

A Comparative study of Lazarillo de Tormes (Anonymous, 1554)

And thomas nashe's The unfortunated traveller (1594)

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INTRODUCTION

This paper on two picaresque novels is only mildly concerned with the literary characteristics of this genre. The reason is that the picaresque novel appeared as such in the second half of the sixteenth century, a time when, as most studies seem to indicate, form was not as important as content. The only literary concern the writer expresses in his work is an attempt to create an entertaining story. The actual significance of the picaresque novel lies in the fact that, contrary to the model of the traditional romance, it focuses the attention on the problems of the lower classes, *the underdogs of society*.

Along with a brief but inevitable analysis of its stylistic peculiarities, I shall try to study the kind of society that, in Spain and in England, made this genre flourish. The most prominently described social issues in the two novels chosen here are the religious and the socioeconomic problems. Those issues constitute the main subject of study.

THE RELIGIOUS ISSUE

One of the first things that we need to understand when studying the historical background of the picaresque novel is the importance of religion. It is nearly impossible at this point in history to draw a line that separates the political and economic reality on the one hand, and the religious one on the other. The sixteenth, seventeenth and even eighteenth centuries, when the picaresque novel emerged, saw Europe being torn to pieces by conflicts of religion. France, one of the traditional European centres of influence, politically and culturally, became during the sixteenth century a secondary power. The reason was the constant state of domestic unrest that the clash between the traditional French Catholic Church and the Protestant Church produced. Monarchs like Francis I spent most of their time doing battle with the Huguenots. In this situation, French literature went through a period of transition until it reached its golden age during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715).

Alain Rene Lesage (1668-1747), with his Gil Blas de Santillane (1715), is one of the precursors of the French picaresque novel after the less than fecund sixteenth century. Lesage's novel is modelled after the Spanish traditional picaresque novel : it is an episodic narration of the life of a Spanish rogue. Therefore, we can hardly speak here of a French genre. Moliere or Racine in the theatre, and Mme. de la Fayette, their contemporary, can be more rightly called the torch bearers of French literature during that period.

In Lesage we find some mild criticism of the Catholic Church in the episode in which Gil takes service with an archbishop : Gil tells his master that his homilies were degenerating in quality, and the churchman, who will only listen to flattery, sends our protagonist packing. Thus, Lesage comes to show how impracticable it is to follow the precepts of the Church, how sincerity is not only not rewarded but condemned, especially by the corrupt priesthood of the time.

Even Voltaire, with his Candide in 1759, would show how decisive the role of religion was at the time. Although Voltaire comes later in time, and Candide is far from being a fully fledged picaresque hero, the protagonist of the novel is at odds with society, and the Church, namely the institutions of the Portuguese and Spanish Inquisition, is seen in a critical mode. The numerous executions and atrocities committed by the Inquisition may amuse the reader of Candide today, but when it was written, the close reality the book portrayed made the story sound quite critical of the debaucheries carried out in the name of religion.

In Spain, during the sixteenth century, the situation was somewhat different. The population was not religiously uniform; there was a large proportion of Jews and Moslems, but the monarchy had a rather strong hold on the political arena. The Spanish monarchs were all through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the defenders of Catholicism in Europe : Philip II, Philip III, and Philip IV waged war with England, the

Ottoman Empire, the German princes, and the Dutch rebels for religious reasons. I cannot think of the religious issue as being the only point of disagreement to trigger off the fight, but it is safe to say that it was an essential stumbling block in the route towards peace in Europe and the Mediterranean.

The gold and silver of the New World brought to Spain the glory and the splendour that in the field of literature and the arts would translate into a golden age of creativity and influence abroad. The second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century constitute Spain's golden age of literature.

The Spain of the seventeenth century had reason to be proud of its achievements, of its empire; Philip II liked to say that his was the empire where the sun never sets. The key to the success and dominance over Europe was a strong leadership on the part of the monarchy, and an equally strong and powerful Church. The poet and dramatist Lope de Vega (1562-1635), in The New Art of Making Comedies (1609), established the new rules for Spanish drama, and a model to be followed by the rest of Europe; Calderon de la Barca (1600-1690), perhaps the best dramatist of the time, showed the world the value of pride, honour, and piety. But Spain's empire was not a story of social success by any means, and contrasting with the character of the aforementioned figures, we find an important group of writers who showed less complacency and more criticism towards the model of society in which they lived.

The genre that criticised Spanish society more ferociously is the picaresque novel, and the fact that this category is considered an exponent of literary criticism comes to show that there was much to criticise about the Spain of the time. The two works that this paper attempts to analyse in detail are the Spanish picaresque novel Lazarillo de Tormes and the English picaresque novel The Unfortunate Traveller.

Lazarillo

La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes. Sus fortunas y adversidades (The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes. His Fortunes and Adversities) was published anonymously in 1554 in Burgos, Alcalá and Antwerp. The importance of the religious issue is quite obvious if only we observe that the book, after its publication in 1554, was included in the Catalogue of Prohibited Books of the inquisitor Fernando de Valdes in 1559. Thus the book entered the list of works that the Holy Office considered dangerous for the soul of the Spaniards, and which meant that those works were indefinitely taken out of printing and banned at the shops and libraries. It was not until 1573 that the novel was allowed to be printed again, but this time without chapters 4 and 5, the ones where Lazaro enters the service of a friar and of a seller of indulgencies respectively.

