicio" into buying him several meals and giving him some money. Catrín's technique is to invent a story about an available, rich sister (48-56). Before being discovered, Catrín actually recruits a "sister" to continue the farce. Catrín seems to enjoy getting the best of people through his cunning, and watching him do so is enjoyable reading.

5d) Protean Form. As Jefferson Rea Spell has stated, Catrín "never entered the service of any master or engaged in any honest occupation" (231). Nonetheless, his list of occupations shows his versatility: student, soldier, gambler, gamester's assistant, thief, salesman (of stolen goods), go-between, and beggar. Indeed, he is able to adapt quickly and proficiently to new roles.

5e) Alienation. Through his own vanity and presumption, Catrín distances himself from most of society. He treats most other people, with overt scorn, as inferiors. He sees them as potential host victims for his parasitic ways. His callous happiness when informed of his parents' deaths indicates his isolation from feelings of affection. Only in his relationship with Marcela during the book's final

chapters does he encounter anything resembling love. However, when he becomes terminally ill, she abandons him. I see Catrín as a character completely alienated from society.

5f) Internal Instability. After entering into an altercation and striking a Catholic priest, Catrín states the following: "Algunos aconsejaban que le pidiera perdón. . . pero yo me desentendí, bien satisfecho de que un caballero catrín no debe prostituirse a pedir perdón a nadie" (67). As happens throughout the novel, our picaro here displays noteworthy resolve and consistency in acting as a "catrín" should. The remarkable irony which extends through the whole novel turns this apparent stability into mush. Catrín is merely hiding his lack of resolve behind a front.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. Catrín's education included formal training in philosophy. However, his interest during classes was more in poking fun at the teachers and the discipline than mastering the subject (8). Occasional semi-philosophical statements dot the text. Although the validity of his assertions can be called into question, he definitely has a philosophical bent.

6) The First-Person Point of View. The novel is

indeed narrated in the "yo" form by Catrín. Further analysis on this point is given below.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. We have noted the violence our picaro encounters during his adventures, but he is not the only character subjected to bodily harm. The world in which he lives seems to be full of picaros and parasites. In many cases Catrín simply applies the advice others give him. The following serves as an example: "Dos años viví contento, aprendiendo mil primores de mis amigos Tremendo y compañeros. Sus máximas para mí eran el evangelio y sus ejemplos la pauta por donde reglaba mis costumbres" (37). In many respects, Catrín merely mirrors the society he observes.

8) Physical Survival. On several occasions we find Catrín "reducido a la última miseria" (79). He speaks often of his lack of food, and several episodes center around his attempts to get a free meal. An interesting twist on this theme is the picaro's obsession with appearances and clothing. Given money when naked and starving, he would invest first in presumptuous clothes, then worry about sustenance.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. Not only are the secondary characters in the novel types, but many of their names reveal exactly their type. A few examples

illustrate this phenomenon. "Tremendo" is a big-mouthed soldier who defies authority and is always picking a fight. "Simplicio" is a simpleton who is victimized by Catrín. "Abundo" is an old man with an abundance of money. Other characters with symbolic names include Precioso, Modesto and Sagaz. Many other characters are never named, but are referred to as the priest, the landlord, the mayor, the chaplain, the scribe, etc. These secondary characters are not well-developed, but rather rapidly sketched, lively types.

The times in which Don Catrín's author lived had a major impact on his writings. In fact, his profession as a writer can be attributed to the injustices and abuses Lizardi saw in the Mexico of his day. The struggle for independence furthered deterioration of economic, social and political conditions (Cumberland 113-140), which undoubtedly intensified his conviction that reform was necessary. Of course, his initial mode of communication was through journals and pamphlets. Targets of his attacks included the government, incompetent doctors, clergy, civic and social conditions, and the class system. This public zeal for reform made him famous in his day, and produced the pseudonym by which he is

still known today--El Pensador Mexicano. Lizardi's fame extended also to censors and governmental authorities, who judged much of what he wrote to be openly seditious. In spite of laws proclaiming freedom of the press in Spain and its holdings, Lizardi was imprisoned on more than one occasion for his writings (Spell, Bridging 107-120). Lizardi's response to such treatment was to turn to a new genre, and thus the novel was "born" in Mexico. Although he had turned to a new means of communication, Lizardi never lost his passion for reform.

Thus, several factors came into play as Lizardi approached Don Catrín. First, his overarching purpose was societal reform; second, censorship forced him away from pamphlets and journals as his method of communication; and third, even in a novelistic genre his writing had to be approved by the censors. Since the novel was not published at the time it was written, we can only speculate as to whether the book would have been allowed in its day. However, I believe these factors caused Lizardi to adopt certain strategies, some of which are key to the success of the book both in terms of art and in terms of reform.

As has been noted, the novel is narrated with the first-person point of view. In my opinion, having the

novel's protagonist narrate the work is a major key to its success on an artistic level. The opening paragraph of the book reveals the first-person narrative technique and part of the narrator's personality:

> Sería yo el hombre más indolente y me haría acreedor a las execraciones del universo, si privara a mis compañeros y amigos de este precioso librito, en cuya composición me he alambicado los sesos, apurando mis no vulgares talentos, mi vasta erudición y mi estilo sublime y sentencioso (3).

This first paragraph tells us immediately that the narrator's style fits the title of the novel perfectly. The lexicon and syntax go with the given name in their elegance and polish. The content corresponds to the surname. Not only are the adjectives he ascribes to himself and his work presumptuous in quality (precioso libro, no vulgares talentos, estilo sublime y sentencioso), but the size of his claims is equally astonishing (Sería yo el hombre más indolente, del universo, mi vasta erudición).

The next paragraphs claim Don Catrín is a much

better book than the Periquillo and predict its infinite fame: "todo hijo de Adán, sin exceptuar uno solo, al oír el sonoroso y apacible nombre de don Catrín, su único, su eruditísimo autor, rendirá la cerviz y confesará su mérito recomendable" (3-4). Here we find that the character whose name is used as the book's title is indeed the narrator. His claims seem to be increasing in boastfulness while maintaining stylistic ostentation. The name is absolutely symbolic of the character.

The fourth paragraph maintains the same pretentious tone. Catrín states his purpose in writing his life story: "El objeto es aumentar el número de los catrines; y el medio, proponerles mi vida por modelo..." (4). Devoid of all modesty, he justifies this end by telling what sort of life he has led: "la de un caballero ilustre por su cuna, sapientísimo por sus letras, opulento por sus riquezas, ejemplar por su conducta, y héroe por todos sus cuatro costados" (4).

In paragraphs five and six he tells of his "noble" lineage and his place and year of birth. Unable to resist an opportunity to boast, he observes that at thirty years of age "no se debían esperar unos frutos de literatura y moralidad tan maduros como los

vais a ver. . . como cada siglo suele producir un héroe, me tocó a mí ser el prodigio del siglo XVIII. . ." (4). A reader encountering these paragraphs for the first time is undoubtedly struck by the flagrant presumptuousness of the narrator. However, no evidence exists in the passages that the narrator is not absolutely sincere in his outlandish claims. At this point, even though none of the events of Catrín's life have been narrated, several factors in the section make us sense a discrepancy between what is being said and the "reality" of Catrín's life. First, the narrator's name is far from being heroic and suggests the negative qualities we find in the style of the text. Second, in the third paragraph he mentions his riches and opulence, while in the fifth he admits that his family is poor. Third, and most important, if his life is so heroic and worthy of our emulation, he spends excessive amounts of time telling us that such is the case. We would instead expect any life as admirable as he describes to speak for itself.

Paragraph six signals the beginning of the overt unravelling of our narrator's lofty claims. Because of its importance in the development of irony in the novel, I examine it here in some detail. The paragraph begins with Catrín trifling with words over

his parents' poverty: "Aunque os digo que mis padres fueron pobres, no os significo que fueron miserables" (4). This leads to an explanation of his mother's dowry:

> Mi madre llevó en dote al lado de mi padre dos muchachos y tres mil pesos: los dos muchachos, hijos clandestinos de un título, y los tres mil pesos hijos también suyos, pues se los regaló para que los mantuviera (4-5).

Obviously Catrín is lacking in judgement: first, in considering illegitimate children to be part of a dowry and second, in mentioning them while trying to prove his parents' honor. Next, Catrín attempts to justify his father's acceptance of such a dowry: "Mi padre todo lo sabía; pero ¿cómo no había de disimular dos muchachos plateados con tres mil patacones de las Indias?" (5). While the imagery employed here is delightful, the message that his father would do anything for money is hardly admirable. In the next sentence, Catrín's claim to noble heritage as a result of his mother's dowry shows an absolute lack of correlation between what he says and the facts in his life: "Desde aquí os manifiesto lo ilustre de mi

cuna, el mérito de mamá y el honor acrisolado de mi padre; pero no quiero gloriarme de estas cosas" (5). Irony has come to the forefront of the novel in just six paragraphs. As if Catrín has not dug enough of a hole for himself in the first four sentences of the paragraph, he crowns it with a fifth:

> Los árboles genealógicos que adornan los brillantes libros de mis ejecutorias, y los puestos que ocuparon mis beneméritos ascendientes en las dos lucidísimas carreras de las armas y las letras, me pondrán usque in aeternum a cubierto de las notas de vano y sospechoso, cuando os aseguro a fe de caballero don Catrín que soy noble, ilustre y distinguido, por activa, por pasiva y por impersonal (5).

Catrín's aim in this sentence is to claim privileged heritage by virtue of his patent of nobility and his ancestors' honorable professions. Had he left it at this he would have made a point. However, he cannot resist embellishing the sentence as well as the claim; in the process he gets into trouble. First, he acknowledges the existence of those who do not consider him to be noble. Second, he swears on his

gentleman's honor that he is a gentleman--a prospect governed by faulty logic. Last, in his final flourish he sets forth in triplicate what he is (noble, ilustre y distinguido) followed by the ways he is these things, also in triplicate (por activa, por pasiva y por impersonal). Such ludicrous reasons for claiming nobility are heightened by the syntactic elegance of the sentence.

By the end of this paragraph the basic narrative situation and personality of the narrator are established for the rest of the book. The first-person narrative strategy is utilized skillfully to create a sustained distance between what is said and the "reality" of the situation--a standard definition of irony.

In the passages we have just examined, Catrín creates irony on his own by summarizing and commenting on events and situations from his life. This is the technique most often used in the novel to create irony. Another technique is utilized often in the book as a springboard to irony and moralizing. Catrín at times quotes secondary characters, thus yielding to their voice in the narrative. An example is when Modesto is quoted at some length as to the evils of dueling (29-33). His speech is sound in logic and

could be taken as advice for reform from Lizardi himself. Catrín, however, rejects it, and in his self-justification creates further irony. A side-effect of this technique is a pleasant blending and variety of scene and summary.

Three narrative circumstances remove Catrín's first-person point of view from the novel: chapter titles, footnotes, and the conclusion. The titles of each chapter are given in the point of view of a third-person. These are usually rapid summaries of the chapter's content, with exceptions in chapters five, nine and fourteen. Chapter five's title apparently had too many events to summarize quickly: "Largo pero muy interesante." Chapter nine's title includes a moral judgement: [Catrín] "Escucha y admite unos malditos consejos de un amigo;. . ." Chapter fourteen's title, though in third-person, utilizes the same sort of irony which pervades the text: ". . . se concluye. . .la narración del fin de la vida de nuestro famoso don Catrín." Thus, the voice in the chapter titles, though usually detached, is not always free from judgements and even contributes to the moralizing irony in the book.

Thirteen footnotes are included as part of the text. Seven merely give sources: "Blanchard, Escuela

de las costumbres" (30), "Proverbios XVI, 32" (33), etc. One explains the idiom "Ponerse la chispa" (95). One refers the reader to a different part of the book.[2] Another states: "Aquí venía muy bien el cuento del barbero y el loco" (77). No such story is offered in the text--perhaps the implied editor was commenting on the text's deficiencies. Three consist of overt moralizing, as in the following example: "Así piensan los que no saben en qué consiste el verdadero honor" (106). We cannot possibly take the author of these notes to have been Catrín. Although the narrative voice in the body of the text remains constant in tone and perspective, it is weakened somewhat by the presence of these notes by an implied author or editor. However, we must remember Lizardi's purpose in writing, and admit that even though the overall narrative situation is weakened by the notes, the moralizing effect of the book is strengthened.

The novel's conclusion is "Hecha por el practicante" who was attending to Catrín in the hospital at the time of his death. Although he shows

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[2] The footnote referred to here is inexplicably absent from the 1959 Porrúa edition of the text. In the Caillet-Bois edition it is found on page 106. In the 1944 Cultura edition it is found on page 81. Equally as puzzling is the fact that the Caillet-Bois edition refers the reader to a different section of the text than does the Cultura edition.

compassion for the deceased, he is quick to point out Catrín's weaknesses:

> El, a título de bien nacido, quiso aparentar decencia y proporciones que no tenía ni pudo jamás lograr, porque era acérrimo enemigo del trabajo. La holgazanería le redujo a la última miseria, y esto le prostituyó a cometer los crímenes más vergonzosos (108).

Lizardi seems to have been unwilling to place his moralizing purpose completely in irony's hands. The voice here seems to be the same one as in the footnotes. Using the "Practicante" as his mouthpiece, Lizardi sums up his intent in the book in six words: "¡Pobre Catrín! ¡Ojalá no tenga imitadores!" (108).

In conclusion, I find Don Catrín de la Fachenda to be a delightful, well-written novel. While it fulfills its purpose as a vehicle calling for reform, it does not do so at the expense of aesthetics. The major tool which creates this result is use of extended irony. The author allows his main character's words and claims to be absolutely unsubstantiated by what we know of his life. Departures from this first-person strategy are limited and detract very little from the strength of the

novel. Thus, in a remarkable fusion of successful moralizing, excellent narrative technique, and humor through irony, lively, fast-paced episodes and interesting characters, we have a novel that is a satisfying and enjoyable reading experience.

Chapter Six

Wherein José Rubén Romero's masterpiece, La vida inútil de Pito Pérez, is placed in its historical context and its picaresque characteristics discussed, after which the formation of the work's seemingly simple, yet always entertaining hero is studied through the examination of character codes in key passages of the text, resulting in the conclusion that Pito Pérez is a more complex character than a first glance may reveal.

José Rubén Romero's masterpiece, La vida inútil de Pito Pérez, was published in 1938. Over a century had elapsed since the publication of a narrative with enough picaresque elements to be classified in the subgenre. Only the Periquillo maintains a higher literary profile than La vida inútil among Mexican narratives of this type. Within a few years of its publication Romero's text became an immensely popular novel. As we shall see, although examination of the text in scholarly publications has slowed almost to a halt, the book continues to be a favorite of the Mexican masses.

La vida inútil can be seen as a curious blending of many of the characteristics which were prevalent in the world of art, and especially literary art, of the twenties and thirties in Mexico. Lázaro Cárdenas's administration was especially conducive to artistic

production in all media. Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of this production is in the world of mural painting. Orozco, Siquieros, Rivera, and Rufino Tamayo had been able to return to Mexico from abroad; their work blossomed as they were then able to exercise their artistic freedom (Bradley Smith 286). These artists' preoccupation with the history of Mexico and their desire to identify "lo mexicano" is the visual equivalent of the predominant theme of Mexico's literature in the thirties.

