There is an unfortunate and enduring belief among non-Hispanist scholars that Miguel de Cervantes was a writer of the picaresque and that his most famous protagonist, Don Quixote, is a picaresque (anti)hero. This misjudgment, mostly outside Spain, has historical roots, starting with Cervantes' own contemporaries, and has lasted to the present. The misunderstanding stems firstly from the fact that many scholars are unfamiliar with the Spanish picaresque. This is confounded by the fact that Cervantes did indeed integrate numerous features of the Spanish picaresque into several of his works, especially Don Quixote and his Exemplary Novels. However, this problem extends beyond Cervantes to a number of authors whose works have been lumped into the picaresque with disregard for what the genre entails. W. M. Frohock brought attention to this fact by noting that non-Hispanists employ the term "picaresque" so loosely that "for every novelist to write a new novel there is at least one critic waiting to find something picaresque in it." More recently, Joseph V. Ricapito points out that even today "one sees the word 'picaresque' used in so many ways" that "the original sense of the word has become blurred." Unfortunately, Cervantes’ fiction has not been immune to comparable assessments, but to deem Don Quixote a picaresque narrative and the knight a pícaro is to misunderstand both the characteristics of Spanish picaresque and of the generally accepted character traits of Spanish Golden Age pícaros.

It is true that Cervantes was forced to cope with the picaresque in some way, especially since Don Quixote (1605) was published on the heels of Mateo Alemán’s wildly popular picaresque narrative Guzmán de Alfarache (1599), which went through more than twelve editions before its second part appeared in 1604. The Guzmán is often credited with being the most significant picaresque novel and marked both a resurgence of the genre and its highpoint; it was often known simply as El Pícaro. In fact, several other authors wished to capitalize on Alemán’s instant success and brought out their own picaresque narratives immediately after: Mateo Luján de Say-
avedra published a spurious second part to Guzmán de Alfarache in 1602. Francisco Quevedo wrote Historia de la vida de buscón, llamado Pablos [Life of the Swindler called Pablos] (circulating in manuscript form as early as 1604 and later published in 1626), and López de Úbeda published the first female picaresque work, La picara Justina (1605). The opening years of the seventeenth century saw a flurry of picaresque production, all of which took inspiration from the original prototype, the anonymous Lazarillo de Tormes, published in 1554 but censored and rereleased in expurgated form from 1573. Lazarillo, published in both Spain and Antwerp, marks the origin of the picaresque myth in Western literature by establishing the solitary boy antihero along with the literary setting, eventually yielding the modern conception of the narrative form.

Amidst the sudden—and perhaps unexpected—regeneration and reconstitution of the picaresque, Cervantes may have completed as much as half or more of Don Quixote, which he sent to the printer in 1605. Other major works, the Novelas ejemplares (1613) and the second part of Don Quixote (1615), were likewise conceived, written, and published exactly at the height of popularity of picaresque narratives. Cervantes’ most significant works were all published in the midst of a picaresque surge brought about almost single-handedly by Aleman’s Guzmán de Alfarache. Aleman’s masterpiece established an unsurpassed model during the time period so that anything resembling the picaresque automatically alluded to the Guzmán. As Edward C. Riley points out, the literary scene was abuzz with the Guzmán to such an extent that the disquieting presence of Aleman’s picaro could not have been ignored by contemporaneous writers concerned with “attracting both a large readership and the respect of serious critics,” as Cervantes was.

These publishing milestones in a relatively small literary culture must have impacted Cervantes a great deal. Several of the Exemplary Novels clearly refer to picaresque characters, work with material drawn from picaresque narratives, or imitate essential themes or styles from the picaresque, especially the framed story El coloquio de los perros [The Dialogue of the Dogs] contained within El casamiento engañoso [The Deceitful Wedding], as well as La ilustre fregona [The Illustrious Kitchen Maid], and Rinconete y Cortadillo. Despite appropriating certain aspects from the picaresque for these stories, as we shall see, Cervantes’ overall literary goals as a novelist do not seem to coincide with picaresque authors such as Aleman or the anonymous writer of Lazarillo. In other words, the author brushes up against the picaresque, even takes some inspiration from it, but such imitation is hazily and unevenly reminiscent of the most successful picaresque narratives of the day. The Guzmán and other picaresque novels indeed impacted Cervan-
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tine fiction, even if Cervantes himself would not admit it, but that impact falls short of making the novelist a picaresque writer.¹¹

*Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* are the two foundational works which represent the picaresque's legacy.¹² In the midst of the Spanish Renaissance, the picaresque features a discourse that is very much antagonistic to the idealistic narratives of the chivalric, pastoral, and sentimental romances that enjoyed favor among readers. The adult narrator describes his upbringing and social climbing with biting satire, a critical point of view, and a bittersweet tone that radically departs from the idyllic descriptions afforded by the romances. As a reaction to the romances, the picaresque narrates in episodic fashion the life story of a young boy, orphaned by his mother, and forced to become the apprentice to a series of masters who train the child to survive using cunning and wit in a society that is morally, ethically, and financially bankrupt. As Guzmánillo puts it: “Todos roban, todos mienten, todos traman, ninguno cumple con lo que debe, y es lo peor que se precian dello” (185) [Everyone steals, everyone lies, everyone swindles, no one does what they should, and even worse, they are proud of it]. Along the way, the boy half-outsiders become eyewitness observers of human conduct, especially in church and state, and of the disenfranchisement of various people. As adults, they cull from those memories the most prominent episodes of their lives to bring to light the corruption they witness—and of which they eventually become a part—to show how they have improved their lot. Constant hunger permeates the early years, and the opportunity to recount these hardships becomes a long-term objective that determines the shape of the narration. When the narrative reaches its end, the picaresque stands as a symbol of disenfranchisement; its questioning of church and state authority is highly suspect but nonetheless paints a wick- edly colorful portrait of Golden Age Spain.

Without *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán de Alfarache*, Cervantes could not have written several of his *Exemplary Novels* or *Don Quixote*.¹³ The two picaresque works stand at the forefront of a body of literature written between 1554 and 1646 that now constitutes the genre. A number of literary works published during and since that time share commonalities with the genre, but are not rightly picaresque.¹⁴ Hispanists commonly consider the latter category as meta-picaresque or proto-picaresque, imitations of the more canonical works, often in the form of parody or satire. Over the centuries, this effusion has diluted the intrinsic and accepted constituents of Spanish picaresque narrative so as to generate problems of thematic, formulaic, and generic misidentification. As a result, any narrative that includes criminal types, or is written in the first person describing youthful indiscre-
tions, or whose main protagonist is revealed as an antihero who questions authority (among other markers) gets labeled as picaresque fiction.

It is precisely because of these tendencies that some have lumped Cervantes into a group of authors simply on the basis of narrative style, application of particular themes and patterns, or the development of characters who share some traits with picaresque models. Scholars contend that Cervantes "dialogues" with the picaresque in a variety of ways, including through imitation and parody, the construction of plot and theme, the introduction of characters who resemble the picaro, through strategies of historical or cultural emplotment, and through the imitation of picaresque dialogue. Cervantes is at times ambivalent toward the picaresque, at times critical, and sometimes admiring. With no critical consensus on how Cervantes negotiated the picaresque, scholars might follow Peter Dunn's advice: "it will be more practical to look in Cervantes' work for the new perspectives which he achieved by incorporating motifs, narrative points of view and social reference from these other works. All his best fiction is intergeneric."

Considering Cervantes' fondness for integrating all sorts of styles and modes into his prose fiction, as well as his assimilation and refashioning of other genres into an original creation, it seems safe to conclude that he would do the same with the picaresque, even to the point of parody. Cervantes' irregular replication of the picaresque in his works has generated a number of studies designed to shed light on the writer's relationship to the genre. Almost no Hispanist today believes Cervantes is a picaresque writer, but many believe Cervantes found inspiration in the picaresque and appropriated from it certain features. In El pensamiento de Cervantes (1925), Américo Castro's examination of Cervantes' relationship to the Guzmán de Alfarache led the scholar to label some of Cervantes' fiction "pseudopicaresque," indicating the novelist adapted and imitated certain salient picaresque traits, but was not rightly a picaresque writer. After Castro, the most influential work to treat Cervantes and the picaresque was Carlos Blanco Aguinaga's "Cervantes y la picaresca: notas sobre dos tipos de realismo." Blanco Aguinaga expresses amazement that scholars could include Cervantes and picaresque authors within the same category, stating unequivocally that "Cervantes no escribió jamás una novela picaresca—y que sus 'picaros', por lo tanto, son muy distintos de los otros—porque su manera de ver el mundo y de novelar, es decir, su realismo, es esencialmente antagónico al de los autores de las picarescas más famosas" [Cervantes never wrote a picaresque novel—and his "picaros" therefore are distinct from others—because Cervantes' way of seeing the world and of writing novels, that is to say, his realism, is essentially antagonistic to the most famous au-
thors of the picaresque]. As Dunn later pointed out, the Blanco Aguinaga article convinced “a generation of readers that Cervantes and the picaresque were absolutely incompatible.”