The first circumstance that catches the attention of the reader is the numerous times that Lazaro, the protagonist, rogue and narrator, invokes the name of God during his account of the story. In chapter 1, when Lazaro has eaten the blindman's sausage, and the old man finds him out he says : "Oh holy God! I would have thought myself to be in the grave at that moment". Later in the chapter, Lazaro regrets not having confessed the theft sooner than he did and exclaims : "I wished to God that I had done so, for it was such a good idea!" In chapter 3, where Lazaro is serving a clergyman, he asks God's forgiveness for being so fond of funerals, the only occasion on which he could eat abundantly: "God forgive me for speaking about funerals, for I was never an enemy of mankind except during that period". Later in that same chapter, Lazaro points at God as the source of inspiration for his behaviour : "but that same God who helps those in affliction, when he saw my sorrowful circumstances, suggested to my mind a new course of action". In chapter 3, being at the service of a poor squire, Lazaro curses himself for his bad luck and asks God's forgiveness for it.

The book ends with Lazaro offering his service to God : "in this position I still work and live in the service of God and Your Mercy."

From the character of the plot itself we can easily deduce that the author of Lazarillo is not liable to be very religious : the Church does not appear very favourably portrayed. Consequently, as Walter L. Reed suggests in An Exemplary History of the Novel (51), we must not take the language as objective language, defining the character precisely, but as an example of popular language, a compendium, I should say, of phrases and proverbs. The phrases "Oh God, God forgive" must be taken as ready-made expressions in which Spanish is particularly rich. In other words, we must not believe, as some do, that the author was trying to gain the sympathy of the Church, since the story of the rogue shows unquestionably the corruption within this institution. I would say that Lazaro invokes God's name because that is something that a Spaniard of that time, and even of today, would do whether he truly believes or not. The Spaniard of the time would have God's name in his mouth constantly.

Young Lazaro shows thus a characteristic of Spanish society, its outward piety, one more cause to criticise the religious reality of the time : hypocrisy is the dominant trait, the novel suggests; we often name God, but seldom act according to His mandate. Lazaro does not pretend to do anything other than survive and ignore the sinful circumstances of his own marriage.

As with Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller (1594), the other work to be studied here, I shall try to analyse the different chapters in Lazarillo to see what they criticise specifically about the religious situation. I do believe there is fundamentally nothing interesting in Lazarillo, apart from being a "rattling good yarn" indeed, but criticism of the Church. Some have attributed its authorship to a converso (a Jew forcefully converted to Catholicism during the reign of Charles V). Perhaps, as Walter L. Reed points out (43), the novel seems to indicate

that the author was a follower of Erasmus, who in his Praise of Folly (1549) also presents a narrator of doubtful integrity describing the sins of the Church.

In chapter 1, where Lazaro tells the story of his childhood and how he enters the service of a blind man, we see first of all how his father dies serving a knight who is fighting the Moors. In the manner of the crusades, Charles V fought against the Turks rather as an excuse to gain supremacy in the Mediterranean. The Moors who lived in Spain, who invaded the Peninsula in 711 and were not totally defeated until 1492, stirred trouble until they were finally forced to accept Christianity in 1500; however, the Spanish Moors were called Moriscos, and Lazarillo refers to Moros, consequently we must think of Turks.

If this may not necessarily be called strong criticism, but simply a reflection of reality, the next allusion to religious matters we find is clearly a critical description of the religious practice of the time. When Lazaro and the blindman reach Segovia, the old master earns his living by praying for people according to request. He prays for the salvation of souls, to make lovers fall in love, to avoid pregnancies, etc. But, as Lazaro tells us, his master would start praying and as soon as the money was paid and the client gone, he would stop and go about other things. As we can see, deceit and not real piety is what was abundant in sixteenth-century Spain.

Stuart Miller, in The Picaresque Novel (101), considers Lazarillo an eminently materialistic work, he says: "The blindman is admired for his wisdom since he has many ways of getting money" (102). Miller finds in the novel an "unstable ethic;" however, the fact that Lazaro says at the beginning of his narration that he is happy to tell how virtuous men rise from their low state, in effect shows the dominant hypocrisy of the Spanish society rather than makes the rogue a faulty or unreliable chronicler.

In chapter 2, where Lazaro is at the service of a clergyman, the narrator describes the life of a member of the Spanish Low Church. These modest priests were in the same social category as the rest of the populace: they had the same economic constraints, and lived among peasants, artisans, thieves and other lowly people. Consequently, these priests had to fight for their living and be constantly on their toes in order to make ends meet:

to cover up his niggardliness he would say to me, "You see, boy, priests must be very moderate in their eating and drinking, and for this reason I do not indulge myself the way others do." But the scoundrel lied like a demon, because at meetings of the brotherhood and at the funeral-services where we officiated, he ate like a wolf [...].

This paragraph shows how, through Lazaro's description, the priest must be stingy and clever to be able to feed and survive. Lazaro's master gives the boy hardly enough to eat, partly because he did not have much to spare himself, and partly because he is far from generous, in spite of what Christian principles may dictate. The clergyman does not want to part with his bread, for example, until he suspects that Lazaro's bites in it are produced by mice, and decides against eating the bread himself. He says insincerely: "Here, eat this; the mouse is a clean creature".

