

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY IN THE
SPANISH GOLDEN AGE
PICARESQUE NOVEL

by

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation analyzes three canonical Spanish Golden Age picaresque novels through the lens of naturalistic philosophy. The works selected for my study are the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), *Guzmán de Alfarache* (Part I – 1599, Part II – 1604) by Mateo Alemán and *El Buscón* (1626) by Francisco de Quevedo. While critics have acknowledged a basic kinship between the picaresque novels and nineteenth century naturalist novels in terms of subject matter and a willingness to portray the sordid lives of society's marginalized, few have examined these works from the perspective of naturalistic philosophy. The purpose of this dissertation is to fill that gap in picaresque criticism by analyzing the specifically naturalistic elements of these works. By examining the role of hereditary and environmental determinism, the motives for sex and marriage, and the role of God and religion in each novel, this study will demonstrate that the narrators of these works paint a surprisingly naturalistic picture of the workings of human society. A secondary purpose of this dissertation is to examine several intriguing points of contact between these Golden Age picaresque novels and the naturalistic novels of nineteenth century Spain.

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of picaresque literature in the re-emergence of the Spanish novel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is significant.¹ It was the picaresque novelists (along with Cervantes) who were willing to branch out beyond the novelistic themes and techniques of the immensely popular pastoral novels and novels of chivalry that had dominated the literary scene of sixteenth-century Spain.² With their willingness to show the lower classes and paint a wider vision of Spanish society, one that went beyond depicting only amorous shepherds or noble knights errant, these authors laid the foundation for the realistic Spanish novels that would emerge in the nineteenth century.

While Cervantes' *Don Quijote* (Part I – 1605; Part II – 1615) is most often given credit, and rightfully so, for representing the birth of the modern novel and especially the modern Spanish novel, there can be no doubt that the Spanish picaresque novels also played an important role in the rebirth of the Spanish novel. After the enormously productive Golden Age, the quality of Spanish literature began to decline significantly, and the eighteenth century is all but ignored by the majority of literary scholars in academia today, with only a very few works

¹ Among the critics who trace the influence of the picaresque novel on the nineteenth-century Spanish novel is Jeremy Medina who states that “the later picaresque novel [...] constituted the model for nineteenth-century realistic fiction in Spain” (41). Antonio Rey Hazas goes a step further, tracing the influence of the picaresque into the twentieth century: “Quizá el caso más claro de la supervivencia picaresca sea el de *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942)” (89).

² The publication of *Amadis de Gaula* in 1508 begins a period in which books of chivalry are the favorite genre for readers in Spain with dozens of these novels being published during the first half of the sixteenth century. Readers would eventually tire of these chivalric tales, however, and with the publication of Jorge de Montemayor's *La Diana* in 1558, the pastoral novels begin replacing books of chivalry as the most popular genre for readers in Spain.

considered significant.³ Even the literature of the early nineteenth century finds limited space in the canon of Spanish literature because of the prevalence of romantic works at that time.⁴ It wasn't until later in the nineteenth century when Benito Pérez Galdós and other novelists began to flourish that the Spanish novel would experience a renaissance. Of course, these new novelists took their cues from the literary developments in other parts of Europe and benefited greatly from the rise of the “in vogue” literary movements of the time. Nevertheless, the reader of Galdós and other nineteenth-century writers will also notice a significant and unmistakable influence from Cervantes and the picaresque literature of several centuries earlier. Just as the nineteenth-century novelists wrote partly in reaction to romanticism, Cervantes and the picaresque novelists reacted against pastoral novels and the novels of chivalry that were wildly popular in their day.

Much like these early novels, later romantic novels painted an unrealistic picture of life. Included in these works were unrealistic dialog between characters, an abundance of fantastic elements and emphasis on emotions, especially love and the heart-break of love lost, often expressed in over-the-top, almost ridiculous and flowery language. There was also a fascination with and heavy focus on the upper classes and perhaps it was this aspect of the romantic novels that most frustrated authors like Galdós and others who were displeased with the state of Spanish society and who viewed literature as a way to dialog with readers about the social problems in Spain.⁵ These new authors wanted to focus on the middle and lower classes as only by studying

³ “Spanish literature entered on a long decline with the death of Calderon. For nearly two hundred years no writer of major importance, unless we include Moratín, made his appearance, and for sixty or seventy years scarcely a single book came out that can be read today except for its historical interest” (Brenan 315).

⁴ Nevertheless, these romantic novels were popular in their time and they did have at least some influence on later writers of realist novels: “Although nothing of permanent value came from these works, it must be said that the Romanticists’ appreciation of landscape was passed on to the Realistic novelists of the second half of the century, who developed it with greater skill and made it an important part of their art” (R. E. Chandler 131).

⁵ Galdós and Mariano José de Larra are two examples of writers who used literature to “direct attention to the shortcomings and failures of the Spanish people” (Kirsner 210).

the lives of these people could one really be forced to face the serious concerns in society at the time. The picaresque authors also used their novels as vehicles for social criticism. Focusing on the lower classes and the lowest individuals in those classes, the picaresque works also forced readers of the time to see up close the problems that society faced and the hopelessness of those not fortunate enough to have been born among the upper classes.⁶

All of this leads to a very important question: If many of the qualities that would later define the Spanish realist novel in the nineteenth century were already present in the picaresque literature, to what extent should the picaresque novels be considered realist novels themselves? This question has intrigued critics for some time and many different and well-defended viewpoints have been put forth. Peter Dunn, an undisputed expert in the picaresque novel, downplays the significance of the genre's realistic elements. In his book *The Spanish Picaresque Novel* he says: "Picaresque novels are often described as 'realistic' because they show dirt and beggars and describe places and persons in whose real existence we could believe. We also, being human, find it easier to believe in the baser motives of others than in noble ones" (139). However, apart from these similarities in characters and subject matter, Dunn finds little in the picaresque novels that should be called realistic: "But no novel ever presents a complete picture of the external world, and our use of the word 'picture' at once betrays our expectation of an order, a sense of selection and arrangement that the real world does not have until we filter it through our trained expectations" (139). So while acknowledging the presence of some believable elements in the picaresque novels, he ultimately concludes that such elements are hardly enough for these novels to be considered realistic in any meaningful sense, especially compared to what would later become the realist novel. Marguerite C. Rand expresses a similar

⁶ Oldrich Belic suggests that "hablando de una manera muy general, puede decirse que la novela picaresca fue un producto de la profunda crisis económica, social y moral que atravesaba la sociedad española en los siglos XVI y XVII" (6).

viewpoint when she states that the picaresque novel cannot be called realistic because of “its often exaggerated caricatures” (222). In his essay “La novela picaresca española y el realismo,” Oldrich Belic lists (and subsequently answers) several “argumentos adversarios” against the realistic designation of picaresque works. First, the influence of folklore and incorporation of themes, characters and anecdotes from past literary traditions would clearly represent “elementos o motivos sacados no de la realidad” (Belic 5). Second, the prevalence of hyperbole, satire and caricature take away from its realism simply because the very purpose of these devices is to deform reality. Third, the picaresque novel “no es verídica en todos sus detalles, que no es una transcripción, una reproducción inmediata y absolutamente fiel de la realidad” (Belic 6). Lastly, the picaresque works tend to present a “visión unilateral de la realidad. Esta visión consiste sea en subrayar los rasgos negativos de la realidad española reflejada en la novela picaresca [...] sea en omitir los rasgos positivos” (Belic 6).

In spite of these arguments to the contrary, many critics (including Belic himself) maintain that it is appropriate to refer to the picaresque works as realistic. After answering each of the above mentioned objections, Belic arrives at the following conclusions: “Creemos, en primer lugar, que la novela picaresca española, a pesar de todas sus inconsecuencias, es una literatura realista. Creemos, además, y esto es más importante, que la novela picaresca significa en España el nacimiento del realismo moderno” (15). Letizia Zini Antunes seems to agree and suggests that “a reflexão sobre a gênese do romance realista burguês tem como ponto de partida obrigatório o pequeno texto do *Lazarillo*” (75). A. A. Parker also recognizes the importance of the realistic aspect of the picaresque and even states that “(w)ith *Guzmán de Alfarache* realism became the norm for the Spanish novel” (*Literature* 6). In his article “The Picaresque Novel: A Protean Form”, Howard Mancing goes so far as to list “strict realism” (182) as one of the

characteristics of the picaresque novel. Gerald Brenan views realism as the “most striking thing” (170) about the picaresque novels and suggests that “the aim of the picaresque writers is to make us look at the world without our usual rose-tinted spectacles. They strip life of its pleasant coverings and show us the naked struggle that goes on underneath” (170). More recently, Antonio Gargano has acknowledged “la representación de la realidad baja” to be a “carácter dominante” of some key picaresque works, but cautions that the degree of this type of realism varies from novel to novel.⁷ I agree with Gargano that the degree of realism varies from work to work and therefore any attempt to provide a precise definition of *picaresque realism* is necessarily problematic. Generally speaking, however, it can be said that the picaresque novel represents a step toward realism, especially compared to the chivalric and pastoral novels that were so popular in the sixteenth century.

As stated above, those critics that acknowledge a degree of realism in the picaresque novel generally admit that the picture of reality portrayed in these works is decidedly negative with a tendency to focus on the hardships and struggles of society’s lowest classes. In the late nineteenth century a new type of novel would arise that also tended to deal with the darker side of life and society. Developed and promoted by the French author Emile Zola, these new *naturalist* novels were closely related to the nineteenth century realist novel and perhaps best thought of as a sub-genre of it.⁸ The kinship between the naturalist novel and the picaresque novel has received relatively little attention from literary critics but has not gone altogether unnoticed. For example, J. A. Wells refers to the Golden Age picaresque works as the “naturalistic fiction of the day” (269) because of their tendency to portray the sometimes sordid

⁷ For example, regarding Quevedo’s *El Buscón*, he says: “En el *Buscón*, el realismo como representación sería de la realidad baja está desterrado más que nunca” (127).

⁸ As B. Frank Sedwick suggests: “An observer at that time might have defined Naturalism loosely as an exaggerated Realism, the subjects of which were taken almost always from the worst elements of society” (469).

lives of society's marginalized. Frank Sedwick notes that "naturalistic traits in the sense of choice and treatment of subject matter can be detected as far back as the early picaresque novel in Spain" (469). Both Wells and Sedwick are referring to the prostitutes, criminals and other low-lives that are portrayed in the picaresque novel. However, the similarities between the naturalist and picaresque novels do not end here. Even more significant is the fact that the world presented to us in the picaresque novels is a world that is often shown to work in quite a naturalistic fashion. Antonio Rey Hazas notes that Galdós, for example, "no se sorprendió demasiado ante el naturalismo de Zola, pues captó que su concepto del determinismo de herencia y ambiente ya estaba en la picaresca española" (88-89). Frederick Montaser acknowledges "a hard, bitter realism" along with a "naturalism which thrives upon the ugly and cruel" in the picaresque novel (16). Francisco Sánchez suggests that part of the analysis of the picaresque narratives involves considering the "naturalistic conception of the causes and reasons of marginality" (303). Referring specifically to Quevedo's *El Buscón*, Sánchez says that "it is a deep conviction of the unchangeable nature of individual behavior that propels Quevedo to reduce the *pícaro* to a moral condition barely above animality" (304). In reference to Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga writes that one should not find it strange that "tantos críticos considerasen su vida como primer ejemplo de novela naturalista" (321).⁹ These comments are highly significant if one considers that naturalism as a mature philosophy, much less as a literary school, would not arise until centuries after the appearance of the picaresque novel.

It is clear, then, that several critics have at least acknowledged some connection between the picaresque novels and naturalism. Nevertheless, no scholar has yet offered an in-depth

⁹ It should be noted that Blanco Aguinaga doesn't accept this view, however. He believes a naturalistic interpretation of Guzmán is the result of critics "pasando por alto la doctrina del libre albedrío que expone Guzmán" (321).

analysis of the specifically naturalistic elements in the picaresque. This dissertation attempts to fill this gap in picaresque criticism by carefully studying three canonical picaresque works through the lens of naturalistic philosophy. The primary purpose of this study is to thoroughly analyze the naturalistic elements and naturalistic tendencies of the early modern Spanish picaresque novel and thereby show that a type of “picaresque naturalism” can be identified. A secondary purpose is to study the similarities between these picaresque novels and the later Spanish naturalist novels of the nineteenth century. It will be shown that the version of novelistic naturalism that arose in nineteenth century Spain shares much in common, in some key aspects, with the Spanish Golden Age picaresque novel.

Before proceeding it will be important to consider exactly what is meant by the term naturalism and what it will mean for this present study. The term naturalism itself is a broad term whose meaning has been shaped over the last two centuries.¹⁰ What can be safely agreed upon is that the term in its modern meaning largely took shape after the rise of Darwinism in the latter half of the nineteenth century as Charles Darwin developed his theory of natural selection which suggests that natural, and ultimately rather basic, processes have guided the development of all biological life throughout Earth’s history. According to Darwin, the forces of heredity and environment are the primary factors that determine the characteristics and behaviors of all life forms. Around 1871 the French author Emile Zola began to apply the theories of Darwin and other philosophers such as Auguste Comte in his own writings and eventually developed the naturalistic school of writing novels. Given his prominent place as the father of the naturalist novel, I believe it is prudent to consider exactly what constituted a naturalistic novel according to Zola.

¹⁰ Speaking of the complexity of defining naturalism, at least in a purely literary sense, Maxwell Geismar says that “the definition of the naturalistic school will vary somewhat in the case of each literary historian and, perhaps more importantly, in the case of every novelist’s use of its ideas” (3).

According to Zola, the novelist is a scientist and the novel is his laboratory.¹¹ He believed that the basic theories that govern the universe should also be revealed as controlling the plot and character development of a novel. He carefully attempted to paint in his novels an exact reproduction of nature as it is with all of its ugliness. The three essential traits to any novel that would deserve the designation “naturalistic” according to Zola are “the choice of a commonplace contemporary subject, careful observation and painstakingly exact reproduction of nature” (Gauthier 516). Thomas Munro provides an excellent summary of Zola’s work:

In the novels of Emile Zola, naturalistic art was inspired by a scientific ideal. Naturalism here meant an effort to portray and interpret human life with scientific objectivity and accuracy, avoiding the temptation to gloss over the evil and ugliness of social conditions with neo-classic or romantic beauty. (134)

The naturalist novel is similar to the realist novel except for perhaps an excessive focus on the negative in society and an insistence upon the pre-determined fate of the novel’s characters. The pages of the naturalist novel are littered with prostitutes, criminals and other members of low society who live without hope and who seem to be a product of the same forces that control biological evolution, namely heredity and environment.

In the late nineteenth century, some Spanish novelists, inspired by the French naturalists, also began to include naturalistic elements in their own writings. Benito Pérez Galdós, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez are three writers in whose work critics have noticed some naturalistic tendencies.¹² From the Zolaesque school of naturalism, these Spanish novelists “assimilated the external aspects of naturalism: principally, minute descriptions, humble social environments, popular language, and some influence of *ambiente* on the characters’ development” (Medina 88). In spite of the influence of Zola and the French school of

¹¹ “Zola argued that, in the same way as scientists aim to explain the laws of the physical world, the naturalist novelist should work on the laws governing human behavior” (Conti 866).

¹² See Jeremy Medina’s *Spanish Realism: The Theory and Practice of a Concept in the Nineteenth Century* for a detailed analysis of the naturalistic tendencies of each of these authors.

naturalism, however, Spanish writers never came to accept naturalism in its purest Zolaesque form. Medina describes the decline of naturalistic influence in Spain: “In time, all but a few writers rejected Zola’s methods and approach. Most of them concluded that reality encompassed much more than external appearances and physiological laws” (91). Unsatisfied with a description of reality based on science alone, the Spanish naturalist writers “saw that reality—a complex amalgam of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual phenomena—could not, by definition, be reproduced entirely through ‘realistic’ or naturalistic techniques” (91). Another aspect of Spanish naturalist novels that differentiate them from Zola’s works is humor. According to Medina, the Spaniards “were reluctant to maintain the same objectivity (impartiality, neutrality, author unobtrusiveness, etc.) as the French [...] Instead, they turned to humor, to that special irony—at times carefree, at times disconcerting—that can be found in most great Spanish works” (89). As will be shown later in this study, these differences between Zola’s naturalism and that of the Spanish novelists will be crucial to my argument that nineteenth century Spanish naturalism shares much in common with the “picaresque naturalism” of Golden Age Spain.

However, stepping back from a purely literary definition of naturalism as it applies to the novel, it is also important (and essential for this study) to examine the broader philosophical meaning of naturalism. In philosophy, naturalism is the theory that everything that exists is a part of the known universe and is governed by its laws. Thomas Munro perhaps best summarizes the naturalist position: “In general, naturalism accepts the evolutionary account of the history of the universe, life, man, and civilization; hence of the arts also” (135). Pure naturalists have no need for belief in any sort of god or supernatural being that may affect the

workings of the world.¹³ The world, in their minds, is much like a large machine, with each part working in a predictable and deterministic way. The two basic forces of heredity and environment shape the course of each life and there is little hope of escaping this type of predetermined fate. While Charles Darwin applied these ideas primarily to the world of biology, others such as Thomas Robert Malthus and Herbert Spencer considered the possibility that similar mechanisms to the ones governing the animal kingdom also conspire to control human societies and the fate of each human being.¹⁴ No longer considered to be special creatures created in the image of God, human beings came to be seen as simply animals with advanced cognitive capabilities whose destinies were controlled by the same forces that controlled all other life on Earth.¹⁵ People in the lowest classes were destined to remain there simply because their heritage combined with environmental pressures and the structure of society in general would not allow them to climb. This aspect of naturalism will be very important to the topic at hand as picaresque novels generally deal with characters from the lowest classes of society and their seemingly futile struggle for social and economic advancement.

In spite of the naturalist's insistence upon disbelief in any sort of god or higher order to the universe, there is yet a place for ethics in a naturalistic world. However, the ethics of naturalism "is humanistic and mundane rather than ascetic and otherworldly [...] it is relativistic rather than absolutistic, holding that goodness and rightness in conduct are relative to changing situations and to effects on human experience" (Munro 136). Also, the naturalistic idea of the

¹³ Munro describes naturalism as "basically opposed to all forms of supernaturalism and transcendentalism, such as mysticism, dualism, idealism, pansychism, pantheism, teleology, and vitalism" (133).

¹⁴ In fact, it was Darwin who borrowed Malthus's expression "struggle for existence" and Spencer's "survival of the fittest" to aid in describing his theory of natural selection. Darwin's use of these expressions to explain his theory of biological evolution led to the use of the term "social darwinism" which is a bit of a misnomer since many of the ideas of social darwinism are actually from Malthus and Spencer, rather than Darwin (Rogers 266).

¹⁵ D. W. Gotshalk observes that "the naturalist teaching regarding man's place in the universe is frankly anti-humanistic. Its plain implication, to put it bluntly, is the insignificance, the paltriness, the incurable impotence and ultimate meaninglessness of human endeavor, and of the enterprise of man" (152).

“survival of the fittest” is devastating to ethics since “fittest” by no means implies “best”, certainly not in an ethical sense. As Thomas Huxley says: “the ‘fittest’ which survives in the struggle for existence may be, and often is, the ethically worst” (Huxley quoted in Rogers 278). It will be important to keep these comments in mind as we study the often tragically warped “ethics” of characters from the picaresque novels.

Now that I have reviewed the basic tenets of naturalism both as a philosophy and a literary movement, it is important to explain precisely what naturalism will mean for this study. First and foremost, I must omit Zola’s idea that the novel should reflect reality objectively and with scientific accuracy. Certainly the picaresque authors felt no such restriction to their creativity as science and the scientific method had not gained the importance they would have much later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Also, the picaresque authors in general did not feel it necessary to create an exact reproduction of nature in their works. This is not to say these authors were not at times powerfully descriptive in their writings. However, they did not feel compelled to reproduce nature in a strictly realistic sense. As Peter Dunn says: “(t)he Spanish picaresque novel does not reflect scientific discoveries, or new speculations about the nature of the physical world, just as it does not reflect society in a precisely literal, realistic way” (16). This raises a very important question. If the picaresque novels do not offer a faithful reproduction of reality in their works, and if they do not contain any genuine scientific analysis of society or the human condition, what meaningful relationship to the naturalist novel could they possibly have? First, it must be remembered that the goals of this study are to show how the world of the picaro often seems to operate in a rather naturalistic fashion and to analyze the relationship between the Spanish picaresque works and later Spanish naturalist novels. In no way do I mean to suggest that the picaresque novels deserve the designation *naturalistic*

according to the nineteenth century literary understanding of that term. Such an assertion would be absurd since the very ideas that gave rise to naturalism as a literary school or technique would not emerge until centuries after the appearance of the picaresque. However, if one considers the picaresque novel's emphasis on the lower strata of society, its focus on the ugly and cruel, its suggestion of deterministic forces, both hereditary and environmental, operating in the lives of its protagonists (as well as the lives of other characters) and its frequent portrayals of human beings as little more than advanced animals driven purely by instinct, one begins to see a type of "picaresque naturalism" emerge. This dissertation will carefully analyze these naturalistic elements of the picaresque novel.

I intend to study three canonical works from the picaresque genre that I believe possess naturalistic elements. I will begin with a study of perhaps the most well-known picaresque novel: the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*. I will then analyze Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* and finally Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón*. It will be shown that each of these works, in spite of the differences among them, contain certain elements that will later be important in the Spanish naturalistic novels of the nineteenth century and reveal a world largely controlled by naturalistic forces. Before proceeding to a detailed analysis of each of these novels, it is important to define exactly what is meant by the term picaresque novel. This is a difficult task considering that scholars have generally struggled to come to an agreement over exactly how the genre should be defined. I will then provide a brief overview of each of the novels I have selected for this study and explain why I have chosen them. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the historical moment during which the picaresque novel arose and a review of some of the major ideas in picaresque criticism over the years.

Defining exactly what constitutes a picaresque novel has proven to be quite a challenge for critics over the years.¹⁶ This is largely due to the great variety of characters, themes, structures and styles that make up all of the various novels that have been given the designation “picaresque.” One of the first modern attempts at defining the picaresque can be found in F. W. Chandler’s *Romances of Roguery* published in 1899. Chandler begins his rather long definition of the picaresque (covering several pages) with a brief summary definition: “The picaresque novel of the Spaniards presents a rogue relating his adventures” (45). While this definition is perhaps overly simplistic, in it one finds some of the key elements that would to help define the picaresque novel: the presence of a picaro or “rogue,” the autobiographical form, and a series of (mis)adventures which make up the main action of the story. Claudio Guillén agrees that the autobiographical form is essential to a picaresque novel and considers “the orphan as protagonist” as equally essential (Mancing, “Protean Picaresque” 276). Carlos Blanco Aguinaga offers what might be considered a more “naturalistic” definition of the picaresque. He considers the two most essential elements of the picaresque novel to be the autobiographical form and “la historia de un trotamundos desheredado de la fortuna cuyo papel en la vida se reduce a ir satisfaciendo, de cualquier manera, sus necesidades más elementales” (314). Ulrich Wicks views the picaresque as a fictional mode and suggests “that the *essential picaresque situation*—the fictional world posited by the picaresque mode—is that of an unheroic protagonist, worse than we, caught up in a chaotic world, worse than ours, in which he is on an eternal journey of encounters that allow him to be alternately both victim of that world and its exploiter” (242). Lázaro Carreter calls for a more open definition of the picaresque and “maintains that the authors of picaresque novels were aware of an unwritten poetics of the genre and could modify literally

¹⁶ See Howard Mancing’s “The Protean Picaresque” for a thorough review of the various attempts to define the picaresque genre over time.

any of the formal and thematic conventions associated with the tradition and still write what they and their readers considered picaresque novels” (Mancing, “Protean Picaresque” 277). The struggle for scholars to agree upon a definition of the picaresque combined with the fact that so many texts, often with radical differences one from the other, have nevertheless been called picaresque lead Howard Mancing to consider the picaresque novel as a constantly changing or *protean* form: “A picaresque novel is a text in which a major character is a pícaro who usually tells the story of his or her own life; the text always displays some degree of generic self-consciousness; it is a protean form” (Mancing, “Protean Picaresque” 281). According to Mancing, the picaresque novel:

can be a short story... or a very long novel. It can be in the form of a dialogue or narrated either in the first or the third person. Its structure may be completely open, with a sequel promised, or closed, ending with the death of the protagonist. It may be constructed in a tight, logical, and causal way, or it may be loose, arbitrary, and episodic. It may contain no embedded material or it may consist primarily of interpolations, rather like a collage. (“Protean Picaresque” 285)

Mancing also says that a picaresque novel may contain “elements of essay, moral discourse, or social satire” and have a tone that “may be deadly serious, completely frivolous, or anywhere in between” (Mancing, “Protean Picaresque” 285-86). Given the wide range of themes, tones and styles that have been part of the picaresque tradition, it is clear that the picaresque novel simply will not be contained within any precise definition. No doubt this debate regarding what properly constitutes a picaresque novel will continue among scholars and this present study will certainly offer no new insights on the matter.¹⁷ In fact, all three of the texts I have chosen for analysis conform quite well to Chandler’s idea of a “rogue relating his adventures” as each work is written in autobiographical form and has as its protagonist a pícaro. Beyond these basic

¹⁷ In a recent book (2008) Meyer-Minnemann offers his definition of the picaresque: “En resumidas cuentas, son constitutivos para el género de la novela picaresca según nuestra definición la trayectoria vital del pícaro y su presentación narrativa autobiográfica” (“Género” 37).

similarities, however, each of the works I have chosen are significantly different from one another in terms of structure, style, tone and theme. What is interesting (and of primary importance to this study), is that in spite of so many differences, each of these novels can be shown to contain decidedly naturalistic elements.

The first work to be studied in detail in this dissertation, *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (published anonymously in 1554) is probably the most well-known of the Spanish picaresque novels, both within and outside of the Spanish-speaking world. Although it is a very short book, it contains most of the elements that one would expect to find in a picaresque novel: the misadventures of a pícaro, an emphasis on the problems of society and an up-close view of the lower classes of society. Lazarillo's constant fight for food and survival, his humble up-bringing, criticism of the clergy (in multiple episodes) and other themes in this work have a decidedly naturalistic flavor and will be studied carefully in this dissertation.

The second work that will be analyzed is *Guzmán de Alfarache* by Mateo Alemán (Part I published in 1599; Part II published in 1604), a work that was immensely popular in its time.¹⁸ Considerably longer than *Lazarillo*, *Guzmán de Alfarache* is a liberal mix of story-telling and sermonizing. There are also intertwined love stories and numerous moral and theological ramblings throughout the book, features that are not present in *Lazarillo*. Nevertheless, many critics generally feel that *Guzmán* is the first unquestionably picaresque novel and it is often considered to be the work that is most representative of the genre.¹⁹ In spite of its many digressions, this novel contains some elements that are decidedly naturalistic.

¹⁸ "More popular at first than the *Quijote*, it went through some twenty-nine editions in five years and was translated into a number of foreign languages" (R. E. Chandler 121).

¹⁹ Rey Hazas, for example, says that "(e)l pícaro por definición es Guzmán de Alfarache. A raíz de esta novela empezó a ser llamado así, pícaro, el personaje central del nuevo género" (20).

I will conclude with an analysis of *La vida del Buscón llamado Don Pablos* by Francisco de Quevedo (published in 1626), another work that is generally accepted as a picaresque novel. It is much more similar in form to the *Lazarillo* than to *Guzmán*. Like the *Lazarillo*, *El Buscón* is a very short work and gone are the sermonizing and lengthy digressions that were so prevalent in Aleman's text. While often noted for its parody and satire, Quevedo's text nonetheless also contains many naturalistic elements.

Historical Context of the Picaresque Novel

Before beginning my analysis of the three novels I have chosen for this study, it is important to briefly consider the historical moment during which the picaresque novel arose. The era of the picaresque novel begins with the publication of *Lazarillo de Tormes* in 1554 and ends with the publication of *Estebanillo González* in 1646.²⁰ At the beginning of this time period Spain was a great world power with a vast empire extending to many parts of the globe. However, mismanagement of the Spanish economy and disastrous foreign policy would soon send Spain into a steady decline. In 1516 Charles I, a teenager who knew no Spanish, succeeded his maternal grandfather Ferdinand to the thrones of Castile and Aragon. Following the death of his paternal grandfather, Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian I, Charles added to his reign Austria, Tyrol and parts of Germany and immediately left for Germany (McKendrick 104). Thus, "the pattern for the coming years had already been set—an absentee king draining Spanish resources in pursuit of enterprises that were not properly Spain's own. This financial, human and

²⁰ Major works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that are considered picaresque novels include the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599 & 1604) by Mateo Alemán, *La pícaro Justina* (1605) by Francisco López de Úbeda, *Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* (1618) by Vicente Espinel, *El Buscón* (1626) by Francisco de Quevedo and *Vida de Estebanillo González* (1646) supposedly written by himself. In addition to these canonical texts, many other inferior picaresque works were published during this time including several unauthorized sequels from less capable authors.

emotional investment in Europe was to continue for almost two hundred years and become the major reason for Spain's eventual decline" (McKendrick 104). With Charles preoccupied with issues abroad, the Spanish people began to be neglected. While explorers in the New World initially found a substantial amount of gold and silver, a significant portion of it was stolen by pirates and never reached Spain. The bullion that managed to reach the Spanish homeland was spent on Charles' various religious and political wars throughout Europe (McKendrick 111). When shipments of gold and silver later began to decline, the Spanish government was forced to raise revenue by increasing taxes. Since those who could afford to purchase titles of nobility were not required to pay taxes, most of the tax burden became the responsibility of those least equipped to bear it (McKendrick 112). Spain's economic woes would continue during the reign of Phillip II (1556-1598) and would not improve under Phillip III (1598-1621) and Phillip IV (1621-1665). One of the contributing factors to the stagnant economy was a significant reduction in population, resulting primarily from the expulsion of the Moors, continuous warfare and the number of emigrants to the New World (Altamira 137). This combined with a general aversion toward work resulted in an inadequate workforce to move the Spanish economy and industry.²¹ While many landless peasants began to move into the cities in search of work during this time, wealth was very unevenly distributed in these urban centers (Dunn 15). While a few people were very wealthy, the majority lived in abject poverty (Maiorino 2). This fragile economic situation helped give rise to a new group of vagabonds, beggars and delinquents in Spanish urban centers. Nevertheless, there was an increasing desire on the part of the state to combat this type of vagrancy since the state felt that "if left to themselves, the poor would purposefully misbehave" (Cruz 45). This increasingly hostile attitude toward the poor indicated

²¹ As Altamira explains: "the fields were unpeopled and the factories empty. Production was much restricted, wages fell enormously, the cost of living rose, and there were various crises of famine" (137).

that they “were becoming not solely a moral and religious concern, but were increasingly looked on as a social disease” (Cruz 47). This is the social and economic situation in Spain during which the picaresque novel would be born.

Ironically, during this period of political unrest and economic hardship, Spain would see its literary production blossom. Referred to as the “Golden Age” of Spanish literature, the sixteenth century and roughly the first half of the seventeenth century produced some of the great classics of world literature. During this period, readers enjoyed the mystical poetry of Santa Teresa de Ávila and San Juan de la Cruz, the brilliant plays of Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca and Tirso de Molina and the publication of Cervantes’ *Don Quijote*, a novel cherished not only in Spain but also throughout the world. Not all was golden during these years, however. As indicated earlier, this time period also saw the proliferation of the immensely popular books of chivalry and pastoral novels. Nevertheless, of the literary genres important during the Spanish Golden Age, it was the picaresque novel that would extend its reach beyond Spain and beyond the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While books about knights errant and shepherds would cease to be of interest to readers, tales of rogues and their lives have remained popular through the present time.