Literary art in Mexico in the thirties seems to be a reaction against the avant-garde tendencies of the twenties represented by the "Contemporáneos" and the "estridentista" groups. In very simplified terms, these groups sought cosmopolitanism and universality, and examined the individual with an emphasis on his interior. In contrast, in the thirties "criollismo," regionalism and "lo mexicano" were sought, with frequent examination of society as a whole, often with emphasis on its exterior. Excellent non-novelistic texts from this period which illustrate the above tendencies from the thirties include <u>El perfil del hombre y la cultura en México</u> by Samuel Ramos and <u>El Gesticulador</u> by Rodolfo Usigli. Predominant themes of the novel in the nineteen-thirties were the

Revolution, "indigenismo" and social problems.

La vida inútil constitutes a curious blending of many of the prevalent tendencies in the literature of the twenties and thirties in Mexico. Although the setting of the text is the state of Michoacán and the flavor is intensely regional, it has a universal appeal as evidenced by its popularity outside of Mexico. Emphasis in the text is on the individual, Pito Pérez, but there is also examination of the society of the day, with a very strong element of social protest. The work departs from the prevalent tendencies of the literature in its era in several ways. Unlike the overwhelming majority of works in the twenties and thirties, humor plays a very prominent role in La vida inútil. In addition, although it reminds us of the novels of Fernández de Lizardi and some of the classical novels of Spain's Golden Age, the use of picaresque techniques and elements in the text is very unusual for its time.

Besides enjoying great popularity within a few years of publication, La vida inútil de Pito Pérez was also favored with immediate critical attention. In 1939, the year following La vida inútil's appearance, Gastón Lafarga published an entire book on Rubén

Romero's literary production. The chapter dedicated to La vida inútil deals with most of the major topics on which critics have focused since that time: the work's tie to the picaresque, its use of language, the presence of humor, and the element of social protest.

Lafarga classifies the book as picaresque and compares it to its ancestor, the Periquillo. He states that the major difference between the two is that while Lizardi's work is unduly extensive, Rubén Romero has successfully selected only the essential elements of his picaro's life. He speaks of the book's structure as symphonic: "Hay emoción, música en las ideas y en las palabras" (128). He also notes that much of the language from the text comes from the regional speech of Michoacán. He describes the style as natural and intense, but at times careless. He finds that the presence of witty but bitter humor is evidence of Pito's despondence and bitterness. He observes that although the novel reflects sympathy for people in general, Pito's bitter words constitute protest against the institutions of his society.

In 1940 Ernest Richard Moore and Gilberto González y Contreras published books on Romero, each with a section dealing with the picaresque nature of La vida inútil. Moore compares the novel with the

classical Spanish picaresque texts. He finds that while Spanish picaros are victims of society, Pito chooses his picaresque life. González observes that Pito's speech is based on popular expressions, humorous anecdotes and colorful observations.

Raúl Arreola Cortés calls the work "uno de los mayores orgullos de las letras mexicanas" (11). Compared to Spanish picaros, he finds Pito Pérez "Más profundo que Lazarillo, más humano que Estebanillo, más auténtico que Marcos de Obregón, más honrado que Guzmán de Alfarache" (11-12). Compared to other Mexican rogues he finds Pito "más original que el Periquillo, más filosófico que Felicillos" (12).

F. Rand Morton sees the novel as a "revolutionary" text because of the emphasis on a type from a lower social class. According to Morton, the author gives the Pito Pérez type importance and equality with Mexico's other social classes. The book reveals a side of Mexico not commonly depicted (89).

Manuel Pedro González states that Rubén Romero has rescued the picaresque from the didacticism of Mateo Alemán and Fernández de Lizardi and returned to it the spirit of Lazarillo de Tormes. He further states that Romero's novels are among the few Mexican novels written before 1940 which have universal

appeal, that foreigners easily identify with their humble characters, and that Romero "ha sabido descubrir lo que en el campesino michoacano hay de esencia humano, de universal y permanente" (226). Referring to Pito Pérez, González indicates that he is one of the rare characters whose fame exceeds that of his author.

R. Anthony Castagnaro claims that Pito Pérez is "as genuine a product of the Mexican Revolution as any single character of Romero's better known literary colleagues" (302). He points out that several techniques are used to produce humor in the novel, including verbal wordplay, humor of circumstances, caricature, and scatology. Castagnaro states that the lack of narrative formality, consistency in description, and abundance of dialogue are evidence that Romero unconsciously makes use of contemporary novelistic techniques.

Ewart E. Phillips focuses on the genesis and development of the character Pito Pérez. He observes that Pito appears in six of the nine novels Romero wrote. He also notes that Pito's emotional distance from his fellow men allows him to see society in a critical light. Thus, he functions as a common man's philosopher.

Ned J. Davison focuses on symbols and the structure of the novel. He sees the image of Pito's bare or poorly clad feet as the central symbol of the novel. He indicates that this image "se presenta en la primera página y se repite con logradas variaciones a lo largo de la novela" (13). He also sees alcohol as an important motif in the novel. In addition, he finds an interior structure in the novel which differs from the obvious episodic/picaresque structure. This interior structure is based on three key moments which divide the text: first, Pito's departure from his home town; second, the burlesque crucifixion in jail; and last, Pito's realization that there is a relationship between alcohol and his hallucinations. Davison concludes that the interior structure and sustained use of the above symbols "descubren un enfoque cuidadosamente pensado y una unidad de tema que sobrepasan la relación fortuita de sencillas burlas y desventuras picarescas" (17).

Tamara Holzapfel has produced the most detailed psychological analysis of Pito Pérez. Her thesis is that Pito is more than a Mexican picaro and philosopher of the common man. She explains the protagonist's actions and attitudes in terms of alienation and rebellion. Based on an examination of

his hallucinations, she finds that Pito seeks a new society because of complete disillusionment with his reality. She indicates that Pito identifies with the Devil because he feels completely abandoned by God, as is the case with the Devil.

In his article "Onlyman," Ulrich Wicks's comments on the novel deal with the narrative situation and Pito's absolute alienation. He observes that by having the picaro tell his life story to a first-person narrator, he brings a new narrative technique to the picaresque. The result of this situation is that the process of oral narration becomes one of the episodes of his life. It also allows the narrator to organize and "cool" Pito's anecdotes. The technique also leads to an important break in the typical picaresque pattern: "The traditional picaro's act of narration is a step toward integration. . . But Pito does not engage in such an act formally" (33). The technique contributes to his complete alienation from society.

Curiously, the last article dedicated to La vida inútil was published in 1977. In spite of the novel's continued popularity among the masses, scholars have not continued to give it critical attention. Perhaps the incredible novelistic production of the "boom" and

the period since has caused it to be overlooked or forgotten, but surely this amnesia is only temporary.

Let us now turn our attention to the novel's picaresque elements.

1) Episodic Plot. Although the plot of La vida inútil is indeed episodic, the organization of the episodes differs from the traditional picaresque novel. Whereas in most picaresque novels the episodes are presented in a purely chronological order which corresponds to the life events of the pícaro, such is not the case in the novel at hand. The difference is due in part to the presence of the controlling narrator in the text. At the beginning of every chapter the narrator gives a theme to Pito upon which to base the episodes in that chapter. Thus, the narrator has a transparent role in manipulating the order of the récit. For example, chapter two deals with Pito's family life; chapter six treats Pito's amorous relationships; chapter seven has Pito's experiences with jails as its theme, and so forth. In many cases the récit seems to follow the chronological order of Pito's histoire, but in other cases such a relationship seems unlikely, and accurate reconstruction of the histoire seems impossible. Even

though Pito narrates the events of his life in a thematic fashion rather than in the traditional chronological one, the plot remains episodic. Pito's anecdotes are almost totally insulated one from another, thus preventing any cause and effect relationships as might be found in a realist novel. The only consistent link between episodes is the presence of Pito himself. Thus, La vida inútil is fully episodic even though the episodes are arranged thematically rather than chronologically.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. Although a great number of anecdotes are related by Pito, the rhythm hardly seems vertiginous. This could be due to the thematic organization already noted. Since we are not given a complete awareness of the order of the events, neither do we see the pace with which they occurred. The organization also seems to lend itself to the picaro approaching the events of his life from a more philosophical point of view. Thus, we do not feel swept up by the pace of the events as with other picaresque narratives.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Pito is quick to point out the power of fate in his life. Early in the text he claims that "mi mala suerte me persigue" (18). Although at times this power is attributed to "la

venia de dios" rather than to fate itself, Pito sees himself as a victim of a force greater than himself. Pito is occasionally directly responsible for his own misfortunes, but such is not always the case. For example, being the third son in his family dooms him to a life of dead-end employment. His parents spend their ambitions for solid employment on their first two sons. Whereas the family has Pito's older brothers trained to be a priest and a lawyer, respectively, Pito is trained to be a mere altar boy. The Sisyphus rhythm, which is present in many of the text's episodes, also makes fate's hand in the text seem heavy.

4) Bodily Violence. Only once is Pito subjected to bodily violence, and in this case he brings it upon himself. This episode is discussed below. Compared to the traditional pícaro, physical violence is not Pito's lot.

5a) A Single Protagonist. Pito is indeed the work's only possible protagonist. All other characters appear briefly only once or twice. The book's title is accurate in claiming to be about Pito's life.

5b) Uncommon Origins. Pito's origins are, to say the least, less than desirable. His father is never mentioned, and his mother does not nurture him. In

fact, Pito's entire family causes him to feel insecure about himself:

> . . .a mí me tienen por loco de remate en el pueblo. Aseguran que falta un tornillo a toda mi familia. ¡Qué barbaridad! Dicen que mis hermanas Herlinda y María padecen locura mística y que por eso no salen de la iglesia; afirman las gentes que Concha está tocada porque pasa los días enseñando a los perros callejeros a sentarse en las patas traseras y a un gato barcino que tiene, a comer en la mesa con la pulcritud de un caballo; Josefa se tiró de cabeza a un pozo dizque porque estaba loca; y Dolores se enamoró de un cirquero por la misma causa. . . (16).

As we see from this quote, Pito's home life could hardly be called common.

5c) Cunning. Pito's cunning is immediately apparent in his ability to express himself. His stories, often laced with double meanings, and sometimes pointed aggressively at his listener, are always entertaining. In addition to enjoying poking fun at others, his craftiness is used from time to time to get his next

meal, such as when he gets the owner of a store to commit to give him a "piloncito" of sugar, but then collects a "piloncito" of bread from the store's clerk. However, Pito's talent and ingeniousness are utilized most often to obtain alcohol. One example of this is when, over a period of time, he siphons almost an entire barrel of wine from a bar. He does this by fashioning a hole in the barrel, then drinking through a tube which he conceals in his jacket. When he is finished, he seals the hole with wax until the next opportunity. Pito does indeed demonstrate remarkable cunning throughout the text.

5d) Protean Form. Pito is adept at playing different roles in order to survive. Roles in which he functions in the text include altar boy, assistant to a druggist, professional story teller, assistant to a priest, secretary, store clerk, preacher, journalist, and actor. Never does our protagonist function in any one role for extended periods of time. Nonetheless, he displays impressive versatility in his journey through life.

5e) Alienation. From his earliest days, Pito is denied any caring relationships even with his family. This lack of love and concern in his life seems to intensify as he grows older. This subject is further

discussed below.

5f) Internal Instability. Pito's inability to hold down any job is evidence of his interior instability. The only anchor in his life is a false one--alcohol.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. As is evidenced below, Pito is a very observant, keen individual who sees society and its constituents with clarity. He does indeed have a philosophical bent.

6) The First-person Point of View. As was noted by Wicks, the narrative situation in La vida inútil does not follow exactly that of the classical picaresque novel. Rather, it is a slight variation which features some attractive possibilities. Two voices, both in first-person, are present in the work--that of the controlling narrator, and that of the protagonist. The narrator serves mainly as a framing device. His conversations with Pito make up almost the entire text. His presence is felt mainly at the beginning of each section, but is often forgotten, for he yields to Pito during most of the text.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. The setting for La vida inútil is the state of Michoacán, Mexico, within several decades of the conclusion of the revolution. At one point Pito points to the jails of the region as his favorite places. Such a statement testifies of

the unkind nature of the world in which he lives.

8) Physical Survival. When Pito was born, a baby was born to a friend of Pito's mother. This friend subsequently died. Out of charity, Pito's mother became the baby's guardian and wet nurse. Since his mother would feed the other baby first, from the time he was born Pito was familiar with hunger. Although not a dominant theme in the text, hunger does occasionally surface. Often, Pito's answer is to forget he is hungry by drinking himself into oblivion.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. The supporting cast in Pito's adventures is made up of a variety of types which are depicted in brief but colorful terms. Some of the outstanding secondary figures who make up this gallery are Padre Coscorrón, appropriately named because of the stinging blows he administers to the heads of the altar boys; José de Jesús Jiménez, the incredibly obese druggist who will go to any length to avoid getting up from his chair; Jiménez's wife, Jovita Jaramillo, who deceives her husband with Pito while the cuckold sits perched on his chair in the next room; Vásquez, a public administrator who by day steals Pito's ideas without acknowledging them and who becomes a champion guzzler by night; and Don Santiago, a rich young man who steals Pito's girlfriend to marry

her. The gallery of human types is one of La vida inútil's entertaining, and revealing, aspects.

Ewart E. Phillips, in an article published in 1964, states the Pito Pérez is perhaps the most popular fictional character in Mexican literature (698). Certainly, La vida inútil's success is due mostly to the convincing presentation of its picaresque protagonist. This key element of the text is the focus of our attention in this study. Through analysis of passages from the text by means of a system of codes we come to appreciate more fully the complex formation of this character.

In this analysis I follow basically the format that John S. Brushwood uses in his study on María in Genteel Barbarism (83-106). Just as Brushwood has done, I have formulated a system of codes which highlight the salient elements which are interwoven to create Pito Pérez.

1. EXTERIOR. Of the five codes, this is the only one which is seen exclusively through the interventions of the narrator. More than ninety percent of the text is made up of the words of the protagonist himself. In some chapters, the narrator nearly disappears. Nevertheless, the narrator's few

words add a great deal to our appreciation of Pito, to a large degree because they provide us with a point of view outside of the character.

2. OBSERVER. Much of what Pito says can be classified as philosophy or social criticism. Without this serious side to the character, he would probably be nothing but a caricature. This dimension enriches our concept of the protagonist and gives him a degree of intellectual depth. This code seems to correspond to the book's implied author, whereby his political and social concerns can be made known.

3. HUMOR. Humor's presence in Pito's narrations constitute perhaps the main reason for his popularity. This aspect of the narrative has been the focus of several studies (e.g., Torres-Rioseco 21-24). This code is mixed with the other codes throughout the text, even with the most serious of subjects.

4. ALIENATION. After most of the episodes in the text the protagonist is alienated from the world around him. To this extent his experience is parallel to that of the typical picaresque antihero. Nonetheless, Pito does not suffer from alienation only at the end of episodes, but rather as his normal state. This element is crucial because it causes the reader to feel sympathy for him in his alienated

condition. It gives an emotional dimension to the character and to the reader's experience.

5. REBELLION. Using the ideas set forth by Genette (Brushwood, Genteel Barbarism 86), the nuclear sentence which is developed in the text is "Pito rebels against the conventions of society." His nonconformity constitutes a fundamental part of the formation of his personality. This code has a very close relationship to the code of alienation, because in general his rebellion leads him directly to a state of alienation.