The corollary to this description is the fact that the clergy was as corrupt as the rest of Spanish society at that time. We have here, as in most picaresque works, a ridiculing or demythologising of the false ideal of the sanctity of the clergy. This ideal was corrupted by sheer need: although the riches brought from the New World made the Crown, the nobility, and the high ranks of the Church extremely powerful and wealthy, the lower ranks of the Church and of society literally starved. We shall see how different the economic reality was in Nashe's England. Charity, we see in Lazarillo, is not a necessary consequence of affluence.

In conclusion, I should like to take up a point of religion that we shall see more greatly developed by the English picaresque literature. It is

the confusion between fortune or chance and providence. When the tinker appears and helps Lazaro open his master's chest, Lazaro says the tinker arrived by chance, but at the same time he believes God sent him as an "angel" to save him from starvation. This circumstance shows an essential difference with English and Northern European or Protestant tradition. Protestant tradition has a stronger sense of destiny, predestination and free will than the Catholic tradition.

In chapter, 3, where Lazaro enters the service of a squire, we see a picture of the socioeconomic situation. This episode deals with the status of squires and those who tried to pass for nobles, although they did not have a penny to their name. It is interesting to see, however, the piety that Lazaro's master, the poor squire, must show to maintain his respectability : he spends every morning in church instead of trying to earn a living. In brief, going to church is not motivated by a firm religiosity but by an attempt to conform to social conventions.

One quality that this chapter shows about Lazaro is sympathy. Compassion is a Christian attribute and Lazaro has it. As Robert Alter puts it in Rogue's Progress (8), the young boy is able to recognise the fact that the squire cannot give him anything because he does not possess anything, and he does not hate him for it. As Robert Alter also suggests, he cannot even hate the blind man after all the suffering he makes him undergo; the blind man was the one that taught him to be constantly on his toes and to provide for himself : "Stupid, learn this : a blindman's boy must be at least one point sharper than the devil." To this Lazaro concludes : "This fellow is right in charging me to sharpen up my eye and to take stock of myself. Now that I am on my own, I must consider how to get along in this world."

As we can see, Lazaro is not the pious person that his manner of speaking might make one think he is, constantly calling God's name, but he is not downright evil by any manner of means. As some have pointed

out, religiously, socially, in almost every way, the rogue must be in a hostile world for the novel to be considered picaresque. As far as religion is concerned, Lazaro lives in a seemingly un-Christian world, where he, without ceasing to be a rogue, shows some Christian values.

In chapter 4 where Lazaro enters the service of a friar, the topic is again Lazaro's adventures with the clergy. Lazaro is serving a friar of the military order of *La Merced*, an order that was concerned with redeeming captives. Here is another allusion to the wars that Spain maintained with the Turks for the dominance of the Mediterranean during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The friar seems to be another example of the corrupt clergy of the time : he likes to wander in search of pleasure and do other things that the narrator chooses not to tell us. What those things are we can only speculate about, but according to the general tone of the novel, he probably was rather frugal with what he gave Lazaro to live on.

In chapter 5, we find Lazaro serving a seller of indulgencies. The practice of travelling and selling religious tokens which granted the purchasers special remission of sins and other blessings was widespread in Spain and other Catholic countries at the time. These indulgencies were called "papal bulls," and were awarded supposedly by the Pope; however, many abuses were committed from this exercise.

What the author of Lazarillo wants to do is to show us that the practice had nothing to do with its original objective and that it had degenerated into a money spinner for the bull vendor. Lazaro's master did not possess any papal dispensation for his practice, and, of course, the effectiveness of the bulls could hardly be checked : he gave bulls for successful pregnancies, to redeem Christian captives from the Moors, etc.

The entire episode is an attempt to show what a farce the whole business had turned into. Lazaro's master is nothing but a charlatan who speaks Latin to those priests who do not speak themselves, but actually

his is not Latin at all : he also brings presents for them so that they let him sell his false bulls in the different towns that he and Lazaro visit. The chapter's plot is structured around the tricks played by the bull vendor. The bull vendor plays the part of the rogue, and since the picaresque story must revolve around the protagonist's roguery, he becomes momentarily the picaresque hero. Lazaro is almost an innocent accomplice : when he sees how his master fools everybody with the surreptitiously heated cross, he wants to tell the truth but cannot do it:

When he saw me there, my master put his finger to his lips as a sign for me not to say anything. I did as he told me, as was my duty, although after I saw what the miracle was, I was dying to tell

Once more we see Lazaro showing scruples and Christian morals; nevertheless, he is far from being innocent : "although I was just a child, it amused me; I thought, 'I wonder how often these swindlers defraud innocent people with tricks like this.'"

In chapter 6, Lazaro enters the service of a chaplain, and he is treated fairly decently; consequently no flaws are found with the chaplain, and with no religious or social criticism to offer, this episode is among the shortest ones.

In chapter 7, Lazaro enters the service of a constable and works as constable's deputy, but not for long for he is afraid he may suffer the attack of outlaws. Invoking God's name, "God was kind enough to set me on a profitable road and light my path for me", Lazaro tells us he has become a town crier. What concerns us here is the fact that Lazaro befriends the Archpriest of San Salvador, and the latter arranges Lazaro's marriage with a servant girl. The girl is the archpriest's lover, and the marriage is a perfect way for the archpriest to cover up the love affair.