Topics in Picaresque Criticism

Given the economic and social situation described above, it is unsurprising that a major focus in picaresque criticism over the years has been to study the relationship of the picaresque novel to the circumstances in Spain at the time. Some critics have seen an unmistakable connection. Brennan says that “The picaresque form had its root in social conditions. The ruin of the middle-income classes by inflation, the need so many people had of living by their wits, the

hardships of the writer's life which threw him into low company were the things that prompted it" (174). Maravall also concludes that:

la literatura picaresca, y muy especialmente la novela, acertó de modo prodigioso a dejarnos un testimonio, entre otros, pero éste con particular vivacidad y precisión, de la crisis económica, social e histórica [...] crisis por las que pasaron los países de la Europa occidental y, entre ellos, con mucha mayor gravedad, España, durante el siglo del Barroco. (762)

Roland states that the picaresque "originó en España porque allí se hallaban reunidas las condiciones necesarias, miseria económica, clases sociales muy desiguales además de los antecedentes literarios requeridos" (426). F. W. Chandler, who acknowledges the picaresque authors' tendency toward satire and caricature, still believes that the novels are rooted in social realities: "The society, then, which the picaro traverses is the main thing; and although his satirical bent may lead to occasional caricature, the picture he presents of contemporary life must on the whole be faithful, for its very success arose from an appreciation of its likeness as a portrait" (60). Ysla Campbell considers the "carácter reformista" of the picaresque works and suggests that they were written in order to inspire social reform (171).²²

Other critics, however, have cautioned against identifying the rise of the picaresque novel too closely with the specific historical situation of Spain at the moment. A. A. Parker challenges the notion that the picaresque novel arose naturally from the social and economic conditions in Spain at the time since "it is just as easy to produce similar pictures of other countries" (Parker, *Literature* 10). Peter Dunn seems to agree when he says:

Literature is 'real' in relation to norms, not to life. The long debate about the relation of the picaresque literature to social conditions is bound to remain inconclusive for this reason. Any modern urban society—and picaresque literature represents a predominantly urban society—offers opportunities for

²² "El carácter reformista de la picaresca, que se muestra desde los prólogos, es evidente al hacerse portavoz de un pensamiento renovador acorde con las circunstancias que atravesaba la Península: proclama la igualdad fundada en la universalidad del pecado original, lo que implicaba la ponderación de la virtud, el mérito y el trabajo, con una reivindicación fundamental del buen uso del comercio, frente al linaje y el ocio de la aristocracia" (Campbell 171).

success to the unscrupulous, whether the times are lean or fat. Which social facts should these novels be referred to in order to extract their social significance? (139)

Dunn goes on to conclude that “(t)here is no simple correspondence between picaresque literature and lack of work or general poverty [...] It is wrong therefore to see in it the reflection of an economic and social order; rather it is the description of urban outcasts who exist in any affluent society” (139). No doubt the debate regarding the relationship between the picaresque novel and the social and economic conditions in Golden Age Spain will continue. Nevertheless, I cannot agree with Parker’s assertion that since the same social and economic conditions that existed in Spain also existed in other European countries where the picaresque novel did not emerge, one should therefore not see the picaresque originating from those conditions. While certainly not the only cause for the emergence of the picaresque, if one is to take the “realistic” aspect of the picaresque novel seriously at all, it should be expected that these works, at least to some degree, reflected and were prompted by social and economic realities of the time.

In addition to analyzing the picaresque for its portrayal of Spanish society at the time, a number of critics have chosen to focus their study of the picaresque novel on the *picaro* himself. These studies generally aim to understand the *picaro* from a psychological point of view. Douglas Carey, for example, studies the asides in the *Lazarillo* text in order to explore Lázaro’s interiority. While these asides are few in the novel, Carey sees them as “an important clue to the psychological development of Lázaro” (120). Sherman Eoff studied the psychology of *Guzmán de Alfarache* and concludes that Guzmán’s

psychological portrait is essentially that of a self-conscious person who hovers wistfully on the doorsteps of respectable society, timorously bowing to those who dominate the social order, aspiring by way of circumvention to what is currently regarded as the proof of success, and comically disguising his futility by reference to the lowest common denominator of social practices. (119)

A. A. Parker studies the psychological development of Pablos in *El Buscón* and finds that the “development of the *pícaro*’s character [...] is treated so subtly, truthfully and (despite the brutality and the bitter irony) really so humanly, that it adds to the work’s special distinction” (Parker, “Psychology” 68). These studies have been of great assistance in my own research as I have focused on how a *pícaro*’s character development is shaped by environment and heredity and to what extent he is driven by natural instincts.

Humor is another element frequently found in the picaresque novel that has received significant attention from critics. In fact, James R. Stamm suggests that humor is as important a distinguishing factor of the picaresque novel as realism. Regarding humor, he says: “This element, as much as the focus of attention and observation on the activities of the lower economic strata, distinguishes the picaresque novel from the fictional forms which preceded it” (482). Stamm sees several different types or uses of humor in the picaresque novel. First he describes what he terms a “parental or genealogical humor” (482). He says that “(w)hile protagonists of the novels of chivalry were invariably of noble birth, and the shepherds of the pastoral tradition were frequently so, the *pícaro* is at pains to declare his humble origin with boisterous assertion from the outset” (482). This form of humor “makes its appearance in the *Lazarillo de Tormes* and becomes almost a matter of custom in the picaresque novels which follow” (483). In addition to this parental humor, Stamm also sees “social and anticlerical satire” and “folklore material probably derived ultimately from popular medieval jokes and traditions of bumpkin wit” (485) as other sources of humor introduced early on in the picaresque novel. Nevertheless, the use of humor in these novels was not stagnant. According to Stamm: “It was inevitable that, as the genre developed, changes should appear in the use and types of picaresque humor as well as in its target” (485). He mentions, for example, how Alemán greatly

“suppressed the element of social satire” but did add “an element of literary amusements, in the form of three novelas, and provided a treatment of traditional material which was more sophisticated than that of the *Lazarillo*” (485). Quevedo, however, with *El Buscón*, would return “to sources for his use of humor, developing much the same elements which gave life to the *Lazarillo*: satire, parental humor, and an earthy, occasionally scatological, humor close to folklore traditions” (485).

In spite of the unmistakable presence and role of humor in the picaresque novel, some critics see a rather serious moral lesson in these works. Roland Grass suggests three basic viewpoints regarding morality in the picaresque: “(1) that the moral element is superficial, (2) that the moral element is basic, and (3) that the moral question is irrelevant” (192). F. W. Chandler feels the moral aspect was of minimal importance: “In the picaresque novel in Spain moral reflection may be encountered here and there inchoate in the narrative, but nowhere digested and become a part of its very life and tissue” (65). This is at least partially due to the fact that, according to Chandler, “the Spanish picaresque author was fearful of being identified with his antihero, and often found himself forced to maintain his own integrity by declaring a moral purpose scarcely shown in his work” (64). On the opposite end of this spectrum is the opinion of M. Herrero García who “expounded the point of view that the picaresque novel is in effect a great sermon which teaches in two ways, by presenting moral doctrine and by giving examples of vice and sin” (Grass 192). Another viewpoint, such as that of T. E. May, is that “the morality of the pícaro is actually irrelevant since he is merely a product of the imagination” (Grass 192). Regardless of how each critic chooses to approach the question of morality in the picaresque novel, it is essential to avoid a simplified overgeneralization on the matter since, as Grass explains, “(e)ach picaresque novel should clearly be studied and evaluated on its own

terms, but it must also be considered in relation to the times in which it was written and with reference to the stated purpose of its author” (192).

In addition to the moral aspect of the picaresque novels, some critics have chosen to consider the specific theological or religious implications of these works. For example, Thomas Hanrahan sees *Lazarillo* as a work of Erasmian satire with an “insistent hammering at the very root theological issues of Reform” (338). Parker agrees that *Lazarillo* “fits into the environment of religious reform” since its “strongest satire ... is directed against hypocritical religious observations” (*Literature* 29). Also, Parker views *Guzmán* primarily as a study of general human depravity according to the doctrine of Original Sin (38). According to Parker, Alemán uses the character of Guzmán to provide a vivid illustration of the effects of sin and the possibility of man’s salvation due to Divine Grace (39). In his article “On Religious Parody in the *Buscón*” R. M. Price examines the various religious allusions in Quevedo’s novel and shows how the author uses these “to help to maintain a religious context in the reader’s mind, and so maintain the tense and ugly atmosphere of the novel” (274). He goes on to say: “The significant religious incidents in the *Buscón* are therefore placed by Quevedo into a background of easy religious allusion and superficial irreverence, and also of extreme religious and social unease” (274).

All of the above mentioned studies and the many more that will be referenced throughout this dissertation have offered considerable insights into the picaresque novels and into the minds of the authors that wrote them. The work of these scholars has had a tremendous impact on my own research and no doubt their influence will be highlighted throughout the pages of this study. Nevertheless, there remains work to be done and it is my sincere hope that this dissertation will offer critics a new way of understanding the picaresque novel. Critics have offered valuable

insights into the realistic elements found in these novels, and, as was alluded to earlier, there has been considerable debate as to whether the picaresque works can be fairly classified as realistic novels in any meaningful sense. Scholars have offered little more than a faint whisper, however, in regards to the specifically naturalistic elements in the picaresque novels. I believe that once these works have been viewed from the perspective of naturalistic philosophy, the similarities and points of contact between the genres will become clear. A careful comparison between the essential themes and subject matter of the picaresque and the later Spanish naturalistic novels will show a strong and unmistakable kinship between the Spanish picaresque and the specifically naturalistic novels of nineteenth-century Spain. The remainder of this dissertation will work to make the case for this close and compelling relationship between two important genres of Spanish literature.

NATURALISM IN *LAZARILLO DE TORMES*

Introduction

The rich tradition of the picaresque in Spain began with the publication of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* in 1554.²³ The book was a popular success and was published in multiple editions even though it would be the only picaresque novel published for 45 years (Brenan 170).²⁴ After this initial success, the book was banned by the Inquisition in 1559 before being released again in 1573 in censored form (Dunn 17). According to R. E. Chandler, the triumph of the *Lazarillo* was “immediate and universal, and many native and foreign authors owe it a great debt” (120). In spite of its short length, the *Lazarillo* deals with a number of themes including hunger, poverty, the clergy, pride, hypocrisy and charity among others.

Any serious student of Spanish literature is familiar with the story of *Lazarillo de Tormes* so I will offer here only a very brief outline of the book’s basic structure and plot. The text is divided into seven ‘tratados’ of greatly varying length and is episodic in nature. This division into episodes would set a precedent for future picaresque novels and would become what many believe to be a defining feature of a picaresque work. For the most part, each episode focuses on one particular master whom *Lazarillo* served. The adult Lázaro narrates his life as a picaro and addresses his account to an unidentified “Vuestra Merced” who apparently has asked him to

²³ There were actually three different editions published in 1554, each with its own variations. For a detailed discussion of these different editions and the theory that there was an even earlier edition from which the 1554 editions were derived, see chapter two of *Lazarillo de Tormes* by Robert Fiore.

²⁴ The *Lazarillo* would enjoy another surge in popularity some 45 years later when *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the second picaresque novel, was published.

explain a particular *caso* (case or affair). After a brief description of his family background he begins to narrate his experiences with a variety of masters that he has served in his life. In the first tratado the reader is introduced to Lazarillo's first master, a harsh and cruel blind man who, in spite of his cruelty, teaches young Lazarillo the art of deceit and trickery. Lazarillo soon abandons the blind man and begins to serve a priest who turns out to be even worse than the first master. His time with the priest is the subject of the second tratado. The third tratado deals with Lazarillo's experience serving his third master, a squire. The squire is a truly pathetic figure who is obsessed with appearances and who feels the need to maintain his sense of honor at all cost, even though he is living in abject poverty. While the squire is kinder to the lad than his previous masters, he does nothing to cure Lazarillo's hunger and in fact must himself depend on Lazarillo's begging skills in order to eat. After the squire abandons him in an attempt to escape from creditors, Lazarillo briefly enters the service of a friar of the Order of Mercy. Lazarillo's service of the friar is the subject matter of the fourth tratado which is barely a page in length. Lazarillo says very little about his time with the friar and, mysteriously, says that he abandoned this master at least partly because of "cosillas que no digo" (111). Exactly what these "cosillas" referred to has been of great interest to critics, as we shall see later. The fifth tratado, which is substantially longer than the fourth, deals with Lazarillo's time (about four months) working for a corrupt and shameless pardoner who uses trickery to take advantage of superstitious people to make a living. The theme of hunger is no longer present here as Lazarillo plainly says that this master always provides him with plenty to eat. The sixth tratado is nearly as short as the fourth but covers a much longer period of time. Lazarillo begins to work for an artist who paints tambourines, a job he considers to be very hard. Later, a priest gives him a job as a water carrier and the young picaresque finally begins to improve his overall situation. After four years of saving

money with this new job, Lazarillo is able to afford decent second-hand clothes and decides to leave his job once he sees how nice he looks in his “new” clothes. The seventh and final tratado begins with the protagonist briefly working for a constable, which he considers to be a dangerous job. Shortly thereafter, Lázaro becomes a town-crier and it is in this capacity that the picaresque reaches his highest point of success. It is also during this time that he gets married to the archpriest of Sant Salvador’s maid. There is strong suspicion that his wife is having an affair with the archpriest but Lázaro makes up his mind to ignore such rumors and to mind his own business, threatening harm to anyone who even brings up the topic. Lázaro, who has suffered so much in his life, says of this time that he was at the peak of his success: “estaba en mi prosperidad y en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna” (135).

In spite of its short length, the *Lazarillo* has been a favorite topic of literary critics throughout the centuries. Scholars have commented on a variety of topics related to the text including the narrative technique (Fiore), the portrayal of Spanish society, especially the poor and marginalized members of that society (Cruz, Maiorino), the book’s identity as a picaresque work (Meyer-Minnemann), the role of humor and laughter in the work (Leahy, Stamm) and many others. While most criticism is concerned with analyzing the protagonist himself or his relationships and interactions with other characters, a few studies have focused exclusively on secondary characters.²⁵

The book’s anonymity, unsurprisingly, has inspired many critics to attempt to discover the name of the author. Several different theories have been put forth but none have been able to stand up to intense scrutiny. A recent book by Rosa Navarro Durán claimed to definitively prove that the author of *Lazarillo* was Alfonso de Valdés. The initial excitement over her findings was

²⁵ For example, Molinero’s essay “El Negro Zaide: marginación social y textual en el *Lazarillo*” focuses on Zaide, Lazarillo’s stepfather, and Redondo’s study “Historia y literatura: el personaje del escudero de *el Lazarillo*” focuses on the historicity of Lazarillo’s third master.

quickly dampened by other critics, such as Valentín Pérez Venzalá, who raised serious doubts about her conclusions.²⁶ Research will no doubt continue in this area until the real author is identified.

Morality and ethics have also been popular subject matters among critics who have studied the *Lazarillo*. Bruce Wardropper, A. Bell, George Shipley and Pamela Waley have each contributed excellent studies to this area of *Lazarillo* research and no doubt their work has greatly informed this present study, as will be seen shortly. The topic of morality in the novel continues to be a favorite among critics to this day.²⁷

A rather controversial topic in *Lazarillo* criticism, and one of fundamental importance to this study, is the degree of realism in the novel. Several critics have pondered to what extent it is proper to consider the *Lazarillo* a realistic novel. While certainly not the first work to have realistic elements of some kind, the *Lazarillo* nevertheless represented an important step toward the development of the realistic tradition of the novel that would have enormous impact in Spain and would in fact be a defining element of much of Spanish literature. This shift toward realism is at least partially explained by the intellectual climate of Europe at the time. As Francisco Rico explains: “the winds of truth were sweeping across Europe’s intellectual landscape in the mid-sixteenth century. A new thirst for authenticity shook classical studies, historiography and beliefs out of their settled orthodoxy” (*Point of View* 16). According to Rico, verosimilitude was to be the new “main priority” of humanist writers of fiction (*Point of View* 16). As Everett Hesse explains:

²⁶ See Navarro Durán’s book *Alfonso de Valdés, autor del ‘Lazarillo de Tormes’* (2003) and Pérez Venzalá’s article “El *Lazarillo* sigue siendo anónimo. En respuesta a su atribución a Alfonso de Valdés” (2007).

²⁷ A recent dissertation by Paul Cristofaro (2008, University of Alabama), for example, examines the *Lazarillo* through the lens of three eighteenth-century moral philosophers: Bernard Mandeville, Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant.

Inspired by the works of Erasmus, humanistic writers like Luis Vives and Alfonso and Juan de Valdés [...] were in the vanguard of a reform movement that was to have repercussions in many phases of human life: moral, social, religious and intellectual. As a result, literature began to depict reality more and more vividly by presenting life-like situations which stressed human foibles with a disarming candor. (20)

Given that the *Lazarillo* was written in the intellectual climate described above, it is unsurprising that a study of its realism has been a popular topic among scholars. According to Rico, the autobiographical nature of the novel contributes to its realism since “the entire novel had to be completely faithful to the autobiographical illusion; the only way the world could enter into it was through Lázaro’s and Lazarillo’s senses” (*Point of View* 17). Also contributing to the novel’s realism is the fact that the places and descriptions given by Lazarillo would have been recognized by readers at the time. Rico, in the introduction to his critical edition of the novel states that: “nada hay que cualquier lector de la época no pudiera haber visto, oído o vivido en el ámbito de las experiencias comunes y triviales. Los lugares mencionados –con toda precisión-, las costumbres, los personajes eran familiares a todos los españoles de 1550 y pico” (46). Suárez-Galbán goes a step further and sees in the *Lazarillo* an attempt at a faithful representation of social realities: “Pocas obras como el *Lazarillo* se centran tan rotundamente en la realidad social; pocas declaran tan abierta y tajantemente lo que hoy día se conoce como la lucha de clases” (469). Anne Cruz agrees that the novel deals with some very real issues in Spanish society at the time. She observes that “(d)espite its seeming hilarity [...] the *Lazarillo* encodes the serious issues that materially affected sixteenth-century Spain” (16). Stephen Gilman, on the other hand, cautions the reader against accepting the novel as an entirely faithful picture of Spanish society: “It would be wrong to think of the *Lazarillo* as a ‘realistic’ portrait of Spain; it is rather an anti-portrait, a rejection so complete that it cuts far beneath the level of satire” (151). I agree with Gilman that we must be careful not to take Lazarillo’s description of society as if it

were completely objective and accurate. Indeed, the very nature of autobiography is necessarily limited in perspective: the reader only gets to hear what Lazarillo has chosen to tell him. Perhaps the best way to settle the matter of realism in the *Lazarillo* is simply to view it in relative terms: compared to other genres of literature that were popular at the time such as the pastoral and chivalric novels, *Lazarillo de Tormes* can rightly be considered more realistic simply because it deals with real places, real “types” of people and real issues that existed at the time it was written.²⁸

As we have seen, the picture of Spanish society that emerges from the *Lazarillo* is only the perspective of one individual, the protagonist/narrator Lazarillo de Tormes. This does not mean, however, that we are excused from taking his particular perspective seriously. Rather, we should carefully study his portrait of society and ask why he paints it the way he does. That being said, what type of world does Lázaro describe in his narrative? A careful analysis of the text will reveal a world that works in a rather naturalistic fashion, at least partially according to the tenets of naturalistic philosophy. In Lazarillo’s world, events are driven by blind fate and the protagonist himself consistently displays a rather bleak and pessimistic attitude toward life in general. While love is present, it is primarily motivated by animal instincts and the need to procure a better survival. The marginalized members of society in the *Lazarillo* are shown to have little, if any, chance of improving their social and economic situation in any meaningful way. While there are moments in the novel in which some characters, including Lazarillo himself, show genuine compassion, overall the members of society are shown to be selfish and ever self-seeking. Since simple survival is the chief objective of the characters in Lazarillo’s world, there is great competition for resources, just as there is in the animal kingdom. Characters

²⁸ Undoubtedly these realistic aspects of the work are an important reason why the picaresque became so influential in countries beyond Spain and in the centuries that follow 1554.

are required to use deception and cunning in order to get by. And yet the reader does not feel that this selfishness is the result of willful sin or the influence of “evil” in any supernatural sense, but rather it is simply the necessary means to survive in a cruel, hostile and godless world.

I will begin this study of the specifically naturalistic aspects of the *Lazarillo* by considering the role of hereditary and environmental determinism in the formation of Lazarillo’s character and socio-economic situation. This will be followed by a study of the impact of God, religion and morality in society as it is portrayed in the work. I will conclude with a brief analysis of sex and marriage and the motivation for these. My goal throughout this chapter will be to demonstrate that the degree of naturalism in the text goes far beyond the novel’s willingness to show up close and personal the sordid lives of society’s lowest classes. As will be seen, later chapters of this dissertation follow a similar structure in their analysis of both *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *El Buscón*.

Hereditary Determinism

One of the major features of picaresque literature is the emphasis on the picaresque’s family history. In all three of the works analyzed in this study, the protagonist begins his story by describing his parents, who invariably are of questionable character and have committed acts that highlight various character defects. Indeed, Antonio Rey Hazas sees “la genealogía vil” as one of the defining characteristics of a picaresque novel:

uno de los caracteres más acusados del antihéroe es que tiene siempre una ascendencia innoble. La función primera del rasgo es clara: la vileza de los progenitores supone un estigma, una marca determinista de la herencia de sangre, que condiciona radicalmente los actos del pícaro y le encamina, en principio, hacia el mal. (25)

As the picaresque transitions from talking about his family to recounting his own misadventures with various masters, the careful reader will notice that he shares some of the same unfortunate character traits that his parents had displayed. Considering that the goal of this present chapter is to analyze the naturalistic elements in the *Lazarillo*, a discussion of hereditary determinism in the novel is unavoidable. That a type of hereditary determinism is at work in the novel is indisputable. The very fact that the status of nobility and its accompanying benefits were primarily inherited at birth meant that, as Maiorino points out, “the *picaresque* is trapped by a kind of hereditary determinism that shapes his ‘good luck’” (33). However, naturalistic theory goes beyond this and states that particular characteristics, even the tendency to behave in particular ways, can be inherited. To what extent is Lazarillo’s life and character determined by his genetic make-up? Critics have been at odds over this particular issue. For example, Américo Castro suggests that Lázaro is a thief “because of the blood inherited from his father” (quoted in Herrero 882). Fernando Lázaro Carreter agrees that Lázaro’s thievery is a result of having inherited his father’s blood, but goes one step further: “because [Lazarillo’s] mother is a prostitute, he will end up marrying the mistress of the archpriest of Sant Salvador” (quoted in Herrero 882). Herrero rejects these theories of hereditary determinism on the grounds that Lazarillo only stole as a result of the stinginess of his masters, who refused to give him enough to eat. Therefore, “there does not seem to be much need for additional genetic explanation” (Herrero 883). Also, Herrero finds Carreter’s assertion that Lazarillo’s mother was a prostitute to be untrue since “the text explicitly states that Zaide loves her. Their union is permanent; she is a widow and bears him a son” (883). I agree with Herrero that the theories of Castro and Carreter are unconvincing. Lazarillo only steals as a last resort and out of sheer necessity, preferring to work or beg whenever he is able to do so. And the notion that Antona Pérez is a prostitute is indeed an

unfortunate misreading of the text. Perhaps the best evidence of hereditary determinism in the text is found in the first and last tratados. In the first tratado, after the death of Lazarillo's father, his mother "como sin marido y sin abrigo se viese, determinó arrimarse a los buenos, por ser uno dellos" (15). Interestingly, in the seventh tratado, after the archpriest encourages him to look out for himself only, Lázaro responds with the same phrase: "Señor –le dije-, yo determiné de arrimarme a los buenos" (133).²⁹ So, it is clear that Lázaro shared his mother's desire to mix in with respectable people because of the benefits this could bring. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether this tendency is a matter of genetics or simply Lazarillo having learned from his mother's example.

In summary, it must be admitted that there is little evidence of hereditary determinism in the *Lazarillo*, at least in terms of the genetic transference of traits or behaviors from one generation to another. Even Rey Hazas, who considers this type of determinism to be a defining characteristic of the picaresque genre, admits that it is much more prevalent in later picaresque works: "el rasgo se fue acentuando con el paso del tiempo y se hizo cada vez más exagerado" (25). My analysis in the following chapters will show that hereditary determinism is present to a much greater extent in *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *El Buscón*.

Environmental Determinism

We have seen that there is little evidence of hereditary determinism in *Lazarillo de Tormes* but what of environmental determinism? To what extent has Lázaro been a victim of circumstances? And to what extent does he appear to be the product of his social environment?

²⁹ Casal observes that "the protagonist's statement at the end of the work 'yo determiné de arrimarme a los buenos' echoes what was said about his mother in the first chapter: 'determinó arrimarse a los buenos'. In both cases, the verb *arrimarse* has only one possible meaning—the worst. The conclusion in the seventh and last chapter could not be more sarcastic, with his wife taking the role of a prostitute, thereby closing the vicious circle of Lázaro's family" (331).

The text offers substantial evidence that Lazarillo's environment exerted a strong influence in the development of his character and in determining his actions. As Homero Castillo points out, Lázaro "no titubea en expresar su opinión sobre las condiciones ambientales que lo rodean, en especial si merecen reprobación" (308). There are several environmental conditions that are highlighted in the text and one of the most significant is poverty. Poverty is a major theme in the novel and while it is a constant problem for both Lazarillo and his family, it is also clear that it affected many other people as well.³⁰

Certainly Lazarillo was born into poverty. Immediately in the first tratado we learn that his father, in charge of a water-mill on the Tormes river, was caught stealing, presumably in order to help his family get by. After his father dies, Lazarillo's mother, Antona Pérez, begins a relationship with Zaide, a black man who helps Lazarillo and his family by bringing food and other items to them. However, he too has to steal in order to provide for everyone.³¹ He is eventually caught and both he and Antona are punished for their illicit relationship. Antona then manages to make ends meet by serving at an inn. One day a certain blind man comes to stay at the inn and asks Antona if she would allow Lazarillo to be his guide, promising to receive the young lad "no por mozo, sino por hijo" (22). Antona, still struggling to afford to take care of her children, agrees to the blind man's request. She and Lazarillo say a tearful goodbye but she assures the lad that "con buen amo te he puesto" (22). Nevertheless, Antona is clearly aware of the challenges and hardships that await her son and therefore tells him: "válete por ti" (22).

³⁰ As Cruz states: "the *Lazarillo* is a tale of poverty, not merely of Lazarillo's, but of poverty itself, of the relationship between society and its poor, and of the changing ideologies that leave the two groups no longer beneficently interrelated, but in conflict with each other" (4).

³¹ Again, Cruz: "the narrative also points to the double bind in which the poor, like Lazarillo, find themselves from birth: the only means available to them of escaping poverty is by breaking God's law. If the poor are to behave according to Christian principles, then they must *remain* poor, since any attempt on their part to relieve the situation constitutes both social and religious transgression" (33).

While she is saddened at the prospect of never seeing Lazarillo again, she clearly feels she has made the right decision.

This tearful scene marks the beginning of Lazarillo's picaresque adventures as he begins to serve a variety of masters. His first two masters, the blind man and the priest do not live in poverty, though this is of no benefit to Lazarillo since both of these masters are very stingy and give the young lad only the bare minimum he needs to stay alive.³² In the third tratado Lazarillo begins to serve his third master, a squire who is not only poor but is in fact completely broke. This is the first indication that poverty is affecting more than just the lowest classes.³³ It is also in this same tratado that the reader begins to discover just how widespread the problem of poverty has become in Lazarillo's society. Lazarillo talks about how, after a particularly poor harvest, the Town Council decides that poor foreigners must leave the city: "Y fue, como el año en esta tierra fuéese estéril de pan acordaron el Ayuntamiento que todos los pobres extranjeros se fuesen de la ciudad, con pregón que el que de allí adelante topasen fuese punido con azotes" (93). It is clear, then, that poverty has affected not only Lazarillo personally, but also a significant portion of society, including individuals of varying social classes. The problem of poverty was not even limited to Spain but was actually a "staggering social disease" that affected much of sixteenth-century Europe (Herrero 876).

Another social ill with which Lazarillo has to contend is an apparent lack of charity among the Spanish people. At the beginning of the third tratado, Lazarillo says that people provided for him while he was injured but refused him any further help as soon as his wounds

³² As Cruz states: "hunger is indeed the young boy's prime motivation: it is the reason for which he lies and steals from his masters, negating whatever feelings of charity he may once have harboured, and the force which ultimately drives him to ignore his wife's behaviour in order to forestall the loss of the material benefits he enjoys from her illicit relations" (18).

³³ Cruz describes Lazarillo's third master: "the squire, like the poor, formed part of a changing society whose function within that society had also been recently devalued" (37).

healed: “Y mientras estaba malo siempre me daban alguna limosna; mas después que estuve sano todos me decían: ‘Tú bellaco y gallofero eres. Busca, busca un amo a quien sirvas’” (71). Later in this same tratado, well after Lazarillo has discovered the truth about the squire, he goes throughout Toledo begging for food, which he does successfully. However, he specifically attributes his success to the skills he developed by serving the blind man rather than to the generosity of the people of Toledo.³⁴ Lazarillo manages to get food, but only due to his highly developed begging skills. If he had depended only upon the charity of the people of Toledo, the boy and his master would likely have starved. However, even this little bit of luck would run out for Lazarillo. Later in this same tratado Lazarillo ceases to beg fearing that he will be driven out of town with the rest of the poor foreigners which, as was mentioned earlier, is what a recently established law demanded. This new law was not an empty threat, either. Lazarillo says that “y así, ejecutando la ley, desde a cuatro días que el pregón se dio, vi llevar una procesión de pobres azotando por las Cuatro Calles. Lo cual me puso tan gran espanto, que nunca osé desmandarme a demandar” (93). The lack of charity toward poor foreigners, revealed by this new law, severely limited Lazarillo’s options. However, this very lack of charity, and the law derived from it, were not the result of an evil and uncaring society, but were rather quite literally the result of the physical environment: for some reason there had been a bad harvest. Though the text does not specify exactly what was to blame for the poor harvest, one can assume it was related to some type of environmental problem (drought, etc.).