The following excerpts, or in the terminology used by Barthes, lexias, from the text give an idea of the interweaving of the above codes in the novel. They represent key passages in the presentation of Pito Pérez. After each lexia I comment on the use of the codes and their contribution to the formation of the character.

LEXIA 1. Sus grandes zapatones rotos hacían muecas de dolor; su pantalón parecía confeccionado con telarañas, y su chaqueta, abrochada con un alfiler de seguridad, pedía socorro por todas las abiertas costuras sin que sus gritos lograran la conmiseración de las gentes (11).

EXTERIOR; ALIENATION. This is the first physical description of Pito in the novel. The poetic style in the narrator's sections is readily apparent, even in the description of a vagabond. Attributing to the ragged jacket the ability to cry out for help allows the presentation of the code of alienation from the first page of the text. The jacket's inability to arouse people's compassion is indicative of what happens throughout the novel.

LEXIA 2. ¿No ha observado usted que la profesión de déspota es más fácil que la de médico o la de abogado? Primer año: liquidación de viejas amistades para evitar que con su presencia recuerden el pasado, y creación de un Supremo Consejo de Lambiscones; tercer año: curso completo de egolatría y megalomanía; cuarto y último año: preponderancia de la opinión personal y arbitrariedades a toda orquesta (14).

OBSERVER; HUMOR; REBELLION. The voice in this lexia is entirely Pito's. The dominant code is that of observer. Pito has obviously paid close attention to the political situation in Mexico. At the same time, the protagonist's intelligence is patent in his

speech, which shows a degree of intellectual depth. In spite of the philosophical pessimism in the passage, the code of humor is present as well. As a result, reading the text is not oppressive. On the contrary, we admire Pito's verbal grace. At the same time we see in this passage the protagonist's rebellious side. He dares to speak out against political authorities rather than be in conformity with them.

LEXIA 3. "--Pito Pérez, ponte de rodillas y reza el Yo pecador para confesarte: ¿Quién se robó el dinero de Nuestro Señor?"

"--No sé, padre".

"--Hic et nunc te condeno si no me dices quién es el ladrón..."

"--Yo fui, Padre" --exclamé con un tono angustiado, temoroso de aquellas palabras en latín que no entendía, y que por lo mismo pareciéronme formidables (32).

ALIENATION; HUMOR; REBELLION. The prevalent code in this lexia is alienation. Pito's isolation as he faces the priest parallels his state with regard to society in general. Padre Coscorrón's use of Latin reminiscent of Doctor Purgante in El Periquillo

Sarniento provides the passage with a touch of humor. Although the Latin is humorous to us, it intimidates Pito into confessing and leads to his further alienation. The code of rebellion is suggested indirectly in this passage. In spite of the fact that here he conforms to the will of the clergy, the protagonist is in this position because he was an accomplice in the theft of donations. In addition, if he were to conform completely to the desires of the priest, he would confess that his friend not only participated in the crime but masterminded it.

LEXIA 4. ¡Pobres de los pobres! Yo les aconsejo que respeten siempre la ley, y que la cumplan, pero que se orinen en sus representantes (86).

OBSERVER; HUMOR; REBELLION. Pito demonstrates here that he is thinking. He has just recounted the story of a politician who does not concern himself with the poor. His advice to always respect the law surprises us somewhat, since Pito has freely criticized its representatives. Nevertheless, this advice is obviously given as a preparation for the grotesquely humorous jolt as the sentence finishes. The code of rebellion is also inherent in this

suggestion.

LEXIA 5. La humanidad es una hipócrita que pasa la vida alabando a Dios, pretendiendo engañarlo con el Jesús en los labios y maldiciendo y renegando sin piedad del Diablo.

¡Pobrecito del Diablo, qué lástima le tengo, porque no ha oído jamás una palabra de compasión o de cariño! (89-90.)

ALIENATION; OBSERVER. This is one of the sections of the book in which the code of alienation is most dominant. Beginning with the above words Pito compares the Devil to Jesus Christ. Through this comparison, Pito shows great sympathy for the former. His observations regarding the Devil reflect his own sufferings. His concern for the lack of love shown for the Evil One defines his own alienated situation.

LEXIA 6. Al terminar el Secretario, me puse de pie improvisando estos malos versos:

El pueblo lo felicita
por la mujer que se lleva.
Es dadivosa, bonita,
diligente, y casi nueva. . .

El novio se puso de pie con la cabellera alborotada, los ojos echando chispas, y

> cogiendo una botella de sobre la mesa, me la tiró con tal tino que, dándome con ella en la frente, me hizo rodar por el suelo bañado en mi propia sangre (111-2).

HUMOR; ALIENATION; REBELLION. Humor together with rebellion dominate the verses of this lexia. Pito's rebellion leads him to stand and recite his verses at the wedding party of his former girlfriend. Alienation is also implied in the passage. Pito has obviously been left alone without love once again. The groom's violent reaction intensifies the protagonist's alienation. He is left wounded and completely abandoned on the floor.

LEXIA 7. Sí, es verdad, conozco algunas [cárceles] y no me avergüenza confesarlo. He ido a parar a ellas por borracho y travieso, pero a nadie he matado ni he cometido crímenes de esos que honran a los ricos y hunden a los pobres en largos años de condena. Porque un rico mata y se esconde mientras su dinero quebranta leyes y suaviza voluntades (115-6).

OBSERVER; ALIENATION; REBELLION. These words function as a prologue to a complete chapter dealing

with Pito's experiences in jails. The predominant code is that of alienation. Ironically, although alienation is prevalent here, Pito comments in the chapter that behind bars he found an environment of family warmth which he never experienced in his own home. His visits to jails occur often as a result of his rebellion. His poverty guarantees that he will stay imprisoned, as he observes in this lexia. The code of observer is present here as he comments on the injustices of the penal system which have their root in money. Although we do not see it in this segment, the code of humor is interwoven throughout this chapter in spite of its seemingly cheerless subject matter.

LEXIA 8. Su estampa era la misma que yo conocí diez años antes: levita deteriorada con flor en el ojal, bastón de puño niquelado, pantalón con unas rodilleras tan amplias que podría guardar en ellas a sus hijos, a semejanza de los canguros; sombrero carrete haciendo equilibrios para conservarse sobre la melena alborotada y que por su color de oro viejo, parecía aureola de santo (155-6).

EXTERIOR; ALIENATION. The voice in this lexia is

that of the narrator rather than Pito's. The item which catches our attention most readily in this lexia is the suggestion of Pito as a saint. This is the second time in the book that he is portrayed with a halo. Apparently his alienation has sanctified him. His physical state as described here reveals an exterior which is a reflection of his extreme interior alienation.

LEXIA 9. Alguno de la tertulia, sonriendo maliciosamente, interrogó a Pito Pérez:

"--¿Y la Caneca?

"Está en casa, rodeada de comodidades".

--¿Quién es la Caneca? --pregunté intrigado por saber a quién se referían.

--¡El amor más fiel que he tenido en mi vida! (175).

HUMOR; ALIENATION. The attitude of the first questioner here shows the contempt others have for Pito. His alienation is hardly surprising in light of such an attitude. However, the presence of a faithful lover in Pito's life suggests that he is no longer completely isolated from the love and concern of his fellow man. Nonetheless, as the anecdote continues, we find that Caneca's presence in Pito's life is the

strongest evidence of his alienation in the book. This is because Caneca is a woman's skeleton which Pito has stolen in an act of rebellion and desperation. On the surface this situation is surprising and humorous in a grotesque way, but at a deeper level it is tragic.

LEXIA 10. Los vecinos madrugadores descubrieron el cadáver sobre un montón de basura, con la melena en desorden, llena de lodo, la boca contraída por un rictus de amargura, y los ojos muy abiertos mirando con altivez desafiadora al firmamento (181).

EXTERIOR; ALIENATION; REBELLION. These words from the narrator in the final chapter of the book interweave three of the codes. The physical description of Pito's cadaver is movingly pathetic. As a dead man, he is presented in the most alienated state possible--as human refuse. His mouth with its expression of bitterness acts as a reflection of his alienation. Appropriately, although he is dead, his eyes reflect the rebellion which was characteristic of his life. This final symbol of defiance seems to be against heaven itself, thus leaving behind his rebellion against mere humans.

The following diagram shows the frequency of the codes in the lexias quoted herein. I believe it is useful in drawing some brief conclusions:

CODE

Lexia	Exterior	Observer	Humor	Alienation	Rebellion
1	X			X	
2		X	X		X
3			X	X	X
4		X	X		X
5		X		X	
6			X	X	X
7		X		X	X
8	X			X	
9			X	X	
10	X			X	X
	3	4	5	8	6

The predominance of the code of alienation is readily apparent. The codes of rebellion and humor are present in at least half of the lexias. The other codes do not appear with as much frequency, but their presence is essential in the formation of the protagonist.

Pito Pérez appears to be a simple character, but as we have seen through the examination of the interweaving of the above character codes, he is more complex than can at first be assumed. In my opinion, the presence of these elements, and their skillful intertwining by Rubén Romero, assure Pito Pérez of being a fictional character of lasting, widespread

appeal.

Chapter Seven

Wherein Valle-Arizpe's El Canillitas is identified as a "colonialista" novel although the colonialist mode was sixteen years outdated at the time of its publication and its picaresque characteristics identified, after which many ways in which the reader is treated to humor in the novel are pointed out, among which are the narration of practical jokes, the presence of linguistic and situational irony, the use of humorous names and nicknames, the utilization of comical comparisons, and so forth.

El Canillitas, novela de burlas y donaires,[1] published in 1941 by Artemio de Valle-Arizpe, is anachronistic on several counts. The novel's referent is colonial Mexico, the language is archaic, and the flavor is antiquated. One would think that it should have been written between 1918 and 1926, when the colonialista novel was being cultivated in Mexico. While other authors of colonialist novels created other types of fiction after 1926, Valle-Arizpe continued in the same mode throughout his lifetime. El Canillitas is a fruit of his incessant effort.

Almost all of the Mexican fiction written in the nineteen-thirties and early nineteen-forties deals

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[1] All references to El Canillitas by page number in the body of this text refer to the fourth edition of the novel published by EDIASPA in Mexico in 1947.

with twentieth-century Mexico. Whereas La vida inútil de Pito Pérez takes a mere backward glance in terms of the picaresque conventions it employs, El Canillitas, written just three years later, immerses itself in the past. Although the work is an oddity when viewed in the context of the development of Mexican fiction, a brief look at its author's career shows that it conforms neatly to Valle-Arizpe's monumental production. Whether he was writing fiction, narrating history or collecting chronicles, legends and narratives, almost the entirety of his sixty-plus volume work deals with Mexico's Colonial Era. In fact, his special interest in the country's capital city earned him the title of "Cronista de la Ciudad de México" in 1942. El Canillitas, with its precious language, colonial setting, and picaresque model, is a glaring departure from the fiction of the day, but a natural manifestation of its author's preferences.

Within five years of its initial publication, El Canillitas was in its fourth printing. In spite of its popularity with the reading public, critics have almost completely overlooked the book. Several factors seem responsible for the fact that it has received almost no critical attention. First, Valle-

Arizpe's prominence as a historian casts his fictional works into obscurity. While his historical work on Colonial Mexico is distinguished in both quality and quantity, none of his fictional texts is truly outstanding. Second, the vastness of Valle-Arizpe's work can make any one of his books look like just one more volume by a prolific writer. Third, the fact that colonialist literature had been outmoded to public taste for almost two decades can make a critic see the book as a mere curiosity. Finally, John Brushwood's statement on the colonialist novel applies perfectly to El Canillitas, "Judging the colonialist novels from the standpoint of reading pleasure, the only just statement is to say that a little is delightful, but a little goes a long way" (Mexico in its Novel 187). All of these factors contribute to El Canillitas's lack of critical attention.

Since El Canillitas has been virtually ignored by critics, summary of critical comments on the text is quickly accomplished. Ermilo Abreu Gómez, in his review of the book, notes its membership in the picaresque family tradition as well as its archaic, academic nature. He considers the book to be an escape from everyday life into the past. He feels the book's aesthetic value can be summed up by calling it

a "cínica expresión caricaturesca de lo humano" (5).

Manuel Pedro González thinks that Valle-Arizpe treats the world of the picaresque as "un tema erudito, buscado y explotado como materia histórica y ambiental más que entrañablemente sentido" (231).

Roberto Maximiano Acevedo has commented:

> Valle-Arizpe conceived stories and novels filled with minute details of the customs, manners, mores, and conventions of those times, giving the most interesting descriptions of the costumes, furnishings, decorations, foods, medications and all aspects of everyday life (v).

This generalized statement on the whole of Valle-Arizpe's fiction applies absolutely to El Canillitas.

Let us now turn to an examination of the work's picaresque characteristics.

1) Episodic Plot. As with other picaresque novels, El Canillitas's structure depends on its picaro as the only consistent link between chapters. Whereas most of the novel is absolutely episodic, Valle-Arizpe's obsession for presenting details from Mexico's Colonial Era occasionally turns an episode into an

exposition on eighteenth-century Mexico City's culture. For example, in the seventh "tranco" (the book is divided into twenty-four "trancos"), the extent of the picaro's action is to walk from the cathedral across the Plaza Mayor. This chapter, the longest in the book, is spent describing the cathedral, the plaza, and the people Félix sees on his short walk, including fellow picaros, Indians, peddlers, criminals, beggars, noblemen, and so forth. In spite of an emphasis on manners and customs in this and other similar sections, El Canillitas's plot remains episodic.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. Valle-Arizpe's costumbrista bent makes the pace of the narrative less than dazzling. In spite of the snail's rate of narration regarding the events of the picaro's life, dizziness can on occasion overcome the reader as a result of the book's excessive length or the overwrought attention to Colonial detail. In short, the book can be dizzying, but the rhythm with regard to the picaro's life is not.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Very few references to fate are made in the text of El Canillitas. On one occasion the protagonist is said to have had "estrellas contrarias" (278). In an unrelated

episode, Félix happens to overhear part of a conversation between two judges, during which one says to the other: "De los cinco criminales que hoy hemos condenado a muerte inapelable, tengo la plena seguridad de que dos de ellos sí la merecían" (72). Notwithstanding isolated references such as these to fate, its hand is never emphasized and seldom present. Our protagonist places himself in misfortune's way without needing fate's assistance.

4) Bodily Violence. At least ten times in the text Félix is subjected to some form of physical beating. On one occasion, as the victim of a practical joke, he is sent to a store with what Félix perceives to be an innocent message. The message infuriates the storekeeper, who turns on the protagonist and batters him. In another episode, Félix's skull is cracked open when a scuffle escalates into a rock throwing contest. His first incarceration is marked by initiation rites performed by his jailmates, in which he is thoroughly humiliated through verbal and physical abuse. When caught by his girlfriend's father in her room, he is beaten mercilessly. Even when he is among men of the cloth in a monastery, he is administered "cristianamente, una paliza monumental" (282). In short, Félix is no stranger to

bodily violence.

5a) A Single Protagonist. In spite of "costumbrista" tendencies, El Canillitas is without a doubt the story of a picaro, as is reflected in the book's final paragraph: "Esta fue la vida y la muerte. . . de Félix Vargas, más conocido por el Canillitas. . ." (367).