Catholic priests must be celibate and chaste; therefore, the novel denounces yet another fault in the clergy. Lazaro timidly asks the archpriest and his new wife whether there is any truth in what the entire

town is murmuring : although the priest and the girl are and have been lovers for some time, they both deny it. Thus, Lazaro is satisfied with his status and, although some may say that he is innocent enough to believe the archpriest and his wife, the following passage suggests otherwise :

I had to swear that never again in my whole life would I mention the subject : I was delighted, I claimed, to have her enter and leave his house, day or night, for I was sure of her virtue, and even considered it quite all right for her to do so. In this way the three of us reached a complete understanding about the situation.

So, in the end, Lazaro proves to be nothing but a rogue, with as faulty morals as the institution being criticised here. As Robert Alter remarks (9), "Lazaro is a good Christian in theory, a bad one in practice; he adapts to an un-Christian world."

The Unfortunate Traveller

In England, as in Spain and indeed in the whole of Europe, the religious issue was a hot issue during the sixteenth century, and an issue that a socially conscious writer like Thomas Nashe could not afford to ignore in his novel The Unfortunate Traveller (1594), the first English picaresque novel.

The 1530s saw the separation of the Church of England from the papal authority; this event had important social and political repercussions. Although the Act of Supremacy, and the Act of Treason (1534), which settled the break with Rome, went through with little opposition from the population, dissent was not rooted out in England altogether, and at an international level, the problems were equally important, for Henry VIII made quite a number of enemies in Europe. Henry was at war with France, and was regarded with contempt by Rome and especially by Spain.

Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), the initiator of the picaresque novel in English literature, was the son of William Nashe, vicar of Lowestoft.

Consequently, religion must have been an important issue for Thomas from an early age. This circumstance is probably proved by the fact that one of the first things Nashe did upon his arrival to London, after his studies at Cambridge, was to engage himself in a religious controversy with the Puritan Martin Marprelate. Nashe was a fervent supporter of the established Anglican Church, and as his literary feud with the writer Gabriel Harvey proves, he was not afraid of controversy. His works were banned by a joint decision of the Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift and Bishop Richard Bancroft in 1599. The reason was the degree of irreverence and the shameful addresses that Nashe's and Harvey's writing were increasingly showing.

The Harvey issue was only a matter of literary pride, but the anti-martinist writings, in the form of pamphlets such as An Almond for a Parrot (1590), that imitates Martin's colloquial style, had a religious motif. His picaresque novel, his most famous work, compiles all the aforementioned characteristics of its author.

The unfortunate traveller or The life of Jacke Wilton is set in the reign of Henry VIII, but the first picaresque novel in English is very much an Elizabethan piece of work. Not only is this suggested by the date of publication, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, but also by the fact that the social and religious issues it touches upon are very much a part of Elizabethan thought.

The Elizabethan period was a period of some religious and political tolerance. But this second half of the sixteenth century can be divided in two parts : the first, up to the 1570s, was a time of stability and relative prosperity; the second, especially after the problems caused by the Catholic followers of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the execution of the Duke of Norfolk, was much more turbulent. The 1580s saw an increase of activity on the part of the Puritans and other groups of Dissenters; also a clash with Spain, all of which resulted in an important economic depression.

Nashe, in The Unfortunate Traveller, has a few characters killed by the plague in Italy : Castaldo, the husband of Diamante, Jack's lover and later wife; and Johannes Imola, the Italian nobleman who invites Jack and Diamante to stay in his house. We also hear about the plague in England when Jack is there after Henry VIII's campaign in France is over temporarily. The reason the plague is featured so prominently in the story is that in Nashe's youth he saw several waves of disease cause havoc in England; and in 1593, on the occasion of one of the worst plagues London suffered. Nashe warned his countrymen in Christ teares over Jerusalem, that if they did not reform, London would suffer the same fate as Jerusalem.

If there is any doubt about the importance of religion for Nashe in Jack Wilton's story, we can turn our attention to the number of times that the rogue talks about God and religion directly. Among other instances, we find him sending his master, a gullible captain, to the French camp to spy and hopefully get killed in the process, and the rogue says : "Gone he is : God send him good shipping to Wapping, and by this time, if you will, let him be a pitiful poor fellow, and undone for ever." Later on, Jack justifies his roguery as follows : "My masters, you may conceive of me what you list, but I think confidently I was ordained God's scourge from above for their dainty finicality." When Jack is in Germany, he witnesses the notorious massacre of some Anabaptists at the hands of the troops of the Duke of Saxony, and he says :

[...] let me dilate a little more gravely than the nature of this story requires, or will be expected of so young a practitioner in divinity, that not those that intermissively cry "Lord, open unto us: Lord open unto us" enter first into the kingdom: [...] When Christ said "The kingdom of Heaven must suffer violence," he meant not the violence of long babbling prayers, nor the violence of tedious invective sermons without wit, but the violence of faith, the violence of good works, the violence of patient suffering.

As Charles Nicholl has noted in A Cup of News (158), Nashe is quite clearly criticising the Puritans in the description of the Anabaptists' uprising in Munster, as much as he is expressing the importance of religion. In this episode, the Baptists are slaughtered because they refuse to carry the weapons of war into battle. Jack finds the whole affair very ridiculous, and expostulates against that religious group in a manner that must make us think of Nashe talking about the Puritans in England: "They pray, they howl, they expostulate with God to grant them victory, and use such unspeakable vehemence a man would think them the only well-bent men under Heaven." It is obvious that Nashe thought Puritans the most verbal about their beliefs, but he was first and foremost a strong defender of the Church of England and was opposed to Dissent of any sort.