Yet another social disease that affected Spain at this time was an unhealthy obsession with honor and status and a stubborn refusal to accept one’s reality as it is. This is the subject of

³⁴ “Mas como yo este oficio le hobiese mamado en la leche, quiero decir que con el gran maestro el ciego lo aprendí, tan suficiente discípulo salí, que, aunque en este pueblo no había caridad, ni el año fuese muy abundante, tan buena maña me di, que antes que el reloj diese las cuatro ya yo tenía otras tantas libras de pan ensiladas en el cuerpo y más de otras dos en las mangas y senos” (87).

the third tratado which, as Maiorino states, “explores the theatrics of false pretenses” (37). In this tratado, Lázaro describes his time serving a squire whose status in society has been greatly diminished. When Lazarillo first encounters the squire, by all appearances his luck seems to have finally changed for the better: “topóme Dios con un escudero que iba por la calle con razonable vestido, bien peinado, su paso y compás en orden” (72). Lazarillo is delighted by this first impression and thanks God for providing him with a suitable master: “Y seguíle, dando gracias a Dios por lo que le oí, y también que me parecía, según su hábito y continente, ser el que yo había menester” (73). It doesn’t take long, however, for Lazarillo to discover the truth that the squire’s appearance attempts to conceal: he’s dirt poor and just as in need of food as Lazarillo. As Maiorino states, this fallen squire “upholds memories of a better world but survives in the pit of poverty, where a rift exists between what he pretends to be and what his material circumstances force him to do” (36). Instead of finally receiving the care he so desperately needed, Lazarillo is now forced to provide for both himself and his new master. It should be noted that Lazarillo doesn’t much mind his new role as provider: “con toda su pobreza, holgaría de servir más que a los otros” (92). Nevertheless, Lazarillo had one thing against this master: “quisiera yo que no tuviera tanta presunción, mas que abajara un poco su fantasía con lo mucho que subía su necesidad” (92). He wants the squire to face the reality of his situation. Only then will he truly be able to climb back to the social and economic status to which he felt entitled. It is Lazarillo’s next comments regarding the squire that are most telling, however: “Mas, según me parece, es regla ya entre ellos usada y guardada. Aunque no haya cornado de trueco, ha de andar el birrete en su lugar. El Señor lo remedie, que ya con este mal han de morir” (92). Lazarillo’s comments seem to indicate two things here: 1) that there were

more people in society that suffered the same delusion of the squire, and 2) that there was little hope of these people ever being cured.³⁵

This obsession with appearances was not limited to people who held a formerly respectable social status. Lazarillo himself would fall prey to this same mentality later in the text, in spite of his criticism of the squire. In the sixth tratado Lazarillo is given work as a water carrier and is able to save enough money to buy some second-hand clothes. Lazarillo seems to be just as impressed by appearances as the squire when he sees himself in his new attire:

“Desde que me vi en hábito de hombre de bien, dije a mi amo se tomase su asno, que no quería más seguir aquel oficio” (127). Lazarillo decides he no longer wants this job as he feels it is beneath someone as well-dressed as himself. The adult Lázaro now suffers from the same delusion that the younger Lazarillo used to mock in others. That Lazarillo, from the lowest of classes, could so easily succumb to the same self-deception that the squire suffered seems to indicate, as Stephen Gilman has suggested, that this unrealistic obsession with honor was “the most notable symptom of a diseased society” (151).

It is clear, then, that there are potent forces in Lazarillo’s social environment that greatly influence the formation of his character and impact his decision-making. The prevalence of poverty, the lack of charity and a society-wide “obsession with honor in all classes” (Gilman 151) together conspire against Lázaro, pressuring him to conform to a society of which he is initially very critical. While the precise nature of the environmental forces operating in the novels analyzed in this study will vary from work to work, it will be shown that both *Guzmán de*

³⁵ Individuals fitting the squire’s description were not uncommon at the time of the *Lazarillo*’s publication. According to Agustín Redondo: “La figura del escudero, tal como aparece en *El Lazarillo*, corresponde pues a la de un personaje real, venido a menos y de vida difícil en la España de la primera mitad del siglo XVI. Las características de este personaje literario son indudablemente las de los escuderos castellanos, sus contemporáneos” (435).

Alfarache and *El Buscón* also demonstrate how their protagonists' lives have been shaped, at least to some degree, by various factors in their social environment.

God and Religion

Religion and its impact on society and the individual are major themes in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The text is littered with references to God and religion, and several of the masters that the young picaro serves have a religious vocation. What, then, is the purpose of so many references to religion? How does the author view the importance of religion in Spain at the time? It will be shown that in spite of the numerous references to God in the text, the *Lazarillo* reveals a world in which God is essentially a synonym of blind fate, and religion is simply a tool used by wicked and deceiving people to take advantage of the naiveté of the highly religious and superstitious people of Spain.³⁶

Lazarillo refers to God many times throughout the novel, which is unsurprising considering the fact that the picaro is in a constant battle for his life and always feels the nearness of death. As a child he learns the importance of faith in God from his mother. When she gives him over to be the servant of the blind man, Lázaro tells us that she “confiaba en Dios” that the young Lazarillo “no saldría peor hombre que mi padre” (22). Shortly thereafter, during the tearful separation of mother and son, she tells him “procura de ser bueno, y Dios te guíe” (22). So Lazarillo begins his adventures with at least an elementary understanding of the importance of trying to be good and trusting in God’s care. The first references to God by the protagonist himself are simple expressions that would have been common at the time and would therefore provide little if any information about Lazarillo’s theology. However, as early as the first

³⁶ As Shipley notes, the text shows “the vocabulary of God and goodness drained of transcendent truth and equated, in Lázaro’s usage, with happenstance and with material and animal comfort” (*Making the Case*, 182).

tratado, “God becomes Lazarillo’s ally and brings him the means of survival and revenge” (Fiore 52). For example, after suffering greatly at the hands of the cruel blind man, Lazarillo decides to take revenge, putting the blind man in a position to slam into a stone post. In this famous moment of the text, Lazarillo gives credit to God for assisting him in his vengeful scheme: “Dios le cegó aquella hora el entendimiento (fue por darme dél venganza)” (45). Immediately, then, the reader learns two things about Lazarillo’s theology: 1) he does in fact believe in God and even believes that God is able and willing to get involved in the affairs of men, and 2) that his idea of God is, at least biblically speaking, greatly mis-informed, since the Bible clearly states that vengeance is to be reserved for God alone.³⁷ Another example of Lazarillo’s confused theology is found in the second tratado, during the picaro’s time serving the stingy priest. This famously cruel second master of Lazarillo practically starves the boy by refusing to give him any more than a single onion every four days for sustenance. The priest himself, however, eats voraciously and keeps a chest of bread under lock and key. When a tinker happens to come by one day, Lazarillo lies to him claiming to have lost his key to the chest and begs the tinker to try one of the keys he has with him to see if it will fit. One of them does fit and Lazarillo gives the tinker some of the bread as payment for his help. What is surprising about this episode is that Lazarillo claims to have been “alumbrado por el Espíritu Sancto” (55) to carry out this scheme.³⁸ A bit later in this same tratado, after the priest decides to keep careful count of exactly how many loaves are in the chest, Lazarillo decides to scrape away for himself crumbs of the bread in such a way as to make it look like mice are to blame. He also credits God with giving him this idea: “Mas el mesmo Dios, que socorre a los afligidos, viéndome en tal

³⁷ “Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’” (Romans 12:19).

³⁸ In fact, this line was so offensive that it was replaced in the censored edition of 1573 by “alumbrado por no sé quién” (*Lazarillo*, 55n).

estrecho, trujo a mi memoria un pequeño remedio; que, considerando entre mí, dije ‘Este arquetón es viejo y grande y roto por algunas partes, aunque pequeños agujeros. Puédese pensar que ratones, entrando en él, hacen daño a este pan’” (59). So, according to Lazarillo’s concept of God, the Almighty is ready and willing to provide assistance to human beings in carrying out petty revenge schemes and to encourage them to lie and steal.

Lazarillo also sometimes invokes God’s name in wishing harm to those who have been cruel to him. After the priest devours the sheep’s head and gives Lazarillo what is left of the bones, he says to the lad: “Toma, come, triunfa, que para ti es el mundo. Mejor vida tienes que el Papa” to which Lazarillo silently replies: “Tal te la dé Dios” (50-51). Lazarillo wishes for God to make the priest to suffer as he himself has. Later in this same tratado, after the priest says he will begin carefully counting the bread in the chest, Lazarillo silently prays “¡Nuevas malas te dé Dios!” (58).

Based on these references alone, it is clear that Lazarillo’s concept of God is radically different from the Christian God of Catholic faith. At various moments throughout the text, Lazarillo gives credit to God or the Holy Spirit for little moments of good fortune that he enjoys. However, when we carefully analyze exactly what Lazarillo praises God for doing, we can’t help but notice Lazarillo’s poor understanding of God’s character. These examples show that Lazarillo, while clearly a believer in God, and even in the power of God to act in his life, nonetheless attributes to God acts that are impossible for His character and would, according to the Catholic faith, be more appropriately attributed to the devil. However, no supernatural explanation for Lazarillo’s brief moments of good luck need be sought. Rather than the Holy Spirit prompting the young protagonist to devise his various deceptive schemes, it is much more

likely that they are simply the result of having lived a life where craftiness and the ability to deceive has had a direct and beneficial impact in one's life.³⁹

We have seen that Lazarillo at least believed in God and had some idea, however distorted and confused, of God's character. Nevertheless, in spite of his many references to God and religion, Lazarillo is on the whole a pessimistic character. There are several comments made by the protagonist that seem to indicate that he considers his life to be driven by little more than a sort of blind, cruel fate and that ultimately he feels alone in the world. For example, shortly after Lazarillo begins to serve the blind man, he is told by his cruel master to put his ear up against a stone bull. When Lazarillo complies, the blind man smashes his head against it and, laughing, tells him: "Necio, aprende, que el mozo del ciego un punto ha de saber más que el diablo" (23). Lázaro says that this incident awoke him to the reality of his solitude in the world: "Parescióme que en aquel instante desperté de la simpleza en que, como niño, dormido estaba. Dije entre mí: <<Verdad dice éste, que me cumple avivar el ojo y avisar, pues solo soy, y pensar cómo me sepa valer>>" (23).⁴⁰ After this awakening to the fact of his loneliness in the world, Lazarillo begins to sense that his life is being controlled by a cruel, inescapable destiny. During his time with the selfish priest of the second tratado, Lazarillo laments the bad luck he has had with his masters so far. Though he considers moving on to serve yet another master (since the priest was even worse than the blind man) he is hesitant to do so reasoning that "(y)o he tenido dos amos: el primero traíame muerto de hambre, y, dejándole, topé con estotro, que me tiene ya con ella en la sepultura; pues si déste desisto y doy en otro más bajo, ¿qué será sino fenescer?"

³⁹ And in fact, Lazarillo himself, in the prologue to the work, readily acknowledges that his success in battling his ill fortune, however limited that success may be, has come "con fuerza y maña" (11).

⁴⁰ Sears notes that the blind man "serves as a template for the course of Lazarillo's story, which comes down to the lesson that he teaches the boy in typically brutal fashion by slamming the child's head against a stone statue of a bull. [...] Ironically, then, the *ciego* functions to make the child *see* in a way that he had not needed up to that point" (534).

(54). Based on these fears, Lazarillo says that “no me osaba menear, porque tenía por fe que todos los grados había de hallar más ruines. Y a abajar otro punto, no sonara Lázaro ni se oyera en el mundo” (54). In spite of his “faith” in a god who apparently inspires him to lie and steal in order to survive, he nonetheless feels his situation is hopeless and can only get worse. This turns out to be a type of self-fulfilling prophecy when, in the third tratado, Lazarillo discovers that the well-dressed and seemingly well-to-do squire he is now serving is actually broke and without food. As soon as he learns that his new master will not be giving him any food, Lazarillo again laments his bad fortune: “Vuestra Merced crea, cuando le oí, que estuve en poco de caer de mi estado, no tanto de hambre como por conoscer de todo en todo la fortuna serme adversa” (76). A bit later in this same tratado, when the squire tells Lazarillo that being in the habit of eating little will result in a long and healthy life, the young lad says to himself, sarcastically: “Si por esa vía es, [...] nunca yo moriré, que siempre he guardado esa regla por fuerza, y aun espero, en mi desdicha, tenella toda mi vida” (80). Later, still in the third tratado, Lazarillo begins to have at least some success acquiring food for himself and his master by begging. However, even this would not last as the Town Council decided to drive out the poor which made Lazarillo afraid to continue begging. Lazarillo laments this development with extreme pessimism: “Pues estando yo en tal estado, pasando la vida que digo, quiso mi mala fortuna, que de perseguirme no era satisfecha, que en aquella trabajada y vergonzosa vivienda no durase” (92). Once again, Lazarillo sees his life controlled by a cruel fate that simply will not allow him to enjoy any success for any amount of time. A bit later Lazarillo’s master somehow obtains a *real* and sends a happy Lazarillo to the market to buy bread and meat. However, on the way to the market, he encounters a procession of people transporting a dead man and again laments his hard luck: “Tomo mi real y jarro y, a los pies dándoles priesa, comienzo a subir mi calle, encaminando mis

pasos para la plaza, muy contento y alegre. Mas ¿qué me aprovecha, si está constituido en mi triste fortuna que ningún gozo me venga sin zozobra? Y así fue éste” (96). So, even in his better moments he is unable to entirely escape his bad fortune. At the conclusion of this tratado, after his master abandons him, Lazarillo yet again laments his cruel fate: “Así, como he contado, me dejó mi pobre tercero amo, do acabé de conocer mi ruin dicha, pues, señalándose todo lo que podría contra mí, hacía mis negocios tan al revés, que los amos, que suelen ser dejados de los mozos, en mí no fuese así, mas que mi amo me dejase y huyese de mí” (110). As all of these passages demonstrate, Lazarillo views his life as primarily driven by blind, cruel fate and sees no real chance to escape his destiny. The events in his tragic life have caused him to have little hope for ever improving his situation and he even admits he had sometimes prayed for death: “en nada hallaba descanso, salvo en la muerte, que yo también para mí [...] deseaba algunas veces; mas no la vía, aunque estaba siempre en mí” (53). Lazarillo constantly feels the nearness of death, especially in the first three tratados since something as basic as finding enough to eat is a constant, daily challenge.

After the first three tratados, however, things begin to change for the young protagonist. Referring to the third tratado, Fiore notes that “in this chapter the hunger theme reaches its climax and Lazarillo, the height of despair” (64). From this point on, Lazarillo’s life does begin to improve and by the end of the book he has reached the height of success. However, the extent to which his situation at the end of the story can be called “successful” has been a topic of much interest to critics. Let us briefly consider the state in which the narrator finds himself at the conclusion of the novel: He finally has stable employment as the town crier and is married to a young lady in an arrangement that had been set up by the archpriest of Sant Salvador. However, there are strong suspicions that Lazarillo’s wife is also the mistress of the archpriest even though

Lazarillo chooses to ignore such allegations. Some critics have tended to focus on the job of town crier in order to determine if this was indeed a respectable job at the time. M. J. Woods views the post as a significant advance for Lázaro.⁴¹ Others, however, insist that town crier was not a job to be desired and the fact that Lázaro considers this job to be his best is a clear indication that he has not advanced as much as he believes. According to Rico, “of course, no one in Spain at the time of Charles V could admit seriously that to rise from being the son of a thieving miller and laundry woman... to being a town crier and husband of a sacrilegious adultress constituted any real advance. The reader knows that Lázaro, whatever he may say, has not risen” (*Point of View* 24-25). Fiore adds that “(t)he position of town crier was held to be so loathsome that only the basest types took that kind of job. One of the crier’s duties was to assist the hangman. And so the successful position, about which Lázaro boasts, is not at all what it seems to be—a respectable Civil Service job” (73). Regardless of the respectability of Lázaro’s job, it is no doubt an upgrade from his days spent trying to outwit the priest in order to secure a few crumbs of bread. Clearly his situation, at least materially, has improved. However, this material improvement has come at the cost of his integrity and spiritual development. As Fiore states: “The prologue promises the complete story of an individual who has overcome adversity and succeeded in reaching a ‘good port,’ but what actually follows is a partial account of a pseudosuccess story, a story of a debased character who surrenders himself to a corrupt world” (100). Instead of fighting against the various evils of society that the young Lazarillo had identified and criticized, the adult Lázaro embraces them.

It is clear, therefore, that Lazarillo never does truly rise in this novel. He has indeed been the victim of his “mala fortuna” and whatever minor material progress he has been able to

⁴¹ “Despite the more unpleasant aspects of a *pregonero*’s job, if we look at the totality of activities it entailed, there can be little doubt that the post represents a substantial social advance for Lázaro” (Woods 585).

achieve is certainly not the result of divine providence acting in his life.⁴² Rather, his “success” is due to his own cunning and craftiness and to the fact that he sees no other option than to conform to the hypocritical world around him. Perhaps A. Bell best summarizes Lazarillo’s outlook on life: “This is the conclusion that Lázaro has drawn from the experiences of his life, that the world is totally formless, without system or principle, and the only way to ‘get on’ in it is by brute force and cunning” (85).

To this point we have only considered Lazarillo’s warped perspective of God and religion and his pessimistic worldview. This could easily be attributed simply to the boy’s lack of proper training in matters of religion. If we are to fairly evaluate the impact of religion and the divine in the book, we must carefully consider any characters who do indeed have a proper religious education and vocation, and the *Lazarillo* has an abundance of such characters. As will be seen, these characters reveal basically no indication of God working in their lives but rather show themselves to be capable of a degree of manipulating, scheming and deceiving that makes young Lazarillo’s cruelest tricks seem innocent by comparison.⁴³

As was mentioned earlier, the Inquisition did at one time ban the *Lazarillo* due primarily to its portrayal of religious figures and it is not difficult to see why. Throughout the text, nearly every religious leader is shown to use religion to control and abuse people. Certainly the author’s sharpest criticism of the clergy is to be found in the characters of the priest from the second tratado and the archpriest of Sant Salvador in the seventh and I shall discuss those particular characters in detail shortly. However, there are also several other characters involved

⁴² The reader of *Lazarillo* will note the author’s irony in giving his protagonist the name Lázaro, which, at least biblically speaking, is most often connected to the idea of God’s loving care (Luke 16) or resurrection (John 11). Therefore the use of Lázaro here “lends an unexpectedly ironic twist, for the Spanish namesake finds himself at considerable distance from divine providence” (Cruz 11).

⁴³ As will be seen in the following chapters, the strong anticlericalism of *Lazarillo de Tormes* is absent in *Guzmán de Alfarache* but returns with a vengeance in *El Buscón*.

in work of a religious nature. The blind man, for example, makes a substantial living by reciting any of the hundreds of prayers he has memorized. The fact that the blind man does this, not out of any genuine concern for the spiritual needs of the people but rather for profit alone is made clear in the text. The passage in which Lazarillo explains the “profession” of the blind man is a bit lengthy but is worthy of being quoted in its entirety:

Pues, tornando al bueno de mi ciego y contando sus cosas, Vuestra Merced sepa que, desde que Dios crió el mundo, ninguno formó más astuto ni sagaz. En su oficio era un águila. Ciento y tantas oraciones sabía de coro. Un tono bajo, reposado y muy sonable, que hacía resonar la iglesia donde rezaba; un rostro humilde y devoto, que con muy buen continente ponía cuando rezaba, sin hacer gestos ni visajes con boca ni ojos, como otros suelen hacer. Allende desto, tenía otras mil formas y maneras para sacar el dinero. Decía saber oraciones para muchos y diversos efectos: para mujeres que no parían; para las que estaban de parto; para las que eran malcasadas, que sus maridos las quisiesen bien. Echaba pronósticos a las preñadas: si traía hijo o hija. [...] Con esto andábase todo el mundo tras él, especialmente mujeres, que cuanto les decía creían. Déstas sacaba él grandes provechos con las artes que digo, y ganaba más en un mes que cien ciegos en un año. (25-27)

As the above passage makes clear, the blind man had no genuine faith in the power of prayer. Rather, he uses prayer and the gullibility of superstitious and religious people to make a handsome profit. In fact, it is quite likely that he has no genuine belief in God at all. Prior to the passage quoted above, the blind man says to Lazarillo: “Yo oro ni plata no te lo puedo dar; mas avisos para vivir muchos te mostraré” (23). After this, Lazarillo explains to the reader that after God, the blind man “me dio la vida y, siendo ciego, me alumbró y adestró en la carrera de vivir” (24). The wording used by the blind man is of great significance here. “Yo oro ni plata no te lo puedo dar” is an unmistakable reference to an episode in the book of Acts where the apostles Peter and John encounter a crippled man who asks them for money. Peter replies to the man with these words: “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). The contrast between what Peter offers the crippled man

and what the blind man offers Lazarillo could not be starker: Peter gives to the crippled man the supernatural power of God for healing. The blind man, on the other hand, gives to Lazarillo an education in cunning and deceit. In spite of his knowledge of so many prayers, he apparently has no faith in the effectiveness of them. Rather than try to live a life of integrity and depend on God for sustenance, he exposes his lack of faith in divine providence by insisting that the only way to live is through the use of deceptive scheming to outwit others with whom he is competing for survival. The blind man's impact on the development of young Lazarillo's character cannot be overestimated.

Another master who uses his knowledge of religion for profit is the despicable pardoner from the fifth tratado. Just as the blind man takes advantage of the gullibility of the people in order to sell prayers, the pardoner does the same in order to sell indulgences. However, the pardoner is even more cunning and more scheming than the blind man. Lazarillo's initial description of this master is potent: "En el quinto por mi ventura di, que fue un buldero, el más desenvuelto y desvergonzado y el mayor echador dellas que jamás yo vi ni ver espero, ni pienso que nadie vio, porque tenía y buscaba modos y maneras y muy sotiles invenciones" (112). The pardoner's deceptive nature is made clear by the way in which he would alter his conversation based on whom he was speaking to. For example, whenever he arrived at a new location from which to sell his indulgences, he would give small gifts to the local clergymen hoping that they would in turn send business his way. Lázaro says that when they thanked him for the gifts, he would try to ascertain just how well educated they were: "informábase de la suficiencia dellos. Si decían que entendían, no hablaba palabra en latín, por no dar tropezón, mas aprovechábase de un gentil y bien cortado romance y desenvoltísima lengua. Y si sabía que los dichos clérigos eran de los reverendos, digo que más con dineros que con letras y con reverendas se ordenan,

hacíase entre ellos un Sancto Tomás y hablaba dos horas en latín –a lo menos que lo parecía, aunque no lo era” (114). The pardoner, then, is a total fraud, who takes advantage of a person’s ignorance to make himself look more intelligent than he really is. His abuse of the people reaches a climax when he gets a constable to participate in an elaborate hoax in which he convinces the town people that his prayers bring miraculous results. Terrified by the “miracles” they witness, the people are, of course, are all the more eager to buy the pardoner’s indulgences and he makes quite a fortune as a result of this scheme.⁴⁴

Still another of Lazarillo’s masters whose work is of a religious nature is the friar of the Order of Mercy from the mysterious fourth tratado. Very little is said of this particular master (the entire tratado is only ninety-five words long) but what is said is quite significant. Lazarillo explains that this master was “(g)ran enemigo del coro y de comer en el convento, perdido por andar fuera, amicísimo de negocios seculares y visitar” (111). Clearly then, the friar is not particularly fond of his religious duties but rather seems much more attracted to the secular life. As Rico explains in a footnote of his edition of the novel, “enemigo del coro” means “enemigo de cumplir con la obligación de participar en los rezos y oficios de su convento” (111n). Lazarillo does not describe any elaborate schemes or particular incidents in which the friar abuses his position as a religious leader. However, it is what Lazarillo chooses *not* to say in this tratado that may be most revealing. At the end of this short tratado, Lazarillo reveals that he left this master partly because he could not keep up with his busy lifestyle and also, mysteriously, because of “otras cosillas que no digo” (111). Unsurprisingly, quite a few critics have pondered exactly what is meant by “otras cosillas.” George Shipley, Crystal Chemris and Rodrigo Casal

⁴⁴ Wells suggests that the behavior of the pardoner is founded in historical reality: “The conduct of this, his fifth master was no doubt typical of a phase of the religious life of the time, but it is no wonder that the keen satire aroused the denunciation of the Inquisition. All the more significant it becomes that the criticism was generally recognized as true and hence it was found hopeless to suppress it” (272).

all suggest that the “*otras cosillas*” to which Lazarillo refers are homosexual acts between the friar and the boy himself. It is certainly understandable that scholars would feel the temptation to craft such theories regarding the nature of these “*cosillas*” that the narrator has opted not to share with the reader, and such a theory would indeed be of use to this present study.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, it is more prudent, I believe, to follow the advice of Rico who suggests that there is insufficient evidence in the text to support such theories and that rather the omission is simply an attempt to abbreviate the narrative, especially since it occurs at the “*momento en que Lázaro empieza a imprimir un ritmo más rápido al relato*” (112).⁴⁶ Still, even if we admit ignorance in regards to the exact nature of the “*cosillas*” that the narrator refuses to tell us, we have a clear enough picture of the friar to see that religion is of little interest to him.

In spite of the characters we have just discussed in the preceding paragraphs, it should be clear to the reader that the author of Lazarillo directs his harshest criticism of religious leaders to the priest of the second tratado and the archpriest of the final tratado. The stingy priest of the second tratado is the most despicable of the masters that Lazarillo serves. Lazarillo’s initial description of him reveals him to be even worse than the cruel blind man: “*era el ciego para con éste un Alexandre Magno, con ser la mesma avaricia, como he contado. No digo más, sino que toda la laceria del mundo estaba encerrada en éste*” (47). This priest, entrusted with the important task of caring for the spiritual and physical needs of his community, instead gives Lazarillo a minimum amount of food to keep the boy alive (one onion every four days) and indeed nearly starves him. In addition to his stinginess, the priest is also a hypocrite. He tells

⁴⁵ Crystal Chemris sees several clues in the novel that suggest that Lazarillo has been sexually abused, not only by the friar of the fourth tratado, but by many other individuals in his life: “Lazarillo’s initiation into a world in which he is victimized sexually by adults appears to begin in his dealings with the guests at his mother’s inn and continues in the veiled but poignant references to sexual trauma inflicted by the *ciego* and to homosexual prostitution and pandering in the service of the *Fraile de la Merced*” (109).

⁴⁶ Even Shipley acknowledges that scholars should be careful about reading into the text what is not there since often “*dirt lies embedded in the eyes of its beholders, who project it enlarged onto the screen of the text*” (“*cosillas*” 43).

Lazarillo, to hide his stinginess: “Mira, mozo, los sacerdotes han de ser muy templados en su comer y beber, y por esto yo no me desmando como otros” (52). This turns out to be far from the truth, however. According to Lazarillo: “el lacerado mentía falsamente, porque en cofradías y mortuorios que rezamos, a costa ajena comía como lobo y bebía más que un saludador” (52). So, the priest is found to be both stingy and a hypocrite.

The archpriest of Sant Salvador of the seventh tratado also displays significant moral shortcomings. Of course, it must be admitted that he helps Lázaro to improve his situation better than any other master he has served to this point, at least materially speaking. In addition to providing him with food and various gifts, he also arranges the marriage between Lázaro and one of his maids. Nevertheless, Lázaro is not able to fully enjoy these good times in his life due to constantly hearing rumors of an on-going affair between his wife and the priest who arranged their marriage. The priest discusses these rumors with Lázaro and warns him to mind his own business and not to worry about what others say.⁴⁷ Lázaro seems content to do just that even though he readily admits that his friends have proven to him repeatedly that his wife had already had three children prior to their marriage. So, once again, an important religious leader is shown to be immoral, this time to the extent of having an illicit sexual relationship and trying to conceal it.

It should be clear, then, that in spite of so many references to God and the abundance of characters with a religious vocation, neither God nor religion seem to have any meaningful impact in society as it is portrayed in the *Lazarillo*. While Lázaro clearly believes in God, he nevertheless seems to view his life as controlled by a sort of cruel fate. And even though he credits God with inspiring some of his most clever schemes, no true student of the Bible could

⁴⁷ “Lázaro de Tormes, quien ha de mirar a dichos de malas lenguas nunca medrará; digo esto porque no me maravillaría alguno, viendo entrar en mi casa a tu mujer y salir della [...] no mires a lo que pueden decir, sino a lo que te toca: digo a tu provecho” (133).

possibly accept that the Holy Spirit would inspire anyone to lie, steal and deceive. It would be easy to attribute Lázaro's misunderstandings about God to his own ignorance and lack of formal training in religious matters and no doubt this is somewhat to blame. However, even those who do have such proper training, show no indication of true faith in God, and there is certainly no indication of divine influence in their lives. Rather, they use religion for the same reason Lazarillo uses his cunning and craftiness: to make a better life for themselves. The world of the *Lazarillo*, then, is seemingly void of any genuine divine or supernatural influence and looks rather like the world that would be hypothesized by naturalistic philosophy.

Ethics and Morality

It has been shown that genuine religion has little impact on Lazarillo's life or the choices he makes. In fact, in spite of the strict Catholicism to which Spaniards at the time supposedly adhered, it can be said, at least based on the picture of society one sees in the *Lazarillo*, that genuine religion had a negligible impact on society overall. Indeed, it at times had a considerably negative impact as in the example of the fraudulent *buldero*. However, putting aside this lack of impact of specific religious and theological doctrines, we are still left with the possibility of analyzing the characters to see if they subscribe to a certain moral or ethical code. If not faithful to specific religious doctrines, can it at least be said that Lazarillo and other characters in the novel acknowledge and behave according to absolute moral truths? To what extent can the characters be considered 'good'? Do their actions and attitudes indicate genuine concern for their fellow men? Do they show a willingness to sacrifice for the good of others? It is to such questions that we now turn our attention.

Several critics have studied morality and ethics in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Stuart Miller is of the opinion that “no morality or thought of ethics enters into the actions of the characters” (Hesse 23). A. Bell believes that Lazarillo is a “self-seeking, amoral hypocrite, who is set to convince *V.M.* that the whole of society is exactly like him” (93). Bruce Wardropper suggests that Lazarillo is at least initially good, but is corrupted by the negative influence of his masters and his constant fight for survival:

La novela nos enseña la corrupción moral de un muchacho fundamentalmente bueno. Su integridad, su honradez (esencial si no formal) quedan desmoronadas por la fuerza de la hipocresía universal. Partiendo de una moral condicionada por el instinto de perseverar en su existir [...] el autor la va sustituyendo por una inmoralidad corriente, que es la hipocresía. (447)

Roland Grass seems to agree that Lazarillo progresses toward immorality due to the unfortunate events of his life: “Forced by circumstances into a picaresque life, then, Lazarillo progresses rapidly toward absolute immorality” (197).

Two critics who do not see Lazarillo as a primarily immoral character are Antonio Alatorre and Pamela Waley. Alatorre views Lázaro as “una figura ejemplar, un héroe auténtico” (444). Waley, by focusing more on the “extras” in the story as opposed to Lazarillo’s cruel masters, comes to the conclusion that Lazarillo’s “moral limitations are determined by the circumstances of his life, and within those he is undoubtedly, if relatively, good. And so are the majority of the Spaniards he meets on his way” (601). Waley disagrees with critics who see in the *Lazarillo* “a society that is unpleasant and self-seeking, corrupt and corrupting, irreligious and hypocritical” (591). She suggests that it is unfair to see the entire novel as an indictment of Spanish society when Lazarillo has focused his criticism on just a few representatives of that society, namely his particular masters. She supports her argument by pointing out that the blind man and Lazarillo were apparently sustained by the charity of others. She also considers that

people were quick to treat Lazarillo's wounds when he was mistreated by his masters. While this is true, it must also be remembered that these same people who were so quick to attend to Lazarillo after he suffered the cruelty of his masters, were equally quick to laugh at his misfortunes.⁴⁸ One example of this occurs in the third tratado after the priest accidentally injures Lazarillo thinking him to be the "snake" that was stealing from the bread chest. Lazarillo says that an old lady and some neighbors helped to dress his wounds but then immediately began to laugh about the matter: "Ahí tornaron de nuevo a contar mis cuitas y reírlas, y yo, pecador, a llorarlas" (70). It is clear, then, that the townspeople show some level of compassion as demonstrated by their willingness to help Lazarillo clean his wounds. However, it is equally clear that these same people found great joy and laughed heartily at a child's serious injury.