5b) Uncommon Origins. The text's first "tranco" is dedicated to the presentation of Félix's parents. Although his father's identity was impossible to ascertain with any authority, "según fieles cálculos de comadres sabidoras, fue un tal Serapio el Mochilón, ladrón corriente y moliente" (9). Physically lacking in beauty and ever inebriated, Serapio was charged with murder, convicted, and hanged for it. Félix's mother was of roughly the same social fabric as his presumed father. Her profession as a prostitute made childhood stability impossible for the protagonist. Her death made Félix an orphan at a very young age, after which he was raised by his mother's fellow-workers in less than ideal environments. Félix's peculiar origins hardly prepare him for a stable life.

5c) Cunning. The picaro's cunning is not emphasized in the text, but it is easily perceived. Very early in the book we see Félix's capacity to work situations to his advantage. A priest who takes him in gives him

the responsibility of passing the alms basin during mass. As an incentive to inspire hard work, he offers our protagonist half a "real" for each "peso" collected. Félix's interpretation of this offer is a surprise:

> Apenas se reunió un peso, en el acto extrajo Félix el medio real prometido, con lo que quedaron siete y medio; se acabaló, poco después, un nuevo peso, es decir ocho reales, y volvió a extraer Felisillos su comisión y la siguió sacando apenas se llegaba a esa cantidad. De este modo nunca se pasaba en el plato petitorio de los siete reales y medio. Así repetidísimas ocasiones, hizo solamente la lícita substracción de lo ofrecido. . .(33).

Thus, while the Church receives little money, Félix benefits handsomely. His craftiness brings him many free drinks, free food, and even a free pulled tooth.

5d) Protean Form. Early in his life Félix works in several different professions. As a young boy, while he lives in a brothel, he performs a variety of odd jobs ranging from cleaning rooms to procuring customers. Later he becomes an altar boy, then a

pharmacist's assistant, and still later an amanuensis. His length of service in each of these professions is very short. Most of the time he is a jobless vagabond living from drink to drink. Thus, in spite of some role-playing early in his life, overall Félix does not stand out as a character who plays many roles.

5e) Alienation. Without a doubt there are moments in Félix's life in which he is completely alone, without love or friendship, such as in the following passage: ". . .algo extraño sobrecogía al pobre niño, y hacíale sentirse solo, más abandonado, más desvalido que nunca. . ." (93). His fondness for alcohol further distances him from his fellow man. For example, on one occasion he is pursued by a member of the opposite sex, but he has lost all capacity for feeling, due to a constant drunken stupor. The unusual twist of Félix's alienation is that he is rarely alone. When he is a boy, people take him in or he finds company among fellow picaros; when he is older he inevitably has a drinking companion. Although he is rarely by himself, his relationships are almost always short-term and void of loyalty and nurturing. Félix's alienation may not be as severe as that of Don Catrín or Pito Pérez, but it remains very real.

5f) Internal Instability. Félix's inability to hold

a job is symptomatic of his lack of internal stability. In the book's penultimate and antepenultimate chapters he completely gives up drinking. Our hero suddenly seems to be reaching equilibrium in his life. However, in the final chapter he repents of his sobriety. The epitaph on his grave marker is indicative of the lack of internal drive in his life: "Aquí descansa Félix Vargas, quien siempre descansó" (366). Our protagonist has absolutely no goals, no drive, and no direction. He is positively unstable.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. The only form of philosophy which we find in El Canillitas comes from the narrator rather than from the protagonist. Furthermore, the narrator's philosophy is not heavyhanded, scholarly and pedantic, but light, homespun, and often flippant. The text is dotted with short philosophical aphorisms such as "quien bien duerme, pulgas no siente" (46), "ya se sabe que hecha la ley, se hace la trampa" (53), and "los mortales enferman del mal, pero mueren del doctor" (154). Such maxims are definitely not detailed philosophical expositions, but they reveal in the narrator a definite philosophical temperament.

6) The First-person Point of View. El Canillitas is

not narrated from the first-person point of view, as with most picaresque novels. Instead, a third-person narrator tells the picaro's story in the past tense. The narrator's frequent use of diminutives in reference to the protagonist, especially in the first half of the text, belies his affection for the character. Furthermore, the text is often focalized through Félix. Thus we see that the narrator is not cold and strictly objective. Nonetheless, the protagonist is not the narrator, and the narration is not told with the first-person point of view.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. Félix's world is filled with fellow picaros, beggars, poverty, filth, and cruelty. He becomes acquainted with even the "Cárcel de Corte," which contains "lo más florido de lo peor de México y de sus contornos" (163). Order and kindness are not absent from Félix's world, but they do not figure prominently therein.

8) Physical Survival. At different moments during the novel, Félix's hunger is described as eternal, always alert, never appeased, and furious. Its presence is often mentioned during the course of the narration. Our hero's strategy to drown it in alcohol is a poor solution at best. The result of El Canillitas's incessant hunger is incredible

emaciation. He is referred to several times as a human thread. Physical survival is indeed a question which is prominent in the text.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. To say that the gallery of human types presented in El Canillitas is vast somehow seems to be a gross understatement. As has been noted, the gallery of types presented in chapter seven alone is vast. Beggars, prostitutes, pharmacists, doctors, men of the cloth, drunks, convicted criminals, picaros, teachers, students, gossips, businessmen, Indians, peddlers and noblemen, among others, are portrayed in the text. In almost every case, specific examples are given for each type, whether they be fairly well developed or scarcely mentioned, named or nameless. For example, Don Libario Liébana, an obese, outspoken, eccentric priest who throws out people who pray in the church midweek because he judges them to be lazy, is a fairly rounded character. On the other hand, the convicts we meet while Félix is in jail are not rounded, but remain types. In the space of three pages we are introduced to twenty-five of them by name with a brief description of their crime or specialization. This cast of convicts includes "el Galafre, emperador de la ganzúa, que. . .tenía la gracia de abrir puertas por

mayores seguridades que tuvieran de chapas, fallebas, colanillas, trancas, aldabas, alamudes, teleras, fiadores y cadenas" (160-161), and "el Barandillas. . .les sabía destilar a yerbas y flores sus venenos esenciales, echábalos en una copa de vino. . . y a poco al que la bebía le llegaban hasta el corazón" (162). The extensive array of human types in El Canillitas is one of the book's richest elements.

One reason classic picaresque novels have remained popular after several centuries is that strong doses of humor are incorporated therein. As can be seen in some of the passages which have already been cited in this study, El Canillitas follows in the picaresque novel's tradition of humor. In fact humor's presence throughout the book is not only one of its most appealing characteristics, but one of its most accomplished as well. Let us now analyze some of the devices utilized in the text to produce humor.

Perhaps the type of humor most commonly associated with the picaresque tradition is that which stems from the action of the plot itself. Trickery and ingenuity are at the heart of this type of humor, as can be seen in the following examples. Félix hears

students tell how they placed a donkey in their teacher's lecturing seat. When the teacher arrived, the class was paying the same amount of attention to the animal as was their custom to their teacher. Turning the tables on them, the teacher:

> fingió no ver al esquelético animal y. . . con toda calma se puso a pasar lista y al terminar de leerla se quedó examinando con mucha atención a la bestia, . . . dijo con un fingido asombro:
>
> --Me he quedado sorprendido, señores míos, de que no figure en mis listas el nombre de este buen compañero vuestro (124).

While Félix is working in a pharmacy a stranger arrives and asks our hero to lend him an emetic. The stranger explains, "únicamente lo pido prestado, pues créame, se lo devolveré pronto" (146). After Félix naively lends him the emetic, the man fulfills his promise, but by using the meaning of the word "devolver" which Félix had not anticipated. When Félix has a terribly intense toothache and an equally intense hunger, he makes a clever bet with a man which both ends his toothache and satisfies his hunger. Félix bets that he can eat everything in the

restaurant they are frequenting. If he wins, the man pays for the food; if he loses, the man can pull one of his teeth. Félix's intentional loss after stuffing himself is thus actually a double victory.

Situational humor such as is illustrated above, though clever, is not El Canillitas's strongest suit in quantity or subtlety. The other type of humor present in the text which is common in many picaresque texts is the use of irony, both linguistic and situational. El Canillitas is full of statements in which the narrator speaks ironically. On numerous occasions positive adjectives are applied in an obviously ironic manner, such as with the "noble oficio" of beggars, Félix's "esclarecidos progenitores," a "buen regalo" consisting of bedbugs, fleas, and lice, "exquisito dialecto de presidio," and so forth.

Sometimes the irony is more extended than just one word, as in the description of the presumptuous doctor, Aniceto Valdivieso, who is "el único dueño de la verdad absoluta. Lo que decía era ya cuerpo jurídico para toda cuestión que ocurriese después" (147-48). The same type of irony leads the narrator to refer ironically to many of Félix's experiences in terms of education. From prostitutes he learns

"lindas, excelentes cosas que le sirvieron en su bachillerato de pícaro y luego en su doctorado" (24-25). His time in jail turned him into a "doctor prematuro en muchas nobles artes," since he was taught by "eximios maestros en todas la disciplinas, quienes enseñaron al mancebo cosas fundamentales. En esos catedráticos de condición rahez no tenía fin su ciencia ni número su sabiduría" (159). After being released from prison he meets a new set of distinguished teachers, under which he becomes a "consumado doctor en bellaquería" (175).

Situational irony is not as abundant in the text, but it is present on occasion. Such irony frequently involves religion, as when Félix receives a brutal beating at the hands of friars. Another irony is apparent in the activities of the undesirables who congregate at the rear of the cathedral. Before taking any actions they piously pray to any of a variety of saints depending on what ignoble undertaking they have planned. For example, they pray to the Virgin of Soledad that their burglaries will be successful; Saint Judas is called upon to keep representatives of the law at a great distance from them. Thus, both linguistic and situational irony play strong roles in the text.

Names and nicknames in the text are a constant source of humor. Some of the characters have names which in and of themselves either suggest the characters' characteristics, fit them ironically, or just sound funny. The name of Mexico City's most effective slanderer, Pablo Longorio de la Rada Rayada, is suggestive of his lengthy discourses and his mouth the size of a bay. Félix's mother's name, María la Brincos, represents her willingness to leap freely from man to man. Sidronio Salmerón de Caravantes's given name accurately suggests his penchant for drinking, while his first surname ironically suggests religiosity. Geripundio, Liborio Liébana, Filogonio Azcárate, and Serapio are names which simply sound comic.

The title of the book --the protagonist's nickname-- reflects the predominant way in which the narrator refers to characters in the text. Relatively few characters in the text are known exclusively by their true names. In contrast, we know no more than the nickname of numerous characters, while others are referred to by both their legal names and a nickname. Félix receives his nickname from a woman friend, and it obviously is related to his caricaturesque lack of size: "Un suspiro tenía más carne que Félix el

Canillitas, que ostentaba toda su estructura ósea por encima del pellejo" (191).

As with our hero, other nicknames stem from characters' physical appearance, such as in the case of a gentleman nicknamed "Amapola" because his face is always red, and the sisters who are so physically different from each other that they are referred to as the "Fiel Contraste," and "El Terror," so named because his nose is terrifyingly large. A character whose mouth is slightly off to one side has an ingenious nickname which reflects this physical peculiarity: "el peón de Ajedrez." He was called this "porque andaba de frente y comía de lado" (230).

While some nicknames are outright attacks on a character's personality and reputation, as with "don Pendejo el magnífico," others are tempered by irony, such as with "el Mudo," so called because in spite of his incessant talking, he never says anything. Many of the text's most amusing nicknames mean very little without a short explanation which reveals the logic and genius of the names. Examples of this type include a prostitute known as "la Tos" because "todos la habían tenido" (181), "El Apenitas," so named because "era muy tímido, muy humilde y callado, muy suave en todo" (160), and "China Velera," whose name

comes from he reputation of always being on the move. Other nicknames are left without explanation, and thus come across as colorful, flamboyant, and entertaining, such as with "El Gallo Verde," "Madam Trompadur," "don Quirileisón," and the prisoner known as "Medialuz." Whether they are based on physical or behavioral characteristics, and whether an explanation enriches them or not, the names and nicknames given the characters in El Canillitas are a constant source of delight to the reader.

A technique which produces humor with great regularity in the text is that of comparison, which is used most often when presenting new characters. These comparisons provide concrete examples which illustrate adjectives or concepts, thus making them more visible and palpable to the reader. The type of comparison most frequently employed in El Canillitas is that which equates an aspect of a person or thing with another, such as in the case of a woman who is "caliente como un comal" (177). Rather than flatly state that Félix's face was wrinkled, a humorous comparison gives this concept a visual and tactile existence: "la cara se le plegaba como acordeón" (260). Also referring to Félix, the narrator states that "parecía cepillo de dientes, porque no tenía más

que hueso y pelo" (176). Saying that a group of picaros was everywhere would be a lifeless commentary and would cause no mental stimulation. Adding a ridiculous comparison breathes life into the idea: "se metía por todas partes como humedad" (48). A man who is as fat as a pyramid, a woman as juicy as a peach, and a man who drinks with the thirst of a tired camel are further examples from the text of how humorous comparisons of equality both tickle our funny bone because of unexpected linking of heretofore completely unlike items, and effectively fill out our mental and emotional image of the items described.

Comparisons of inequality are almost as abundant as those of equality in El Canillitas. Both types function on the principles mentioned above, but comparisons of inequality have a slightly greater impact both as humor and in creating effective mental images. The following passage contains two such comparisons, along with three instances of ironic adjectives, and two humorous nicknames:

> El tal Nalga de Palo, que tenía lengua más larga que una bandera, hizo de la pindonga madre del Mochilón, ilustre abuela de Félix, un recuerdo afectuoso, muy delicado, diciéndole que fue más transitada que la

calle de los Plateros (13).

The visual image of Félix staggering after too many drinks is greatly enriched by this comparison: "se bamboleaba más que caña en vendaval" (260). Some comparisons are obviously not to be taken at face value, but the humorous and suggestive impact they have on the reader cannot be denied. Such is the case in the following description of the aggressive encounter between two of the text's women: "Fue tal el jollín que armaron, que al lado de él no sería nada lo que hicieran los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis" (20). Thus we see that comparisons of equality and inequality are not only humorous, but effective narrative tools as well.

A stylistic device used with great regularity in the text is that of lists. Mentioned above is the list of types of prisoners Félix encounters during his stay in jail. Other lists include one hundred twenty-four ways of referring to prostitutes, more than fifty food dishes prepared by the priest's servant, more than twenty terms used to indicate racial mixtures, things the pharmacist does, things heard on the street, religious events, and so forth. Many of these lists have a humorous side to them, as with the list mentioned above which reports to which saints

criminals pray for success in their illegal activities. The following short list is used for the introduction of a character: "Era el tal medio tuerto, medio cojo, medio sordo, medio idiota y medio hermano de una repolluda fulana. . ." (177). A list of stories told by the town gossip, liar, and character assassin, Juan Pablo Longorio de la Rada, contains many stories which are so dramatic or farfetched that they can be no less than humorous. The following is the beginning of the list:

> Miren, allí va el padre Antonio Larios; todos, absolutamente todos los sermones que predica, no son de él, ¡qué van a ser de ese tontaina!, sino que son del famoso padre Parra, de cuyo sermonario los saca y aprende de memoria; aquél es don Mariano Reséndiz de Trotosa; muy honrado es este don Marianito, sí, muy honrado, pero buena fama de hurtos encubre; aquélla es la rica doña Juana Sotelo, a quien todos conocen, pero no sabe nadie, yo sí lo sé, que las noches no las pasa en su casa, en donde sólo se queda estornudando su catarro el cornalón de su marido, y ella anda en un puro retozo con el Superintendente de los Reales Azogues;. . .

