

Spanish Picaresque Novel

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Spanish Golden Age Literature

- 16th to 17th centuries
- *Lazarillo de Tormes*, 1554
- Mateo Aleman, *Guzman de Alfarache*, 1599
- Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 1605
- Francisco Quevedo, *The Swindler*, 1608
- Baroque poetry of Gongora
- Plays of Lope de Vega and Calderon

What is a Picaresque?

- Anti-hero; opposition to the traditional Chivalric hero
- Low class origins, but aspirations for respectability and money
- Burlar: to deceive and play cruel tricks
- Parents who are criminals, prostitutes, tax collectors, executioners, and Jews or Conversos
- Wanderer
- By showing how society treats the picaro the purpose of the novel is to satirize society

Lazarillo de Tormes

- Earliest Picaresque novel: 1554
- Anonymous
- So popular that a sequel appeared in 1555, *The Further Adventures of Lazarillo de Tormes*
- By 1560 translated into French and other European languages
- Banned by the Inquisition in 1559 and a redacted version without anti-clerical comments appeared in 1573

Plot of Lazarillo

- Boy named Lazarillo whose father dies in the war and is sent off by mother to live with a blind beggar
- He is put in the care of a Priest who treats him badly and half starves him
- He goes into service for a nobleman who has lost his estate, and is made to beg for him
- Marries a woman who is mistress of a priest and gets a job as Town Crier through the priest's influence;
- He is a *cabron*, a man who profits from his wife's infidelity

Blind Man Awakens Lazarillo

- We left Salamanca and came to a bridge. As you get to it, there is a stone animal there which looks like a bull.

The blind man told me to go up to it: 'Lazaro, put your ear close to the bull and you'll hear a loud noise inside it.'

I was so simple I did just that, and when he felt that my head was against the stone, he gave me such a blow that my head crashed against that blasted bull so hard that it hurt me for three days and more.

'You silly little nitwit! You'll have to learn that a blind man's boy has got to be sharper than a needle!'

I said to myself: 'What he says is true. I must be awake because I'm on my own and I've got to look out for myself.'

Lazarillo Learns

- He steals some of the money people give the blind man
- He sneaks wine from the man's bottle until eventually the beggar bashes his teeth in with the bottle:
- “From that time on I had little time for the cruel old blind man. Although he made a fuss of me and treated me kindly, bandaging up my cuts. I could easily see that he enjoyed his sadistic punishment.”

Revenge on the Beggar

- Eating dinner Lazarillo swaps out a hot sausage for a cold turnip. The blind man beats him and makes him throw it up.
- Revenge: During a rain they have to cross a ditch. The boy leads the man in front of a post and the man launches himself into it to cross the “ditch.”
- Lazarillo: “What! You smelled the sausage and you couldn’t smell the post? Ole! Ole! I jeered.
- I left him in the care of a crowd of people and set off running to the town gates..I never found out what happened to him and I did not bother to inquire either.”

Priest

- “Out of the frying pan and into the fire!
- Food locked up; 1 onion ever four days!
- Tinkerer makes a key; Bread like the “very face of God”
- Eventually found out the Priest sends him away:
- “I can’t find any way of combating your craftiness and I’m quite positive you couldn’t have been anything else before you came to me than a blind man’s boy.”

Gentleman Pauper

- Lazaro begs food for him
- “I hope God takes as much pity on me as I did on him, because I felt for his suffering as I had often endured it and still endured it most days.”
- Lenders come to collect debts; Gentleman goes to town to change money; Lazaro arrested and interrogated
- “All I did was upside-down, because masters are usually left by their servants but with me it was the opposite: he left me, in fact he deserted me.”

Pardoner

- Sold indulgences
- Pardoner and a constable get in a fight while gambling. Constable accuses pardoner of being a fraud. Pardoner prays God to sink him in the earth if the charge is true, but if false let God punish the sinner for his lies. Immediately he falls to ground screaming in pain, possessed by devil. Pardoner puts an indulgence on man's head, prays for him to be forgiven, and miraculously he is! Everyone buys indulgences.
- “I was only a boy then, but his trick impressed me very much and I said to myself: “I wonder how many others there are like him swindling innocent people?”

Civil Service

- “I got into the Civil Service! I realized that you can’t get on unless you are in a government job. I’ve still got it today and I live in the service of God and of Your Honor.”
- Town Crier
- People gossip about his wife and the priest:
“Lazaro de Tormes, you’ll never get on in life if you take any notice of what people say about you. I’m telling you this so you should not surprised if someone sees your wife going into my house and leaving it...Neither of you need be ashamed of what she does; this I can promise you. So don’t pay any attention to what anybody says; just think about your own affairs, I mean what’s best for you.”

Francisco Gomez de Quevedo y Villegas (1580-1645)

- Written in 1608; published 1626
- Family was connected to court; father was secretary to the daughter of Charles V
- Studied theology and classical languages
- Wrote much, including poetry
- 1611: fled to Italy to escape penalty for dueling
- 1618: Knight of order of Santiago
- Served Spanish Vice-Roy to Naples, Duke Osuna
- He ends up arrested for immorality, books censored, and ends life in a monastery.