That Lazarillo himself at times displays compassion in the novel cannot be disputed. Perhaps his greatest moment in the work, the moment in which he seems to genuinely care for the well-being of another person, occurs when he discovers the pitiful truth about the squire and his impoverished condition. When Lazarillo sits down to eat the bread and tripe that he has been able to obtain, he can't help but notice his poor master staring at the food:

Y comienzo a cenar y morder en mis tripas y pan, y disimuladamente miraba al desventurado señor mío, que no partía sus ojos de mis faldas, que aquella sazón servían de plato. Tanta lástima haya Dios de mí como yo había dél, porque sentí lo que sentía, y muchas veces había por ello pasado y pasaba cada día. Pensaba si sería bien comedirme a convidalle; mas, por me haber dicho que había comido, temíame no aceptaría el convite. Finalmente, yo desesaba aquel pecador ayudase a su trabajo del mío y se desayunase como el día antes hizo, pues había mejor aparejo, por ser mejor la vianda y menos mi hambre. (89)

It would have been easy for Lazarillo to have abandoned his new master upon realizing that he would be unable to care for him, providing for him even less food than the stingy priest.

Nevertheless, Lazarillo reacts to this situation with a surprising level of compassion. Rather than

⁴⁸ As Leahy suggests: "Para este público, Lázaro de nuevo se convierte en objeto de un espectáculo que una vez más enfatiza su condición de inferioridad" (334).

run away, he elects to stay with his new master even though he understands that by doing so, he'll be required to not only struggle to provide for himself, but for his master too. Lazarillo's willingness to share with his master, especially compared with the stinginess of the priest in the previous tratado, may tempt the reader to view the protagonist as indeed a basically good lad. Nevertheless, we must base our judgement of Lazarillo's moral or ethical code on his entire life, not just one moment. A careful review of some crucial moments of the story will reveal a young boy whose ethical code is constantly changing. However, this change is decidedly not the result of continued progress in understanding of ethics or a steady increase in wisdom. Rather, his system of ethics seems to be largely based on his circumstances at any given time and will therefore readily change as his situation changes. Lazarillo chooses a course of action based on the estimated practical value of its outcome rather than any mature understanding of morality. One course of action is preferred over another based on its likelihood to help him survive.⁴⁹

A couple of citations from the text will illustrate this. In the first tratado, Lazarillo explains that at first he did not care for his mother's new lover Zaide primarily because he was initially afraid of him. However, Lazarillo says that he began to warm up to him, not because of an increase in genuine love, but rather because Zaide's presence meant more food: "Yo, al principio de su entrada, pesábame con él y habíale miedo, viendo el color y mal gesto que tenía; mas de que vi que su venida mejoraba el comer, fuile queriendo bien, porque siempre traía pan, pedazos de carne y en el invierno leños, a que nos calentábamos" (17). Lazarillo's "love" for Zaide seems to be of little more value than the love that a dog shows toward the person who gives it the most treats.

⁴⁹ As Wardropper states: "¡Cuántas veces habla Lázaro de su provecho y de cómo piensa aprovechar las circunstancias de su vida! Es su gran obsesión. Es la fuente de sus conceptos morales [...] Lo bueno es lo provechoso" (443).

One of the most depressing moments of the entire novel (and one which clearly shows how he has been shaped by his food-starved environment) occurs in the second tratado.

Lazarillo tells how, when assisting the priest in reading the last rites to a dying person, he would silently pray for God to take the life of the sick individual since this would mean a funeral feast and therefore a full belly for the picaro.⁵⁰ This segment of the text is a bit lengthy but is worth being cited in its entirety:

Y porque dije de mortuorios, Dios me perdone, que jamás fui enemigo de la naturaleza humana sino entonces. Y esto era porque comíamos bien y me hartaban. Deseaba y aun rogaba a Dios que cada día matase el suyo, y cuando dábamos sacramento a los enfermos, especialmente la Extremaunción, como manda el clérigo rezar a los que están allí, yo cierto no era el postrero de la oración, y con todo mi corazón y buena voluntad rogaba al Señor, no que la echase a la parte que más servido fuese, como se suele decir, mas que le llevase de aqueste mundo. Y cuando alguno de éstos escapaba, Dios me lo perdone, que mil veces le daba al diablo; y el que se moría otras tantas bendiciones llevaba de mí dichas. (53)

The above scene shows the utter selfishness of Lazarillo. I cannot help but agree with Roland Grass that this moment marks a “kind of climax” of “absolute immorality” (197) for Lazarillo. It is also interesting to note the connection this scene has with the biological world: the death of one organism contributes to the life of another. While likely not the intention of the author, one cannot help but notice the naturalistic flavor of this scene. And it seems difficult to condemn the protagonist for praying that others die, given that his hunger has brought him close to death. In a naturalistic world each individual must do whatever is necessary in order to survive.

It is clear, then, that Lazarillo’s ethical code is exactly what one would expect in a world that operates in a naturalistic fashion. While he does show moments of compassion, these are the exception rather than the rule. Consistently throughout the text, Lazarillo’s choices and actions are not made in consideration of obedience to God or any fear of final judgement. Rather, his

⁵⁰ Maiorino comments on this scene: “When secular needs are at stake in an unproductive society, where one’s gain is another’s loss, even prayers will focus on materialist concerns” (27).

value system is almost entirely based on his material needs. Ever self-seeking, he nearly always chooses the course of action that will better his chances of survival and provide the greatest physical comfort. And whatever love he may have toward others is based primarily on what material benefits they can provide to him.

Sex and Marriage

A discussion of the naturalistic elements of a text cannot avoid a discussion of sex and marriage. How are these viewed in the *Lazarillo*? Do the married couples in the novel seem to genuinely love each other? What motivates their love? What motivates their marriage? These are the questions we shall now attempt to answer.

While it should be acknowledged that there are moments in which something like genuine love is displayed by some of the characters in the *Lazarillo*, the overall picture that emerges from a careful reading reveals a world in which relationships are “meramente carnal” (Rey Hazas 21) and motivated by the need for survival or at least the hope for a better economic situation.

Little is told of the relationship between Lazarillo’s mother, Antona Pérez, and his father, Tomé González, so any meaningful analysis of their relationship would be speculation. However, after Lazarillo’s father dies, his widowed mother’s immediate concern, logically, becomes providing for her children. To do this, she decides to mix with respectable people, hoping to become one of them herself. She rents a house in Salamanca and tries to earn a living by preparing food for students and washing clothes for the stable-boys of the Comendador de la Magdalena. Here she meets Zaide with whom she quickly develops an illicit relationship and soon has a child with him, out of wedlock. While it is tempting to judge Lazarillo’s mother as

immoral (and the fact that Zaide only half-jokingly refers to their own child as “hideputa” strengthens this viewpoint), it should be noted that Antona is driven to this immorality by the need to survive rather than any hard-hearted rejection of moral laws or tendency to give into temptation. As was mentioned previously, Zaide would consistently bring bread, meat and even firewood for Antona and her children. In fact, according to Lazarillo, the primary reason for Zaide’s theft was to help Antona “criar a mi hermanico” (19). Antona and Zaide’s illicit relationship is exactly the type of relationship one would expect in a naturalistic world. Rather than being born from any religious or high-minded notion of love, it is born of the obligation to satisfy basic physical needs, primarily food and sex.

Toward the end of the novel, in the final tratado, Lazarillo himself takes the vows of marriage and while he is at least officially married, it is clear that his marriage is motivated by the same factors that motivated his mother’s relationship to Zaide. When the archpriest of Sant Salvador, after seeing the “habilidad y buen vivir” of Lázaro, offers to marry him to his maid, Lázaro makes it clear why he accepts the offer: “Y visto por mí que de tal persona no podía venir sino bien a favor, acordé de lo hacer” (131). Lázaro agrees to the arrangement simply because of the advantages it would bring him. After the marriage takes place, Lázaro does not regret his decision “porque, allende de ser buena hija y diligente servicial, tengo en mi señor acipreste todo favor y ayuda” (131). So while he does acknowledge that his wife is basically “buena,” he also makes it clear that a significant reason for his contentment with the arrangement is because of the favors he continues to receive from the priest. Still later, when Lazarillo begins to discover the truth about his wife’s previous affairs and begins to hear rumors of an affair with the priest, he

chooses to turn a deaf ear to the whole matter. Rather than investigate these rumors, he prefers to keep the peace and maintain himself “en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna” (135).⁵¹

It is clear, then, that the primary motive in both Lazarillo’s marriage to the priest’s maid and his mother’s relationship with Zaide is to have their basic physical needs met. Nowhere to be found is the religious idea of marriage as a sacred institution. Indeed, the archpriest, who above all should hold such a view of marriage, mocks it more than any other by encouraging Lázaro to marry a woman with whom he (the priest) enjoys an illicit relationship. It is difficult to determine the extent to which this base view of marriage had infiltrated society since we only have the examples of Lazarillo’s marriage to the priest’s servant and Antona’s relationship with Zaide. It is at least interesting, however, that Lazarillo justifies his decision to remain with his wife, in spite of the persistent rumors of her unfaithfulness, because she apparently was no worse than the other women of Toledo: “yo juraré sobre la hostia consagrada que es tan buena mujer como vive dentro de las puertas de Toledo” (135). This, combined with the fact that two different religious leaders are shown to have questionable relationships with women, may be at least an indication that these types of arrangements and a general devaluing of marriage were somewhat common in society.

In summary, it is clear that *Lazarillo de Tormes* paints a rather naturalistic view of the world. While the name of God is on everyone’s lips, there is little evidence of His work, neither in society nor in the life of the individual. Even those who claim to represent God show no indication of genuine faith but instead use religion to prey on the gullible and take advantage of the superstitious nature of the people in order to make a profit. Lazarillo’s world is one governed

⁵¹ Roncero López interprets these words as “an example of the humor of buffoons who took pride in their depraved, marginal status, which they flaunt in the face of their masters and of the reader, or hearer, of their compositions” (239). See his article, “‘Lazarillo’, ‘Guzmán’, and Buffoon Literature” for more points of contact between the picaresque and buffoon literature of the time period.

by blind fate and various deterministic forces. While Lazarillo consistently aspires to a better life, the influences of his family background, his social status, the economic conditions of the time, cruel mistreatment by those entrusted with his care and the attitudes and psychological ills of society all conspire against him.⁵² And while the protagonist admirably fights back against these deterministic forces, he is ultimately overcome to the point that he considers wearing second-hand clothes and living with an adulteress wife to be the height of his good fortune.

⁵² As Casal observes: “The whole narration becomes in fact an accumulation of evidence to demonstrate that Lazarillo is not responsible for what Lázaro has become. He presents himself as a victim of circumstances” (326).

NATURALISM IN *GUZMÁN DE ALFARACHE*

Introduction

In spite of the success of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, fifty years would pass before another author dared to write a picaresque novel, likely due at least in part to the strong censorship that the *Lazarillo* received. This second novel in the picaresque genre was *Guzmán de Alfarache*, published in two parts in 1599 and 1604. Unlike *Lazarillo de Tormes*, whose author never revealed himself, the author of *Guzmán de Alfarache* is known to be Mateo Alemán who lived from 1547 to 1615. Born in Seville, he was the son of the physician Dr. Hernando Alemán whom many claim was of Jewish origin.⁵³ He graduated from the University of Maese Rodrigo in Seville in 1564 with a degree in Arts and Philosophy (McGrady 15). Later he would follow in his father's footsteps by obtaining a degree in medicine from the University of Alcalá de Henares though he would ultimately choose not to pursue a career in medicine (McGrady 15). At twenty-one years of age he began a series of business ventures. His various commercial endeavors caused him to acquire a substantial amount of debt which he was unable to pay, resulting in his being thrown into debtor's prison in Seville in 1580. After being released from prison the following year, he attempted to emigrate to Mexico but was unable to convince authorities that he was not of Jewish descent and because of this, was denied permission to move. In 1583,

⁵³ McGrady claims that the Alemán family "was known to be of Jewish origin" (13) but Peter Dunn has cast considerable doubt on this assertion. See Dunn's explanatory endnote about Alemán's supposed Jewish origin (148).

Alemán was made a royal judge, charged with investigating some irregularities in the account of a deceased royal employee (McGrady 40). During this assignment, he was thrown into prison, having offended the local justices by overstepping his authority (Dunn 41). In spite of this, Alemán was given another government job shortly thereafter as an accountant and in 1593 was given a second judgeship.

To this point in his life Alemán had been inactive in the world of literature, although he had always been extremely well read (McGrady 21). After a few minor and insignificant publications, Alemán exploded onto the literary scene with the publication of Part I of *Guzmán de Alfarache* in 1599.⁵⁴ While the work brought him nearly instant fame, it did not rescue him from his financial troubles.⁵⁵ His economic problems would continue and he would again spend time in debtor's prison in 1602. Also in 1602, there appeared a false Part II of *Guzmán*, written by Juan Martí, a native of Valencia. Alemán responded to this false novel with the legitimate Part II of *Guzmán* in 1604. This second part also failed to rescue him financially and his other business ventures were unsuccessful as well. As a result, Alemán attempted again to emigrate to Mexico and this time he was successful. Little is known about his experience in Mexico but what little documentation is available indicates that things went generally well for him there (McGrady 37). From Mexico, Alemán completed his work *Ortografía castellana* (1609) and published his final work, *Sucesos de D. Frai García Gera* in 1613. He died in 1615 having never completed (or at least not published) a promised Part III of *Guzmán*.

While Alemán did publish several other works in his lifetime, none of them enjoyed the popularity of *Guzmán de Alfarache*. *Guzmán* was an immediate success in Spain with some

⁵⁴ McGrady notes that, prior to *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the only publications from Alemán were “a translation of two odes by Horace, printed without date or place, and a prologue for the *Proverbios morales* (*Moral Proverbs*) of his friend Alonso de Barros, printed in 1598” (21)

⁵⁵ This was largely due to the fact that there were numerous pirated editions of the text from which Alemán obviously received no money (McGrady 22).

twenty-six editions of the novel having been published by 1604 (McGrady 22).⁵⁶ The success of the book extended beyond Spain as it was translated into French, Italian and German (McGrady 23). The work avoided the inquisitorial censorship that *Lazarillo de Tormes* had undergone, largely due to the fact that *Guzmán de Alfarache* contains an unmistakably Catholic message of salvation and portrays the clergy as good individuals, rather than corrupt as they are consistently portrayed in *Lazarillo*.

Guzmán de Alfarache is different in many important ways from *Lazarillo de Tormes* but still shares a few key characteristics that places the work firmly in the picaresque tradition. Like *Lazarillo*, Guzmán narrates the events of his life from the perspective of an adult looking back on his childhood and adolescence. Following an episodic structure similar to that found in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Guzmán recounts his adventures and misadventures as he moves from one master to another. Like *Lazarillo*, Guzmán begins his story by relating the circumstances of his birth and provides some details about his family history. Both protagonists have their first experience with the cruel, hostile nature of the world very shortly after leaving home. Hunger is an important theme at times in both novels, especially in the beginning of *Guzmán* and roughly the first half of *Lazarillo*. Finally, both novels contain a substantial amount of humor and each sees as one of its primary goals to be that of entertaining the reader.

In spite of these similarities, it is the differences between the two novels that are most striking. The first immediately obvious difference between them is the length. *Guzmán de Alfarache*, published in two parts, is about ten times the length of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. The primary reason for the added length of *Guzmán* is the frequent “digressions” in which Guzmán breaks away from narrating the events of his life in order to reflect on a wide variety of moral,

⁵⁶ In fact, *Guzmán de Alfarache* was the most successful bestseller in Spain in the seventeenth century. The second most successful bestseller of the century was *Don Quijote* (Part I published in 1605, and Part II published in 1615).

religious, philosophical and social issues.⁵⁷ While there is little philosophical or theological reflection in *Lazarillo*, Guzmán is constantly offering commentary on the various events in his life. In addition to these digressions, there are also four additional interwoven stories in the text that add to its length. The inclusion of moral and theological digressions is unsurprising. As previously mentioned, *Lazarillo de Tormes* was heavily censored due to its negative portrayal of the clergy and God. As McGrady suggests, “*Lazarillo de Tormes* could not be the ideological model for a new literary species—this pattern would have to be furnished by an arch-Catholic work, such as that of Alemán” (60). Another important difference between these two works is the psychological development of the protagonists. I am inclined to agree with McGrady who suggests that *Lazarillo* is “not fully developed psychologically” (62) while Alemán “delineates most carefully the psychology of Guzmán” (62). The portrayal of the various masters that the two picares serve throughout their lives is also different between the two novels. As McGrady suggests, “Lázaro’s masters are much more individualized than Guzmán’s. In the gallery of personages that appear in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, none stands out so sharply as *Lazarillo*’s beggar, priest of Maqueda, or squire. With the exceptions of the Italian Cardinal and the French Ambassador, the faces of Guzmán’s masters tend to be rather expressionless” (63). McGrady summarizes the similarities and differences between these two novels in this way: “In sum, Mateo Alemán took *Lazarillo de Tormes* as a model for the structural elements of his picaresque novel. However, he rejected *Lazarillo*’s anticlerical ideology. In other words, Alemán borrowed the form, but not the content” (66).

⁵⁷ In her superb essay “The Sermon as Literature in *Guzmán de Alfarache*,” Laurie Kaplis-Hohwald argues that “*Guzmán de Alfarache* is indebted, in no small part, to sermon literature of the Gold Age. [...] Guzmán in his digressions speaks to us in a personal and universal language, as the best preachers try to do” (n. pag.).

Because of the great length of the novel, it is difficult to outline an adequate summary of the plot. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to lay out the basic trajectory of Guzmán's life as this will help lead to a better understanding of the analysis that follows. Following the example set by *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Guzmán begins his story by telling the reader about his parents and his birth. He offers greater detail about these matters than did Lázaro and even describes his maternal grandmother. In chapter three of the first part, he decides to leave home “un viernes por la tarde” and finds himself at an inn where he is served nearly-hatched eggs, which makes him violently ill. This is Guzmán's first encounter with a cruel society and officially marks the beginning of his picaresque adventures. On his way to Madrid he begins to serve his first master, an innkeeper.⁵⁸ After arriving in Madrid, Guzmán initially struggles to find employment but eventually ends up working for a chef, where he begins his career as a thief. After he is dismissed from this job, he heads for Toledo where, after a particularly profitable theft, he begins to dress elegantly and tries to attract the attention of the ladies. After failing miserably in his attempts to find love, he joins a group of soldiers headed to Italy and ends up serving the captain. Guzmán provides for the captain by stealing which causes the captain to begin to distrust his servant. After this distrust leads to his dismissal, Guzmán, now in Genoa, tries to make contact with some of his father's family members who are wealthy. He does meet an uncle by whom he is mistreated and ultimately rejected. Guzmán then joins forces with a band of beggars and begins to become an expert in his new “skill,” having learned the rules and statutes that the beggars had set for themselves. One of the skills that Guzmán perfects is the ability to create fake sores on his body and a Cardinal, who believes the picaro's stripes are real, has mercy on him and takes him in to care for him. He remains with the Cardinal for a while until he

⁵⁸ According to McGrady, the innkeeper “belongs to one of the most satirized occupations in contemporary Spanish society. The major writers of the Golden Age liked to vent their wrath on the host who gave poor service and charged unreasonable prices” (107).

dismissed due to his obsessive gambling. The first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* ends with the protagonist serving as the buffoon of the French Ambassador in Rome.

After beginning part II of *Guzmán de Alfarache* with many digressions, Guzmán continues the story of his life by recounting a few episodes from his time serving the French Ambassador. After he is dismissed from this post, he meets Sayavedra with whom he initially gets along, but by whom he is later robbed of his baggage.⁵⁹ The two are eventually reconciled and become partners in crime. Guzmán returns to Genoa to seek revenge on the uncle who had earlier mistreated him. This time, Guzmán pretends to be the noble Don Juan de Guzmán and is welcomed by his relatives, whom he then proceeds to rob. Later, he and Sayavedra decide to sail back to Spain and during the voyage Sayavedra becomes ill and throws himself overboard. Once in Spain, Guzmán manages to get married but becomes widowed after a short time. After his wife's death, he decides to study theology at Alcalá de Henares but eventually abandons his studies and remarries. Upon returning to Madrid, Guzmán and his new wife enjoy a time of prosperity at least partially due to the fact that Guzmán prostitutes his wife to wealthy men. Later, the couple moves to Seville where the protagonist is reunited with his mother. The three do not get along and eventually his wife leaves him for an Italian sea captain. After parting ways with his mother, Guzmán begins to serve as administrator of a wealthy lady's estate. The lady becomes yet another victim of his thefts but this time his crimes are discovered and he is condemned to the galleys for life. While in the galleys, he meditates on his life and repents of his past deeds and is converted. When asked by a fellow prisoner to participate in an uprising, Guzmán remains faithful to his newfound repentance and informs the captain of the planned

⁵⁹ Juan Martí would publish a false second part of *Guzmán de Alfarache* in 1602 under the pseudonym Mateo Luján de Saavedra. Alemán makes his opinion of Martí's work clear by making his character Sayavedra a thief of Guzmán's property and by having him later become insane and throw himself into the sea.

mutiny. This results in Guzmán being freed from the galleys. Guzmán promises a third part of his life, but this was never written.

The above is an admittedly incomplete outline of the basic chronology of Guzmán's life as he tells it and many events have necessarily been omitted. In addition to the basic narrative of the events in Guzman's life, there is interwoven throughout the entire book a series of sermons, commentaries and anecdotes on a variety of topics including life, religion, justice, society and love. The entire story is told by Guzmán himself, who claims to be telling his story from the viewpoint of a reformed sinner, saved by the grace of God. His narrative is meant to entertain all readers but also to instruct those prudent readers who would be willing to seek out a moral message in the work, rather than read solely for entertainment.⁶⁰

Due to its size, complexity and immense popularity, it is unsurprising that *Guzmán de Alfarache* has intrigued literary critics over the centuries. As McGrady says, the novel "contains an ambiguity that permits different generations to interpret it in diverse ways" (53). While very little scholarly criticism on the text is available from the time of the *Guzmán's* publication, the text still received considerable praise from various high-ranking officials and capable intellectuals. For example, McGrady reports that an Augustinian priest, during a ceremony at the University of Salamanca, stated that "no nonreligious book of greater usefulness and entertainment had ever been published" (McGrady 23). Baltasar Gracián complimented the text saying that it combined "Greek inventiveness, Italian eloquence, French erudition, and Spanish wit" (quoted in McGrady 23). In the eighteenth century, critics continued to value the work but only the story of Guzmán's picaresque life. These critics generally praised the narrative of Guzmán's adventures but criticized the moralistic digressions.⁶¹ In the nineteenth century there

⁶⁰ "Haz como leas lo que leyeres y no te rías de la conseja y se te pase el consejo" (I, 111).

⁶¹ In fact, there appeared a French translation of the novel, produced by Alain René Lesage in 1732, which

emerged in *Guzmán* criticism the opinion that the moral digressions were simply included by Alemán as a way to help his novel avoid the same type of censorship by the Church and the Inquisition of which the *Lazarillo* had been a victim. Only in the twentieth century have scholars finally begun to appreciate the totality of Alemán's work and begun to acknowledge the artistic unity of *Guzmán*.

Scholars have put forth a variety of opinions in regards to the meaning and purpose of Alemán's text. Moreno Báez argues that the book is primarily a dissertation on original sin and how mankind is to be saved from it. Parker agrees with Moreno's understanding of the work but adds that the text should also be seen as a serious study of delinquency and moral evil. San Miguel views the work as "referida sobre todo a la existencia del hombre sobre la tierra" (277) and considers the social commentary and satire to be as important as the religious message. Cros sees the work as a plea for social reform, particularly the need for society to recognize its collective responsibility to show compassion and be charitable to the needy.⁶² More recently, Charmaine McMahon's study focuses on *desengaño* as a running theme of the work and considers it to be the "binding force and common thread that links each episode to the others" (62). John C. Parrack sees the novel as Alemán's illustration of a picaresque school of learning which "represents a cultural critique that seeks to resolve empirically the contradictions between theory and practice" (300) that existed in Alemán's time.

In addition to these studies which attempt to find the overall purpose or message in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, many critics have chosen to focus on specific themes from the text. Genevieve Ramírez has studied the concept of honor, which is a major theme in the text and one

eliminated the moral digressions in the book. In addition, the famous Spanish author Leandro Fernández de Moratín produced a revised version of the text which also omitted the digressions (McGrady 54).

⁶² "Esta nueva concepción de la compasión y de la justicia social, que desdeñando el valor redentor de la limosna nace de la toma de conciencia de las responsabilidades colectivas, domina el conjunto de la obra y le da su verdadera significación" (Cros 186).

of the narrator's favorite topics for his frequent digressions. J. V. Ricapito has carefully analyzed the themes of love and marriage and how these are portrayed in *Guzmán*. Another popular topic in *Guzmán* criticism has been the psychology and psychological development of the protagonist. Sherman Eoff, whose research has greatly influenced my own, views *Guzmán* primarily as a victim of environmental determinism. Carroll Johnson applies the theories of psychologists like Freud to build a psychological profile of the protagonist. McGrady dedicates an entire chapter of his book on Alemán to the psychology of *Guzmán*, carefully distinguishing between *Guzmán* the picaresque and *Guzmán* the reformed narrator.

Perhaps more than any other topic in *Guzmán* criticism, critics have focused on the protagonist's conversion which occurs at the end of the novel. Some critics have insisted that *Guzmán*'s repentance is genuine while others have questioned the sincerity of his conversion. A detailed summary of the primary arguments both for and against the veracity of *Guzmán*'s transformation will be offered later in this chapter.

Another topic that has received attention from critics is the degree of realism in the novel. Katharina Niemeyer views the work as more realistic than *Lazarillo de Tormes* since this earlier novel still possessed "rasgos de lo inverosímil" while "la historia de *Guzmán* no sale nunca del marco de la verosimilitud" (102).⁶³ She also mentions the careful description of individuals from all levels of Spanish society as one of the realistic features of the novel.⁶⁴ Certainly, there is much commentary in the work about Spanish society and the various issues of the day.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, Ángel San Miguel cautions the reader against accepting the work as a true

⁶³ For example, Niemeyer considers the exaggerated description of the blind man's nose as an example of a "rasgo inverosímil" in *Lazarillo de Tormes* (102).

⁶⁴ "La aparición de una gran variedad de estamentos y profesiones, de toda una serie de distintos tipos sociales, y la presentación detallada de su comportamiento nada ejemplar, han configurado uno de los motivos básicos para la interpretación tradicional de *GdA I/II* como obra 'realista'" (102).

⁶⁵ Sergio Fernández sees *Guzmán de Alfarache* as "un gran relato en el cual intervienen todos los problemas propios al ochocientos español" and suggests that Alemán "ha tratado de resolver el problema entero del género humano hurgando e investigando sus propios problemas y los de su patria" (422).

reflection of seventeenth century Spanish society since Guzmán focuses primarily on the negative aspects of that society and often exaggerates them.⁶⁶ Blanco Aguinaga agrees that the reader only sees reality through the pícario's unique point of view but still finds this significant since often the pícario's point of view can be useful in discovering "la mentira de los otros puntos de vista" (315).⁶⁷ In summary, it is perhaps most useful, as San Miguel suggests, to view the novel as *realistic* in comparison to "otras formas narrativas de aquel tiempo (Libros de Caballerías, Novelas Pastoriles) de carácter menos realista" (183).

In spite of the great amount of scholarly attention the novel has received, and the wide range of topics that critics have chosen to write about in relation to *Guzmán*, few have studied the specifically naturalistic elements of the novel. This is most likely due to two factors. First, the work is supremely Catholic, if nothing else. It is a novel that, on the surface at least, seems to tell how God, through His grace, redeemed a man from a life of sin. Second, even if one may wish to dispute the legitimacy of Guzmán's conversion (and consequently the veracity of the message concerning God's grace), the reader is still left with a novel filled with much commentary and sermonizing about God and religion and one which consistently portrays the clergy and church in general in a positive light. If one were looking for naturalism, this text is indeed a very strange place to find it. Yet in spite of the lack of studies focused on naturalism in *Guzmán*, several critics have at least identified and commented on several deterministic forces that seem to operate in Guzmán's life. As mentioned previously, Sherman Eoff sees environmental determinism as having a tremendous impact on Guzmán's life. C. A. Longhurst also highlights the role of determinism in the work: "The degree of determinism which can

⁶⁶ "el pícario, es innegable, presenta el lado negativo de la sociedad, pero si este lado negativo se describiera objetivamente, sería lícito hablar de un *realismo parcial*. Pero es que ni esto sucede, puesto que el narrador lo exagera sirviéndose de la hipérbole" (181).

⁶⁷ He therefore defines the realism of *Guzmán de Alfarache* as a "*realismo dogmático o de desengaño*" (313).

undoubtedly be detected in Alemán's novel is not such as to guarantee salvation or damnation, and it could even be argued—original sin apart—that it is social and psychological rather than theological (parentage, upbringing, company, etc.)” (99). Edmond Cros highlights three types of “determinismos” that have at least some degree of impact on the protagonist: “hereditario (*de tal palo, tal astilla*), geográfico (padre genovés, madre andaluza), sociológico (malas compañías, medio ambiente de los pobres fingidos)” (131). It is important to remember, as Cros reminds us, that these deterministic forces “no actúan de la misma forma, con la misma fuerza, ni tampoco en el mismo instante” (131). One critic who has seen a direct connection between *Guzmán de Alfarache* and naturalism is Blanco Aguinaga who considers that in Alemán's text “determinismo originario, ambiental y dogma se unen para producir, por vez primera en la novela moderna, una especie de ‘naturalismo’” (326). The remainder of this chapter will carefully analyze the two types of determinism most closely associated with naturalistic philosophy, namely hereditary and environmental determinism and the role these play in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. This will be followed by an analysis of how love and marriage are portrayed in the text. Finally, I will discuss the impact of God in Guzmán's life which inevitably requires a careful analysis of his supposed conversion near the novel's end. In order to maintain conformity with the analyses of the other two works in this dissertation, I will focus almost exclusively on the narration of the events of Guzmán's life rather than the frequent digressions.

Hereditary Determinism

The role of heredity and family in the shaping of Guzman's life and personality has received much attention from critics. This is not surprising since Guzmán himself, in the very first chapter of Part I insists on highlighting the importance and impact his family had in shaping

his future. As Blanco Aguinaga states, Guzmán “empieza no sólo por contarnos la historia de sus padres, sino que, antes de hacerlo, siente la obligación de darnos las razones que le hacen entender como *necesaria* esta prehistoria, porque en ella ve la causa determinante de su historia” (316). Following the example set by *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Guzmán begins his narrative by recounting the circumstances of his birth and describing his parents (and even his grandmother). Guzmán, however, offers considerably more detail about his parents than does *Lazarillo*. He describes his father as coming from a family of Genoese noblemen. He is a lover and squanderer of money, willing to resort to robbery when necessary. While he hears mass regularly and outwardly appears to be very religious, he is quick to abandon his faith when convenient.⁶⁸ During a trip to Spain to recover lost money, his ship is attacked by Moorish pirates and he is taken prisoner. To get out of this predicament, he professes faith in Allah and marries a Moorish woman, whom he soon abandons, having sold her estate without her knowledge or approval and makes off with the money.⁶⁹ Back in Seville, he resumes doing business, professes anew his Christian faith, and meets an intriguing young lady who is married to a rich but sickly gallant. This lady, who will become Guzmán’s mother, finds him attractive and more desirable than her husband but is afraid to leave her husband because she does not want to lose his financial support. To solve this dilemma, she devises an elaborate scheme by which she pretends to be violently ill and insists that she must be left alone to rest. She is not alone, however, as Guzmán’s father is hidden in the room with her and their affair results in Guzmán’s birth. After the old gallant dies, Guzmán’s mother and father marry and his father, unable to live within his means, quickly spends all of his wife’s money and dies after a short illness.