The biggest group opposed to Anglicanism was quite clearly the Catholics. Nashe deals with this subject as well. He does not seem to dislike Catholicism so much as the authority of the Pope. On their way to Italy, Jack and his master, the Earl of Surrey, go to Rotterdam and meet Erasmus and Thomas More. Neither Erasmus, the free thinker, nor More, the loyal subject of the king and of Rome, receive any criticism from the author; their work is briefly described and given its due value. However, Cardinal Wolsey, a strong opponent to the separation of the Church of England from Rome, is directly attacked by Jack, who says that those who gave religion a bad name will be punished in due time.

Another direct attack on the figure of the Pope is the fact that in the story, Juliana, "the Pope's mistress," appears as a corrupt character full of evil: an immoral woman who manipulates even the Pope himself getting an edit out of him to banish all Jews from the city of Rome, so that she can retain Jack for her sexual pleasure. Another instance in which the Pope appears not very favourably portrayed, is when the Ambassador of Spain arrives in Rome to honour St. Peter's Day with ridiculous ceremony that

involves the Pope and a white jennet. The author's intention is to make the Pope look rather ridiculous. Also, the fact that the Pope and the ambassador have a huge banquet comes to represent the vice and extravagance of the Roman Catholic Church.

The fact that the Pope's guest is the Ambassador of Spain, and that the worst villain in the story is another Spaniard, Esdras of Granada, is rather significant. In the 1580s, England and Spain clashed repeatedly : Elizabeth helped the Dutch Protestants who were in fact revolt against their monarch Philip II, and the Spanish monarch saw no other way of exterminating heresy and disciplining his subjects in the Netherlands than by fighting England directly. We can see how Nashe's feelings towards Spain and Catholicism were the typical of the Elizabethan man. To finish with this issue, we must note the way in which the infamous Esdras of Granada is killed : he is forced to offer his soul to the devil and to curse God, and is shot in the mouth so that he can never express repentance. This is quite significant, for it shows one of the most common complaints that Protestants put to Catholicism : the emphasis on repentance and prayer for salvation rather than through actual good actions.

The feeling that England was isolated and surrounded by Catholic enemies in Europe was the cause for the Elizabethan fear of everything that came from abroad. Spain, France and Italy were Catholic countries, and the English showed a mixture of admiration for their culture, and apprehension for their religion. Nashe shows this characteristic when he presents Jack admiring the beauty and excellence of the city of Rome, and later on when the banished English earl saves the rogue from his execution and tells him about the evils of travelling. Of France, the earl says, you will only see there falsehood and slovenly habits, in Spain ridiculous costumes, and in Italy decadence and whoring. Thus, we get a taste of Elizabethan chauvinism and provincialism.

Finally, the fact that Zadock and Zack, the two merchants who try to take advantage of Jack and Diamante's misfortunes, are Jewish is also significant, as is the fact that they are banished by the corrupt Pope, in the same way that they were banished by the Spanish monarchs.

All opposition to the Church of England is ridiculed in one form or another in Nashe's novel: Baptists representing the Puritans; Spain, Italy and France representing Roman Catholicism. Our rogue ends up going back to the English camp in France, going back to good old Blighty where morality is not corrupt as it is in Europe, and doing the right thing: making a decent woman of his courtesan Diamante. Consequently, we must conclude that The Unfortunate Traveller has a strong moral and religious message. However, Nashe's novel does not appear as critical about religious issues as Lazarillo, because the Spanish author was quite obviously at odds with the official church in Spain, whereas Nashe was defending the established church in England, not so much swimming against the current. Thus, we notice in Nashe a deep moral concern, but no real bitterness. It is true that Nashe verbalises his ideas more openly than the anonymous Spanish author, but that is only because there was a stricter censorship in Spain than there was in England; therefore, the criticism of the church in Lazarillo is done in a more subtle and ironic manner.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUE

The picaresque novel is primarily a variation of the realist novel, and as such one of the most important objectives of the author is to describe society and, more often than not, to show its flaws. We have already seen the religious configuration of the Spanish and English society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries being treated by the picaresque novel. Now, to complete the historical picture, we must concentrate on the political and economic reality described by this genre, the mores and everyday difficulties of society, of the people.

Lazarillo

Lazarillo describes fundamentally the Spain of the first half of the sixteenth century. Spain had finished its internal wars with the Moors and its conflict with Charles VIII of France over territories in Italy and Southern France. The Catholic Kings' alliances in Europe provided Spain with political power, and the colonisation of the New World brought abundant riches. Nevertheless, the expulsion of the Jews and of the Moriscos in 1549 and 1609 respectively, left the Spanish economy in a deplorable condition at the moment when they were most needed to sustain Spain's European position and its overseas empire. The Jews were the most active citizens, the educated and rich urban bourgeoisie. The Moriscos were mostly farmers. The magnificent enterprises that Spain undertook were financed by German and Italian bankers, the economy did not develop because the American gold was used to pay interests and to be wasted by the Crown and the nobility (in which we shall include the High Church).

Lazarillo gives an image of an impoverished country. It is an accurate picture indeed, for it concentrates on the lower classes, where poverty abounded.