(243-44).

He goes on to slander many other people, dead and alive, including Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora. These are but a few examples of lists, many of them humorous, which are incorporated into the book.

Another linguistic source of humor in El Canillitas is the use of diminutives and augmentatives. Again, the first example of this device is found in the book's title. Not only is the protagonist so slight and bony that he is not compared to a regular shin bone, but a minute shin bone. Félix is often referred to with diminutives, as an "animalillo" when small, "nerviosillo y saltarín" as a boy. These and other diminutives function to emphasize Félix's laughably unbelievable lack of body weight. Even more effective tools in creating humor are augmentatives. These are generally used simply to add an exclamation point to adjectives. The word "zonzo" in itself has a comic feel, but one character is called "zonzorrión, que es zonzo en grado superlativo" (18). The same man is worthy of a humorous neologism: "pulquérrimo, de pulque, no de pulcritud" (18).

El Canillitas is endowed with a rich supply of

stylistic charm. Prominent among its repertoire of devices which are pleasant for readers are those which create humor. Wit, situational and linguistic irony, comparisons, names and nicknames, lists, and suffixes are all devices used to tickle the reader's funny bone. Without a doubt, the novel both teaches its readers about Colonial Mexico and entertains them, in part through humor, as has been shown here. Thus, El Canillitas, in both educating and delighting its reader, strongly follows in the rich tradition of the Mexican picaresque novel. Although it differs from picaresque norms in several respects, emphasis on humor causes a picaresque mood to be present throughout the work.

Chapter Eight

Wherein Hasta no verte Jesús mío by Elena Poniatowska is placed within the context of both its author's literary career and tendencies of Mexican novels from its era, after which its picaresque characteristics are identified and the pace of the narrative analyzed, as a result of which the pace is found to be surprisingly leisurely in striking contrast to the enormous amount of material which is related in the text.

Hasta no verte Jesús mío,[1] published in 1969 by Elena Poniatowska, was the author's second novelistic effort. At the time of its publication, her reputation as a writer was well established primarily through her work as a journalist in Mexico City. Her journalistic talent and production eventually led to her being awarded Mexico's "Premio Nacional de Periodismo" in 1978. She was the first woman to be so honored ("El premio nacional de periodismo por primera vez concedido a una mujer" 29). Since Hasta no verte's appearance, Poniatowska's literary star has continued to rise with her steady journalistic production, a book of invented, but historically based letters directed to Diego Rivera by Angelina Beloff, his companion of ten years (Querido Diego, te abraza

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[1] All page references to the novel in this study refer to the original 1969 Era edition of the text.

Quiela), a drama, and several books on the 1968 tragedy at Tlatelolco. In fact, La noche de Tlatelolco, which is a collection of journalistic writings and interviews with regard to the massacre, has become a basic source on the subject. In 1983 it was already in its forty-third printing. Poniatowska's background in journalism is apparent in each of her books in the sense that authorial interference is portrayed to be minimal or absent.

According to John S. Brushwood, the major characteristics of Mexican fiction between 1967 and 1982 are metafiction, Tlatelolco, life in Mexico City, matters related to identity, and nostalgia (La novela mexicana (1967-1982) 17-20). Incorporated in Hasta no verte Jesús mío are three of these characteristics, although none is stressed in the text. First, many of the events in the novel take place in Mexico City. Emphasis is not, however, placed on life in the capital, but simply on the life of Jesusa Palancares, the novel's protagonist. Second, an underlying current in the text is the identity of women, men, and Mexico, especially with regard to the revolution. Finally, history is a very visible backdrop for much of the action of the novel. As the protagonist narrates the events of her life she makes reference to

historical figures such as Villa and Cárdenas. At one point she even describes personally meeting Emiliano Zapata. Nostalgia often shows through her view of the past, especially since her view of the present is less than favorable. Thus, Hasta no verte shares several characteristics with other Mexican narratives of the same period.

The fact that a number of picaresque characteristics pervade Poniatowska's novel could be another evidence of nostalgia, in that using such elements harkens back to a cultural past. However, unlike the Periquillo, La vida inútil de Pito Pérez, and El Canillitas, reference is not made to other picaresque novels in the text itself. In fact, while the above-mentioned novels are self-consciously part of the subgenre, such does not seem to be the case with Hasta no verte. The author's account of the book's creation constitutes evidence that it was not consciously conceived to be picaresque. Poniatowska states that she overheard the person Jesusa Palancares talking one day and requested an interview with her. In spite of Jesusa's initial resistance to the idea, Poniatowska did meet with her every Wednesday for two hours for the next two years to hear of her life. Poniatowska describes the transformation of the

interviews into a novel in this way:

> Utilicé las anécdotas, las ideas y muchos de los modismos de Jesusa Palancares pero no podría afirmar que es una transcripción directa de su vida. . . Maté a los personajes que me sobraban, eliminé cuanta sesión espiritualista pude, elaboré donde me pareció necesario, podé, cosí, remendé, inventé (Poniatowska "Hasta no verte Jesús mío" 10).

This description of the book's genesis brings to mind Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez, which was examined in chapter three of this study. Like Infortunios, the text at hand has a curious, undeterminable relationship between author and narrator. The author listened to the oral récit of the narrator, then created a novel from it. Since we do not have access to transcripts from the original oral account given by the person Jesusa Palancares, we cannot know to what extent it has been transformed by Poniatowska to arrive at the récit we have in Hasta no verte. However, unlike Infortunios, because of the author's account of writing the narrative, Hasta no verte can be classified as a novel without reservation.

Poniatowska's novel was in its twenty-second printing in 1983. In spite of the continued demand for and distribution of the book, critical comment has been sparse. For the most part the book has been approached from the perspective of feminist criticism.

Joel Hancock sees the novel as "a landmark in Mexican literature because it offers a fresh view and treatment of Latin American woman, and may represent a step toward the delineation of a new female image or role model" (353). Hancock sees Jesusa Palancares as a character who is far removed from inaccurate and/or offensive female stereotypes which abound in Spanish American literature. He sees her as an embodiment of "so-called feminine and masculine traits, thus approximating the androgynous figure which some feminist critics regard as essential" (353). Hancock also notes some of the book's picaresque characteristics, including Jesusa's unusual childhood, her Protean form, her penchant for social observation and criticism, and the recurring topics of hunger and misfortune.

Monique Lemaitre sees Jesusa Palancares as an important addition to a group of women characters in Mexican literature "que no se dejaron dominar por

nuestra sociedad patriarcal" (751). Lemaitre analyzes Jesusa's personality traits in comparison with the four feminine archetypes set forth by Jung. She finds that Jesusa has characteristics which correspond to each of Jung's archetypes; therefore, she defies any efforts to be neatly labelled. She also observes that Jesusa does not adopt the negative characteristics of her male oppressors when she has escaped their domination, which allows true liberation rather than an endless exchange of abuses.

Edward H. Friedman points out many of the ironies in the text which arise from the differing perspectives of the narrator and the implied author. Most of these ironies stem from a discrepancy between what the narrator tells and what she shows. For example, while Jesusa claims to have led an evil life, her actions are often noble and positive. Another irony Friedman points out is that while much of the novel is set during the revolution, which embodies Mexico's struggle for freedom from repression, many of the combatants are at once repressing Jesusa, who represents Mexican women. Friedman sees the silence which is imposed upon Jesusa throughout most of her life as one of the major themes of the novel. Jesusa's father, her stepmother, her husband, and

others rarely speak to her and even more rarely allow her a voice. Friedman claims that such repression actually denies Jesusa the development of a personality. Therefore, the opportunity given to Jesusa to narrate her story is highly significant, for it gives her an identity. Friedman concludes:

> The predominant battle in Hasta no verte Jesús mío is not so much the revolution as the fight for survival of a representative and symbolic woman, whose major weapon is a text that delivers her from silence (187).

Let us now turn to the picaresque elements in Hasta no verte Jesús mío.

1) Episodic Plot. The structure of Poniatowska's novel is indeed based on episodes. Experiences from Jesusa's life, most of them independent of one another, are strung together with the protagonist serving as the only sustained element of continuity in the text. Although various characters appear in more than one chapter, such as Jesusa's father, who is present in chapters two through seven (of twenty-nine), the overall structure remains episodic.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The pace of Hasta no verte is

unexpectedly subdued and far from vertiginous. This element of the text is the subject of extended analysis later in this chapter.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Fate as such is never overtly mentioned in the book. However, Jesusa's religious beliefs serve much the same function as fate. Jesusa is consigned to a life of suffering because she believes God is in control and that she is doing penance for her unrighteousness in previous lives. However, unlike other picaresque novels in which strokes of bad luck at key moments prohibit the picaro from enjoying a newfound prosperity, bad luck does not victimize Jesusa in Hasta no verte. Rather, she sees her life as one of misfortune as prescribed by God.

4) Bodily Violence. During the first third of the novel, when Jesusa's family relationships dominate the text, violence is commonplace. She sees her brother beat his wife with regularity; her sister is abused over the course of several years and finally dies of fright after her husband makes an attempt on her life. Jesusa is also an occasional object of abuse. Her stepmother is habitually brutal to her: "Ella me golpeaba. . . me pegó mucho con una vara de membrillo" (35). Curiously, Jesusa does not harbor resentment

toward her stepmother, but rather remembers her most as the person who taught her valuable lessons on a variety of subjects. The narrator considers the punishment she was given to have been positive: "lo hacía por mi bien, para que yo me encarrerara" (35). She cannot say the same for the punishment she receives from her husband, who beats her mercilessly for no apparent reason:

> Para todo golpeaba Pedro, como la mayoría de los hombres de la corporación que trataban a sus mujeres a punta de cintarazos. . . Pedro agarraba y me daba con la cacha de la pistola en la cabeza. . . Me golpió hasta que se le hizo bueno. Me acuerdo que conté hasta cincuenta planazos (97-98).

Jesusa clearly suffers more severe punishment than she deserves. Finally one day when Pedro takes her out to beat her, she pulls a gun on him. Starting at that moment Jesusa does not take any more physical abuse from Pedro or anyone else.

5a) A Single Protagonist. Jesusa Palancares is the novel's only possible protagonist. The title La vida de Jesusa Palancares would accurately reflect the content of the text.

5b) Uncommon Origins. Jesusa was five years old when her mother died. Before her death she did little to train her daughter: "no me regañó ni me pegó nunca" (20). Jesusa's father, although never affectionate or nurturing with his children, did accept the responsibility of providing for and taking care of them. However, when the children were young and without anyone to care for them, while he was at work he would lock them in a shack, even on hot days. When he realized his work made it impossible to care for his family properly, he would leave their care to acquaintances or stepmothers. In these situations Jesusa received very little training and even less love. Eventually, before Jesusa's fifteenth birthday, her father rejected her, died soon thereafter, and she was left an orphan.

5c) Cunning. At one point a drunkard makes unsolicited sexual advances to Jesusa. She reacts to his overtures by thrashing him violently with a stick. She realizes the police will come looking for her, so she hurries home, changes her clothes, and combs her hair. When the police arrive with the victim of her assault, he is unable to recognize her and through her craftiness she avoids a trip to jail. As we see clearly in this anecdote, Jesusa possesses a capacity

for cunning, but its practice is rarely presented. Although it is not entirely absent from the text, the protagonist's survival is due to hard work rather than trickery.

5d) Protean Form. The list of professions in which Jesusa has worked during her long lifetime is formidable: assistant in a pharmacy, nanny, cook, soldier, commander, factory worker, launderer, dancer, waitress, nurse, butcher, maid, and businessperson. Her constant shift from one job to another is evidence of both her resistance to confining situations and her ability to adapt to new roles and responsibilities.

5e) Alienation. In his study on Hasta no verte, Edward Friedman emphasizes the silence which is imposed on Jesusa's life. Rarely do people talk to her, and even more rarely is she allowed to talk to people. Of course, one of the effects of this silence is alienation. Jesusa can hardly feel that she has any solidarity with her fellow beings when she is unable to communicate with them. At one point she claims that the only person she ever loved was her brother. Implicit in such a statement is that love is lacking in all her other family relationships, especially in her marriage. Although she has occasional fraternal friendships, these are short-

lived, isolated cases. She usually faces life alone. Her lack of identification with other people even keeps her from experiencing any feelings of nationalism: "Soy como los húngaros: de ninguna parte. No me siento mexicana ni reconozco a los mexicanos" (218). She is completely isolated from her fellow beings.

5f) Internal Instability. Jesusa's ornery disposition leads her often into fights and fits of rage which would seem to indicate a lack of interior stability. However, such is not at all the case. If she fights it is always with some motive linked to Jesusa's firm internal resolve to maintain her independence and do that which is proper. On several occasions she raises other people's children out of a sense of duty, since she claims no love for them. She is right when she states: "Yo tengo la voluntad muy fuerte" (254).

5g) A Philosophical Bent. Jesusa's strong philosophical leanings are voiced with great regularity in the text. Jesusa expresses opinions on Mexico, men, death, fighting, unions, government, the revolution, vices, homosexuality, doctors, the military, etc. Beyond her observations on the world around her, she is very involved with a spiritualist

religious group, which leads her to have strong views on such subjects as reincarnation, communication with the dead, and overall views of life. In short, Jesusa is a sort of philosopher of the common people in a way similar to Pito Pérez. The regularity with which she voices her views in the text is discussed later in this chapter.

6) The First-person Point of View. Hasta no verte is narrated from the first-person point of view in the tradition of the classic picaresque novels. Jesusa Palancares tells her own life story retrospectively; thus, she is both protagonist and narrator. The difference between her narrating self and experiencing self at times becomes very obvious in the text with shifts from past to present. Nonetheless, in both modes the point of view remains first-person.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. The fact that Jesusa does not form part of Mexico's upper or middle class is obvious. She is a poor, exploited laborer in a bleak world. Nevertheless, the chaotic world in which she lives is emphasized only occasionally in the text, such as in the description of the hospital for women suffering from venereal diseases. Certainly, Jesusa's world is chaotic and unkind, but it is instead Jesusa's bleak life which is spotlighted in the text.

8) Physical Survival. Hunger and depravation are certainly a part of Jesusa's life from time to time. Exhibiting her will not to be taken advantage of, when she misses meals, she merely sets out to convince herself that she is not hungry: "Y con las fuerzas que hacía se me quitaba el hambre" (109). As a reaction to the times of hunger, Jesusa often spends extra time telling of the details of meals during more abundant times. The same is true of having a roof over her head. Since she is no stranger to sleeping outside, special mention is often made of places of shelter which she enjoys during happier times. In short, the text does give special attention to Jesusa's physical needs.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. The cast of supporting characters in Jesusa's life is extensive, but is composed of people rather than caricatures or stereotypes. Certainly some of the characters could be representative of a certain type of people, e.g. Felipe is the unaffectionate but dutiful father, Pedro Aguilar is the wife-beating, macho husband, Evarista is the demanding, cruel stepmother. Yet these characters have very human traits, many of which do not fit exactly the type to which they are linked. Rather than a vast gallery of human types, the vast

gallery in Hasta no verte is composed of humans.