⁶⁸ “Cada mañana oía su misa, sentadas ambas rodillas en el suelo, juntas las manos, levantadas del pecho arriba, el sombrero encima de ellas” (I, 132).

⁶⁹ Ramírez Santacruz comments on the protagonist’s father: “el dato de que su padre, preso en Argel, renegó de la religión cristiana y taimadamente abandonó a la mora con la que contrajo matrimonio, revelan a un hombre de principios vacilantes, hipócrita e interesado” (179).

It is clear then, that Guzmán's parents were accomplished sinners and as the story unfolds, this sinfulness and inclination toward evil will also be apparent in Guzmán himself. However, the mere fact that Guzmán struggles with sin is by no means an indication of any hereditary determinism. Clearly, his innate sinfulness has its origin in the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin.⁷⁰ As Blanco Aguinaga states (and as other critics have echoed), “(n)o es necesario buscar mucho para descubrir que lo que en la prehistoria de su vida determina la historia de Guzmán es, como lo que en la prehistoria bíblica del hombre origina su entrada en la Historia, el pecado original” (317). The prehistory that Guzmán provides the reader is therefore symbolic of all mankind. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Guzmán's sinfulness is based on an orthodox understanding of Christian theology, the influence of heredity can still be detected. Original Sin declares every human being to be born into a condition of sinfulness, from which there is no escape except by the grace of God. However, the doctrine does not dictate which particular sins one will struggle with. This is where the impact of heredity can be seen in Guzmán. Edmond Cros, who cautions readers not to overvalue the importance of determinism in the work, still acknowledges that heredity plays a role in determining the character of Guzmán: “nos parece más exacto afirmar que su atavismo no lo predetermina a pecar, sino que predetermina la manera como peca cuando ya está, por otros motivos, inmerso en el mal” (132). When one compares Guzmán's vices with those of his parents, the biological connection becomes unmistakable.⁷¹

⁷⁰ In a digression on religion in the second part, Guzmán writes: “Porque, como después de la caída de nuestros padres, con aquella levadura se acedó toda la masa corrompida de los vicios, vino en tal ruina la fábrica deste reloj humano, que no le quedó rueda con rueda ni muelle fijo que las moviese. Quedó tan desbaratado, sin algún orden o concierto, como si fuera otro contrario en ser muy diferente del primero en que Dios lo crió, lo cual nació de la inobediencia sola. De allí le sobrevino ceguera en el entendimiento, en la memoria olvido, en la voluntad culpa, en el apetito desorden, maldad en las obras, engaño en los sentidos, flaqueza en las fuerzas y en los gustos penalidades” (II, 433).

⁷¹ This in spite of the fact that Guzmán himself apparently does not see a hereditary link between his own sins and those of his parents: “La sangre se hereda y el vicio se apega” (I, 130).

As was mentioned earlier, Guzmán's father was hardly a saint. In the first two chapters the reader learns that he is an usurer, a thief, opportunistic and skilled in deception. As Guzmán recounts his life story, it becomes abundantly clear that he shares with his father some of these same characteristics.⁷²

Guzmán begins stealing while still very young and continues to develop this 'skill' throughout his life. While he is serving as an assistant to a chef, he develops the habit of gambling. Since he loses a substantial amount of money in cards, he is forced to steal and does so repeatedly in order to fund his continued gambling. Apparently, Guzmán became quite an accomplished thief early on in his career: "Hurtaba lo que podía, pero de modo que no se pudiera causar sospecha contra mí" (I, 310). In spite of his skill in thievery, he is eventually found out and loses his job. In fact, stealing would cost Guzmán his job a number of times in his life. When Guzmán joins a company of soldiers on their way to Italy, he develops a friendship with the captain and helps support him by stealing. However, Guzmán's skills as a thief are so well developed that the captain begins to distrust him: "Hallábase bien con mis travesuras, temíase dellas y de mí" (I, 370). Upon arriving in Italy, the captain dismisses him from his service. Guzmán would further develop his skill as a thief while serving a kind cardinal who took him in out of sympathy because of the (faked) sores on his body. He routinely steals sweetmeats from a trunk where they are kept. What is interesting here is that Guzmán does not steal out of necessity: he is provided with plenty to eat. Rather, he steals simply because of his craving for sweetmeats.⁷³ Guzmán commits numerous additional thefts during his picaresque life, far too

⁷² In fact, Brancaforte suggests that "(e)l paralelismo entre la vida del padre y la del hijo ofrece la mejor confirmación de la importancia que tiene el factor de la herencia para la novela" (176).

⁷³ Contrast this with the episode of the chest of bread in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, where young Lazarillo is forced to steal the bread in order to avoid starvation.

many to list here. These should be sufficient, however, to demonstrate that Guzmán shares his father's inclination toward thievery.

Beyond stealing, Guzmán's father was skilled in the art of deception and Guzmán is nothing if not an expert deceiver. There are numerous instances in the novel in which Guzmán uses deception to take advantage of people and better his situation. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the level of deception of which Guzmán is capable. While he is working for the chef, Guzmán steals a silver goblet which is of great value to his master. The chef's wife is so horrified at the disappearance of the goblet, and so unsuspecting of Guzmán's involvement, that she offers him money to buy a new one before her husband realizes it is gone. Guzmán happily accepts the money but, of course, does not use it to purchase a new goblet. He simply has the one he stole polished and then returns it to his master. Another of Guzmán's deceptions helps to obtain employment for himself. As a way to prompt people to be charitable to him, Guzmán becomes an expert in decorating his body with fake sores. When a cardinal discovers him, he is moved to compassion for the "sick" lad and agrees to care for him and eventually hires him as a page.

Sometimes Guzmán's deceptions involve making himself to appear of a higher class than he is. In an episode reminiscent of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Guzmán obtains an elegant outfit and parades himself around Toledo, pretending to be a gentleman and searching for love. This deception is unprofitable and results only in the picaresque being teased and ridiculed since, as Guzmán himself acknowledges, "aunque vistan a la mona de seda, mona se queda" (I, 341). Guzmán would have greater success with a similar deception later in his life. After being mistreated by his family in Genoa, he decides to return to the city to take revenge on them. This time he dresses respectably and pretends to be Don Juan de Guzmán, a gentleman from Seville.

Because of his appearance, his Genoese relatives welcome him warmly and during his time with them, he manages to swindle them out of a substantial sum of money, avenging the earlier mistreatment he received when they knew him as only a poor rogue. There are many other examples of Guzmán's expertise as a deceiver, but these are sufficient to show that he shared his father's knack for deception.

The degree of hereditary determinism is not as striking in the case of Guzmán's mother, yet there is at least one major character defect that he shares with her. As discussed earlier, Guzmán's mother was capable of elaborate scheming in order to ensure that her desires were met. This is the case with Guzmán as well. Just as his mother would use her husband, the old gallant, to secure her financial well-being while she secretly maintained an adulterous relationship with Guzmán's father, Guzmán would eventually prostitute his second wife simply because it was lucrative to do so.

More will be said about Guzmán's sinful tendencies (and the role heredity plays in shaping these) later in this chapter in the section about love and marriage in *Guzmán*. However, it is clear that the sins that would haunt Guzmán throughout his life are the same ones committed by his parents, suggesting that his particular vices and personal defects are due, at least in part, to heredity.⁷⁴ The chief thing inherited from both of his parents is, of course, original sin, but credit Alemán for his understanding, however primitive, of the role of heredity and genetics in the formation of one's character and habits.

⁷⁴ I must therefore disagree with A. A. Parker's assertion that "(t)here is no sign in the novel of heredity creating circumstances that determine to sin" (154n).

Environmental Determinism

It is clear that Guzmán's family and heritage have a considerable impact on his psychological and social development. However, genetics alone cannot account for Guzmán's actions and personality. As is made clear in the text, and as critics have noted, the society which surrounds Guzmán often makes it difficult for him to be any other way than he is. While the impact of the physical environment is somewhat diminished by the simple fact that the protagonist frequently changes location, there is no doubt his social environment plays an important role in his life. Several critics have highlighted the importance of environment in the shaping of Guzman's life and character. McGrady notes the importance of Guzmán's childhood environment: "Guzmán's character development is heavily influenced by his environment, particularly by his family background. All the ambitions he nourishes, all the fears that oppress him, all his vices, are acquired at home as a child" (88). Moreno Baez echoes these sentiments when he states that "(n)o será posible juzgar su conducta de estos años sin tomar en cuenta las circunstancias que, por haberle rodeado en la mocedad, han contribuído de tal manera a su formación o deformación" (104). One critic who has carefully studied the relationship of Guzmán to his environment is Sherman Eoff. In his article on the psychology of Guzmán, he states that the novel "portrays the close relationship between environment and individual character. Guzmán's psychology must be observed from a vantage point that encompasses in one comprehensive view the several stages of his reaction to environment" (110). Acknowledging the importance of environment in the formation of his character, Eoff's conclusions have an unmistakably deterministic tone. He states that Guzmán is a character who is "heavily conditioned by his environment" (114) and "in vain he seeks to break the bonds of the environment which conspires against him" (108). In order to determine the impact that

Guzmán's environment has in his life, it is important to consider what his environment is like. Using both the text itself and historical information about the era of Guzmán's publication, one can get an idea of the social and economic environment of the time. It can be shown that Guzmán's society was a fertile ground for the creation of picaros like himself.

Any study of the impact of environment on one's character formation must begin with an analysis of one's upbringing and the conditions in which the person was raised. As Johnson rightfully states: "We know that to a great extent the experiences of childhood determine the sort of adult one grows up to be" (170). What is known, then, of Guzmán's first years? Perhaps McGrady best summarizes the environment in which young Guzmanillo is raised: "He has a pampered childhood, without the correction of a father, in a home where moral laxity reigns supreme" (89).⁷⁵ Moreno Báez also acknowledges that some of the blame for Guzmán's deeds is to be directed at his "mala crianza" which is "natural en quien abre los ojos en medio del desorden que reinaba en casa del viejo comendador" (103).

Clearly Guzmán himself felt that he lacked the parental guidance and upbringing needed to prepare him for the world: "Era yo muchacho vicioso y regalado, criado en Sevilla sin castigo de padre, la madre viuda" (I, 163).⁷⁶ Before the rich gallant dies, Guzmán's mother is able to convince both him and Guzmán's real father that Guzmanillo is their child: "supo mi madre ahijarme a ellos y alcanzó a entender y obrar lo imposible de las cosas" (I, 157). Guzmán explains how his mother accomplishes the seemingly impossible:

⁷⁵ That Guzmán was pampered during his childhood is made clear when he finds serving the innkeeper to be initially challenging because he had never before been asked to serve: "se me hacía duro aprender a servir habiendo sido enseñado a mandar" (I, 270).

⁷⁶ Eoff observes that "(d)uring the first twelve years of his life Guzmán has been accustomed to an atmosphere of social and materialistic ease, exposed particularly to an air of sensuality and moral laxity in his home, and in some degree to the general low level of morality in the city of Seville. Moreover, he is a spoiled, undisciplined child, trained neither to work nor to depend on himself" (110). That Guzmán can be considered a spoiled child shows one of the striking differences between this protagonist and his precursor, Lazarillo.

Cuando el caballero estaba solo, le decía que era un estornudo suyo y que tanta similitud no se hallaba en dos huevos. Cuando hablaba con mi padre, afirmaba que él era yo, cortada la cabeza, que se maravillaba, pareciéndole tanto—que cualquier ciego lo conociera sólo con pasar las manos por el rostro—, no haberse descubierto, echándose de ver el engaño; mas que con la ceguedad que la amaban y confianza que hacían de los dos, no se había echado de ver ni puesto sospecha en ello. (I, 157)

Because both “fathers” believed Guzmán’s mother, he was doubly spoiled: “Y así cada uno lo creyó y ambos me regalaban” (I, 157). In spite of being pampered as a child, it is difficult to determine if Guzmán grew up in a *loving* environment. He enjoys both fathers until he is about four years old when the old gallant dies. His real father dies when he is twelve and almost immediately Guzmán decides to abandon his mother.⁷⁷ In stark contrast to the tearful scene in *Lazarillo*, when mother and son are separated, Guzmán’s mother is suspiciously absent at his departure.⁷⁸ After describing the miserable situation in which he and his mother live, Guzmán explains his decision to leave:

El mejor medio que hallé fue probar la mano para salir de miseria, dejando mi madre y tierra. Hícelo así, y, para no ser conocido, no me quise valer del apellido de mi padre; púseme el Guzmán de mi madre y Alfarache de la heredad adonde tuve mi principio. Con esto salí a ver mundo, peregrinando por él, encomendándome a Dios y buenas gentes, en quien hice confianza. (I, 162)

Guzmán abandons his mother and his home with seemingly no regret. There is no indication that he even tells her goodbye. Instead, he focuses on his prospects for new adventures: “Alentábame mucho el deseo de ver mundo, ir a reconocer en Italia mi noble parentela” (I, 163).

It is clear, therefore, that whatever his childhood was like, Guzmán is eager to abandon it in search of a better life.⁷⁹ However, as soon as he begins his journey he discovers that the

⁷⁷ Interestingly, Guzmán does not seem to be much affected by his father’s death: “Cómo quedé niño de poco entendimiento, no sentí su falta; aunque ya tenía de doce años adelante” (I, 159).

⁷⁸ The key difference, of course, being that *Lazarillo* was forced by his mother into the service of the blind man. Guzmán, on the other hand, willingly abandons his mother in search of adventure.

⁷⁹ Moreno-Báez notes that in spite of Guzmán’s natural inclination to evil, he is essentially morally neutral until he enters into society: “Fuera de haber abandonado la casa de sus padres, Guzmán se porta decentemente en esta primera fase de su vida. A pesar de sus malas inclinaciones se mantiene en un estado moral de neutralidad. Pero a causa de su edad y de su entrada en la sociedad empieza el *estadio receptivo-asimilativo*” (91).

“confianza” he has placed in “buenas gentes” is misplaced.⁸⁰ It will be shown that, in addition to the poor upbringing which left him unprepared for his new journey in life, his early encounters with a cruel society and the need to fend for himself in a hostile world make his transformation into a picaro nearly inevitable.⁸¹ Because of his ability to adapt, the boy will quickly learn that the best way to survive in a world of deceivers is to imitate them. In many cases he seems to have been pressured into his sinful acts because of the company he keeps.⁸² In fact, Guzmán is aware of the great influence others have on him and readily blames much of his misbehavior on his peers. “Perdíme con las malas compañías, que son verdugos de la virtud, escalera de los vicios, vino que emborracha, humo que ahoga, hechizo que enhechiza, sol de marzo, áspid sordo y voz de sirena. Cuando comencé a servir, procuraba trabajar y dar gusto; después los malos amigos me perdieron dulcemente” (I, 318). I will now review some of Guzmán’s early encounters with other thieves and deceivers and consider how these early encounters helped to shape his character.

As was demonstrated in the previous section, Guzmán’s inclination toward specific sinful acts and the expert skill he displays in committing them seem to be inherited from his biological parents. However, it is also clear that his environment often makes committing those sins a near necessity. While sometimes Guzmán clearly steals and deceives because of his natural inclination toward evil, there are other times where his circumstances provide him with few other options. His earliest thefts are recorded during his time serving the chef. Guzmán makes it clear that he is not alone in his thievery but is rather simply following the examples set by others:

⁸⁰ As Eoff states, Guzmán’s “disillusionment comes quickly as he falls victim to trickery and injustice and witnesses deception on all sides” (111).

⁸¹ As McGrady states: “Having been indulged by his parents heretofore, Guzmán suffers a shock on learning that other people not only are indifferent to his personal welfare, but will try to deceive and exploit him. He readily adapts to the new circumstances, proving himself to be resourceful and able to swallow his pride” (90).

⁸² Not unlike his father, who also seems to have had the tendency to follow the crowd: “cuando todo corra turbio, iba mi padre con el hilo de la gente” (I, 142).

“Andaba entre lobos: enseñéme a dar aullidos... Todos jugaban y juraban, todos robaban y sisaban: hice lo que los otros” (I, 315). Interestingly, Guzmán casts part of the blame for why servants have a tendency to steal on their masters: “Gran culpa desto suelen tener los amos, dando corto salario y mal pagado, porque se sirven de necesitados y dellos hay pocos que sean fieles” (I, 314).⁸³ The unwillingness of masters to pay their servants a fair wage has driven them to steal, which in turn, contributes to their reputation of being untrustworthy.⁸⁴ It is clear, therefore, that Guzmán’s career as a thief is prompted by both an innate tendency toward that particular sin and by an environment that encourages it since everyone else participates and unfair wages made it a near necessity. It should be noted, however, that his circumstances do not always explain his theft. As was mentioned earlier, there is no need for him to steal from the cardinal who consistently treats him kindly and provides him with adequate sustenance. There are also other times when Guzmán refrains from stealing, such as during his time as a beggar since stealing was against their “rules” and begging alone was profitable enough. Still, Guzmán returns to his favorite vice repeatedly during his picaresque life whenever circumstances require it and sometimes when they do not.⁸⁵ Toward the end of Part II, when Guzmán’s second wife abandons him, leaving him unable to depend on the income she receives from prostitution, he quickly returns to thievery as the way to provide for himself and his mother. Finally, his thefts are discovered while working for (and robbing) a wealthy lady and he is sentenced to the galleys for the rest of his life.

⁸³ Eoff comments on the protagonist’s tendency to blame others for his depravity: “Finding ample excuses in the actions of his superiors, he indulges in trickery, thievery, and self-gratification, and enjoys being in the swim of life in accord with the moral standards of the common herd” (112)

⁸⁴ In addition to the religious digressions present in the work that focus on how one should live to achieve salvation, Alemán occasionally includes observations like this one that comment on specific problems in the Spanish society of his time.

⁸⁵ Eoff observes that “(c)heating and thievery appeal to him because they are commonly indulged in and because they afford an easy and comparatively safe means of satisfying his materialistic desires in a society that stresses ease” (115).

Just as Guzmán develops his skills as a thief because he is surrounded by thieves, he learns to become an expert in the art of deception because he himself has been a victim of the deception of others early in his picaresque life. Shortly after abandoning his mother and setting out alone, he falls victim to deception. He arrives at a small inn, exhausted from his travels and starving for sustenance. He is delighted to hear the hostess offer him an omelet of eggs but when he begins to devour it, he quickly discovers that the eggs are nearly ready to hatch, which makes him violently ill. This is his first experience of the cruel world that awaits him. Shortly thereafter, another deception involving food occurs. Guzmán joins up with a muleteer that he meets on the road and the two decide to spend the night at a village inn. The innkeeper prepares for the hungry travelers a dish which he claims is veal but which Guzmán later discovers to have been the meat of a freshly killed mule.⁸⁶ In spite of these two early deceptions, the picaro does not seem to learn his lesson about his inability to trust others. Another deception to which Guzmán falls prey occurs during his first visit to Genoa to find his relatives. His uncle takes him in and orders a servant to show him to his bedroom. The servant brings Guzmán a lamp and warns him not to extinguish its light because there are large and dangerous bats and goblins in that region and light is the only defense against them. Despite the absurdity of the servant's claims, Guzmán states that "creílo con toda la simplicidad del mundo" (I, 381). Guzmán is sound asleep when suddenly he is awakened by several figures dressed as demons who proceed to toss him in a blanket.⁸⁷ I have only listed a few of the deceptions of which Guzmán was a

⁸⁶ Rosa Perelmuter Pérez comments on the significance of these first two negative experiences for Guzmán's life: "His two initial experiences with food, the rotten omelette and the bogus veal are important stepping-stones in his development, since they introduce him to the trickery of others and will be instrumental in the formulation of his own" (821). These episodes function in a similar manner to Lazarillo's experience with the stone bull: forcing the young picaro first to learn that the world can be a cruel place, and second to use his own cleverness and craftiness to survive.

⁸⁷ Interestingly, Guzmán's relatives are seen here to be capable of the same type of pranks and mischievous behavior as the picaro himself.

victim, but it should be clear that the pìcaro has to learn the harsh lesson that deception is the way of the world and that mastering this art is to be a necessity if he is to survive.

If Guzmán needed to learn the art of deception he would find no better teachers than the gang of beggars that he joins while in Rome. Guzmán describes how one beggar in particular taught him the proper ways of begging: “Guiábame otro mozuelo de la tierra, diestro en ella, de quien comencé a tomar liciones. Éste me enseñó a los principios cómo había de pedir a los unos y a los otros; que no a todos ha de ser con un tono ni con una arenga” (I, 386). His companion teaches him how to modify his method of begging depending on the type of person from whom he was seeking charity. “Enseñóme cómo había de compadecer a los ricos, lastimar a los comunes y obligar a los devotos” (I, 386). Later he meets an old man, originally from Spain, who offers to further his education in the ways of beggars, including how to fake a number of medical conditions: “enseñóme a fingir lepra, hacer llagas, hinchar una pierna, tullir un brazo, teñir el color del rostro, alterar todo el cuerpo” (I, 398). Guzmán becomes such an expert at his new skill that it nearly backfires on him when he meets a cardinal who, utterly convinced that his sores are real, insists on taking him in to have him examined by doctors. Clearly, then, Guzmán receives from the environment that surrounds him the training he needs to develop the ever useful skill of deception in order to better his odds of survival.

Guzmán’s time with the old beggar of Rome in book three of Part I is perhaps the greatest example of environmental determinism in the novel. Through his many years of experience, this beggar developed a complex system of strategies that helped him to maximize the profits he received begging. His ability to adapt to his environment and to know which types of behaviors were most successful at certain times of the day, or with certain types of individuals, was impressive. For example, he says to Guzmán “considera que no se ha de pedir

por la siesta el verano, y menos en las casas de hombres nobles que en las de los oficiales: es hora desacomodada, reposan todos o quieren reposar, dales pesadumbre que nadie los despierte y se enfadan mucho con importunidades” (I, 397). Another piece of advice he gives is that Guzmán should not spend too much time knocking on any one door: “En llamando a una puerta dos veces, o no están en casa, o no lo quieren estar, pues no responden. Pasa de largo y no te detengas, que perdiendo tiempo no se gana dinero” (I, 397). One of the most humorous lines in the novel is the advice he gives Guzmán about never opening a closed door: “No abras puerta cerrada: pide sin abrirla ni entrar dentro, que acontece abriendo, descuidados de lo que sucede, salir un perro que se lleva media nalga en un bocado; y no sé cómo nos conocen, que aun dellos estamos odiados” (I, 397). This is the type of common sense advice the old, experienced beggar gave to Guzmán before he died. He had clearly learned to adapt to his environment and to manipulate it for his own benefit.

Based on a careful consideration of Guzmán’s social environment, and his need to adapt to it through deceptive strategies and schemes, it is easy to see why Eoff concludes that Guzmán is “hopelessly shackled by his environment” (119). While I believe that “hopelessly” implies a level of determinism that Alemán would have rejected (considering the emphasis that the author puts on free will and the possibility for man’s salvation), it remains clear that Guzmán’s environment has an enormous impact on his actions and the formation of his character and attitudes. As will be seen in the conclusion of this dissertation, Alemán’s ability to respect the impact of environmental forces without sacrificing the free will of his characters corresponds nicely to some of the naturalist novels of nineteenth century Spain.

Sex and Marriage

In *Lazarillo de Tormes* sex and marriage are used primarily as ways to secure or better one's survival as the amorous affairs of both Lazarillo's mother and the protagonist himself make clear. The reader of *Guzmán de Alfarache* quickly discovers that little has changed in this second picaresque work. J. V. Rikapito's excellent article on love and marriage in *Guzmán* has been of great assistance to me in this part of my study. Rikapito summarizes Alemán's plan for these two major themes in the work:

Far from being isolated and sporadic references and experiences, love and marriage correspond to a plan of development carefully laid by the author which corresponds on the one hand to a generic negative vision of the world which envelops and embraces the whole work, and a particular one which is a part of the central character's intimate psychological structure was caused by the single, most central experience of Guzmán: the circumstances surrounding his birth and early life. (138)

Given that the circumstances of his birth have such a deterministic influence on Guzmán's idea of and experience in love, it is prudent to revisit those circumstances that were only briefly outlined earlier in this chapter.

Even before Guzmán's father meets his mother, he has already been married once, to a Moorish girl who, as soon as the opportunity presents itself, he robs and abandons.⁸⁸ An equally unimpressive resume in matters of love is to be found on Guzmán's maternal side. His grandmother was "a super-enchantress, a woman who has surpassed the mother in the area of love and deception" (Rikapito 127). She was apparently far more promiscuous than was his mother:

Si mi madre enredó dos, mi abuela dos docenas. Y como a pollos—como dicen—los hacía comer juntos en un tiesto y dormir en un nidal, sin picarse los unos a los otros ni ser necesario echalles capirotes. Con esta hija enredó cien linajes, diciendo y jurando a cada padre que era suya; y a todos les parecía: a cuál en los

⁸⁸ As Rikapito states: "Here love is presented as a convenience, where the *amada* is reduced to a mere object, the victim of the *levantisco*'s opportunism" (126).

ojos, a cuál en la boca y en más partes y composturas del cuerpo, hasta fingir lunares para ello, sin faltar a quien pareciera en el escupir (I, 160).⁸⁹

Ricapito does not fail to see the deterministic forces operating here: “The marital experiences of both father and grandmother represent a pre-history for the treatment of love and marriage in the work. These experiences of collective pre-history give a qualitative indication of life prior to Guzmán’s advent into the world. It will be no different from the world we shall witness in reading the *Guzmán*” (127).

Just as Guzmán’s father and grandmother have failed to experience anything like true love in their lives, Guzmán’s mother’s marriage to the rich, old gallant is born of convenience rather than genuine the love. This is made clear both by the fact that she is so eager to begin an adulterous affair with Guzmán’s father and by the lengths to which she is willing to go in order to ensure that both her husband and her young lover remain in her life. She needs her wealthy husband because of the financial support he provides but needs Guzmán’s father to satisfy her sexual desires. As mentioned earlier, her solution to this problem is to fake an illness which requires her to rest for long periods of time without disruption from anyone, most of all her husband.⁹⁰ With the husband kept away, she is able to easily carry on an affair with her younger, more attractive lover. It is important to note that Guzmán sees his mother’s shrewdness in crafting this plan as inherited from her own mother: “Determinábase a dejarlo y mudar de ropa, dispuesta a saltar por cualquier inconveniente; mas la mucha sagacidad suya y largas experiencias, heredadas y mamadas al pecho de su madre, le hicieron camino y ofrecieron ingeniosa resolución” (I, 146). It would seem that such deceptive skills are present in at least three generations of Guzmán’s family.

⁸⁹ It should be recalled that this is the exact strategy that Guzmán’s mother would use to convince both of his “fathers” that he was their true offspring.

⁹⁰ As was already pointed out, Guzmán would himself fake illness or disease in order to manipulate others. Such a strategy, it will be recalled, helps Guzmán to obtain employment in the service of the Cardinal.

Given the protagonist's heredity and the morally corrupt environment into which he was born, one would expect his own experiences with love and marriage to be equally deplorable to those of his parents and this is indeed the case. It should be noted that Guzmán, at least the post-conversion Guzmán who is narrating his life story, understands what true love is: "Pero amor corre por otro camino. Ha de ser forzosamente recíproco, traslación de dos almas, que cada una dellas asista más donde ama que adonde anima" (I, 151). Later he adds: "El amor ha de ser libre. Con libertad ha de entregar las potencias a lo amado; que el alcaide no da el castillo cuando por fuerza so lo quitan, y el que amase por malos medios no se le puede decir que ama, pues va forzado adonde no le lleva su libre voluntad" (I, 152). Although these words seem to indicate that the reformed Guzmán has a mature understanding of genuine love, such love will elude him throughout his entire picaresque life.

Guzmán's first efforts to find love take place while he is strolling about Toledo, masquerading as a wealthy young man after having purchased a fine outfit of clothing. He attempts to strike up romance with three different women but each attempt ends with the picaro being ridiculed in some fashion.⁹¹ He has other amorous adventures at different times throughout the novel, nearly all of which are unpleasant for him. He eventually does marry, twice in fact, and both marriages come to disastrous ends. It is essential to study both of these marriages in detail as they will be shown to be motivated, as naturalist philosophy would expect, by lust and greed rather than genuine love.

⁹¹ These experiences occur shortly after Guzmán hears the story of Ozmín and Daraja. Rikapito notes that these three experiences "represent, as it were, a cycle of adventures which culminate in the ridiculous, serving as an absurd postscript to the ideal, exotic world of Ozmín and Daraja" (130). It should be noted that the inclusion of "La historia de los dos enamorados Ozmín y Daraja" within the text of *Guzmán de Alfarache* may seem odd to readers today, but this was common in the Spanish Golden Age. Cervantes's inclusion of "La novela del curioso impertinente" within the first part of *Don Quijote* is just one more of many examples of the practice of interpolating unrelated short stories within a long work of prose.

It is clear that Guzmán agrees to marry his first wife largely because of the financial reward he would receive from the girl's father: "Casóme con su hija y otra no tenía. Estaba rico. Era moza de muy buena gracia. Prometióme con ella tres mil ducados. Dije de sí" (II, 368). There is no indication that this marriage is inspired by anything like true love and in fact seems to be little more than a profitable financial transaction. At the outset of the marriage Guzmán is more or less a wealthy man and his wife more or less content. However, Guzmán quickly discovers that what his wife truly desires is not him but only his wealth. Guzmán describes the deterioration of his marriage in the following passage, worth quoting at length:

Caséme rico: casado estoy pobre. Alegres fueron los días de mi boda para mis amigos y tristes los de mi matrimonio para mí. Ellos los tuvieron buenos y se fueron a sus casas; yo quedé padeciéndolos malos en la mía, no por más de por quererlo así mi mujer y ser presuntuosa. Era gastadora, franca, liberal, enseñada siempre a verme venir como abeja, cargado de regalos. No llevaba en paciencia verme salir por la mañana y que a mediodía volviese sin blanca. Perdía el juicio cuando vía que lo pasado faltaba. Pues ya--¡pobre de mí!--cuando del todo se acabó el aceite y sintió que se ardían las torcidas, cuando no habiendo qué comer ni adónde salirlo a buscar, se sacaban de casa las prendas para vender, ¡aquí era ello! Aquí perdió pie y paciencia. Nunca más me pudo ver. Aborrecióme, como si fuera su enemigo verdadero. (II, 384)

Clearly, Guzmán's wife only values him to the extent that he can satisfy her desire for material things. When tight finances make this difficult, she treats him as an enemy. Her relationship with Guzmán never improves and she dies a short time later.

After the death of his first wife, Guzmán decides to study theology at Alcalá de Henares and is within months of completing his studies when he meets Gracia and falls madly in love with her. Unable to focus any longer on learning because of his obsession with Gracia, he decides to abandon his studies in order to marry her. Guzmán makes it clear that there is nothing sacred about his love for Gracia: "Pues de bachiller en teología salté a maestro de amor profano" (II, 432). Even before knowing the details of Guzmán's life with Gracia, the reader is already

sure that this second marriage will be a failure. Just before recounting the events of the marriage, Guzmán lashes out against love in one of his many digressions: “Es amor una prisión de locura, nacida de ocio, criada con voluntad y dineros y curada con torpeza. Es un exceso de codicia bestial, sutilísima y penetrante, que corre por los ojos hasta el corazón, como la yerba del balletero, que hasta llegar a él, como a su centro, no para” (II, 432). Because his inlaws are rather well-to-do and take a liking to him, the marriage initially goes smoothly. However, when they begin to have severe financial problems, Guzmán begins to pander Gracia, which he does successfully and profitably.⁹² His willingness to openly prostitute his wife for financial benefit represents the depth of the protagonist’s depravity, surpassing that of Lazarillo who knowingly remains married to an adulteress because of the financial stability it brought him.⁹³ Guzmán and his wife eventually move to Seville where Guzmán is reunited with his mother, who does not get along with Gracia. Their relationship quickly sours to the point that it cannot be redeemed and Gracia takes Guzmán’s possessions and flees to Italy with a certain captain.