La Vida del Buscon: The Life of a Swindler

- Criminal parents send Pablo to school
- Serves a young nobleman
- Goes to university but ends up involved in crime
- Goes to claim inheritance from an uncle, an executioner, who executed his father for theft
- Joins up with a man who pretends to be noble and well-to-do (quedar bien); they end up in jail
- He buys his way out of prison and goes to Seville; joins a troupe of actors but gets bored and seeks new adventure
- Becomes a cheating gambler
- Leaves for America to avoid getting caught

Introduction to Reader

- Light heartedly implies that the Reader wouldn't be interested in a book about a coarse, swindler, if their own nature wasn't inclined to depravity!
- You know the author
- You know the price of the book...unless you are one of those people who read the book in the book store like "people who steal a free read as sparrows pick at a meal..." piecing together bits and pieces here and there, which "is a great pity because they criticize the book even though it hasn't cost them anything; which is a mean swindle..."

Family and early life of Pablo

- Father was a barber
- Mother was suspected of being Moorish or Jewish
- Father accused of theft and imprisoned and mother was a procuress and a witch
- Parents fight about his future profession: “But I always fancied myself as a man of leisure so I didn’t apply myself to either.”
- He wants to go to school

Education

- Fights with a boy who calls his mother a bad name; but, finds out it is true.
- Makes friend's with a boy named Don Diego
- Diego tells him to call a man named Pontius de Aguirre "Pontius Pilate"; he is beaten; When he says Credo prayer, he says Pontius de Aguirre instead of Pilate.
- Pablo will leave school and serve as Diego's servant

Dr. Goat's Boarding School in Segovia

- Dr. Goat was High Priest of Poverty and Avarice
- The boys eats turnip stew
- Servants eat the scraps
- “Eat like brothers! God has provided! Don't fight, there's enough for all.”
- No need for a lavatory...
- Another boy got sick and when he received his last rites he looked at the wafer of bread: “Sweet Jesus Christ. Seeing you in this house is the only thing that has convinced me I'm not in Hell.”
- Boys brought home by Don Diego's father

Initiation at Alcala

- Other students spit on him
- In the night in the dorm there is yelling and he is hit and beat
- When he wakes in the morning his bedding is dirtied and the other servants make a joke about him needing to get up and where is the bad smell!
- “I determined to change my outlook. We made it up and from then on lived like brothers and nobody bothered me any more in the schools or the courtyards.”

Pablo Turns Bad

- Tricks the maid into thinking she had offended the inquisition by saying “Pio, Pio” to the chickens, and to rectify it he will take the chickens and burn them
- “Don’t you remember you called “pio, pio,” to the chickens? Well, isn’t that the names of popes, vicars of Christ...? Now you see your sin.’
- “If you swear on a Holy Alter you didn’t mean any harm then I can certainly see no way to denounce you. But those two chickens who ate their food after you called them with the sacred name of Holy Father—well, you’ll have to give them to me to take to an agent of the Inquisition to be burnt...”

Letter from Uncle, the Executioner

- Father died
- Mother arrested by inquisition for witchcraft
- Dinner at his Uncles and the Pie—”I remembered what he had said about my father, and was satisfied with the crust. In fact, whenever I eat pies I say a Hail Mary for the soul which once belonged to the meat.”

Unfortunate Gentleman, Don Toribio

- Letters of nobility are worth nothing
- He would sell his “don” if he could find anyone willing to pay for it
- Tells Pablo how to live in Madrid with no money
- You need clothes to look like you have money

Meets a girl

- Pretends to be rich and to have a “page” bring some fine cloth to their home
- Acts like a fine home is his and tips his hat to all the businessmen who pass as if he knows them
- Asks the girls for a fine rosary as a token of trust

Identity Revealed by Don Diego

- Goes to an Inn and pretends to be a rich man; pays people to come and call on him
- Meets two ladies; turns out that his old master Diego knows them and thinks he recognizes Pablo
- Beaten once by Don Diego's enemies and once by his friends

Life as a Penitent begga

- Sells his fancy clothes and buys clothes of a penitent with a large cross and a rosary
- Tied his legs up in his pants and used crutches
- Joins and acting troupe; even play is stolen and patched together
- Left acting, to improve his morals, and then became an Anti-Christ, or someone who chats up nuns

Gang Leader and America

- Goes to Seville and joins a gang; becomes their leader and a prostitute his woman
- “When I saw that this situation was going to be more or less permanent and that bad luck was dogging my heels, I made up my mind, not because I was intelligent enough to see what was going to happen but because I was tired and obstinate in my wickedness, to go to America with Grajales. I consulted her first; I thought things would go better in the New World and another country. But they went worse, as they always will for anybody who thinks he only has to move his dwelling without changing his life or ways.”

Observations

- The “noble” Diego is no better in reality than Pablo
- Spain seems like a world in which everyone is on the make, everyone struggling to find money and to appear better than their true circumstances; a result of the Gold and Silver from America?
- There is no moral center; the religious figures in the novel are equally compromised
- Pablo is beaten and “learns” through various initiations; it is hard to judge him; is his alternative to become an executioner like his uncle? A servant to a hypocritical, and disloyal man like Diego?

Summary

- The Picaresque Novel gave vent to the frustrations of the lower and middle classes in a society that was very class conscious and yet had little opportunity for class mobility
- The nobility and clergy and prison and educational system all are satirized for their corruption
- Anti-semitism is common in the novels