In chapter 1, we get a taste of poverty when Lázaro tells us about his parents: his father is a miller, and his business is not very prosperous, so he is forced to steal flour from his customers. Apart from the bad use made with the gold from America, another negative consequence of the general economic mismanagement was that the abundance of precious metals triggered off inflation, which made products less affordable, and the economy weaker. Only the army was relatively prosperous, and there is where Lázaro's father ends up. His mother must open an eating house to earn a living; but since her industry does not produce an adequate income, she must seek the favours of a nobleman's steward to support her

family. Since money was not being invested to develop any sector of the economy, the lower classes had to resort to stealing or collecting the crumbs that fell off the nobles' tables. Thus, a philosophy of life by roguery or by serving the nobility and the Church ensued. The Spanish nobility were especially powerful after defeating the Moors, and to keep them on his side, Charles, V exempted them from taxation; consequently, the burden of the numerous wars Spain was fighting all over Europe fell on those least able to bear it, on the classes whose industry and activities could have developed the Spanish economy.

In chapter 2, we see again the difficulties of the lower clergy to survive, and Lázaro's servitude as his only alternative. Our rogue enters the service of a clergyman who, out of niggardliness and some lack of resources as well, starves him. In this situation, our rogue cannot afford honesty and faithfulness, and must rob the priest as much as he can. The reader of the twentieth century will often wonder, reading Lazarillo, why the protagonist does not attempt to climb the social ladder, and why he has no ambition. As Frederick Montserer puts it, the picaroon's movements are in a "horizontal social pattern," concerned only with survival, not romance and ambition (4). This is not an altogether literary decision, but a sign of the times: the class division was so important in Spain's aristocratic society, that social or economic advancement were only possible through association with the richer. For the lower classes this meant servitude. At this point, Lázaro is perhaps too young to think about advancement, but we already perceive how poor his condition is, and how desperate his situation.

Chapter 3 is a very revealing chapter for in it we see some of the most characteristic traits of the Spanish society of the time. The first paragraph shows Lázaro wandering on the streets of Toledo, where people who see him cry:

"You are a scoundrel and a tramp. Get along; go look up a good master to serve", As indicated before, he is not encouraged to work on any enterprising trade, the trend was to serve a wealthy nobleman.

Lazaro thinks that he has found a wealthy aristocrat in the young squire; however, he has committed a gross mistake, for the squire is penniless. This shows us a distinctive sector of Spanish society, those who tried to pass for noble but were not. All the European aristocracy imitated the affluent Spanish upper classes, it was the fashion of the time in the sixteenth century : they were wealthy (thanks to the riches coming from the New World), and did not involve themselves in any kind of debasing trade. This fashion of imitating the Spanish nobility was prevalent among the Spanish middle classes, if one can use the term at this point in history. Lawyers, properous artisans and merchants would leave their trade to lead a life with more social glamour and respectability. They would buy land and titles and would become even more jealous of their newly -acquired honour than the actual nobility were of theirs. Concepts like honour and purity of blood (no contact with Jews or Moriscos in the family) were to be defended with on'es life. As I have said before, this brought difficult times for the Spanish economy, which in the seventeenth century came to a virtually complete standstill.

Lazaro's master is in appearance a noble, but he has no money because he will not work on anything that debases him. He wants to work only for wealthy masters; as he says: "When a man establishes a connection with a gentleman of title, all his troubles are over." Furthermore, the squire leaves his home and his land in Old Castile for a question of honour, "to avoid taking off his cap to a knight, a neighbour of his." The squire says to Lazaro :

You are only a boy, [...] and do not understand matters of honour; and honour, my boy, comprises the entire capital of a gentleman in this day and age. [...] for a nobleman owes nothing to anyone except to God and his king.

Furthermore, it behooves a gentleman not to neglect for even a moment his self-respect.

Consequently, unlike in the rest of Europe, in Spain, people did not prosper through industry, but through roguery or connections with the nobility, the Church or the Crown. The tone of direct social criticism comes from Lazaro :

"O Lord, how many like him Thou must have, scattered throughout the world, who suffer more for the wretched thing they call honour than they would endure for Thy sake?". The absurdity of the social phenomenon is thus underscored by Lazaro. The presence of a few women the squire would have witnessed the contrast between the squire's appearance and private life, and his actual status, his poverty, they stay in his company until they discover that he has no far use, buying him another pair of trousers.

Chapter 4 has nothing relevant to add to our discussion, it only serves as transition to chapter 5. In chapter 5, we find Lazaro with the seller of indulgencies. This episode shows how deeply rooted corruption and fraud were in Spanish society. Not only is it corruption on the part of the bull vendor, and the lower ranks of the Church but also corruption on the part of officials such as constables and mayors of towns who let the fraud go on provided they benefit from it too.

In chapter 6, where Lazaro sells water for a chaplain, we see how Lazaro, in spite of having an honest occupation, gives it up as soon as he has saved enough to buy new clothes and travel in search of something more glamorous. Again, as the banished English earl tells Jack in Nashe's novel, in Spain you only find affectation and ridiculous attires.

Chapter 7 shows the rogue working for the government, for as he says "nowadays nobody prospers except those who work for the government". Only those posts of an official character, related to the Crown, were exempted of heavy taxation. That is what Lazaro is telling

Also, through his friendship with an archpriest, a member of the high and wealthy clergy, Lazaro finds a wife. His wife is the archpriest's lover, but Lazaro does not mind that, because all he wants is to survive, even if he has to suffer some humiliation. He is, however, outwardly proud of his position, as he tells us at the end:

"They say nothing to me [about the renowned infidelity of his wife], and I have peace in my house". Lazaro's previous master, the squire, sends a similar message during his conversation with the rogue over the issue of "honra" (honour): he would do anything to serve a gentleman of title and wealth, do tricks for him, lie to him, become his favourite, his buffoon, etc. etc. The squire would be seen as a respectable figure by society, although he would not care about his honour being with the nobleman, nobody would see what goes on inside his house. As we can see, Spanish society gave more importance to appearances than to anything else, even honour.