Love and marriage in *Guzmán de Alfarache* are presented in a way consistent with a naturalistic world. Guzmán, at least prior to his conversion, seems unaware of the true meaning of love and the sacred nature of the institution of marriage. Instead, he sees marriage primarily as a convenient way to better his financial situation and, unsurprisingly, both of his marriages crumble when he encounters financial hardship. Also, whatever feelings of “love” that Guzmán has toward his wives seem to be little more than unbridled lust. Finally, the impact that heredity has had in shaping Guzmán’s attitudes and behaviors in the realm of sex and marriage is

⁹² Eoff comments on Guzmán’s immoral situation: “This state is but the culmination of a course of action in which moral flexibility has enabled him to bypass every difficulty standing in his way” (114).

⁹³ While Lazarillo was quietly tolerant of his wife’s illicit relationship with the priest, Guzmán actively promotes Gracia’s prostitution because of the wealth it brings him.

unmistakeable given that his love life follows a trajectory not unlike that of his father, mother and grandmother.

God and Salvation

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, *Lazarillo de Tormes* treats religion as little more than a naive superstition that self-serving members of a manipulative clergy use to take advantage of the Spanish people. Mateo Alemán, having read *Lazarillo* and having been fully aware of the novel's history with censorship, knew that such a heretical and anticlerical work would likely never again see the light of day. He was careful, therefore, to ensure that *Guzmán de Alfarache* would be a thoroughly Catholic work. Both Catholic doctrine and the ecclesiastical authorities that promote it are portrayed in a positive light, in stark contrast to what is found in *Lazarillo*. Thus McGrady quite correctly acknowledges that “(a)s far as a religious ‘message’ is concerned, *Guzmán de Alfarache* must be considered a refutation of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, not a continuation. The unknown author satirizes the clergy; Alemán exalts it. The priesthood is the only profession (besides the kingship) to be constantly extolled in *Guzmán*” (60-61). Also, while *Lazarillo* contains a few references to God, *Guzmán* is filled with frequent, sometimes quite lengthy, digressions into matters of theology.

A few critics and several general books on Spanish literature have suggested that the omnipresent moral and theological digressions are unimportant and unnecessary additions to the novel and were most likely included by Alemán primarily to avoid the censorship that *Lazarillo de Tormes* faced.⁹⁴ Peter Dunn finds this theory implausible since this would suggest that the Inquisitorial censors would not have been sharp enough to see through this and “whatever else

⁹⁴ For example, Richard Chandler, in his book *A New History of Spanish Literature*, speaks of the “maze of long, moralizing passages and countless digressions, perhaps used to avoid censure and clerical censorship” (121).

they may have been, they were not stupid” (55). Obviously, if one takes the view that the digressions are only added to avoid censorship, it becomes easy to dismiss the theological or religious aspect of the book. If, on the other hand, the digressions are lessons and advice offered by a reformed sinner who wants his readers to avoid the same pitfalls in life that he has experienced, then any theological message in the text becomes essential to the understanding and appreciation of the work as a whole.

Much of the critical debate regarding *Guzmán de Alfarache* has centered on the protagonist’s supposed conversion or reform that takes place during his time in the galleys toward the end of the novel. If Guzmán’s repentance is real and the picaresque has genuinely reformed his life, it would seem to validate the basic theological message that God’s grace and salvation is available for every man, even the lowest of sinners, if he is willing to repent. On the other hand, if the conversion can be proven to be false, we would then be left with an utterly pessimistic work since not even God would be capable of rescuing man from his depravity. It is therefore important to consider this very important issue of the veracity of Guzmán’s conversion. Quite capable scholars have argued for both sides of this issue. Arguing in favor of the sincerity of the protagonist’s repentance are Moreno Báez, A. A. Parker, Donald McGrady, Peter Dunn and Francisco Rico. Among the scholars that have expressed doubt that Guzmán’s conversion is genuine are Carroll B. Johnson and Benito Brancaforte. In his study entitled “The Problem of Conversion and Repentance in *Guzmán de Alfarache*,” C. A. Longhurst carefully reviews the various opinions put forth by critics and provides a useful summary of the primary arguments for and against Guzmán’s conversion. According to Longhurst, there are four primary arguments in favor of Guzmán’s conversion. First, the very nature of the autobiography seems to be evidence in favor of the protagonist’s reform: it is basically a long confession of Guzmán’s crimes, some

of which could not have been public knowledge. His claim to have been reformed combined with the confession-like writing is strong evidence of the sincerity of his conversion.

More evidence supporting the veracity of Guzmán's reform is his constant denouncing of sin throughout the text, and not just his own sin, but sin in general. This would indicate that he is genuinely remorseful about his crimes and desires for others to avoid his sinful life. A third argument in favor of Guzmán's conversion comes from the fact that the author himself seems to present his protagonist's repentance as genuine. In the prologue to Part I he writes of his protagonist:

Él mismo escribe su vida desde las galeras, donde queda forzado al remo por delitos que cometió, habiendo sido ladrón famosísimo [...] Y no es impropiedad ni fuera de propósito si en esta primera escribiere alguna doctrina; que antes parece muy llegado a razón darla un hombre de claro entendimiento, ayudado de letras y castigado del tiempo, aprovechándose del ocioso de la galera. (113)

The fact that Alemán refers to his protagonist as “a man of clear understanding” and “having been a thief” seems to indicate that he intends to present Guzmán to the reader as a reformed man.

A fourth argument in favor of the protagonist's conversion is the simple fact that the text does indeed contain much doctrinal truth and some of the moralizations in the text “appear to incorporate doctrinal elements that had been reinvigorated by the Council of Trent” (Longhurst 89). The mere inclusion of genuine Catholic doctrine does not, of course, prove Guzmán's conversion but, as Longhurst says, “looked at from the point of view of the real author it does not seem all that likely that he would have put doctrinal truths in the mouth of a cynical, unchristian commentator who did not mean a word he said, since this would have detracted from the validity of the doctrines” (89). This argument is reinforced by the fact *Guzmán* was, in its time, “praised for its orthodoxy and its moral content” (Longhurst 89). These are the primary arguments in

support of the veracity of Guzmán's conversion according to Longhurst. There are also, however, several arguments which call into question whether the protagonist is truly reformed at the novel's end.

Longhurst summarizes several arguments which can be used to dispute Guzmán's conversion. First of all, there are several occasions in the text where Guzmán seems to be "still governed by feelings of hatred or vengeance at the moment of writing" (Longhurst 89). This is important since Guzmán claims to be writing as a reformed man. Clearly, some of his negative attitudes have not changed. There are also times when Guzmán seems to gleefully recount his crimes, almost as if he were proud of them. So, in spite of the frequent denouncing of sin and constant moralizing, there is also "the equally overt and obvious gusto and delight of the author in relating waggish and lurid tales, some of which, if followed to any moral conclusion, would more likely lead to a negative than a positive morality" (Grass 194). It seems rather hypocritical that Guzmán seems to find such joy in telling the story of a life he now supposedly deeply regrets having lived.

Another argument used to suggest Guzmán's reform is not genuine is the fact that sometimes he reveals a very pessimistic attitude toward life. As Longhurst states, "Time and time again he insists that evil is so deeply ingrained in human nature that fundamental change is difficult to the point of being impossible. Far from the book sustaining the message that man's inherent tendency to evil can be overcome if he avails himself of God's grace, the emphasis falls much more often on the deterministic nature of evil" (90). If Guzmán's message is that God can save anyone, in any situation, then why so much emphasis on the seemingly irresistible power of evil?⁹⁵

⁹⁵ "Este camino corre el mundo. No comienza de nuevo, que de atrás le viene al garbanzo el pico. No tiene medio ni remedio. Así lo hallamos, así lo dejaremos. No se espere mejor tiempo ni se piense que lo fue el pasado. Todo

A third argument against Guzmán's conversion comes from his actions after his supposed repentance. Shortly after his conversion, Soto organizes an uprising with the other prisoners and offers Guzmán the chance to participate. He chooses not to do so but his choice can hardly be attributed to a renewed spiritual state. Rather, he believes that if he informs the captain of Soto's plan, it will better his chances of obtaining freedom. We see, therefore, that this last episode of the narration continues to show Guzmán "as a schemer and as more interested in saving his own skin than those of others, for he makes no attempt to dissuade his fellow prisoners from committing treason" (Longhurst 90).

The fourth and final argument against the sincerity of Guzmán's reform, according to Longhurst, is found in certain comments the protagonist makes regarding the difficulty people had believing that he had changed: "Aunque siempre por lo atrás mal indiciado, no me creyeron jamás. Que aquesto más malo tienen los malos, que vuelven sospechosas aun las buenas obras que hacen y casi con ellas escandalizaban, porque las juzgan por hipocresía" (II, 506). It is almost as if, as Longhurst suggests, "Guzmán is in effect trying to preempt the rejection by the reader of the genuineness of his reform [...] He is so concerned about convincing others of his newly-found honesty that his motives become suspect" (91).

Almost all of the scholars expounding these various views, on both sides of the issue, have put forth intriguing arguments that are worthy of serious consideration. None of them, however, are ultimately convincing and the reader must accept that there is no easy way to clear up the ambiguity in the text. Of course, the obvious way to settle the matter once and for all would be to read the promised Part III of Guzmán's story, which never materialized. This would have made it clear whether or not Guzmán's reform was a lasting one or whether he quickly

ha sido, es y será una misma cosa. El primero padre fue alevoso; la primera madre, mentirosa; el primero hijo, ladrón y fratricida" (I, 377).

resorted to his picaresque ways. Without Part III to resolve the matter completely, I believe it is most prudent to accept Guzmán's conversion as genuine, primarily because his contemporaries viewed it as such and because the protagonist himself clearly intends for readers to learn from the error of his ways.⁹⁶

Assuming, then, that Guzmán is truly converted and saved by the grace of God, we are left with a novel that is more optimistic than *Lazarillo de Tormes*. As was made clear in the previous chapter, Lazarillo seems to be driven by blind fate and the author offers his protagonist no real hope of appreciably improving his situation and certainly no help from God. By the novel's end, he has reached the depths of depravity and, in spite of the numerous references to God and Lazarillo's frequent and close contact with people of religious vocation, there seems to be no genuine possibility of salvation for the picaro. Guzmán, on the other hand, though even more depraved than Lazarillo and a more accomplished criminal, is rescued by the grace of God at the lowest point in his life. The theological message seems to be clear: any man, regardless of his sinful state, can obtain salvation if he sincerely repents and turns to God for salvation. However, until he is brought to repentance and encounters the grace of God, his life is largely shaped by the same environmental and genetic forces that are always operating in an individual's life and in human society.

Guzmán de Alfarache, in spite of being a very Catholic work in terms of the theological message presented and the moral values extolled, reveals a society that operates in a surprisingly naturalistic fashion. While the work is clearly a treatise on original sin and paints a picture of a society that confirms this Christian doctrine, the author also seems very aware of the deterministic forces that influence society and the individuals living in that society. While the

⁹⁶ Schlickers writes: "Los críticos coetáneos, por el contrario, no entendieron la conversión de Guzmán en sentido subversivo, y el texto mismo tampoco alude a ello" (171).

doctrine of original sin may explain why all human beings seem so inclined toward sin, it is the combination of heredity and environment that seems to play the biggest role in determining exactly what type of vices a particular individual will struggle with. In spite of Guzmán's insistence on free will, it is clear to the reader that he has inherited not only original sin, but also the tendency to gravitate toward specific sins from his parents and his grandmother.⁹⁷ It is also clear that Guzmán develops the arts of deception and manipulation, not only because of an inherited evil nature, but because social and economic conditions at the time made survival exceedingly difficult otherwise. Guzmán and other characters in the novel often seem like animals that must learn to adapt, by whatever means necessary, to an environment that severely limits them. It seems that Alemán's overall message is that only by the grace of God can a man overcome the many deterministic forces at work in his life. In this respect, *Guzmán de Alfarache* can indeed be considered a type of response to *Lazarillo de Tormes*, which seemed to offer man no genuine hope whatsoever.

While the abundance of theological doctrine and the exaltation of ecclesiastical authorities in the text would never allow for *Guzmán de Alfarache* to be compared to any of the works of Zola, it is nonetheless true, and shall be demonstrated in the conclusion to this dissertation, that the Spanish naturalist novels of the nineteenth century also tend to acknowledge the effects of heredity and environment without embracing the fatalistic determinism of pure naturalistic philosophy or denying the Catholic faith so dear to Spain.

⁹⁷ Regarding free will, Guzmán says: "Las estrellas no fuerzan, aunque inclinan. Algunos ignorantes dicen: <<¡Ah señor!, al fin había de ser y lo que ha de ser conviene que sea.>> Hermano mío, mal sientes de la verdad, que ni ha de ser ni conviene ser: tú lo haces que sea y que convenga. Libre albedrío te dieron con que te gobernases. La estrella no te fuerza ni todo el cielo junto con cuantas tiene te puede forzar; tú te fuerzas a dejar lo bueno y te esfuerzas en lo malo, siguiendo tus deshonestidades, de donde resultan tus calamidades" (I, 464).

NATURALISM IN *EL BUSCÓN*

Introduction

By combining religious and moral commentary with the adventures of a picaresco, Mateo Alemán discovered the formula for a picaresco novel that would escape the censorship of the Inquisition. The success of *Guzmán de Alfarache* “set up a vogue for picaresco novels,” (Brenan 174) with a dozen or so being published over the next half-century. Following the precedent set by Alemán, these works generally combined the narrative of a picaresco’s life with accompanying moral commentary (Brenan 174). However, the picaresco novel would be tweaked once again with the publication of Francisco de Quevedo’s *Historia de la vida del Buscón llamado Don Pablos* in 1626. In Quevedo’s novel, the moral commentary and sermonizing are eliminated and the focus shifts to the events of the picaresco’s life and the narrator’s talent as a story-teller. Due to the absence of lengthy digressions, *El Buscón* is a short novel, much more similar to *Lazarillo de Tormes* than *Guzmán de Alfarache* in terms of episodic structure and length, but it does share with Alemán’s text a strong emphasis on crime and human depravity. However, what distinguishes Quevedo’s picaresco work from both of these earlier works is the author’s tremendous ability to use language for humorous effect. The biting satire and extreme sarcasm of *El Buscón* are unrivaled by any other picaresco novel of the time and the work is unmistakably a literary expression of its author’s prejudices and ideology.

Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas was an extraordinarily gifted and diverse Spanish writer. He was born in Madrid in 1580 of an aristocratic family and spent his childhood in the royal palace where his father had served as secretary to Princess María, the daughter of Carlos V and his mother was a lady in waiting for the queen (Del Val 461). His father died shortly after his birth and he was “left to the care of governesses and tutors in the dreary atmosphere of Philip II’s court” (Brenan 258). In general, his childhood was an unhappy one and he had the physical disadvantages of being lame and of extremely poor vision (Brenan 258). As a young man, Quevedo attended the University of Alcalá de Henares where he studied philosophy and theology and mastered several languages including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian; after completing his studies at Alcalá he moved to Valladolid where he began to establish himself as a writer (Brenan 259). When the court moved to Madrid in 1606, Quevedo moved with it and remained there until 1611 (Del Val 461). In 1613 he began to serve as the political agent of the Duque de Osuna, with whom he had become friends, and remained in the Duque’s service for seven years. During this time, the Duque de Osuna, in collaboration with others, conspired to overthrow the Venetian Republic with the assistance of Quevedo (Brenan 260). The plot was discovered while Quevedo was in Venice, an occurrence which nearly cost him his life.⁹⁸ Osuna was eventually imprisoned and Quevedo was exiled to his home at Torre de Juan Abad while authorities investigated his conduct (Brenan 260). He was released from his exile some time after Philip IV came to power and for a while enjoyed the favor of the king, eventually becoming his secretary in 1632 (Del Val 462). He later married a widow of noble family in 1634 but the marriage was unsuccessful and the couple separated after only a few months together (Brenan 261). In 1639, Quevedo fell out of favor with Philip IV and was

⁹⁸ In order to elude the men who were given orders to kill him, he disguised himself as a beggar and the deception was successful because of his near perfect Italian accent (Val 461-462).

imprisoned in a monastery in Leon for four years. Shortly after his release, he returned to Torre de Juan Abad where he died in 1645.

Quevedo was a prolific writer who produced works in a variety of genres. His poetry ranged from simple but powerful love sonnets, to hilarious poems with biting satire, to serious moral and philosophical commentary. He was an enemy of Góngora and the *culteranista* style, preferring the clearer, more direct style of the *conceptistas*.⁹⁹ In spite of his insistence on clarity, however, he still demonstrated tremendous skill and mastery of the Spanish language in his poetry. While his skills as a poet were considerable, Quevedo is still mostly known for his prose, namely *El Buscón* and *Los sueños* (1627), the latter a satirical commentary on the corruption and decadence of seventeenth-century Spain. Quevedo also produced works on theology including *La cuna y la sepultura* (1612) and *La providencia de Dios* (1641) and political works such as *La política de Dios, gobierno de Cristo y tiranía de Satanás* (1617-1626). Quevedo was a masterful writer of prose, demonstrating an enormous vocabulary and unmatched wit.

In spite of Quevedo's great talent as a writer of prose, the only novel to come from his pen was *Historia de la vida del Buscón llamado don Pablos* published in 1626.¹⁰⁰ Written in the same autobiographical style of the then established picaresque novel, *El Buscón* recounts the story of Pablos of Segovia, a young lad who, despising his family and ignoble birth, sets out to make a better name for himself, aspiring to become a gentleman. His efforts are constantly thwarted, however, and in spite of his aspirations of nobility, his life continues to degenerate until he has become, by the novel's end, a notorious thief capable of the most heinous crimes,

⁹⁹ The *culteranos* favored Latinate words, unusual syntax, and accumulations of adjectives in their poetry. *Conceptistas*, on the other hand, privileged the idea of a poet over its use of language and followed Garcilaso in using clear, uncomplicated poetic expression. In fact, Quevedo would dedicate two works exclusively to the task of attacking *culteranismo*: *La culta latiniparla* and *Aguja de navegar cultos*.

¹⁰⁰ Though the work was almost certainly written considerably earlier than this, probably around 1604. See Gonzalo Díaz Migoyo's "Las fechas del *Buscón*" for a summary of the various theories in regards to the date of composition of *El Buscón*.

even murder. The entire story is narrated by Pablos himself, in keeping with the picaresque tradition. A brief overview of the novel's plot will help the reader understand my analysis which follows.

As is the case with most picaresque novels, Pablos begins his story by telling the reader about his family, which was a great embarrassment to him. His father was a barber and accomplished thief and his mother was a witch. He had a little brother who died very young as a direct result of receiving lashes for assisting his father in one of his thefts. After he expresses his desire to move away and become an honest gentleman, his parents send him to school where he becomes friends with Don Diego Coronel. After a miserable experience under the tutelage of the despicable Cabra, he later accompanies Don Diego to Alcalá as his servant. He suffers great mistreatment while at Alcalá which inspires him to try to become even more mischievous and cruel than his peers. His growing reputation as a troublemaker eventually causes him to lose his job as Don Diego's servant. At about this time, Pablos receives a letter from his uncle stating that his father has been hanged for his crimes and his mother has been placed in jail. Pablos returns to Segovia to collect a small inheritance but immediately abandons his hometown once again after being embarrassed by his uncle's lifestyle and the low-lives with whom he associated. He heads for Madrid and on the way meets Don Toribio, who welcomes Pablos into his gang, a group of picares that live off their witty scheming and robbery and are general parasites of society. Pablos joins forces with this new band of brothers and becomes a successful member of the community, showing himself just as capable as any of them in terms of scheming and criminal mischief. Eventually Pablos and his new friends are arrested and thrown into jail. Pablos manages to bribe his way out of jail and resumes his quest to rise above this kind of life and make a name for himself. He soon meets a young lady named Doña Ana and impresses her

by pretending to be the nobleman Don Felipe Tristán. Since he is able to dress and talk like a nobleman, the deception is initially quite successful until Don Diego Coronel, who happens to be related to Doña Ana, shows up and recognizes his old servant. After Pablos is badly beaten by some acquaintances of Don Diego, he briefly turns to a life of begging before joining a traveling theater group. He has some degree of success as an actor and even moreso as a writer of verse. The theater company eventually breaks up and Pablos turns his attention to chasing after nuns before eventually joining a band of criminals with whom he participates in the murder of two policemen. After the murder, he and other criminals from his gang manage to avoid being caught by hiding in a cathedral. While at the cathedral he meets a prostitute and the two emigrate to America where, according to Pablos, things only went from bad to worse.

While *El Buscón* is unique among the picaresque novels for reasons to be discussed shortly, it still shares much in common with other works of the genre, particularly the two that have already been analyzed in this dissertation. In addition to the autobiographical style and episodic nature of the work, there are also specific moments and characters that were clearly inspired by Quevedo's reading of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*.¹⁰¹ One cannot read Pablos' description of the cruel schoolmaster Cabra and his refusal to provide his students with enough food without recalling Lazarillo's very similar experience with the priest of Maqueda. Don Toribio, whom Pablos initially assumes to be a gentleman but soon after discovers to be a pretender who lives in poverty, is reminiscent of the squire from the third tratado of *Lazarillo de Tormes* who, by all appearances seems to be a well-to-do gentleman but is in fact penniless and starving. There are also similarities between the protagonists themselves.

¹⁰¹ In fact, Ife suggests that *El Buscón* represented Quevedo's attempt to outshine his predecessors: "The literary challenge of the *Lazarillo*, and, in particular, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, was one which Quevedo was unable to resist. Pablos's description of his family background attempts to out-do Guzmán's in its baseness and iniquity; Cabra and don Toribio allude to Lazarillo's second and third masters yet parody even those caricatures unmercifully and almost beyond recognition" (149)

Both of them come from fathers who had been known to steal and both picares are ashamed of their status in society and aspire to improve their social and economic situations.

There are also echoes of *Guzmán de Alfarache* in Quevedo's text. Rodríguez Mansilla summarizes some key episodes from *El Buscón* that were clearly inspired by Alemán's novel:

aventura fallida con una moza de posada (Guzmán en Malagón y Pablos en Madrid); quejas de un capitán que no recibe mercedes en la corte (que merece la conmiseración de Guzmán y las pullas de Pablos); la comida repugnante que se ofrecen al pícaro (tortilla y muleto para Guzmán y tortas de presunta carne humana para Pablos); inserción de 'Órdenes mendicativas' en el *Guzmán* y 'Premática' en el *Buscón*, ambos textos paródicos y burlescos; compañía de mendigos organizados en el *Guzmán* y de falsos caballeros en el *Buscón*, ambos bajo reglamento. (148)

It is clear, then, that Quevedo had read these previous picaresque tales before sitting down to write his own.

In spite of these similarities, however, there are also some important differences between *El Buscón* and the other two works analyzed in this study. One of the greatest differences involves the work's degree of realism (which will be discussed in more detail shortly). While all three of our protagonists talk in detail about the horrid conditions in which they frequently suffer and the cruel individuals they encounter, Pablos exaggerates his descriptions to the point of incredulity.¹⁰² The experiences of Guzmán and Lazarillo, while certainly horrific, are at least believable. Another major difference is the utter hopelessness of Pablos in *El Buscón* compared to the protagonists in the other novels. While the extent of Lazarillo's rise is debated among critics, it must at least be acknowledged that he was able to make the best of a bad situation and enjoyed at least some level of contentment. Guzmán, likewise, was at least able to attain a place of spiritual peace by his repentance. Pablos, however, follows a trajectory from bad to worse

¹⁰² For example, Pablos says that one of the boys under the tutelage of Cabra becomes so used to not eating that he forgets how: "Certifico a v. m. que vi a uno dellos, al más flaco, que se llamaba Jurre, vizcaíno, tan olvidado ya de cómo y por dónde se comía, que una cortecilla que le cupo la llevó dos veces a los ojos, y entre tres no le acertaban a encaminar las manos a la boca" (121).

throughout his life, especially in terms of his deepening moral depravity. Without going into any details, he informs the reader at the end of the novel that he and his wife left Spain for the New World but in these new surroundings, he explains, “fueme peor” (308). Whatever glimmer of hope, however faint, found in *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán* has all but disappeared in Quevedo’s text.

Given the changes that Quevedo introduced into the picaresque novel, it is unsurprising that *El Buscón* has received substantial attention from literary critics. While scholars almost unanimously praise the author’s sharp wit and remarkably clever use of language in *El Buscón*, there has been much debate regarding the purpose and meaning of the work, its place in the picaresque canon and the overall quality of the novel.¹⁰³ Fernando Lázaro Carreter is of the opinion that the novel is lacking any significant moral or didactic purpose and is little more than an opportunity for Quevedo to show off his great talents as a writer: “El *Buscón* se muestra, así, charla sin objeto, dardo sin meta, fantasmagoría” (494). For Lázaro Carreter, Quevedo’s novel is above all a humorous work, not to be mined for any serious content or didactic purpose:

“Domina en el *Buscón*, sobre todo, una burla de segundo grado, una burla por la burla misma” (496). Domingo Ynduráin agrees that the work “no prueba ninguna tesis” but does reflect the ideology of its author (44). Maurice Molho also acknowledges that the work is primarily a vehicle for Quevedo to express his ideology, particularly his conviction that the differences between social classes need to be maintained. He sees the work as a “libro concebido para dar al grupo hegemónico, y en especial a la casta dominante, la conciencia de su denominación” (497). Victoriano López Roncero concurs that the primary objective of Quevedo is to maintain the separation of social classes and suggests that the author uses humor to this end: “El humor y la risa, pues, le sirven a Quevedo para reírse de todos aquellos que pretenden ascender socialmente,

¹⁰³ For example, Brenan declares the novel a “*tour de force*, written with wit and brilliance” (262) and Paul Smith writes that the language Quevedo uses is “fearsomely complex, riddled with puns and multiple allusions” (10).

para recordarles que son seres inferiores, que están manchados y que, por tanto, deben contentarse con permanecer en el lugar que la sociedad les ha concedido” (“El humor” 285).¹⁰⁴ A. A. Parker believes that there is more to Quevedo’s novel than a mere display of his wit and that “behind the fireworks of the wit there lies a profound insight into the character of a delinquent” (*Literature* 62). Given that the work contains so many jokes and puns and such grotesquely exaggerated characterizations, it is certainly understandable why so many critics refuse to take the work seriously or see any real didactic or moral purpose in it. As Parker observes: “so frequent are these jokes, so strong an impression is left on the reader by the phantasmagoria of Quevedo’s grotesque world, that most critics have succumbed to the temptation to see nothing more in the plot and the characterization than the occasion for a prolonged display of flashing wit” (*Literature* 61). Even Parker himself concedes that *El Buscón* is “essentially, in intention and execution, a humorous work” (*Literature* 61). Nevertheless, Parker cautions that the abundance of humor alone need not cause readers to fail to see the more serious elements of the work: “He writes what is above all a sarcastically funny book, but the psychology of delinquency is seriously conceived and the wit, for the way the plot itself is constructed contributes to this over-all unity” (*Literature* 61).

Critics have also debated *El Buscón*’s place in the picaresque canon. On one extreme is Francisco Rico’s opinion that while the work offers the reader much to appreciate, it is nonetheless a “very bad picaresque novel” (75). On the other extreme is the opinion of R. O. Jones who considers *El Buscón* “una de las tres obras maestras de la novela picaresca española y aun puede afirmarse que la más bella de las tres” (209). Parker goes so far as to declare *El*

¹⁰⁴ Richard Bjornson agrees that “the comic elements in *El Buscón* are not gratuitous” but are rather “inseparable from Quevedo’s moral commentary and constitute the chief characteristic of the satiric style by means of which he conveys it to the reader” (59). He views Pablos as “static figure whose ludicrous behavior represents the psychological reality of a widespread type of moral blindness” (59).

Buscón to be the “peak of the picaresque novel” because it offers a psychological study of delinquency (*Literature* 62). Still another viewpoint (although far less common among critics) is Fernando Rodríguez Mansilla’s suggestion that Quevedo wrote *El Buscón* primarily to lampoon the picaresque novels, much like Cervantes did to the novels of chivalry with *Don Quijote* (158).¹⁰⁵ Obviously, one’s opinion of the work’s proper place in the picaresque canon will largely be determined by how he or she defines the genre. Regardless of its rank, however, the work unmistakably belongs to the picaresque tradition due to its autobiographical form, its episodic structure and its basic plot which portrays the attempt of a low-born lad to escape from the marginal status to which society has assigned him.

Another issue debated among critics is the degree of realism in the novel. As was stated earlier in this dissertation, the picaresque works, if not realistic in a nineteenth century sense, at least represented a step in the direction of realism. Quevedo, however, would move the genre a step back from realism with *El Buscón*, at least in terms of the literary technique of describing people, places and customs in an accurate, objective manner. Like *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*, *El Buscón* references real places and hints at some very real problems that Spanish society was experiencing at the time.¹⁰⁶ However, Quevedo’s frequent use of extreme exaggeration and distortion in describing the conditions in which Pablos lives and the characteristics of the individuals he encounters shows that the author had little interest in describing the world in an objective, realistic manner preferring instead to display his masterful

¹⁰⁵ Ife agrees with Rodríguez Mansilla and suggests that “Quevedo made use of the picaresque in a way which suggests that not only did he wish to out-do the opposition in satire but by parodying them to the point of travesty, he intended to destroy the genre along with the society it depicts” (150).

¹⁰⁶ For example, Brenan views Pablos’ account of his education as a rather faithful reflection of the typical educational experience of the time: “The chapters on university life were obviously written from personal experience. They describe the pranks of the students and their servants and the very disgusting and scatological initiation ceremonies which new boys had to put up with. One realizes the terrible effects upon a sensitive youth of the dirt, violence and gnawing hunger that in those times were the ordinary accompaniments of a good education” (263)

language skills and dark sense of humor. Perhaps the most notable example of Quevedo's use of exaggeration and distortion in describing characters in the novel is found in the grotesque portrayal of Cabra, the schoolmaster under whom Pablos and his peers suffered greatly. Worth quoting at length, it is among the most famous descriptions in Spanish prose:

Él era un clérigo cerbatana, largo sólo en el talle, una cabeza pequeña, pelo bermejo [...] los ojos avocados en el cogote, que parecía que miraba por cuévanos, tan hundidos y oscuros, que era buen sitio el suyo para tiendas de mercaderes; la nariz, entre Roma y Francia, porque se le había comido de unas búas de resfriado, que aun no fueron de vicio porque cuestan dinero; las barbas descoloridas de miedo de la boca vecina, que, de pura hambre, parecía que amenazaba a comérselas; los dientes, le faltaban no sé cuántos, y pienso que por holgazanes y vagamundos se los habían desterrado; el gaznate largo como de avestruz, con una nuez tan salida, que parecía se iba a buscar de comer forzada de la necesidad; los brazos secos, las manos como un manojito de sarmientos cada una. Mirado de medio abajo, parecía tenedor o compás, con dos piernas largas y flacas. Su andar muy espacioso; si se descomponía algo, le sonaban los güesos como tablillas de San Lázaro (I, iii, 116-117)

Clearly, what Quevedo has described here is more of a monster than a human being and yet the description is as much comical as it is horrifying. The description of Cabra is merely one example of many such grotesque descriptions in the novel, but this one serves to demonstrate Quevedo's style. Pablos' outrageous descriptions of various events and people in his life make it difficult to determine to what extent the novel can be useful as a serious reflection of Spanish society at the time.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps Alfonso Rey best summarizes the type of 'realism' found in *El Buscón*: "Quevedo, además de canalizar un considerable acervo literario, refleja una realidad; tal vez no la realidad que hoy descubren el sociólogo o el historiador, pero sí la que veían sus peculiares ojos, hiperbólicos y satíricos" (13). The novel, then, is realistic primarily in the sense that it does reflect many of the issues in Spanish society at the time, even if these issues are greatly exaggerated and distorted in Quevedo's style.