Upon considering the entirety of Hasta no verte Jesús mío, one is struck by the abundance of basic story material related in the text. In broad terms, Jesusa tells the events of her life, which spans more than seventy years. Even though the book is more than three hundred pages long, the narrator relates many, many occurrences from her long and eventful life in a narrative which could be much longer. Curiously, in spite of the numerous events spanning many years, the pace of the narrative seems unhurried. During the remainder of this chapter I seek to give evidence as to why the narrative pace in the book seems so leisurely.

To facilitate the study of this phenomenon I make use of Gerard Genette's terminology relative to narrative pace. Although the terms come from Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method (86-112), we here quote John Brushwood's succinct summary of their meaning:

> . . .scene takes the same amount of time in the récit and the histoire. Summary takes less time in the récit than in the histoire. Descriptive pause takes up immeasurably

> (incapable of being measured) more time in the récit than in the histoire. Ellipse takes up immeasurably less time in the récit than in the histoire (Genteel Barbarism 26).

Most of the pauses in Hasta no verte Jesús mío are not descriptive in nature but analytical. The narrator refrains from carrying forward the action of the narration, but instead comments on it. This phenomenon is referred to in this study as "analytical pause." Analytical pause describes the same phenomenon as descriptive pause in terms of the relationship between récit and histoire.

Rather than attempt to analyze the entirety of Hasta no verte in detail, I examine here chapter ten only. After studying the chapter I relate my findings to the entire text. Some chapters of the text feature the narration of more events than others. I have chosen a chapter which I considered very action-based since it is set during the revolution. In fact, it focuses on Jesusa's involvement therein. I have numbered the lines in the chapter to aid in referring to specific sections of it.[2]

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[2] Rather than refer to the text by page number in this section, I refer only to line numbers. The following line numbers are found on the pages indicated:

The chapter begins with a brief paragraph which acts as a type of topic statement for the chapter: "Mi marido tenía una suerte de perro amarillo con las mujeres. Lo seguían mucho y cuando no les hacía caso se valían de trasmano para ponerme en mal" (lines 1-3). The first sentence is a brief analytical pause, while the second is more difficult to classify. A case could be made for either summary or a type of ellipse. Technically, the sentence is a summary, since a chain of events is being related. However, use of the imperfect tense complicates the matter. Its use indicates that the events were repeated an undisclosed number of times in the past.[3] Thus, immeasurably (incapable of being measured) less time is taken in the *récit* than in the *histoire*, which is the definition of ellipse. Just as with pauses, whether descriptive or analytical, with iterative summary the passing of time in the *histoire* is

Page	Lines	Page	Lines
103	1-34	108	198-238
104	35-74	109	239-279
105	75-115	110	280-320
106	116-156	111	321-358
107	157-197	112	359-369

[3] Genette refers to this phenomenon in his chapter on "Frequency" (113-160). The term he uses to describe "narrating one time what happened n times" is "iterative narrative" (116).

overruled in the *récit*. An accurate sense of time in the *histoire* becomes impossible because the events of the story slow or stand still. Likewise, the narrative pace retards or comes to a halt.

The next portion of the chapter (lines 4-78) is dedicated to the telling of the story of Angelita, the only one of Pedro's lovers whom Jesusa personally comes to know. The second paragraph of the chapter consists purely of summary (lines 4-15). Jesusa relates that she knows Pedro has a lover by the name of Angelita, and that after Angelita's husband confronts Pedro over their relationship, Pedro batters him and ends up in jail. When Jesusa goes to visit her husband and take him some food, she finds Angelita there also.

Summary then gives way to scene (lines 16-23) and we witness the brief conversation which takes place in the jail. Jesusa berates the couple with regard to their relationship, while Pedro counters with an inane denial. Summary again returns (lines 24-35) as Jesusa tells that she leaves the jail with no small amount of indignation. She sees Angelita run home, so Jesusa follows her for a confrontation. A short scene (lines 36-38) shows Jesusa's inquiry for Angelita at the door with the owner of the house. Two lines of summary

(39-40), in which the owner identifies Angelita, are followed by an utterance by the owner directed to her boarder: "¡Sáquese! Yo no admito pleitos en mi casa" (scene, line 41).

The stage is now set for a confrontation, which is narrated in summary (lines 42-54). Despite Angelita's attempts to flee, Jesusa catches her, fights with her, disfigures her, and then allows her to run home to her husband. A short scene shows us Angelina's husband's verbal reaction to her arrival (lines 55-56). He tells her she deserves the punishment Jesusa gave her and tells her to leave.

The next few lines of the text interrupt the histoire's chronology of events (lines 57-68). As a group, these lines function as a narrative pause, even though on the surface they seem to be a continuation of scene and summary. The summary in lines 57-58 and scene in lines 59-61 relate what Jesusa heard about Angelita at a later date--that her face was permanently scarred. Lines 62-63 are pure descriptive pause as Jesusa describes Angelita's physical beauty before their fight. This triggers a line of iterative summary (64) followed by a scene (lines 65-67) and then another line of iterative summary (68). In these lines Jesusa relates that when she used to fight with

Pedro (once again, an undeterminable number of times) she would tell him at least to cheat with beautiful women. Thus, lines 57-68 do not carry the basic story forward, but expand on it and digress from it, with the effect on the narrative pace being a pause.

We return briefly to the story line as Jesusa relates Pedro's lack of response to her actions with Angelita (summary, lines 69-72). Without even switching to a new paragraph, a section which functions as analytical pause begins disguised as iterative summary (lines 72-91). Clearly a spinoff from the narration of Pedro's relationship with Angelita, in this section Jesusa clears Pedro of any responsibility for his relationships with other women since they pursue him; he is not the pursuer. Even in lines 77-79, in which Jesusa backtracks to tell of how Angelita went after Pedro, what seems to be summary actually functions as a pause. Likewise, what appears to be scene in lines 82-83 also functions within the framework of a pause:

> Por eso digo que como hombre no le quedaba más remedio que cumplirles. ¿Qué hacía Pedro si se le iban a ofrecer? ¿Decirles: "Vete, no te quiero?"
>
> --Pues aunque no me quieras, ven

arrimate (105).

The following is an outline summary of the first eighty-three lines of the chapter with regard to narrative pace:

1	Analytical Pause	
2-3	Ellipse (Summary in imperfect tense)	
4-15	Summary	
16-23	Scene	
24-35	Summary	
36-38	Scene	
39-40	Summary	
41	Scene	
42-54	Summary	
55-56	Scene	
57-68	Pause	
	57-58	Summary
	59-61	Scene
	62-63	Descriptive Pause
	64-68	Iterative Summary
		64 Iterative Summary
		65-67 Scene
		68 Iterative Summary
69-72	Summary	
72-91	Analytical Pause	
	72-76	Analytical Pause
	77-79	Summary
	80-81	Analytical Pause
	82-83	Scene
	84-91	Analytical Pause

Another anecdote begins on line 92, thus implying an ellipse even though we are given no overt temporal markers. Still on the theme of women in Pedro's life, this time Jesusa tells of an occasion when she overhears that another woman is pursuing Pedro. She decides not to confront either Pedro or the woman. The pattern of narration is similar to that of the chapter's first anecdote:

92-94 Summary
95-96 Scene
97-100 Summary
101-113 Analytical Pause
101-107 Analytical & Descriptive Pause
108-111 Iterative Scene
112-113 Iterative Summary

As with the chapter's first anecdote, this one is told primarily by means of summary, but scene is also used to add further color to the story. When the telling of the actual anecdote ends, the narrator pauses to analyze the story she has just told, draw conclusions, and back up her conclusions through further illustrations.

After another implied ellipse, a new anecdote is told. Unlike the first two of the chapter, this anecdote is not interrupted by either descriptive or analytical pause. The content of the story deals with a situation in which her husband is poisoned. We are told of Pedro's physical reaction to the poison and of the curious treatment he receives at the hands of a curandero. The story is told with the following mixture of scene and summary:

114-124 Summary
125 Scene
126-133 Summary
134-136 Scene
137-138 Summary
139-146 Scene
147-149 Summary
150-156 Scene

Rather than again launching into an analytical mode, the narrator instead tells another anecdote. This time the transitional ellipse is explicit: "Después de su accidente mi marido hasta me llevaba a la calle y un día cuando íbamos al mandado, oí. . ." (107). Once again this episode deals with Jesusa's husband's relationships with other women. We see Pedro here banning a woman, presumably formerly one of his lovers, from his presence. He threatens her with violence and finally has his right-hand man put her on a train and send her away. The anecdote is narrated in the following way:

157-159	Summary
160	Scene
161-162	Summary
163-177	Scene
178	Summary
179-180	Scene
181-182	Summary
183	Scene
184-185	Summary
186-327	Pause (primarily analytical, with some iterative scene and summary)

The lengthy pause at the story's conclusion begins with a physical description of the woman Pedro has his man put on the train. It continues with a brief comment on her background. The narrator then gives her opinion on extramarital relationships and goes on to discuss, among other things, how many women Pedro had during the revolution, her rocky relationship with

Pedro, how she would treat him, and her duties, feelings, and activities during the revolution. Whereas war generally is considered in terms of a series of events, the narrator of Hasta no verte here refers to Mexico's revolution in terms of the conditions, relationships, and feelings she experienced, rather than to events. In a section we would expect to be rapid-paced with an abundance of scene and summary, analytical pause reigns instead, bringing along with it a pace which is anything but frenzied.

Near the end of Jesusa's ramblings during the lengthy analytical pause mentioned above, the narrator speaks of inclement weather during the revolution. This leads to weather-related stories from that time period. The first is related purely in summary about the effects of a heavy rainstorm (lines 328-340). The company gets so muddy that the women have to wash the company's clothing, which is stolen when hung out to dry.

Four spaces separate lines 340 and 341. These spaces may be indicative of time between interview sessions. The spaces also seem to imply an ellipse, although once again the chronology of the récit compared to the histoire is uncertain. The topic

continues to be weather during the revolution, but this time snow, and the protagonist's reaction to it, are at center stage. With the exception of the use of a brief scene (lines 362-363), the remainder of the chapter (lines 341-369) is narrated in summary. The predominant tense in this section is imperfect; however, the action seems to go forward much more than in earlier sections of the chapter when iterative summary is used. Nonetheless, the pace of the narrative slows compared to what it would be if the preterite were used.

The following chart numerically presents the use of summary, scene, and pause in chapter ten:

Anecdote:	Pre	1	2	3	4	5	6	TOTAL
Summary:	2	43	7	25	10	13	29	129
Scene:	-	14	2	19	19	-	2	56
Pause:	1	32	13	-	142	-	-	188

Overall, the chapter utilizes far more pause than summary or scene. In fact, it uses more pause than summary and scene combined. By looking strictly at these statistics, we see that the pace of the narrative can hardly be called dizzying. Let us also remember that some of the summary is iterative, which also slows the pace of the narrative. Furthermore, an ellipse is understood between each of the anecdotes,

but because the chronological relationship between anecdotes is emphasized only once, we are never given the impression that the events of the protagonist's life are bearing down on her in rapid succession.

The findings for chapter ten which have been set forth in the foregoing paragraph apply to the entire book. In fact, as was already mentioned, for the purposes of this study we chose a chapter which was more action-based than most of the chapters. Thus, the dominance of pause over scene and summary in the entire book is likely to be even greater than in chapter ten. The pattern of telling an anecdote with a mixture of scene and summary and then following it with a large dose of analytical pause extends throughout the text. Just as in this chapter, chronological relationships between anecdotes are rarely emphasized anywhere in the text. Imperfect is used in summary to a significant extent throughout the novel, just as we see, to a considerable extent, in this chapter. All these factors account for the subdued pace of the narrative.

The implications of the book's less than dizzying pace for its readers are significant. Rather than travelling quickly with the protagonist from episode to episode in the past, readers instead spend most of

their time with the narrator in the present. Rather than appeal to readers looking for an action-based narrative, Poniatowska's novel instead appeals to readers interested in getting to know the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of the character/narrator Jesusa Palancares. The narrative pace seems to be an evidence that in Hasta no verte Jesús mío the implied author is not as concerned with the life events of a picara as with the picara herself.

Chapter Nine

Wherein El Chanfalla, by Gonzalo Martré, is found to be representative of novels of its time period in that it contains matters pertaining to identity, nostalgia, and Mexico City, after which its abundant picaresque characteristics are identified and discussed, following which it is shown that episodes in the text which show the unreliability of appearances and others which contain fantastic elements, joined by the narrator's highly contrived style of narration, all join to encourage readers to delve more deeply into the tricky relationship between appearance and reality.

Since the publication of Hasta no verte Jesús mío, a number of narratives have been published which contain prominent picaresque characteristics. The text which incorporates the greatest number of such characteristics is El Chanfalla,[1] published by Gonzalo Martré in 1979.

According to the jacket of the novel, Martré has written narratives of two types: socioerotic (a term coined by the author) and political. El Chanfalla is said to be a political novel and the first volume of a tetralogy which covers the period in Mexico from 1928 to 1970. It deals principally with the decade of the nineteen-thirties.

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[1] All references to the novel by page number in this text refer to the original 1979 V Siglos edition.

In order to place El Chanfalla into its literary context, let us once again refer to what John Brushwood sees as the major characteristics of Mexican fiction between 1967 and 1982. These characteristics are metafiction, Tlatelolco, life in Mexico City, matters related to identity, and nostalgia (La novela mexicana [1967-1982] 17-20). The same three elements which are incorporated into Hasta no verte Jesús mío are found in El Chanfalla; however, the emphases are very different in the two novels. Although the setting for both novels is Mexico City, in Poniatowska's novel this is not the emphasis, while life in the capital is the essence of Martré's. The professions, living conditions, attitudes, and social relationships of the lower classes in Mexico City are thoroughly described and illustrated. Identity is also a major element of Martré's narrative. Unlike Hasta no verte Jesús mío, in which the emphasis on identity is focused on the protagonist, in El Chanfalla the focus of identity is on the lower and working classes. National politics and labor movements of the thirties are detailed to show their effects on common people. Nostalgia is probably not the best word to describe the way in which the text turns to the past, since a great deal of what is

detailed is unpleasant and unattractive. However, at least a form of nostalgia is present in returning to the Cárdenas era. In sum, life in Mexico City, identity, and a small dose of nostalgia are present in El Chanfalla, while metafiction and Tlatelolco are not. Thus, the text is not a maverick of Mexican fiction, but shares characteristics with many of the novels of its time period.

With regard to its relationship to the picaresque family, reference to the subgenre is made only on the book's jacket. Like Hasta no verte Jesús mío, and in contrast to La vida inútil de Pito Pérez and El Canillitas, Martré's text is not an overtly self-conscious member of the family. Rather than attempting to write a picaresque novel, using a young boy merely as a vehicle, the implied author seems to have set out to write a novel about Mexico City in the thirties. The picaresque product seems to be a coincidental result.