Finally, another important detail we observe from these characters is the deep consciousness of class: they make a clear distinction between themselves and the aristocracy. Lazarillo shows an eminently static society.

The Unfortunate Traveller

In England, Nashe gives us some hints of the kind of society Elizabeth I's reign created. Jack Wilton's story is set during the 1510-20s, during the reign of Henry VIII and his campaign against France. But as many have pointed out, that is only an attempt to criticise English society without being direct and specific. Also, the fact that most of the action takes place in Italy helps to make criticism easier and less direct though equally effective.

The first episodes of the novel deal with Jack's roguery in the English camp in France. This is an opportunity for Nashe to criticise the lower ranks of the army. Jack's first master is an unscrupulous captain who forces the protagonists to throw dice and cheat or provide a better

living for both of them. Consequently, we can assume that the author was not very pleased with the army and perhaps the atmosphere of militarism present in Elizabethan England, and that during the reign of Mary I (1543-1558) brought economic hardship to the people, and international shame for the numerous defeats at the hands of France mainly. The fact that Jack becomes a soldier of fortune may well substantiate this attempt to criticise war and militarism.

Another circumstance that seems to point in the same direction is the fact that Jack claims, at the beginning of the novel, that God has sent him to discover bad masters: the rogue betrays the captain and other officers he serves, because, as we see, they are as corrupt as Jack himself. This adds to the criticism of the army.

Unlike *Barzillai*, Nashe does not seem much concerned with the poverty of his characters. Unlike then England was not a military power with ample commitments to fight wars as Spain had done. In Elizabeth's moderation and economic conservatism, England's fast-growing population found a good environment for stability and relative prosperity. But at the same time, with the desire of a parasitism and the clashes with Spain, did the economy suffer a strong decline: the Crown's and the nobles' demands to make England a powerful nation, respected around the world, demanded a strong increase in taxation to build a war fleet, and recession appeared straight away.

As usual, main concern was the controversial religious issue, the debate between those in favour of reform and those in favour of allegiance to the Pope or European Protestantism.

As we have seen, this issue has been previously discussed, and it's not strange to think of one that Nashe felt had to be addressed, but will be the focus of an Elizabethan thinking. Nashe's tone and interests contrast with most of contemporaries like Spenser, Sidney or Shakespeare. He saw the past, especially the Middle Ages, not as a glorious period, but as a

mythologised one, and its ideals as ridiculous. We can observe this in the episode where Jack's master, the Earl of Surrey, on his arrival to Florence, issues a challenge to all the knights of the city to prove his love for Geraldine. The joust and its participants are described ironically by the narrator, in a clear attempt to ridicule the whole idea.

Another target of Nashe's criticism is Elizabethan bigotry. This bigotry came primarily from Puritan quarters, from those who saw in Europe a source of religious and cultural corruption. Because of religious disagreement with dissenters, Nashe was very critical about this attitude, and although he was opposed to Catholicism and consequently to the European Catholic countries, he did not hesitate to praise Rome's excellence through Jack's admiration of the eternal city. But even among other religious and political groups, bigotry and xenophobia were widespread. We see this circumstance reflected in the discourse of the banished English earl, who tells Jack that there is nothing good to be gained from travelling overseas and coming into contact with foreign cultures. As Stephen S. Hilliard remarks in The Singularity of Thomas Nashe (150), travelling and foreign influence were controversial issues at the time. The English were afraid of foreign influence, but at the same time afraid of falling into provincialism; for that reason the education of a gentleman invariably included a trip around the continent.

In sum, The Unfortunate Traveller exhibits many characteristics of the Elizabethan thinking, some of them contradictory : xenophobia, bigotry, idealism, etc. Nashe seems, overall , to take a rather gloomy view of the age, and one of the main motifs in the story is the plague. The plague is present both in England and in Italy, and along with an almost sarcastic view of romance and idealism, it seems to try to bring literature back to reality, to the miseries of everyday life, contrasting with Spenser's rendering of the world, or, as Hilliard points out (125), Sidney's claim for literature's role of beautifying history. Nashe's message is that neither is everything well, nor should literature make us believe so. Despite its aura of stability and progress, sixteenth-century England had numerous social stigmas that Nashe did not attempt to overlook.

PURELY LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

Centring our attention on the peculiarities of the picaresque novel as a literary genre, as more than a spontaneous reaction to the reality in which it appeared, we should first try to define the picaresque novel.

Lars Hartveit, in his Workings of the Picaresque in the British Novel(14), presents a good outline or explanation of the genre's main characteristics. The novel is first of all a first-person account of the protagonist's life. The protagonist is taken away from his family and left alone to provide for himself; he is a victim of society. The structure of the narration is episodic. The protagonist needs a master to serve, someone powerful to act as a protector. The ending of the story is inconclusive, open to different interpretations. The author of such a novel is in some respect at odds with society, and his depiction of society is a subjective and critical one.

Frederick Montser adds (6-7), that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the style was very flexible and the content was regarded as more important than the form. Montser calls the picaresque novel a "democratic genre," not only for its flexibility as to form, but also because it caters itself with all social classes, especially with the lower classes, a group largely neglected by the traditional romances.