¹⁰⁷ As Paul Julian Smith says, "If Quevedo intended to give the reader a picture of social practice in his time, then the reality of the *Buscón* is that its infrequent references to real events and actual ways of life are constantly disrupted by flights of fantasy and absurd humour" (80).

The prevalence and importance of humor in *El Buscón* combined with its carnivalesque and often grotesque distortion of reality indicate that it has little in common with naturalism in terms of the literary technique of reflecting the reality of society in an objective, scientific manner. Nevertheless, the work shares with later naturalistic novels a tendency to focus on the dreary and ugly parts of society. Del Val says of the work: “Campea en ella un realismo crudo que no se detiene ante escenas repulsivas” (463). In fact, the connection between *El Buscón* and naturalism goes beyond a willingness to show the dirty and the sordid. There are numerous hints of naturalistic philosophy in the text. Several critics have acknowledged the impact of hereditary or environmental determinism in the novel. Américo Castro has said that “la vida canallesca de Pablos parece impuesta por la ley de herencia” (88).¹⁰⁸ Everett Hesse writes of Pablos’ struggles to cope with “the pressure of his environment” and includes the “corrupting influence of his deterministic environment” as one of the major forces that consistently frustrates Pablos’ efforts to improve his life. A. A. Parker, who views Pablos as “an individual human being, an autonomous moral person” nevertheless acknowledges that the picaresque is also a “product of a particular social environment” (*Psychology* 60). David Russi considers that in *El Buscón*, “human beings act like animals, thus disclosing the animal that is inherent in their being” and suggests that Quevedo’s frequent reference to animals in the text “serve very well to underline the vile condition of the world he has created” (452). The remainder of this chapter will analyze *El buscón* in terms of naturalistic philosophy. Following the pattern of the previous chapters, I will analyze the work in terms of hereditary determinism, environmental determinism, the role of God and religion, and the portrayal of sex and marriage in the work.

¹⁰⁸ However, Castro later admits that he did not intend for this expression to be taken in the modern sense. He is not stating that “las dolencias físicas y morales se heredan” but rather that “en la novela picaresca el personaje central aparece previamente situado mediado un hereditario determinismo, pensado dentro de una clase moral de la cual no podrá zafarse” (88-89).

Hereditary Determinism

Several critics acknowledge the importance of heredity as a primary determining factor in Pablos' life. In addition to Castro's comment mentioned previously, Paul Julian Smith states that "the low-born, racially mixed characters of the *Buscón* are determined by their blood and by their name" (42). In the introduction to his English translation of *El Buscón*, Michael Alpert notes that Pablos' ancestry is one of the factors that "impede his ambition" (xxv). However, the type of hereditary determinism to which these and other critics refer has more to do with the established class hierarchy of Spanish society at the time than with genetics. Pablos is destined to fail in his attempt to become a nobleman simply because the privileges of nobility were primarily based on ancestry: if you were born to a noble family, you belonged to the nobility. This had nothing to do with the quality of the inherited genes. It was simply a matter of the name of the family to which one belonged. The notion that Pablos' life or character was in any way determined by the genes he inherited from his parents has received little support among critics. Leo Spitzer, in response to Américo Castro's claim that Pablos' life was largely a result of heredity, claims that "nowhere does Quevedo give any hint that heredity influences Pablos's character. On the contrary, his whole insistence is on the *pícaro's* self-determination. From the start Pablos emancipates himself from his parents, deliberately reacting against them, standing detached and above them" (summarized by Parker – "Psychology", 61). Parker himself agrees that "there can be no question of heredity or determinism" ("Psychology", 61) in the novel. However, these critics have neglected the fact that, in spite of Pablos' expressed desire to be as unlike his parents as possible, he nevertheless ends up being very much like them. As Bjornson states: "(h)aving twice fled Segovia in the attempt to deny the 'blood' relationship between himself and his disreputable relatives, he ultimately adopts their mode of life" (57). By

comparing Pablos' attitudes and actions with those of his relatives, it will be shown that there are clearly certain undesirable traits and behaviors that seem prevalent in the picaro's family. As was seen with the protagonist of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, I argue in this chapter that hereditary determinism does indeed influence Pablos greatly.

Following the model established by Lazarillo and continued by Guzmán, Pablos begins his story by providing the reader with information about his family background. He tells the reader that his father, Clemente Pablo, was a barber and a thief. Using the cooperation of Pablos' little brother, he would tilt upward the head of whoever he was shaving, giving his son the chance to pick the customer's pocket. It is interesting to note that the father was in no way ashamed of this practice, but rather felt stealing to be a necessity in those days. He tells young Pablos: "Hijo, esto de ser ladrón no es arte mecánica sino liberal [...] Quien no hurta en el mundo, no vive" (101). He blames this sad state of the world that makes thieving necessary on the powers that be, whom he feels are quite accomplished thieves themselves: "¿Por qué piensas que los alguaciles y jueces nos aborrecen tanto? [...] porque querrían que, adonde están, hubiese otros ladrones sino ellos y sus ministros" (101). He goes on to say how he has only been able to survive because of his craftiness and cunning: "Mas de todo nos libró la buena astucia" (101). As the story of Pablos' life unfolds, it becomes clear that his father's innate craftiness and tendency toward theft were passed on to our protagonist.

As will be seen later in this chapter, Pablos' environment must shoulder a significant portion of the blame for the fact that he must sometimes steal in order to survive. Nevertheless, environmental conditions alone cannot explain why he seems to have such a natural talent for thieving. Pablos begins his career as a thief in earnest while he is with Don Diego at Alcalá. He tells the reader how he was immediately successful as a thief and received praise from his friends

who acknowledged his unique skill in this area: “Decían los compañeros que yo sólo podía sustentar la casa con lo que corría (que es lo mismo que hurtar, en nombre revesado)” (158).

Pablos quickly builds a reputation among his peers for being a particularly crafty thief and this reputation eventually causes him to be removed from Don Diego’s service. Throughout his life Pablos will demonstrate his knack for thieving and deceiving. In the final chapter of the novel, Pablos tells how he has managed to be prosperous in his journey from Toledo to Seville:

Pasé el camino de Toledo a Sevilla prósperamente, porque, como yo tenía ya mis principios de fullero, y llevaba dados cargados con nueva pasta de mayor y de menor, y tenía la mano derecha encubridora de un dado –pues preñada de cuatro, paría tres, llevaba gran provisión de cartones de lo ancho y de lo largo para hacer garrotes de morros y ballestilla; y así, no se me escapaba dinero. (299)

In spite of the shame that Pablos feels due to his father’s reputation as a thief, he himself, throughout his entire life, demonstrates the same natural talent for stealing and cheating which allows him, at times, to earn a considerable sum of money.

In addition to his innate craftiness and propensity for stealing, Pablos seems to have inherited another trait, and this one from both of his parents: a tendency to distort reality and see himself as more than he ought. Pablos tells the reader that while his father was a barber, he was greatly displeased with this title: “Fue, tal como todos dicen, de oficio barbero; aunque eran tan altos sus pensamientos, que se corría de que le llamasen así, diciendo que él era tundidor de mejillas y sastre de barbas” (95). Hesse sees the father’s displeasure at his title as a sort of predictor of how Pablos’ life will turn out: “The conflict between what he wanted to be and what in truth he turned out to be underscores the technique of appearance versus reality employed so effectively throughout the work” (38-39).¹⁰⁹ Pablos’ mother, Aldonza, also strives to make herself appear what she is not. While the townspeople suspected her to be of *converso* descent,

¹⁰⁹ Hesse also views this opening chapter as crucial because “it sets the tone and partially indicates the future direction of the action” (39).

she nevertheless tries to convince them otherwise: “Sospechábase en el pueblo que no era cristiana vieja, aunque ella, por los nombres y sobrenombres de sus pasados, quiso esforzar que era decendiente de la letanía” (97). Both of Pablos’ parents, being unable to alter the reality of their status, nevertheless attempt to make themselves appear to be something other than what they are. Throughout the text, Pablos will also strive, with little success, to make himself appear to be the gentleman he so wants to be. Edward Friedman argues that Pablos’ preoccupation with appearances is at least partially inherited from his parents:

When Pablos presents his father and mother, a barber/thief and a witch/prostitute, he shows that they aim to glorify their status through euphemism. The ‘shearer of beards’ and the ‘daughter of the Litany’ use words—names—to place themselves into mainstream society, to give themselves an air of respectability. [...] In descriptions that recreate the deceptive lexicon of his parents, Pablos repeats this flaw in his own writing. His jocular tone may be interpreted as a means of combating the misfortunes of lineage, but he proves that he has inherited linguistic habits along with undesirable genes. In an effort at detachment from his family, he shows that history is inclined to repeat itself. (185)

Using the same type of language as his father, Pablos, in the very next chapter, admits that he also “siempre tuve altos pensamientos” (107) and at least initially tries to go about bettering himself via a proper education: “Y así que me pusiesen a la escuela, pues sin leer ni escribir, no se podía hacer nada” (104). Unfortunately, student life is a disaster for Pablos and he quickly abandons his quest to better himself by means of a proper education. Nevertheless, his obsession with status and appearances only deepens throughout the text and, being unable to actually improve his status, he resorts to various schemes and deceptions to convince others he is wealthier and of a higher class than he actually is. One classic example of this is found in chapter five of book three when Pablos assumes the identity of one Don Ramiro de Guzmán and tries to convince his love interest Doña Berenguela and her family that he is very wealthy:

y una noche, para confirmarlas más en mi riqueza, cerréme en mi aposento, que estaba dividido del suyo con sólo un tabique muy delgado, y, sacando cincuenta

escudos, estuve contándolos en la mesa tantas veces, que oyeron contar seis mil escudos. Fue esto de verme con tanto dinero de contado, para ellas, todo lo que yo podía desear, porque dieron en desvelarse para regalarme y servirme. (251)

There are other similar examples that could be cited but this one suffices to show that just as his father wants to be *known as* more than a barber without actually *being* more than a barber, Pablos also wants to appear to be a wealthy gentleman without actually doing whatever might be required to actually become a wealthy gentleman.¹¹⁰

Still another issue that seems to have affected Pablos' family is a tendency to abuse alcohol. Pablos tells us that his father was quite the drinker: "Dicen que era de muy buena cepa, y, según él bebía, es cosa para creer" (95). Clemente Pablo was not the only member of Pablos' family to struggle with drunkenness. His uncle Alonso, the local hangman, was also a drinker as the reader discovers when Pablos visits him in order to claim an inheritance left to him by his father. On one particular evening when Alonso is gathered together for supper with his friends (a group of rowdy, vile characters), he becomes so drunk that he begins to hallucinate and Pablos has to put him to bed himself: "eché a mi tío en la cama, el cual hizo cortesía a un velador de palo que tenía, pensando que era convidado" (203). Pablos is greatly embarrassed by his uncle's lack of self control and the picaro is eager to get away from him as quickly as possible.¹¹¹ One night, while Alonso is sleeping, Pablos collects his inheritance and departs for Madrid, leaving his uncle a letter telling him not to look for him as he never wants to see him again.

Nevertheless, in spite of the shame Pablos felt due to his uncle's behavior, the picaro would later find himself in a similarly drunken state and having dinner with a similar group of low-lives. In the last chapter of the novel, Pablos is having dinner with his new gang of fellow criminals and

¹¹⁰ And this is, of course, the one explicitly stated *moral* from Pablos' life. In the work's final words, the protagonist warns: "nunca mejora su estado quien muda solamente de lugar, y no de vida y costumbres" (308).

¹¹¹ However, as Price quite correctly observes, Pablos' reactions to his uncle's behavior "are wounded pride and disgust rather than Christian horror and regret" (277).

begins to drink heavily. In their drunken state, the entire group becomes enraged about the death of Alonso Álvarez, a famous criminal of Seville who had recently been killed by the police, and decides to seek justice by looking for policemen to kill. Pablos becomes so inebriated that he participates in these murders without being fully aware of what he is doing:

Con esto, salimos de casa a montería de corchetes. Yo, como iba entregado al vino y había renunciado en su poder mis sentidos, no advertí al riesgo que me ponía. Llegamos a la calle de la Mar, donde encaró con nosotros la ronda. No bien la columbraron, cuando, sacando las espadas, la embistieron. Yo hice lo mismo, y limpiamos dos cuerpos de corchetes de sus malditas ánimas, al primer encuentro. (306)

Just like his uncle, Pablos is seen here with a group of rowdy characters, so intoxicated that he has lost total control of his senses. In spite of the initial disgust he feels at seeing his uncle's drunkenness, he later proves himself to be equally unable to control his own alcohol intake which leads to disastrous results.¹¹²

In spite of the shame that Pablos feels regarding some of the traits and behaviors of various members of his family, he seems destined to repeat them. As a young child, he is able to identify the vices with which his family struggles and admirably aspires to avoid them, but the hereditary influences eventually manifest themselves and the adult Pablos' attitudes and behaviors are strikingly similar to those of his father and uncle. I am therefore puzzled at Everett Hesse's comment that "the impact of Pablos' parents dominates the first chapter but diminishes and then disappears as the work unfolds" (39). On the contrary, it is only after arriving at the end of the story and discovering what Pablos' life has become, that the reader truly sees just how much impact that his parents have had on him. Perhaps Bjornson best summarizes the influence that heredity has had on our protagonist: "by the time he undertakes the writing of his autobiography, Pablos' picaresque identity has effectively manifested itself and condemned him

¹¹² In some ways, Pablos is like Lazarillo, who initially complains about the squire's obsession with his honor but by the end of the novel is dressing exactly like him.

to a life style quite similar to that of his parents and uncle” (58). Nevertheless, as much as heredity has had an impact in shaping Pablos’ life, it is not to shoulder all of the blame for his misfortunes. It is also clear that various elements in Pablos’ environment had much to do in determining the course of his life and character formation.

Environmental Determinism

While heredity seems to have had an unmistakable influence in Pablos’ character formation, there is also substantial evidence that the picaresque was greatly influenced by his environment as well. Several critics have noted the impact that Pablos’ environment has on his life and specifically the role it has played in his psychological development. In his study of the psychology of Pablos, Parker finds that Quevedo’s text “does in fact offer us an analysis of the *pícaro*’s character in relation to environment that penetrates much deeper than the self-evident” (“Psychology” 61). Kellermann also points to “mundo ambiente” as a major contributing factor to the formation of Pablos’ personality and notes that “tiene también validez la afirmación de que es el estado de este mundo el que hace posible la aparición del pícaro” (684) Finally, Hesse acknowledges how Pablos’ initial aspiration to become a gentleman crumbles “before the onslaught of a deterministic environment” (42). I shall now consider carefully exactly what impact Pablos’ environment had on his life and psychological development.

Much like Lazarillo, Pablos at first gives every indication that he was an innocent and basically good child.¹¹³ From a very young age, he is aware of the failings of his family and wants to escape a similar fate as his parents: “Metílos en paz, diciendo que yo quería aprender virtud resueltamente, y ir con mis buenos pensamientos” (103). His desire seems good to his

¹¹³ “Where the later rascally Pablos is the degraded unreal one who becomes an impotent counterfeit of the good man of the world, here it is the child who is essentially good, in the sense that he has the normal innocence, eagerness and ambitions of childhood, and into him there must enter the evil of the world” (May 330).

parents who decide to send him to school where he quickly becomes a favorite of the schoolmaster. However, he suffers considerably at the hands of his peers who tease him about his family's reputation. Pablos restrains his rage for a time, but eventually attacks one boy who loudly refers to him as a "hijo de puta y hechicera" (107). Because of the hazing he experiences, Pablos makes no progress in his effort to learn virtue at this particular school. He then goes as Don Diego's servant to a boarding school where his sufferings are greatly increased at the hands of Cabra, a miserly man in holy orders that Pablos refers to as "la hambre viva" because of his refusal to provide his students with enough food to eat. In order to survive, Pablos has to compete with the other students for the little food that is available and manages to have some success (relative to the others) due to his craftiness. At one particular "meal" (consisting of nothing but a few crumbs) Pablos describes how he is able to eat more than his share of crumbs: "yo [...] como más sano y más fuerte que los otros, arremetí al plato, como arremetieron todos, y emboquéme de tres mendrugos los dos, y el un pellejo." (121) Very quickly we see that instead of providing him with an opportunity to grow in virtue, the first two environments in which the young lad finds himself after leaving home have instead forced him to learn to rely on his wit in order to survive. It would be easy to judge Pablos' hoarding of an unfair share of crumbs as an indication of a selfish and stingy nature. However, Pablos was indeed protecting his very life as the text later records how one young boy did in fact die of starvation as a result of Cabra's negligence and cruelty.

When Don Diego's father, Don Alonso, discovers the mistreatment that his son and Pablos have experienced at the hands of Cabra, he quickly removes the lads from the boarding school. After spending some time at Don Alonso's house, Pablos then accompanies Don Diego to Alcalá to study. University life provides Pablos with no relief from his sufferings as he now

has to deal with incessant and cruel hazing from mischievous students. The painful and humiliating hazing that Pablos suffers includes being spat upon repeatedly, being badly beaten and being covered in human excrement. It is at this point in the novel where Pablos officially loses his interest in learning how to become a virtuous young man. Rather, he decides to become just as much of a nuisance as the other students are to him: “<<Haz como vieres>> dice el refrán, y dice bien. De puro considerar en él, vine a resolverme de ser bellaco con los bellacos, y más, si pudiese, que todos” (149). This is a crucial moment in the text, where the direct and negative impact of Pablos’ most recent environments is clearly visible. As Victoriano Roncero López states: “Este es el momento en el que se produce la transformación de Pablos, el momento en el que se da cuenta de que sólo a través del engaño y del ingenio podrá ascender socialmente” (“El humor” 281). Pablos makes good on his pledge almost immediately and the first indication that the young lad has undergone a change of attitude is the cruelty to animals that he begins to display: “Lo primero, yo puse pena de la vida a todos los cochinos que se entrasen en casa, y a los pollos del ama que del corral pasasen a mi aposento” (149). Pablos is particularly violent in his killing of these animals. One day, when he hears the grunting of two pigs in the house, he becomes greatly annoyed and dispatches the animals with an excess of violence:

Yo que lo oí, me enojé tanto que salí allá diciendo que era mucha bellaquería y atrevimiento venir a gruñir a casas ajenas. Y diciendo esto, envásole a cada uno a puerta cerrada la espada por los pechos, y luego los acogotamos. Porque no se oyese el ruido que hacían, todos a la par dábamos grandísimos gritos como que cantábamos, y así espiraron en nuestras manos. (149)

In addition to his newly established fondness for killing animals, Pablos begins to hone his skills as a thief and deceiver in collaboration with Cipriana, the housekeeper: “No cabía el ama de contento conmigo, porque éramos dos al mohino: habíamos conjurado contra la despensa. Yo era el dispensero Judas, que desde entonces hereda no sé qué amor a la sisa este oficio” (151).

Pablos and Cipriana develop a strong chemistry and profit nicely from their various schemes. Nevertheless, Pablos cautions the reader about the limitations of their friendship: “¿Pensará v. m. que siempre estuvimos en paz? Pues ¿quién ignora que dos amigos, como sean cudicosos, si están juntos se han de procurar engañar el uno al otro?” (154). It is clear then, that Pablos’ friendship with Cipriana, if it can be so called, was based on their ability to help each other financially and not based on trust.

Because of Pablos’ growing reputation for mischief, Don Alonso feels it is no longer wise to allow the boy to serve his son Don Diego and the two are separated. The role of environment in shaping Pablos’ character to this point could not be more clear. A consistent lack of food (and the accompanying need to compete for it) combined with the extremely cruel and violent hazing that Pablos experienced from his peers have by now completely eroded his initial desire to become a virtuous person. Pablos’ experiences in these early learning environments will continue to have a measurable impact on his actions and character development throughout the remainder of the text.

After Pablos is dismissed from Don Diego’s service, he receives a letter from his uncle Alonso informing him that his father has recently been executed and his mother thrown in jail. The letter also informs Pablos of a small inheritance that was left to him and the picaro quickly makes his way back to Segovia to collect it. It is during this time that Pablos again begins to focus his efforts on becoming a gentleman and making a better name for himself. When he returns to Segovia to collect his inheritance, he is embarrassed by the lifestyle of his drunken uncle and his friends and quickly departs from Segovia after obtaining the promised money. In spite of his renewed desire to make something of himself and in spite of his disgust at his uncle’s way of living, Pablos very quickly falls in with another bad crowd after he meets Don Toribio,

who invites him to join his band of friends, a group of parasites that roam throughout Madrid, living off their wits and their highly developed ability to deceive and manipulate other people. Don Toribio explains to Pablos the type of life he and his comrades enjoy: “Es nuestra abogada la industria; pasamos las más veces los estómagos de vacío, que es gran trabajo traer la comida en manos ajenas. Somos susto de los banquetes, polilla de los bodegones y convidados por fuerza. Sustentámonos así del aire, y andamos contentos” (212). Pablos is so intrigued by Don Toribio’s description of life as a parasite of society that, in spite of his quest to make a better name for himself, he simply cannot resist the invitation to join this new band of criminals. Very quickly Pablos adapts to this new lifestyle: “Ya estaba yo tan hallado con ellos como si todos fuéramos hermanos, que esta facilidad y dulzura se halla siempre en las cosas malas” (224) In spite of his desire to separate himself from his family history and elevate himself in society, it is clear that he is most comfortable with criminals and most easily adapts to this kind of environment.

Eventually, Pablos and his new friends are arrested but the picaro manages to get out of jail by bribing the jailer. Upon his release he finds himself alone and friendless and begins to seek out a suitable mate. Embarrassed by his past, he invents different names for himself and pulls off a variety of schemes in an attempt to convince young ladies that he would be a good catch. These efforts invariably fail and very soon Pablos is reduced to the life of a beggar. Pablos soon meets another, more experienced beggar named Valcázar who shares with him his expertise and Pablos quickly becomes successful in his new “profession.” Pablos and Valcázar become good friends and in addition to begging, the two decide to supplement their income by kidnapping children. They would take the youngsters, hide them, and when the town-crier would announce an award for anyone who could help locate the children, they would say: “Por

cierto, señor, que le topé a tal hora, y que si no llego, que le mata un carro; en casa está” (280).

In spite of the wealth they began to accumulate through begging and kidnapping, Pablos decides (for reasons undeclared in the text) to abandon his new friend and make his way to Toledo.

During his journey, he encounters and joins up with a group of actors and for a time enjoys success both as an actor and a writer. Once the theater company breaks up, however, Pablos quickly returns to his wicked ways. After spending a brief time near a convent trying to win the affection of a certain very attractive nun, Pablos makes his way to Seville intending to live off of gambling which would have been easy because of his skill in cheating. Upon arriving in Seville, he meets up with a former classmate of his from Alcalá and agrees to join up with him and his friends for dinner. As mentioned earlier, they get drunk and in their irrational state of mind decide to go out looking for bailiffs to kill. Pablos himself slays two officers but manages to avoid being arrested by hiding in a cathedral. Once again, Pablos finds himself at home amongst a group of criminals and very quickly he begins to advance through the ranks of his new gang: “Estudié la jacarandina, y en pocos días era rabí de los otros rufianes” (308). Nevertheless, Pablos soon tires of being sought after by the law because of the murders and decides to leave for America, taking with him his new wife, a prostitute by the name of *Grajales*.

The negative effect that Pablos’ earliest environments has on his character formation is substantial. As a child, he clearly understands the corruption of his family and sincerely desires to become a virtuous gentleman. Nevertheless, a variety of negative experiences early in his life quickly shapes him into a ruthless young man who lives by his wits and is most content among other criminals. His once sincere desire to become a virtuous gentleman degenerates into an obsession with simply *appearing* to be a gentleman and he employs every deceptive scheme

imaginable to accomplish this facade.¹¹⁴ While he enjoys the occasional brief moment of success, his heritage and true picaresque nature always eventually betray him. By the end of his story, Pablos has given up all hope of ever becoming a gentleman and has emigrated to America with his prostitute wife in order to escape prosecution for murder.

Clearly, then, Pablos' personality is largely shaped by a series of very negative experiences during his early education. Nevertheless, Quevedo hints at another powerful environmental force that affects not only the protagonist, but also many other characters in the novel as well. As was discussed previously in this chapter, there are indications in the text that Pablos' tendency toward self-aggrandizement and his unwillingness to accept reality as it is were inherited from his parents. Nevertheless, this general disconnect from reality is by no means limited to Pablos' family. As is the case in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the inability to accept reality and a general tendency to overvalue one's importance were psychological problems shared by many in Pablos' society.¹¹⁵

There are several characters in the novel besides the protagonist and his progenitors that seem to be out of touch with reality. In the second chapter of book two, Pablos encounters a priest who has convinced himself that he is a tremendously talented poet. Pablos offers the reader a sampling of the poet's verses:

Pastores, ¿no es lindo chiste,
que es hoy el señor san Corpus Christe?
Hoy es el día de las danzas
en que el Cordero sin mancilla
tanto se humilla,
que visita nuestras panzas,

¹¹⁴ As May states, Pablos believes that "for the world at large truth lies merely in appearances and opinion; he has only to conceal his real self and all will be well; the cheat will body forth an external life adequate to a cheating world" (327).

¹¹⁵ Similarly, most of the characters in Galdos's *La desheredada*, considered by some to be his most naturalistic work, are shown to "have little or any contact with reality" (Schnepf 112). This will be discussed further in the conclusion to this study.

y entre estas bienaventuranzas
entra en el humano buche.
Suene el lindo sacabuche,
pues nuestro bien consiste.
Pastores, ¿no es lindo chiste, etc. (178-9)

When the priest tells Pablos that he spent more than a month studying the deep meaning of the word “shepherd,” the pícaro cannot contain his laughter: “No pude porfiar, perdido de risa de ver la suma ignorancia” (179). While Pablos admits that the priest’s ridiculous verses are at least mildly entertaining, he quickly tires of hearing him recite his poetry and tries repeatedly to change the subject of conversation. However, every comment Pablos makes is used by the priest as inspiration for another ridiculous poem. This priest is clearly out of touch with reality, having constructed a fantasy world in which he believes himself to be a gifted poet.

In the next chapter, Pablos meets a soldier who also lives in a fantasy world. He proudly shows Pablos one of his battle scars which, according to our protagonist, is in reality (and quite obviously) a plague scar.¹¹⁶ He then proceeds to brag about all of his accomplishments as a soldier and produces service papers that supposedly prove just how distinguished he is. Pablos surmises that the papers must have belonged to another whose name the soldier had taken. Still, our protagonist plays along and tells the soldier how impressed he is with his exploits: “Yo los leí, y dije mil cosas en su alabanza, y que el Cid ni Bernardo no habían hecho lo que él” (189). The soldier, however, is unimpressed with Pablos’ praises: “¿Cómo lo que yo? ¡Voto a Dios!, ni lo que García de Paredes, Julián Romero y otros hombres de bien” (189). Like the poet-priest, the soldier has completely lost contact with reality and like Don Quijote, fancies himself a great warrior.

It is clear, then, that Pablos is not alone in his inability or unwillingness to accept the reality of who he is. Rather, the tendency toward self-deception and self-aggrandizement

¹¹⁶ “Y enseñóme una cuchillada de a palmo en las ingles, que así era de incordio como el sol es claro” (189)

appears to be a rather common problem in Spanish society at the time. Throughout the novel Pablos encounters a variety of individuals who are obsessed with maintaining certain appearances and are willing to go to great lengths to deceive others into believing that there is legitimate truth behind the false appearances.

Of the three picaresque works analyzed in this dissertation, the impact that environment has on shaping the protagonist's character and life is perhaps most apparent in *El Buscón*. When the reader is first introduced to Pablos as a child, he seems innocent enough and quite admirably desires to learn to become a virtuous young man by means of a proper education. However, the corrupting power of his early educational environments in which food was scarce (forcing him to compete and scheme for sustenance) and in which cruel, violent hazing was reserved for those who would dare try to be different proved too much for Pablos to overcome. In spite of his ambitions to become a gentleman, his early experiences seem to have shaped his character to the point where he can only be successful and content in an environment of thugs where living by trickery and deceit are the preferred ways to make a living. Also, like in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, he and other characters suffer from what seems to be a nearly society-wide obsession with status and appearances and a general refusal to accept and embrace reality.

God and Religion

Guzmán de Alfarache is filled with frequent sermonizing and at least seems, in spite of the doubts of some critics, to present a theological message of salvation, rooted in orthodox Catholic doctrine. With *El Buscón*, Quevedo eliminates the moralizing of the *Guzmán* and returns to the narrative style of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, in which the actual narrating of the events of the protagonist's life takes center stage, with only brief, infrequent commentary on these

events. It is therefore necessary, as it was with *Lazarillo*, to carefully study the events in Pablos' life, his own opinions about God, and his encounters with religious people in order to determine what, if any, impact God and religion has in his life and in society as a whole. It will be shown that while Pablos initially seems to have faith in God, this faith is quickly eroded due to a series of negative experiences early in his life. Also, as was the case in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, Quevedo paints a rather disturbing picture of individuals with a religious vocation, revealing them to be capable of great deception, using religion only as a means to manipulate the superstitious people of Spanish society into providing for their needs. In fact, Pablos himself, after his own faith has been destroyed, also becomes skilled in using religion and religious language in order to manipulate the people.

Pablos makes several references to God throughout the text and at least initially seems to have a typical child-like faith in God. The first reference to God by the protagonist occurs in the first chapter of book one when he expresses his thanks to God for giving him parents that were so concerned about his well-being: "Yo me quedé solo, dando gracias a Dios porque me hizo hijo de padres tan hábiles y celosos de mi bien" (104). Clearly, Pablos's gratitude toward God for his parents is short-lived given that nearly every other time he references his parents in the text, it is primarily to express the great shame and embarrassment he feels being their son. This is confirmed when, after being informed of his father's death and his mother's prison sentence, he shows no grief for his father nor concern for his mother. Instead, he expresses only the shame he feels from this new disgrace.¹¹⁷

Whatever faith in God Pablos may have had in his most innocent state as a very young child seeking to be more virtuous is eradicated completely during his time accompanying Don

¹¹⁷ "No puedo negar que sentí mucho la nueva afrenta, pero holguéme en parte: tanto pueden los vicios en los padres, que consuelan de sus desgracias, por grandes que sean, a sus hijos" (165).