Three critics have written on El Chanfalla. The first is Ignacio Trejo Fuentes, in a review which deals primarily with the issue of the work's relationship to the picaresque subgenre. He finds that although the book has some of the basic elements

of the subgenre in a picaro who suffers hunger, works in a variety of professions, and lives in a chaotic world, the book should not be considered fully picaresque for several reasons: first, the lack of first-person narration; second, the fact that the picaro is not an orphan; third, the presence of fantastic elements; fourth, the open, happy ending; and last, the story is not told in a chronologically linear way. Trejo Fuentes goes on to say that he does not think the mixture of picaresque and politics in the work functions well. On the other hand, he says Martré is a good storyteller, he defines his characters well, and narrates a pleasant story.

In a briefer review of the novel, Wolfgang A. Luchting objects to the fantastic elements in the plot, claiming that they add nothing to the work. He also laments the presence of long passages in the text dedicated to the description and interpretation of Mexican history. He says that although it is somewhat laxly written and poorly integrated, it remains a very entertaining and even disturbing novel.

In La novela mexicana (1967-1982), John Brushwood calls El Chanfalla a traditional, straightforward novel, thus invoking an attitude of nostalgia and implying an effort toward coming to a more concrete

sense of identity (86). He also comments on the strong theme of social problems resulting from city life which is present in the novel, and notes that using picaresque techniques is appropriate since the picaresque has traditionally been used to criticize society (100).

Let us now turn to a discussion of the narrative's picaresque characteristics.

1) Episodic Plot. Although there can be no question that El Chanfalla's plot is episodic, it differs somewhat in several ways from the other narratives previously examined. More than in any of the narratives studied to this point, in this book characters other than the picaro appear in more than one episode of the text. Some members of Chanfalla's supporting cast appear in numerous chapters throughout the novel. Nevertheless, although the protagonist is not the only link between episodes, he is definitely the only major link. Only a limited number of characters appear with any consistency in the text; these characters are scarcely developed, and their relationship with Chanfalla is never significantly intimate or dynamic.

The other way in which El Chanfalla's plot

differs from other picaresque novels is that it is not chronologically linear. The first fifteen of the book's thirty-five chapters alternate between the book's main story line and flashbacks to episodes in the picaro's life. More specifically, chapters 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, and 16 through 35 tell the essence of the story. Chapter two tells of the picaro's parents obtaining his birth certificate; four describes the details of his baptism; six relates his serious childhood illness; and so forth. Thus, although the novel's plot differs technically in several ways from most picaresque texts, its essence remains entirely episodic.

2) Dizzying Rhythm. The pace of the narrative is indeed rapid, especially after the first fifteen chapters, when the main story line is uninterrupted by flashbacks. Both picaro and reader experience a large number of episodes and situations at a very rapid rate, the result of which is the bedazzlement of both.

3) Fate Rules Supreme. Late in the novel, speaking of the picaro the narrator states: "Aceptaba los hechos tal y como se presentaban, sujeto al determinismo que regía su vida" (246). Certainly the picaro is victim of an overall situation which is less than desireable. An example of Chanfalla's

powerlessness is his legal name. When his parents take him as a baby to have him registered, the capricious official, who tells his assistant that he is feeling very patriotic that day, ignores the illiterate parents' request to name their son Ulogio Guerrero Ortíz, and instead names him Agustín de Iturbide y Guerrero (16). Although he often works hard and more often uses his cunning, he does not escape his vagabond existence until the novel's end, when he seems to be on his way to returning to his family, and even then he will remain in the lower class. Thus, throughout the text, although he may score numerous minor victories, Chanfalla is defenseless in his overall battle with fate.

4) Bodily Violence. Although not emphasized in the narrative, violence is a part of the world in which our picaro lives, and on occasion it claims him as its victim. Before leaving home he is constantly and mercilessly bullied by an older boy in the neighborhood. In fact, Chanfalla abandons his home because when he finally retaliates, he thinks he has killed his adversary and fears going to jail. On his own he is witness to fatal traffic accidents, beatings, and torture. On one occasion he is beaten by the police and on two other occasions by others who

cross his path. Indeed, bodily violence is a very real part of Chanfalla's world.

5a) A Single Protagonist. The only possible protagonist in the novel is Agustín de Iturbide y Guerrero, better known by his nickname, Chanfalla. Appropriately, the name Chanfalla is the name of one of the picaros in Cervantes's short drama El retablo de las maravillas.

5b) Uncommon Origins. As was noted above, Chanfalla is not an orphan, nor was he physically abandoned by his parents. Rather, Chanfalla abandoned them. Nevertheless, while he is at home we see no evidence of family nurturing or even communication. At a very young age he might as well be an orphan, because he is on the street having to fend for himself rather than being protected by his parents. The biggest difference after he leaves home is that he does not have a regular place to sleep. Thus, although Chanfalla is not an orphan, his origins seem an appropriate starting point for a life of chaos.

5c) Cunning. The first evidence of Chanfalla's capacity for cunning comes before he leaves home. A friend asks for his help in arranging for his girl friend to escape from the control of her unsympathetic father so they can elope. Chanfalla cleverly and

surreptitiously carries notes for the couple, smuggles her clothing out of the house, and distracts the father when it is time for the escape. Without his cunning the protagonist would not survive the challenges of street life in the city. Perhaps the most entertaining instance of Chanfalla's craftiness comes when, after an upper class woman wanders into the poor part of town her purse is stolen. The police round up all the rogues in the area and ask the woman to identify the culprit. Although he is innocent, Chanfalla thinks the woman is paying too much attention to him. Rather than risk being charged for someone else's crime, he feigns an epileptic seizure with such skill that he is taken for medical treatment and avoids time in jail.

5d) Protean Form. The list of professions exercised by Chanfalla is astounding in light of the fact that at the text's end he is not even thirteen years of age. The activity in which he engages most often is that of vendedor ambulante. The list of items he sells at different stages is impressive: coal, newspapers, balloons, sweet potatoes and bananas, banderillas near a bullring, ice cream bars, fruit, merengues, and buñuelos. Other professions in which he works include rat hunter (he sells them to the meat

shop), singer on buses, fire eater, clown, announcer for a circus, thief, gambler, assistant to a barber, assistant in a gypsy-bear street show, assistant to an herb healer, and assistant to a magician. Chanfalla exhibits a remarkable capacity to function in a variety of professions, and thus demonstrates Protean form.

5e) Alienation. As was mentioned above, Chanfalla's family situation does not provide him with nurturing or love. A neighbor of Chanfalla's family, Don Pedro Rendón, who is a poet and artist, is the only person in the novel who demonstrates any consistent affection to him. Unfortunately, Rendón's contact with Chanfalla is minimal. His relationship with almost everyone else in the novel is strictly businesslike. The few instances of other people's interest in him as a person are far outnumbered by people who want to exploit him. His life is so devoid of love and affection that he spends much of his time at the movies, "único remedio contra la melancolía" (146). In the book's penultimate chapter he falls in love with Agustina, who responds to his love. However, this relationship is short-lived and they soon become bitter enemies. Chanfalla is almost completely alienated from his world.

5f) Internal Instability. Although he is constantly switching jobs, Chanfalla is not prone to practical jokes and capriciousness. With few exceptions he tries to stay within the law and almost always succeeds. His penchant for spending or gambling away his earnings as quickly as he makes them is more a result of his training than of an internal flaw. On several occasions he overcomes the treatment he has received to show compassion to others. Although he is not a pillar of consistency, I see Chanfalla not as an example of a person suffering from internal instability, but as a fairly responsible ten-year old.

5g) A Philosophical Bent. Chanfalla's obsessive interest in national politics and the workers' movements seems very unnatural for a young boy. His obsession with these aspects of public life is surpassed only by the implied author's interest in the same thing. In the case of this novel, the protagonist's philosophical bent seems artificial and pedantic.

6) The First-person Point of View. The narrative point of view in El Chanfalla is not first-person but third-person. It is narrated in the past tense and is occasionally focalized through Chanfalla, but usually is not. This point of view and the narrator's

preference for presenting aspects of Mexico City's life lead to a somewhat superficial depiction of the picaro.

7) An Unkind, Chaotic World. As has been noted, perhaps the outstanding element of El Chanfalla is its representation of Mexico City in the nineteen-thirties. The narrator goes to great lengths to describe in detail the unpleasant, degrading, agitated living conditions of the lower classes of the city during the Cárdenas era. The unpleasant conditions in the city lead to self-interested and sometimes hostile behavior among the people. Confidence men crop up, law officials go corrupt, crime spreads, and people gather into sometimes dangerous groups to multiply their survival capabilities. Thus, the world in which Chanfalla lives can indeed be called both unkind and chaotic.

8) Physical Survival. Chanfalla's constant drive to provide for his own basic shelter and sustenance is implied throughout most of the narrative, even though it is rarely overtly expressed. Through his industriousness, he rarely endures hunger, but exposure to the elements is more common to him, as is seen in this passage:

> Como era invierno buscó techo sin hallarlo,

> como cama tuvo el quicio de los zaguanes, como almohada ladrillos, como colchón cartones, como frazada papeles rescatados de la basura, durmió a la intemperie en los barrios humildes porque en los residenciales rechazaban automáticamente su presencia (86).

Physical survival is a strong undercurrent through much of the text.

9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types. A good number and variety of human types cross Chanfalla's path in the course of the novel. Some of the notable characters in the text include Popocha, the omnipresent policeman who is a law unto himself; "Drácula," the young Don Juan of Chanfalla's neighborhood; Lalo, the bully to Chanfalla who is in turn bullied by the Hormiga brothers; Licenciado Joachim, the justice of the peace who whimsically chooses names for the babies of illiterate parents; Tonelillo, the eight-year old leader of a ring of thieves; Lucha la Carbonera, who begins by selling coal and ends up selling everything from pastries to marijuana; Martín de la Cruz, the bogus salesman of herbs for every ailment; Richard Rasec, a sleight of hand expert and fakir; Beto el Cilindrero, who feigns blindness to garner sympathy

and alms; and Father Nicomedes, the money hungry priest. Curious cameo appearances are even made by several real life people from the era. For example, Chanfalla poses for Diego Rivera as he paints the mural in the stairway of the national palace. He is also fascinated by a speech he hears by Lombardo Toledano, the real life silver-tongued politician. The cast of characters in El Chanfalla is indeed rich and entertaining.

The issue of identity is one of the central concerns of El Chanfalla. The identities of Mexico, Mexico City, the labor movement, politics, politicians, and individuals are of great importance in the text. Closely related to the matter of identity is that of reality. Early in Chanfalla's life, he receives a poorly made toy wooden truck for Christmas, with the explanation that the three kings are poor once again, as they have been in the past. On the recommendation of Lalo, Chanfalla travels to a rich neighborhood to see the Christmas gifts there. This adventure results in a shocking discovery: "Con infinita tristeza admitió las advertencias del odioso Lalo: los Santos Reyes no estaban pobres, sino sus padres, y la visita mágica de los Tres Reyes Magos era

vil patraña" (84). Chanfalla learns the lesson early in life that things are not always what they seem, and that one must be active in ascertaining what is real and what is illusion. The implied author uses a number of strategies which point readers to the same lesson. In the remainder of this chapter I explore some of the ways in which the implied author leads his readers to see the unreliable nature of perceived reality, challenges them to seek to go beyond appearances, and provides them with heightened awareness thereof.

The most transparent method the implied author uses to point his readers to the issue of reality is apparent in the anecdote cited in the preceding paragraph. Many of the episodes in the text exemplify the discrepancies which often exist between appearances and reality. Examples are numerous, and in many of them, Chanfalla is directly involved in the production of misleading appearances. As assistant to Richard Rasec, the sleight of hand expert, Chanfalla comes to find out that his master's acts are nothing more than tricks--appearances masquerading as reality. When Chanfalla sells <u>buñuelos</u> for Lucha la Carbonera in a graveyard on All Souls' Day, he is really a front for Lucha's true business dealings--the sale of

marijuana. When he sells fruit for his gang of delinquents, he is really taking note of expensive tires for the gang to steal. Thus, Chanfalla is personally involved in a number of jobs in which appearance and reality do not coincide, as is the case in many picaresque tales.

Chanfalla participates in producing illusions, and he is witness to the unfaithfulness of appearances on many occasions as well. His business of selling gum on buses goes well for him until a pickpocket gets on the same bus. When a victim of the thief makes a scene over her missing wallet, the culprit manipulates appearances by planting the stolen wallet at the feet of Chanfalla, who is blamed for the crime. In their wanderings through Mexico City's downtown, Don Pedro Rendón tells Chanfalla that justice in Mexico is nonexistent. When the boy asks why there is a need for a lavish palace of justice, Rendón simply answers "Para guardar las apariencias, hijito" (38). Chanfalla further sees the falseness of public life when he witnesses the fraudulent election of Avila Camacho. Chanfalla's herb-selling master often knowingly sells his wares to customers with greatly exaggerated or false promises. However, on one occasion he acts with integrity and is subsequently

falsely accused, beaten, and thrown in jail. The picaro's reaction to the event is logical: "La mentira, concluyó Chanfalla, es preferible a la verdad. Al que miente no puede irle mal en la vida" (116). Thus, through narration of many episodes, readers are shown the unreliability of appearances as well as the danger of reality.

During the last half of the book, events occur which are not normally associated with reality as it is commonly perceived. The first of these events occurs in conjunction with Chanfalla's time as assistant to the "gypsy" (who is a gypsy in appearance only) and his dancing bear, Kino. Chanfalla has a strong desire to befriend Kino, and once he gets close enough, starts to talk to him. When Kino responds and a very human conversation ensues, Chanfalla is not surprised in the least: "no le inquietó que el oso hablara, pues conocía otros animales parlantes, sobre todo loros y cotorras muy hábiles" (129). Chanfalla and Kino converse about working conditions and even of Lombardo Toledano, whom Chanfalla had heard speak on the labor movement.

In a later episode, Chanfalla makes friends with three dogs, which he nicknames Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt, perhaps a twist on Cervantes's <u>El coloquio</u>

de los perros. When Stalin starts a conversation with Chanfalla, he is undaunted, but curious whether anyone else can hear the dogs talk. He asks the only person within hearing distance, Don Toño Arciniegas, if he heard the dogs talk. Arciniegas suggests that he clean his ears, which makes Chanfalla "conciente de ser el único humano capaz de entender a esos perros" (160). He later communicates with other dogs in the same way.

In a similar episode, Chanfalla is relentlessly pursued over a period of several days by an unusual man who is described in this way:

> El jinete, armadura negra y bruñida, visera calada, yelmo dorado, lanza en ristre, arreos y aparejos de lujo, suceso sobrecogedor, no llamaba la atención de los peatones ni parecía estorbar el tránsito de los fortingos (148).

This man reminds Chanfalla of a horseman from a Cecil B. de Mille film he has seen. Later he sees Zurburán's painting of St. George subduing the dragon and concludes that St. George has been following him to punish him for Lalo's death. His acquaintances consider him either imaginative or possessed, and the

horseman eventually stops following him.