These characteristics reveal much about both novels I have discussed here; but one more thing we must inevitably get down to is an analysis of the peculiar protagonist, what makes the picaresque novel a particular and different kind of Bildungsroman.

Montser's study is very useful. He says that the protagonist is a "rogue," e.g. the pickpocket or the pickpocket. This character is a youth who has been abandoned, whose main concern is survival, and in order to survive he is forced to commit minor crimes like theft, but never murder, for that would turn him into a "villain" not a rogue. The rogue must also be at odds with the world; he must be a victim of circumstances. In the case of the female rogue, sex is practised for need not pleasure. Stuart Miller adds that the

rogue is at the mercy of luck; fortune is uncontrollable. Also, the world is his most important teacher (67).

One of the most important features of the rogue is, as Alter puts it (5), that "the rogue, unlike the existentialist hero, is no philosophical prober," he does not rebel against a society that is undeniably hostile to him. We must see the rogue as a character who tries to strike the best deal that he can without stopping to think whether things could or indeed should be different. The author is the one that, through the rogue, presents a critical view of things.

We have heard the picaresque novel being called a democratic genre, because it deals with the lower classes and the miseries that the traditional romance avoids. Perhaps in an attempt to separate itself from traditional romance, the picaresque tradition refuses love and romance. When love and romance appear, they are ridiculed in one way or another. With the exception of Defoe, we could maybe speak of a sexist genre : in the picaresque novel, the protagonist is a male and women play a secondary role. In fact they are viewed rather negatively, for they usually are the cause of trouble for the rogue. Women seem to have only negative connotations.

Lazarillo

Lazarillo de Tormes, fulfils all the requirements of the description of the genre, because obviously it is the original model from which all the rest drew their inspiration. It is a narration in the first person, with passages in which the narrator addresses the reader. The structure of the book is loose, it is episodic; so much so that when the novel was expurgated, entire chapters were withdrawn, and the novel did not suffer from lack of unity or coherence. Its end is also open, for how moral Lazaro's arrangement with the archpriest is remains entirely a matter of interpretation. Whether the rogue thinks his wife and the archpriest virtuous or not is debatable; consequently, so is his integrity and morality.

One of the most valuable things Lazarillo brings to literature is the use of irony. As Walter Reed points out (51), it adapts the mediaeval satire

of "estates" to the modern novel, with its characters without names, its shortness and directness, etc. Irony has been noticed by many critics; however, one common mistake is attributing it to the rogue himself : the rogue is not ironic in any way, the author is; Lazaro is only funny because of the way he tells his story, but he does not take his misfortunes lightly.

The reason for this irony is perhaps to make a sad story more entertaining. Montser considers entertainment the only purpose of the genre (16). However, Francisco Rico suggests in The Spanish Picaresque Novel and the Point of View (62), that irony and humour constituted rather a disguise without which Spain would not have dared admit such gruesome defects as the novel shows.

The Unfortunate Traveller:

The Unfortunate Traveller is close to the Spanish model (Lazarillo was translated into English in 1569). The protagonist is alone against the world. He is a victim of society and fate; however, he is not an innocent victim in any way : there is no doubt that Jack Wilton enjoys his roguery and his tricks in the same way that Quevedo's Pablos does. The ending to Jack's story is quite open : we are never sure what becomes of the rogue or to what extent his claim to reform is true.

One important feature that places Nashe's novel with Lazarillo in the same tradition is its lack of structural unity. Its chaotic succession of events, lacking even chapter divisions, is, as some critics have suggested, a metaphor for the chaos the author is denouncing in the society he describes. Stuart Miller remarks that Jack, the narrator, is portrayed as a very unprofessional one, he sleeps and drinks in the middle of the narration (104). One might observe that the narrator's digressions, for example the one against the anabaptists' practices, are more like sudden fits of wrath than carefully thought-out lectures.

One characteristic that separates The Unfortunate Traveller from Lazarillo is the fact that Jack serves only one master, properly speaking. Nevertheless, although some have tried to ignore the importance of

Lazarillo on Nashe as a direct influence, it is quite clear that the link is there. We can emphasise this relationship by looking at the role women play in both novels : in both novels, the rogue ends up marrying a less than virtuous woman; women are rather corrupt figures; love is not present in these novels, only sex viewed as an infamous vice.

CONCLUSION

On the topic of religion, I must conclude that Lazarillo is in Spain the novel that is most concerned with the faults of the Church. In the wake of Erasmus' In the Praise of Folly, the Spanish author, some say he was a resentful Jew, concentrates on showing the abuses committed by and on behalf of the Catholic Church.

In England, Thomas Nashe is outspoken about his religious views. The Unfortunate Traveller ridicules all forms of dissent to the Church of England: Popists and Puritans, especially.

As to the political and socioeconomic issue lazarillo criticises the predominant attitude among the Spanish people, as well as the corruption of the system and the mismanagement of its institutions.

In England, Nashe sets out to combat Elizabethan idealism, by showing a rather gruesome reality. He appeals for the establishment of order, and for trust in the English institutions, especially the Anglican Church and its social model.

From a purely literary point of view, we have here Lazarillo, the model, and Nashe, who imitates it. The two rogues are different, however. Perhaps this responds to national characteristics. Lazaro is very down -to-earth, very practical and humble, whereas Jack Wilton is more of an ambitious character, with grander designs, and maybe more optimistic views. For those interested in comparing the Spanish and the English personalities, here is a good opportunity.

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