Diego at Alcalá. During one of the more extreme hazing episodes, in which he is being badly beaten by some of the university students, Pablos cries out for God's justice which results in the blows only getting stronger:

Yo levanté la cabeza y dije: <<¿Qué es esto?>>. Y apenas la descubrí, cuando con una maroma me asentaron un azote con hijos en todas las espaldas. Comencé a quejarme; quíseme levantar [...] Yo comencé a decir: <<¡Justicia de Dios!>>. Pero menudeaban tanto los azotes sobre mí, que ya no me quedó [...] otro remedio sino el de meterme debajo de la cama. (145-146)

It is significant that after this event Pablos' journey toward total corruption begins in earnest as he decides to attempt to equal and even surpass the other students in wickedness. With his prayer for divine justice having been ignored, Pablos decides that he must fend for himself. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Pablos quickly develops a reputation for being even more mischevious than the other students and this causes him to lose his position as Don Diego's servant. Don Diego regrets not being able to take Pablos along with him any further and offers to find our protagonist another gentleman for him to serve. Pablos' response to this offer is striking: "Yo, en esto, riéndome, le dije: <<Señor, ya soy otro, y otros mis pensamientos" (165). This is reminiscent of the words Guzmán used to express his conversion: "halléme otro, no yo ni con aquel viejo corazón que antes" (506). Both protagonists, then, undergo a type of conversion in which they believe themselves to have become new people altogether. However, the type of conversion each has undergone could not be more different. Guzmán, finding himself at his darkest hour in the galleys reaches out for God's grace, the only salvation the picaro believes is available to him. Pablos, however, having been disappointed by the seeming lack of God's care and justice, becomes committed to a life of scheming, false appearances and general depravity.

He continues on this path throughout the novel and there is no indication of any turning toward God by the story's end.¹¹⁸

Much like Lazarillo, Pablos frequently encounters individuals with a religious vocation in his journeys. However, these characters invariably are shown either to be enslaved to some particular vice or simply using religion for selfish gain. The first individual that Pablos meets who is directly affiliated with the church is the cruel schoolmaster named Cabra.¹¹⁹ There can be no doubt that Quevedo's description of Cabra and the miserable life that Pablos and his peers experience under his tutelage were inspired by the priest of the second tratado of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Like the priest in *Lazarillo*, Cabra refuses to give the boys the sustenance their bodies require. Also, like the priest in *Lazarillo*, he insists that eating little is a noble thing. During Pablos' first day with the cruel schoolmaster, he witnesses the students being served a small bowl of soup to eat, which in reality is little more than a bowl of hot water: "Trajeron caldo en unas escudillas de madera, tan claro, que en comer una dellas peligrara Narciso más que en la fuente" (119). Cabra indicates the meal is perfectly adequate for the boys saying that "cierto que no hay tal cosa como la olla, digan lo que dijeren; todo lo demás es vicio y gula" (119). Just as Lazarillo is forced to devise various schemes in order to outwit the stingy priest of the second tratado, Pablos and his companions are forced to strategize and outwit one another in order to stay alive while under Cabra's supervision. In spite of this, Cabra has no tolerance for fighting over meals but rather insists that the lads eat like brothers since God has so abundantly provided.¹²⁰ As was mentioned previously, this time with Cabra is where Pablos would begin to show his innate capacity for scheming. While the similarities between Cabra and the priest from

¹¹⁸ In fact, in his final comments Pablos declares himself to be an "obstinado pecador" and sees himself as a victim of "la fortuna" that insists on "perseguirme" (308).

¹¹⁹ Parker condemns Cabra in the strongest possible terms: "a priest should be the guide to salvation, but Cabra is the opposite—the guide to death" (*Delinquent* 59).

¹²⁰ "Coman como hermanos, pues Dios les da con qué. No riñan, que para todos hay" (121).

Lazarillo are obvious, there is at least one major difference. As evil and stingy as he was, Lazarillo's second master at least provided enough sustenance to keep the young lad alive. Cabra's severe neglect of his students would cost one of them his very life. Pablos explains how one boy fell gravely ill and died because of Cabra's refusal to spend the money for a doctor until it was too late: "Cabra, por no gastar, detuvo el llamar médico hasta que ya él pedía confesión más que otra cosa. Llamó entonces un platicante, el cual le tomó el pulso y dijo que la hambre le había ganado por la mano en matar aquel hombre" (128). After the boy dies, they hastily dispose of his body without a proper burial since he was from another country.¹²¹

While Cabra is perhaps the best known religious character in *El Buscón*, he is by no means the only one. As discussed earlier in this chapter, while on the road to Madrid Pablos meets an old priest who has convinced himself that he is a world class poet, oblivious to the poor quality of his verses. In spite of his "suma ignorancia" in matters of poetry, the priest at least knows how to make a profit from his profession. He and Pablos come to an inn where there are twelve blind men gathered around the door. The priest charges each one of them eight *reales* to write prayers for them which, according to Pablos, amounted to nothing but "herejías y necedades" (183). It should also be noted that the priest, in spite of his holy orders, is infatuated with a certain woman and, curiously, dedicates hundreds of verses to the praise of her legs alone.

Another religious character encountered by Pablos is the hermit from chapter three of book two. While he initially gives all indication that his religious faith is genuine, it is quickly discovered that he is as much of a schemer as Pablos. When the hermit, Pablos and a soldier who was traveling with them decide to spend a night at an inn in Cerceilla, the hermit suggests that they play cards to pass the time since "la ociosidad es madre de los vicios" (192). When the three begin to play, the hermit pretends to be unfamiliar with the particular game they are

¹²¹ "Murió el pobre mozo, enterrámosle muy pobremente por ser forastero, y quedamos todos asombrados" (128).

playing and asks Pablos and the soldier to teach him. Because of this, Pablos assumes he will easily defeat the hermit, but he could not have been more mistaken: “Dejónos el bienaventurado hacer dos manos, y luego nos la dio tal, que no dejó blanca en la mesa. Heredónos en vida;” (192). If this weren’t enough to call into serious question the sincerity of the hermit’s religious faith, he later gives God the credit for his winnings: “porque me encomendaba a Dios, me ha sucedido bien” (193). The fact that this individual would give God the glory for his success in gambling either reveals his great ignorance of God’s character or shows that his faith is insincere and that he is only concerned with maintaining the facade of being a genuinely religious person.

Another similarity between *El Buscón* and *Lazarillo de Tormes* is that both novels paint a picture of a society filled with superstitious, gullible people, always ready and willing to purchase prayers from or show charity to anyone who gives an appearance of being religious. Several characters in the text use false religion to manipulate people into giving them money or goods. One example of such a person is Don Cosme, and Pablos’ description of him is worth quoting in its entirety:

Mas todo fue nada para ver entrar a don Cosme, cercado de muchachos con lamparones, cáncer y lepra, heridos y mancos, el cual se había hecho ensalmador con unas santiguaduras y oraciones que había aprendido de una vieja. Ganaba éste por todos, porque si el que venía a curarse no traía bulto debajo de la capa, no sonaba dinero en la faldriquera, o no piaban algunos capones, no había lugar. Tenía asolado medio reino. Hacía creer cuanto quería, porque no ha nacido tal artífice en el mentir; tanto, que aun por descuido no decía verdad. (236)

Don Cosme’s success shows just how gullible people in Pablos’ society are. In fact, Pablos himself also has success using religion to dupe people into providing for him. Shortly after his attempts to court Doña Ana are thwarted, he returns to being a beggar, always being certain that his conversation is filled with pious religious expressions. Pablos shares how he “ganaba mucho dinero” (278) with the following strategies:

Anduve ocho días por las calles, aullando en esta forma, con voz dolorida y realzamiento de plegarias: --<<¡Dalde, buen cristiano, siervo del Señor, al pobre lisiado y llagado; que me veo y me deseo!>>. Esto decía los días de trabajo, pero los días de fiesta comenzaba con diferente voz, y decía: --<<¡Fieles cristianos y devotos del Señor! ¡Por tan alta princesa como la Reina de los Angeles, Madre de Dios, dadle una limosna al pobre tullido y lastimado de la mano del Señor!>> Y paraba un poco –que es de grande importancia--, y luego añadía: --<<¡Un aire corruto, en hora menguada, trabajando en una viña, me trabó mis miembros, que me vi sano y bueno como se ven y se vean, loado sea el Señor!>>. (277-8)

Pablos has learned how to manipulate the highly religious people of Spanish society in order to provide for his needs. By taking advantage of the guilt complex instilled in the majority of the people by the established church authorities, Pablos and other picaros like him are able to make a healthy living.¹²²

It is clear, then, that there is no real evidence of God working in the lives of anyone in *El Buscón*. Pablos abandons what little faith he may have had in God as a child as soon as it becomes clear that God will not protect him in this world and that he will instead have to look after himself. He shows no desire for seeking a religious or spiritual solution for his life's problems and certainly never repents of his wicked ways as Guzmán apparently does. Also, the few people in the text who do have (or pretend to have) a religious vocation show no signs whatsoever of genuine Christian faith but are rather much like Pablos himself. They are talented deceivers who are keenly aware of the highly religious and superstitious nature of the Spanish people and use this knowledge as a means to financial gain. All of this is consistent with a naturalistic worldview. Since, according to naturalistic philosophy God does not exist, one should not be able to detect any hint of His presence or action.

¹²² These episodes of false religion are echoes of Lazarillo's experience with the buldero, whose impressive deceitfulness leads Lazarillo to exclaim: "¡Cuántas éstas deben hacer estos burladores entre la inocente gente!" (125).

Sex and Marriage

In both *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* it was shown that the primary motivation for sexual relationships and marriage was the need to satisfy one's sex drive and improve one's chance of survival or quality of existence and this is also the case in *El Buscón*. As Ynduráin says of Quevedo's novel, "cuando las relaciones sexuales aparecen, lo hacen como medio para conseguir otra cosa" (50). It will be shown that Pablos, following in the footsteps of his mother, is entirely selfish and self-centered in matters of love and throughout the course of the novel "the possibility of feeling or communion between two people does not even arise" (Smith 57).

While the reader is not given much information regarding the quality of the relationship between Pablos' mother and father, there are insinuations in the text that his mother had a reputation of being quite promiscuous. Early on in the text Pablos viciously attacks a young man after he refers to him as "hijo de una puta y hechicera" (107). Pablos is offended at the implication that his mother is a whore and that there may be some degree of doubt in regards to the identity of his true father. Still, he feels the need to ask her about the matter: "Roguéla que me declarase si le podía desmentir con verdad: o que me dijese si me había concebido a escote entre muchos, o si era hijo de mi padre" (108). The answer his mother gives to him is not encouraging: "No serás bobo: gracia tienes. Muy bien hiciste en quebrarle la cabeza, que esas cosas, aunque sean verdad, no se han de decir" (108). She does not deny that there may have been some truth to the young boy's insult but rather is only offended that he had the nerve to say it. It is clear, then, that there is enough in the text to cast serious doubts about the quality of Pablos' mother's love.

Pablos' own experience with women will show him to be no more capable of genuine love than his mother. In chapter five of book two, after he manages to get out of jail, he becomes lonely and begins to look for companionship. He meets a young lady named Doña Berenguela at an inn and begins to pursue her. It is clear what motivates his interest in the girl: "no me pareció mal la moza para el deleite" (250). In order to win her affection he pretends to be a wealthy nobleman named Don Ramiro de Guzmán. The young lady is impressed and forms a relationship with Pablos, who begins to write her charming but insincere love letters, all of them filled with expressions one would typically find in such letters: "Comenzaba por lo ordinario: <<Este atrevimiento, su mucha hermosura de v. m....>> decía lo de <<me abraso>>, trataba de penar, ofrecíame por esclavo, firmaba el corazón con la saeta" (253). A particularly embarrassing episode soon forces him to abandon Doña Berenguela, but he begins anew his quest for romance after his friends advise him of the benefits of finding a wealthy wife: "Animáronme a ello, poniéndome por delante el provecho que se me seguiría de casarme con la ostentación, a título de rico [...] Yo, negro cudicioso de pescar mujer, determinéme" (257-258). Like Lázaro and Guzmán, Pablos is primarily looking for marriage for the financial benefits it will bring him. He eventually meets and begins to pursue a young lady by the name of Doña Ana. Again, Pablos makes it clear that his motivation in chasing after Ana, or any other woman, has nothing to do with love in any sacred or spiritual sense: "yo no quiero las mujeres para consejeras ni bufonas, sino para acostarme con ellas" (263). Even more blatantly than in *Lazarillo de Tormes*, it is clear that sex and money here are the only real motivating factors in Pablos' search for a mate. Smith nicely summarizes Pablos' attitude toward women: "they are objects which arouse his dehumanizing sexual ambition [...] They are presented not as subjects,

that is as individuals capable of action and thought, but rather as objects, images conjured up by the male speaker for purposes of pleasure or ridicule” (38).

By the end of his autobiography, Pablos has given up all hope of marrying a wealthy woman from a higher class and finally settles down with a woman that could not have been a better fit for him. In the final chapter of the book, while he is hiding from the law in a cathedral, he meets a prostitute by the name of Grajales whom he marries and takes with him to America. Little is said specifically of their relationship but Pablos seems rather content with her: “Aficionóseme la Grajales [...] Súpome bien y mejor que todas esta vida” (306). The reader who has accompanied Pablos throughout his adventures knows that there could have been no other possible outcome for the picaresque’s love life. As Alpert says, “Pablos finds his comfort where he can, in the sleazy world of whores and criminals in which he moves” (xv) so it is entirely unsurprising that it would be precisely from this sleazy world that Pablos would find a mate most suitable for him.

As is the case in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*, nothing like true love can be found in the pages of *El Buscón*. Rather, the two primary motives for marriage are the basic need to satisfy one’s sex drive and financial gain. Pablos and other characters see women as objects to be enjoyed rather than as persons to be loved. This type of attitude is exactly what would be expected from the perspective of naturalistic philosophy, which views human beings as simply advanced animals driven by instinct and indomitable passion.

The fact that Quevedo’s picaresque tale is filled with jokes, puns, distortions, and a multitude of grotesque exaggerations means that no one would confuse the work with a nineteenth century naturalist novel. That is, if one limits the definition of *naturalism* to the literary technique of faithfully and accurately describing reality and observing characters as

scientists observe specimens in a laboratory. However, if one analyzes the novel from the perspective of naturalistic philosophy, it becomes clear that Quevedo possessed a considerable understanding of the effects that one's social environment and heredity have on the formation of one's life and character. The degree of determinism is perhaps stronger in this novel than in either *Lazarillo de Tormes* or *Guzmán de Alfarache*. The anonymous author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* at least allows Lázaro the opportunity to advance, if only a little, and Alemán allows his picaresque hero to find salvation through his Catholic faith. Pablos, however, seems destined to be a failure from the beginning. As Kellermann says: "Quevedo ha ideado la trama de su novela para mostrar que a Pablos no le es posible vivir fuera de la identidad impuesta por el destino" (687). While he initially expresses a desire to become a virtuous person via a proper education, the horrid conditions of school force him to learn to survive by relying on his wits and his innate talent for scheming and deception. His time with Don Diego at the university further drives him to depravity and from this point on, his identity has been shaped and the course of his future already plotted out. Even after he loses all interest in being a virtuous person, he remains ashamed of his family and still aspires to become (or rather, appear to be) a wealthy gentleman. Nevertheless, in spite of his disgust at some of the traits and behaviors associated with his family, he eventually displays the same traits and behaviors proving that his willpower alone is not enough to overcome the impact of heredity in his life.

In addition to the clear impact of environment and heredity in Pablos' life, at least one critic has noticed that many characters in *El Buscón* often seem to behave more like animals than human beings. David Russi has studied the frequent comparisons of people to animals that are found in the text and concludes that "Man is shown in the splendor of human lowness, constantly compared to animals. The question Quevedo suggests is are they inferior to man, or is it that we

are at the same level? Could there be a more effective way of pointing to the low state of man than through his constant comparison to animals in the totality of the discourse?” (451-452). Because of his well-known ideology, it is tempting to believe that Quevedo only intended to show that people of the lowest classes, whom he so greatly despised, are like animals. However, the careful reader will notice that even Don Diego, who is supposedly “tan quieto y religioso,” lowered himself to the level of a brute by having Pablos severely beaten because of his attempts to deceive Doña Ana about his social status.¹²³

In summary, the lack of divine influence in the lives of the characters, the obvious impact that heredity and environment are shown to have on the psychological development of the protagonist, and the fact that the primary motives for sex and marriage are greed and lust demonstrate that perhaps of the three novels analyzed in this study, Quevedo’s *El Buscón* paints the clearest picture of a society that operates in a naturalistic fashion.

¹²³ In fact, Rodríguez Mansilla, in agreement with Carroll Johnson, goes so far as to make the argument that Don Diego is in fact, as much of a picaro as Pablos (Rodríguez Mansilla 153).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has demonstrated that the observation that the Spanish Golden Age picaresque novel was the “naturalistic fiction of the day” (Wells 269) was basically an accurate assessment of the genre. However, Wells’ article focused almost exclusively on the fact that the works show up close and personal the dirty and sordid lives of the poor and marginalized. As this study has made clear, a type of *picaresque naturalism* can be identified in these works that extends far beyond a willingness to portray the lives of beggars, prostitutes and other members of low society. All three of the protagonists studied here paint a picture, through their autobiographies, of a world that operates according to the principles and tenets of naturalistic philosophy. While the degree of strict determinism varies from novel to novel, all of these texts reveal the powerful influence that environment has in shaping the lives and character of not only the protagonists but also many other individuals in society. Also, especially in the case of *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *El Buscón*, a type of hereditary determinism can be detected which seems to predetermine which vices and character traits the protagonist will reveal as he tells the story of his life. In addition to the environmental and biological determinism, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *El Buscón* also paint a sobering picture of religion in Spanish society. Nowhere in either of these novels is there any indication of divine influence or intervention in the lives of either the protagonists or in society in general. Prayers are lifted to heaven by the thousands, but these prayers are invariably made by deceivers and schemers who take advantage of the gullibility of the Spanish people and their tendency toward superstition for financial gain. The

characters who have a religious vocation and who therefore have the responsibility to reveal to others the light of God instead live in as much darkness as any of the picares we have studied. Just like the protagonists of the novels analyzed, these religious leaders are self-centered schemers that are gripped by a number of vices such as greed, gambling and excessive sensuality. Religion as a crutch for the weak and fearful, and as a financial opportunity for the shrewd, is precisely what would be predicted by naturalistic philosophy. Finally, the characters in these novels, on the whole, seem to be little more than advanced animals and the supposedly sacred institution of marriage is motivated not by genuine spiritual love but by the need to improve one's economic status and satisfy basic physical needs. While the detailed, careful observation of nineteenth century French naturalist novels is largely absent in these picaresque works, they are nonetheless shown to be quite naturalistic in the philosophical sense of the term.

Since it has been demonstrated that there is an obvious connection between the picaresque novels and naturalistic philosophy, it seems natural to compare and contrast the degree of naturalistic philosophy found in these Golden Age texts to that found in the Spanish naturalist novels of the nineteenth century. Many Spanish authors in the realist tradition accepted certain aspects of Zola's naturalism. For instance, authors welcomed the focus on careful observation and detailed documentation of characters and their surroundings. They also acknowledged the importance of having the freedom to write in detail about the lives of individuals from any social class and even to allow such an individual to be the protagonist of a novel. Finally, Spanish authors appreciated the importance of acknowledging the real impact that forces such as environment and heredity had in shaping the lives and psychological profiles of characters.

Nevertheless, there are some elements of naturalism that the Spanish writers simply could not accept. One of these was the stark determinism of Zola, that viewed human beings as little more than advanced animals who were entirely controlled by and whose lives were determined by a combination of hereditary and environmental factors. Jeremy Medina summarizes the Spanish novelists' primary concern with Zola's philosophy:

Determinism as a philosophy never attained great favor in Spain, where the Catholic concept of free will stood firm against the idea that man was totally subservient to heredity and environment. In Spain, man could not be considered a *bestia humana*, subject to the same physical laws as lower forms of life; he was rather a receptacle of divine attributes and guidance. Here the Spanish novel could not mirror the pervasive pessimism of its French counterpart. (88)

In summary, naturalism in its purest form never caught on in Spain but certain elements of it did influence a number of Spanish authors. Two authors in particular whose works have been analyzed in terms of the degree of naturalism found in them are Benito Pérez Galdós and Emilia Pardo Bazán. A brief discussion of selected works from these authors will help show more concretely the connections between picaresque novels and naturalistic works from the nineteenth century.

Galdós was one of the most prolific writers of the realistic novel in nineteenth century Spain. His opposition to idealistic and romantic literature and his insistence that the novel should accurately reflect society as it is and wrestle with the real problems that Spanish society faced at the time naturally piqued his interest in Zola's new form. While Galdós would never become a strict disciple of Zola, he did share the French author's concern for describing reality as it is and for his willingness to make individuals of low class the "hero" of his novels. He also demonstrated the impact that heredity and environment have in shaping characters in his works. One of Galdós' works that has received quite a bit of critical attention in terms of its naturalistic content is *La desheredada* (1881). This work tells the story of Isidora, a lady who is deceived

into believing that she belongs to a noble family and relentlessly dedicates her life to proving this to be true. She is unsuccessful in her attempts to prove her nobility and yet because of her refusal to work (because having a normal job would be beneath her) she is ultimately driven to prostitution just to survive.

There are several connections between *La desheredada* and the picaresque novels analyzed in this dissertation. Perhaps the most obvious parallel is between Isidora and Pablos from *El Buscón*. Both of these protagonists refuse to accept the reality of their social situation and are obsessed with ascending the social ladder. After all of their efforts to improve their social status fail, the lives of both protagonists end in utter depravity: Isidora becomes a prostitute and Pablos marries one. However, there are more similarities between these novels than just the basic trajectory of the protagonists' lives. Both Galdós and Quevedo used their novels to show that the refusal to accept reality and an unhealthy obsession with improving one's wealth and status were a serious social disease that was affecting much of society. As Michael Schnepf states: "One of the most potent environmental forces in *La desheredada* is the mad dash for wealth and social position that occupies the majority of the characters" (110). *La desheredada* begins with Isidora visiting her father who has been placed in an asylum in Leganés and curiously, it is one of the patients there, Canencia, who describes the type of madness that lands people in Leganés:

una de las enfermedades del alma que más individuos trae a estas casas es la ambición, el afán de agrandecimiento, la envidia que los bajos tienen de los altos, y eso de querer subir atropellando a los que están arriba, no por la escalera del mérito y del trabajo, sino por la escalera suelta de la intriga, o de la violencia, como si dijéramos, empujando, empujando. (87)

Canencia's words are a foreshadowing of how Isidora's life will develop. She, like many of the patients in these asylums, will also be continually obsessed with improving her social status and

growing wealthy without being willing to do the hard work required to attain these goals. As Brian Dendle says, “Galdós evokes with masterly detail the corrupt society of the Restoration: a social system based on hypocrisy, exploitation, sordid envies, gullibility, and an obsession with appearances, a society in which representatives of all social classes pursue elaborate schemes of self-deceit” (quoted in Schnepf, 112). A similar description could be written about the society described in *El Buscón* and to some extent in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. As was discussed earlier in this study, in both of these novels a variety of characters, including the protagonists themselves, fall prey to self-deception and an unhealthy obsession with appearances. Pablos’ initial desire to become a virtuous gentleman through a proper education quickly degenerates into an obsession with appearing to be a gentleman. Throughout the novel he resorts to every imaginable brand of trickery and scheming in order to convince others that he is indeed a wealthy gentleman. In *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the protagonist criticizes the squire from the third tratado for his desperate efforts to appear to be a noble gentleman only to later fall prey to the same type of self deception.

Canencia’s complaint that so many people in his society strive to advance without “mérito” and “trabajo” could also be applied to all three of the picaresque novels analyzed here.¹²⁴ Whenever possible, Pablos prefers to deceive his way into wealth rather than work.¹²⁵ He routinely steals, cheats at cards and specifically targets women of wealthy families for marriage because of the dowry he will receive. Guzmán also routinely steals and even prostitutes his wife for financial gain.¹²⁶ Even Lázaro, who has had to work for a variety of

¹²⁴ Considering the poor economic conditions in Spain during the age of the picaresque novel, it is tempting to blame a high unemployment rate for the picaros’ resorting to stealing and trickery in order to obtain money. However, a general anti-work attitude among Spaniards at the time is well documented by historians: “With the promise of easy wealth overseas and of military booty in Europe, with the traditional association of industry and commerce with Moslems and Jews, with the growing role played in Spain’s economy by foreigners, work became an unattractive, un-Spanish, and un-Christian concept, to be avoided at all costs” (McKendrick 112).

¹²⁵ According to McKendrick, Pablos “provides a splendid literary symbol of that aversion to work and contempt and distaste for industry which was to have such disastrous consequences for the Spanish economy” (112).

¹²⁶ Yes in his reformed state, Alemán’s protagonist seems to be aware of the error of his previous ways: “al bien

masters throughout his life, reveals his disdain for labor when he quickly abandons his job as a water carrier as soon as he sees himself dressed in his newly purchased (but second-hand) gentleman's attire. This general distaste for work is by no means limited to the protagonists of these novels. The squire in *Lazarillo* could relieve his poverty and suffering by seeking employment, but this would be unthinkable for someone of his (formerly significant) rank. Also, several of *Lazarillo*'s masters with a religious vocation are hardly interested in genuine work but instead employ various means of deception in order to bilk superstitious people of their money.¹²⁷ In *Guzmán de Alfarache*, beggars avoid having to work by banding together and forming complex parasitic strategies in order to maximize the charitable donations they receive. Pablos also meets (and joins forces with) many individuals who obtain money by a variety of deceptive schemes rather than hard work. It is clear, then, that both Galdós and the much earlier picaresque authors used the novel as a way to highlight specific negative societal forces that represented a powerful determining factor in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of many people in Spanish society.

Another author closely associated with the brief phase of literary naturalism in Spain is the countess Emilia Pardo Bazán. Pardo Bazán was impressed with Zola's technique of vivid, detailed observation in his novels, but as a devout Catholic and believer in free will, she refused to accept his deterministic theories in their purest form.¹²⁸ She readily acknowledged the sometimes bestial behavior of human beings and even acknowledged that heredity and especially environment do play some role in determining human conduct. Nevertheless, she appealed to the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin to explain the tendency toward animal-like conduct in man:

ocupado no hay virtud que le falte, al ocioso no hay vicio que no le acompañe" (I, 318).

¹²⁷ Contrast these religious leaders with the apostle Paul of the New Testament who "worked day and night in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you" (1 Thes 2:9).

¹²⁸ Donald Brown refers to Pardo Bazán's world-view as "Catholic naturalism" while Robert Lott prefers "mitigated naturalism" (Lott 3).

“Sólo la caída de una naturaleza originariamente pura y libre puede dar la clave de esta mezcla de nobles aspiraciones y bajos instintos, de necesidades intelectuales y apetitos sensuales” (“La cuestión” n. pag.). Thus her understanding of man’s relationship to God and the world is not unlike that which is portrayed in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. As indicated earlier in this study, Guzmán’s misconduct and wrong attitudes are clearly influenced, sometimes powerfully, by heredity and environment. Nevertheless, the picaresque’s situation is not hopeless because he is eventually able to obtain God’s grace which redeems him from the effects of original sin. It is clear that neither Alemán nor Pardo Bazán are willing to compromise their Catholic faith and yet both seem keenly aware of the potent forces that affect human beings. In addition, both of these authors are cognizant of the fact that battling these forces is sometimes very difficult.

In spite of her insistence on the truth of Catholic doctrine, however, one can still detect the impact of heredity and environment in Pardo Bazán’s novels. *Los Pazos de Ulloa* (1886) is one of her novels that critics have designated as naturalistic. In thirty short chapters, it tells the story of Julián, a young, idealistic priest who is sent to Los pazos de Ulloa, an estate in a remote part of Galicia whose residents have long since begun a journey toward moral decadence and deterioration. Julián is sent to rescue the decaying estate and hopes to accomplish his goal by providing a proper spiritual education to its residents. He focuses his efforts on Don Pedro, the owner of the estate, who has failed miserably in his management of it. A brutish man, largely controlled by his passions and instincts, Don Pedro enjoys an illicit relationship with Sabel, the daughter of Primitivo, the primary manager of the property. Julián attempts to help Don Pedro by encouraging him to leave Los Pazos for a time since “la aldea, cuando se cría uno en ella y no sale de ella jamás envilece, empobrece y embrutece” (113). He convinces Don Pedro to accompany him to Santiago with the intention of selecting a wife for himself. While Don Pedro

is initially attracted to the beautiful and flirtatious Rita, he ultimately follows the advice of Julián and agrees to marry Nucha, Rita's more refined and religious sister. Julián's strategy initially seems to have worked as there is notable change in the behavior of Don Pedro. However, when Nucha, after a particularly difficult pregnancy, gives birth to a daughter rather than the son he wanted, he quickly returns to his old ways and reestablishes his illicit relationship with Sabel. The situation continues to deteriorate and Julián is eventually forced to leave the estate, having failed in his mission to restore order to it.

The reader of *Los pazos de Ulloa* who is aware of the author's rejection of Zola's determinism and insistence on the value of the Catholic faith is puzzled by this novel since it seems to suggest that the environmental forces of los pazos prove too potent for even a properly educated, well-intentioned priest to overcome. It is the author's intent, however, to show that a pious education alone is not sufficient preparation for going to battle against the forces that dominate los pazos. As R. C. Boland states: "The Seminary has produced a young man of dove-like innocence only to cast him into a world crawling with serpents" (n. pag.). In spite of his good intentions, Julián is ultimately unfit for the task he takes on. As the work's narrator explains: "Él era sencillo como la paloma; sólo que en este pícaro mundo también se necesita ser cauto como la serpiente" (163).

A parallel to this is found in *Guzmán de Alfarache*. While the protagonist seems to finally obtain salvation while serving time in the galleys, he also has other opportunities throughout his life to change his ways. For example, when he is taken in by the kind-hearted Cardinal he is cared for and provided with adequate food. Nevertheless, such a healthy, stable environment is not enough to overcome Guzmán's criminal instincts and he continuously steals from the Cardinal. While his master is patient with him for quite some time, he finally can take

no more and dismisses his servant. Later in his life, after a failed marriage, Guzmán becomes frustrated with his life and decides to study for the church. Undoubtedly he receives a proper education in theology which should have left him spiritually equipped to battle against his instincts. Nevertheless, only months before he is to graduate and take holy orders, he becomes infatuated with Gracia and abandons his studies altogether. It is clear, then, that both *Los pazos de Ulloa* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* show that a proper education in spiritual matters is not enough to overcome man's natural inclinations toward evil.

I have only considered the work of two authors who have been associated with the naturalistic phase in the nineteenth century Spanish novel. There are certainly others whose work could be analyzed. Nevertheless, the similarities between the nineteenth century works analyzed here and the three picaresque works that have been the focus of this study are clear. In *La desheredada* Galdós highlights many of the same environmental forces that can be seen affecting characters in the picaresque novels. In *Los pazos de Ulloa* Pardo Bazán seems to share Alemán's conviction that a religious education in itself is not adequate to combat the potency of man's beast-like nature. However, she makes it clear in her other writings that she will not be swayed by Zola's fatalistic determinism but will continue to cherish her Catholic faith and find hope for mankind, as Alemán does, in God's grace.

Further direct comparisons between Spanish picaresque works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and naturalistic novels from Spain's nineteenth century would surely show more points of contact between the two genres. The preceding pages make the case that a striking kinship exists between the picaresque and naturalistic novels. Though other critics had noted the genres' similarities, this dissertation has worked to highlight in detail the connections.

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