The foregoing episodes, which feature fantastic elements, are presented in the text as reality. If these episodes were merely focalized through Chanfalla, they could be explained as products of a vivid imagination. His loneliness and the unpleasant nature of his world drive him not only to the fantasy of the movie theater, but to the invention of his own personal fantastic reality. Nevertheless, a later episode cannot be explained so easily. When he sells ice cream bars, Chanfalla witnesses a reenactment of the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion. As he watches a man struggle under the weight of a cross, he has compassion for the man and gives him several ice cream bars. Chanfalla subsequently discovers that the supply of ice cream bars he is selling cannot be depleted. Miraculously, for many days he does not have to return to the ice cream factory to replenish his stock. However, when he capriciously inflicts pain on a cat, he discovers that a row of ice cream bars has disappeared. When he kicks a dog for no particular reason, another row disappears. Just as miraculously as his supply had replenished itself, it disappears row by row as he commits unkind, cruel acts until his box is empty. This miracle cannot be a mere

figment of Chanfalla's imagination, for he lives on the proceeds thereof for many days. This episode suggests that we may need to look again at the prior episodes of fantastic occurrences to reconsider whether they are imagined or real. Rather than being evidence of Chanfalla's psychological state, these episodes as a whole seem to be telling implied readers that reality is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp fully. They assert the existence of realities beyond our normal range of perception and challenge readers to go beyond appearances.

The last element examined here from El Chanfalla which has a bearing on the subject of reality deals with the literary style used in the narration. It should be noted that dialogue in the text seems to be linguistically accurate and unadorned, as in the following example:

> --¿Onde van? --preguntó al niño.
>
> --Nos llevan al Toreo.
>
> --¿A todos?
>
> --Sí, a toditos.
>
> --¿De gratis?
>
> --Ansina nos dijeron.
>
> --Uta, yo no me pierdo ésta (172).

Effort has obviously been made in this brief exchange to capture colloquialisms and phonetic peculiarities. Also of note are the almost complete absence of narrator intervention and the succinct, unornamented nature of each locution.

The contrast in style between dialogue in the text, such as is cited above, and narration delivered by the narrator is conspicuous. Let us look at a short sample of the latter from the text:

> En su peregrinar con el filantrópico botánico, Chanfalla conoció una extensa gama de caballeros de industria y no pocos le ofrecieron empleo, rehusado debido a su fidelidad al terapeuta. . .
>
> . . .Al cabo, Chanfalla corrió la vidorra en la Plaza de Candelaria, puesta su esperanza en el retorno de Martín de la Cruz.
>
> No llegó el teratológico anciano, sino Richard Rasec, prestidigitador y fakir, ésta segunda habilidad adjudicable al hambre crónica, resultado del escaso éxito de sus artilugios (116).

The issue of reality is immediately brought into

play in the contrast between dialogue and narration, for readers are bombarded with two vastly different levels of linguistic reality--one is a choppy, untutored, simple form of expression, while the other is cultured, eloquent and complex.

Because of space limitations, no extremely lengthy sentences have been included here; however, absent even from this short selection is a single, simple, short sentence. In each case the nuclear element of the sentence is clarified, modified, or expanded. Thus, sentence structure is often convoluted and complex.

The linguistic register in the above selection and throughout the book is very high. References to the herb healer alone illustrate this point. Not only is he referred to by his name, Martín de la Cruz, but also as a "filantrópico botánico," a "terapeuta," and finally as a "teratológico anciano." These terms obviously overstate and unduly exalt de la Cruz. He merely sells herbs, often promising results which he knows to be far beyond the capabilities of his products. The irony which results once again points readers to the issue of reality. The discrepancy between de la Cruz's actions and the terms employed by the narrator lead us to see a gap between reality and

artifice, in this case linguistic artifice.

The exalted linguistic register employed by the narrator has a definite impact on readers. At times the discrepancy between the embellished narration and the grim subject matter is so great as to alienate readers. Perhaps this contrast is a clever way of giving readers a small taste of the picaro's experience. In many of the expressions used by the narrator, he seems to go to great lengths to avoid calling an object or concept by its ordinary name. Thus, an ice cream bar is called "hielo pintado y saborizado" (241), fruit is referred to as "gérmenes patógenos" (249), a theft is termed "aliviane de fondos" (264), and so forth. For some readers, such expressions could echo the fashion in which some bureaucracies create overblown terms for common items. Such a reading would likely further alienate readers, which would be appropriate since El Chanfalla is presented as a political novel. Other readers could see such expressions as examples of what Victor Shklovsky has termed "defamiliarization" (Shklovsky 12-13). They force us to deal with common, everyday items in an uncommon, unusual way. With either reading, the narrator leads us to a different level of reality.

In summary, in several major ways the implied author keeps the issue of delving more deeply into reality at the forefront of the text. Episodes which illustrate the unfaithfulness of appearances, others which feature fantastic elements, and the narrator's artificial mode of expression are all elements which impel readers to deal with varying levels of appearance and reality. Since the book is presented as a political novel, and much of the text's content deals directly with politics in the nineteen-thirties, one of the messages which seems to be strongest in the text is the need to probe into the realities of history and politics both past and present. On the surface El Chanfalla appears to be a simple book which shows the adventures of a resilient boy in a harsh city; however, beyond first appearances is a novel which challenges its readers to deal with the complex social, political, and philosophical issues associated with the relationship between appearances and reality.

Chapter Ten

Wherein by way of conclusion it is pointed out that although the narratives examined in this study possess a great many characteristics in common, thus meriting categorization as picaresque, due to differing periods of creation, literary tendencies, and authorial intents, they are also as different as siblings.

Let us return briefly to the matter of the picaresque subgenre. In his essay on the picaresque, Claudio Guillén states:

> No work embodies completely the picaresque genre. The genre is not, of course, a novel any more than the equine species is a horse. A genre is a model. . . A genre has stable features, but it also changes, as a precise influence on the work in progress, with the writer, the nation, and the period" (72-73).

Guillén's statement, and in particular the final sentence, is supported absolutely by the eight narratives analyzed in chapters two through nine of this study. The study itself merely makes evident <u>how</u> the narratives support Guillén's assertion. Using the picaresque characteristics which are set forth in the preface and used in the body of this study, the following chart illustrates in a simplified, yet

concrete way how the picaresque subgenre in Mexico "has stable features, but it also changes."

	1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	5d	5e	5f	5g	6	7	8	9
1542 Naufragios	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
1690 Infortunios	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	X
1816 El Periquillo	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
1832 Don Catrín	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
1938 La vida inútil	X	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
1941 El Canillitas	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	X
1969 Hasta no verte	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X
1979 El Chanfalla	X	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	X

Key to above categories:

1) Episodic Plot.
2) Dizzying Rhythm.
3) Fate Rules Supreme.
4) Bodily Violence.
5a) A Single Protagonist.
5b) Uncommon Origins.
5c) Cunning.
5d) Protean Form.
5e) Alienation.
5f) Internal Instability.
5g) A Philosophical Bent.
6) The First-person Point of View.
7) An Unkind, Chaotic World.
8) Physical Survival.
9) A Vast Gallery of Human Types.

As is readily apparent from this chart, of the fifteen characteristics we have used as a model for the picaresque subgenre, only six of the elements are common to all of the eight texts analyzed at length in this study. The six elements (episodic plot, a single protagonist, protean form, alienation, physical survival, and a vast gallery of human types) tell us

that these narratives share some very basic structural and thematic ingredients. Structurally, each features an episodic plot wherein episodes are linked by a single character. In the course of the many episodes, the protagonist meets many different character types, thus giving a view of society. Each of the picaros is alienated from his fellow beings, and in an effort merely to stay alive, he, or she in the case of Jesusa Palancares, must resort to practicing a variety of professions. In short, the foregoing sentences describe the essence of picaresque narratives in Mexico.

Perhaps equally revealing with regard to the picaresque in Mexico are the characteristics not shared by all eight narratives. When only one narrative is missing an element, we can assume that such an occurrence is peculiar to a text, rather than a pattern in the Mexican picaresque. We see three cases of the foregoing, in that bodily violence is largely absent in La vida inútil, in that Alonso Ramírez does not show a great deal of cunning, and in that Don Catrín lives in a relatively unthreatening world. Although missing in a single text, the foregoing elements seem to be common to the overwhelming majority of Mexican picaresque

narratives.

Six characteristics are absent in more than one text. Let us look at the patterns for each of these characteristics individually. Only five of the narratives have what could be considered a rapid-fire pace. The three narratives which do not are heavily steeped in philosophical and costumbrista digressions and pauses. Thus, dizzying rhythm is not a strong aspect of the picaresque in Mexico.

In all but two of the narratives the narrator communicates that fate has an overwhelming role in the life of the picaro. Curiously, both of these texts, El Canillitas and El Chanfalla are also lacking the first-person point of view. We can conclude that a first-person narrator is much more likely to see himself as helpless than a third-person narrator. Another way of seeing this is that the picaro perceives himself as a victim, while a detached narrator holds him responsible for his situation. It cannot be overlooked that all three of the texts which utilize the third-person point of view belong to the present century. The influence of realism with its efforts toward objectivism seems apparent.

The remaining three characteristics absent in more than one Mexican picaresque narrative have to do

with the picaro. Naufragios and Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez feature protagonists which do not have uncommon origins, internal instability, or a philosophical bent. The absence of internal instability in the picaros of these texts is logical in that both were written for the purpose of depicting the protagonist as a stable, constant individual in spite of the monumental challenges which he faces. The tendency away from philosophizing also seems logical in these texts because the real life people, Cabeza de Vaca and Alonso Ramírez, were anxious for their tales of misfortunes and heroism, rather than their ideas, to be distributed. El Periquillo Sarniento joins the abovementioned narratives to form the threesome of Mexican picaresque tales in which uncommon origins are not featured. In Naufragios and Infortunios the narrator/protagonists simply seem to believe that their origins are not needed for the text. The Periquillo seems to be showing that "average" origins for many of the people of the day were less than ideal. Whatever the cause may be, in all of the Mexican picaresque narratives since 1816, the picaros are depicted as products of uncommon origins.

Another thing is vividly illustrated in the above

chart. Naufragios and Infortunios are conspicuously lacking characteristics having to do with the picaro; at the same time both texts feature a full set of the other eight characteristics. These data seem to indicate that these early narratives are fully developed in the sense of technical narrative aspects of the picaresque, while the central hero does not match the picaro model.

Although none of the six narratives since Infortunios possesses all fifteen of the picaresque characteristics in the model, the fact that each has a nearly complete set is evidence of the similarities shared by the texts. Thus, even though it appears in a grossly understated form in the chart, we see that without a doubt the picaresque in Mexico "has stable features, but it also changes."

The body of this study illustrates that the chart is truly an understatement in that it does not reflect to what extent certain characteristics are emphasized in certain narratives. For example, although fate is a factor in six of the texts, in none does it play a more prominent role than in Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez. Perhaps the greatest evidence that, in spite of their uncontestable similarities, the texts are very different from one another is the variety of

focus used herein to analyze the narratives in the final portion of each chapter. By way of illustration, study of the quantum distance between the implied author and the narrator in Don Catrín de la Fachenda was brought on by the obvious irony which pervades the text. A similar study may be productive for the Periquillo or even for Hasta no verte, Jesús mío, but the findings of the study would be different from those for Don Catrín. The same type of analysis would likely reveal very little in Naufragios or the three texts with third-person narrators: La vida inútil de Pito Pérez, El Canillitas, and El Chanfalla.

Let us briefly summarize the outstanding characteristics in each of the works analyzed in detail in this study. Naufragios's outstanding characteristics are its dizzying rhythm and its focus on physical survival. Using an extreme economy of expression, Cabeza de Vaca makes his adventures come alive for readers. The period of discovery in the New World was doubtless a time of physical danger, so the book's many episodes which feature life-threatening situations should not surprise us. That it is examined in a study on the picaresque is somewhat surprising. Although it probably predates and is at least a contemporary of Lazarillo de Tormes, it shares

kinship with the subgenre.

Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez, as was noted above, is the narrative in which the protagonist seems most victimized by fate. To make matters worse for Alonso, each time he seems to have worked his way to a measure of stability, it is snatched away from him, thus creating a dizzying rhythm. Brutal bodily violence, an extremely unkind, unpredictable world, and the theme of physical survival are also outstanding picaresque elements in the text. Infortunios is also noteworthy in that a strong case can be made for it as a work of fiction which precedes Fernández de Lizardi.

El Periquillo Sarniento is generally known as the first pure novel from Mexico and Spanish America. To state that it has a philosophical bent is a strong understatement. It is by far the Mexican picaresque champion in the category of philosophical ramblings. Its author's proposal of societal reform led to a vast, rich array of brilliantly depicted, yet often flawed colonial human types. It is also rich in the depiction of outdated, decayed customs in Mexico before Independence.

In my opinion, the protagonist of Don Catrín de la Fachenda is one of the most memorable characters in

Mexican literature. His pomposity, arrogance, vanity, and disdain for others are completely absurd because he is both financially and morally bankrupt, and his claim to excellence of blood is groundless. Also of note in the book is the entertaining gallery of secondary characters Catrín meets, each of whom has a name symbolic of his personality, as does the protagonist. I believe that of the narratives examined in this study Don Catrín de la Fachenda most closely resembles the ideal picaresque model.

The narrative structure of La vida inútil de Pito Pérez is unique in that it is not organized chronologically, but thematically. Thus, one chapter deals with love, or lack thereof, in Pito's life, another deals with his experiences in jails, etc. The protagonist is one of Mexico's most popular fictional figures, who in this study is seen to be a fairly complex character. Provincial charm and humor are also outstanding elements of this short piece.

El Canillitas is the first Mexican picaresque text not set in the period contemporary with its writer. Instead, like the colonialista literature which had been in fashion some years earlier in Mexican prose, this narrative is set in colonial times. Rather than focus on the protagonist, as

happens in Don Catrín and La vida inútil, or on the protagonist's actions, as in Naufragios and Infortunios, this text is similar to the Periquillo in that it seeks to present the customs and environment of a time period in Mexico. As opposed to the Periquillo, however, its look at society is nostalgic rather than critical. The style is feigned archaic and laced with a pleasant dose of humor, as is shown in chapter seven. Like the Periquillo, because of its length only a dedicated reader makes it through the entire text.

Hasta no verte, Jesús mío excels in its presentation of a rounded protagonist. Of the picaros studied herein, Jesusa Palancares seems the most human. Not only do we see the events, joys, and hardships of her life, but we hear her manner of speech, her concerns, and her opinions. This text comes across as an oral autobiography, while many of the other texts seem self-conscious. This text is also outstanding in that it reveals the impact of the revolution and other major events in twentieth century Mexico on an individual.

El Chanfalla is like El Canillitas in that the setting is not contemporary with the time of writing. The novel is set primarily in Mexico City in the

nineteen-thirties, and as in El Canillitas, we get the impression that the author is vitally concerned with depicting an era, while the picaro and his story are of secondary importance. Its structure is unique to this set of narratives in that during the first half of the book episodes from the picaro's early life are intercalated with episodes from the main story line. The cast of secondary characters Chanfalla meets is an especially varied and unusual group, with a heavy emphasis on the lower classes. El Chanfalla also stands out due to the presence of fantastic elements in the text, such as talking animals and miraculously self-propagating ice cream bars. In addition, of our set of picaros, Chanfalla is the youngest, most naive, and least prepared to deal with the world around him.

In conclusion, picaresque conventions have been employed from time to time throughout the history of narrative in Mexico, thus attesting to the usefulness and resilience of the subgenre, regardless of literary, political, and economic variables. Even though these works have many characteristics in common, each is a unique creation. To extend Claudio Guillén's analogy, cited at the beginning of this chapter, the relationship between these texts is akin to that of Shetland ponies, Clydesdales, and Quarter

horses, which all form part of the equine species, but which have most definite unique characteristics.

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