Perhaps it is more accurate to state that Blanco Aguinaga’s essay engendered further research into this incompatibility. Overall, scholars have noted Cervantes’ interest in the picaresque but stop far short from viewing that interest as an attempt at adopting and cultivating it. Hence, while Roberto González Echeverría and Dunn have questioned whether a coherent picaresque genre existed in Cervantes’ time and pondered whether the novelist could have viewed the works we call picaresque in such terms, they generally agree that he was inspired by Lazarillo, and, especially, Guzmán. For example, González Echeverría explains that Cervantes did not slavishly follow Aleman’s model but saw Guzmán as a major change in the development of the modern novel, making Cervantes’ Deceitful Wedding and Dialogue of the Dogs beneficiaries of Aleman’s innovations. A similar view is held by Joaquín Casalduero, who shows that Cervantes appraised the picaresque without delving too deep, perhaps because to examine its value system and approach to narrative would ultimately validate Aleman’s genius. Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce writes that Cervantes does not follow what has come to be viewed as typically picaresque formulas nor did he intend to write a picaresque narrative: “Cervantes nunca tuvo la menor intención ni gana de escribir una novela picaresca, según los cánones explotados al máximo por Mateo Alemán” [Cervantes never had the least intention nor interest in writing a picaresque novel according to the canons exploited to the maximum by Mateo Alemán]. What these and other studies reveal is that it was impossible for Cervantes not to be intrigued by what the picaresque had to offer, especially Aleman’s version of it, and he considered a number of aspects worth exploring, even if he did not agree completely with how the world was viewed by and through Guzmán. Ricapito expresses a similar view when he states that Cervantes is not a picaresque writer because he does not fully adhere to any literary formula that was understood as “picaresque” by his contemporaries, nor does he put forth a “damning world view” that can be found in the Guzmán de Alfarache or Quevedo’s Buscón. Yet the advantages of the picaresque were great enough that he could not ignore them outright. Through the years, the only consensus reached by Hispanists is that the picaresque exists, but that certain intertextual and extra-textual traits cannot be consistently defined or applied across works that “might” be picaresque. Many of these discussions began in the 1960s and debate has continued unabated.
A clue for understanding Cervantes' earliest interaction with the picaresque can be uncovered in the Cervantine passage most often cited in this regard—and the first on picaresque to appear in any of his works. In the “Episode of the Galley Slaves,” Don Quixote and Sancho happen upon a chain gang of prisoners on their way to serve out their sentences in the king’s galleys. When the knight asks why the men are to be imprisoned, each provides his own colorful—but less-than-truthful—explanation for his crimes. In the elaboration of his own defense, one in particular, Ginés de Pasamonte, claims to have written his own autobiography, titled La vida de Ginés de Pasamonte. When asked if his story is any good, Ginés answers: “—Es tan bueno—respondió Ginés—que mal año para Lazarillo de Tormes y para todos cuantos de aquel género se han escrito o escribieren” (209) [“It’s so good,” Ginés replied, “that it’s too bad a year for Lazarillo de Tormes and for all the others of that genre that have been, or will be, written”]. The passage rightly has been cited as proof that Cervantes was familiar with Lazarillo and other similar works to the point of counting them as part of a “genre.” In fact, Claudio Guillén’s understanding of “de aquel género” specifies knowledge of something called the “picaresque genre” as well as some kind of criticism of this genre. Similarly, Ricapito writes that through Ginés de Pasamonte Cervantes reflected “a commonly held understanding, informal as that may have been, of a body of literature built around a rogue figure.” The result of such views generally is that Cervantes referred to a body of popular literature today called “the picaresque,” even if such terminology did not exist when he wrote it.

The passage tells us, more than anything else, that Cervantes had read the Lazarillo, perhaps even the original, uncensored version that continued to circulate clandestinely. He likewise was familiar with “others” that belonged to a similar family to the extent that he viewed them as a cohesive body of literature sharing similar features. Since no other picaresque work comparable to Lazarillo had been published up to 1599, “others” may refer to Mateo Alemán’s Guzmán as well as the compilation of works published slightly later. Indeed, for Marcel Bataillon, the galley slave’s statement probably should have read “too bad for Guzmán de Alfarache” rather than Lazarillo de Tormes, a point echoed by Joaquín Casalduero, who writes that Ginés references Lazarillo rather than the Guzmán only because Cervantes likely did not want to award such an honor to Alemán, his contemporary and rival. Cervantes may have perceived Alemán as yet another literary competitor, just as he had Lope de Vega. And striking similarities between the two fictional characters/authors support these hypotheses: Ginés and Guzmán are both criminals convicted to serve in the galleys, but who are
in the process of composing their own (incomplete) memoirs at this critical juncture in their lives. The coincidence hardly could have been gratuitous.  

Cervantes clearly found insight in some of Guzmán's offerings. First, as others have noted, Ginés' physical appearance represents what had commonly come to be associated with picaros, literary or otherwise. We are told he is a cross-eyed petty criminal ("al mirar metía el un ojo en el otro un poco" [209], "as he looked, one eye moved inward toward the other"), who, after being freed by Don Quixote, dresses as a gypsy to avoid recapture. Cervantes clearly means this to recall a people stereotypically linked to thievery, lies, and deception, as expressed by Berganza in *The Dialogue of the Dogs*: "sus muchas malicias, sus embaimientos y embustes, los hurtos en que se ejercitan, así gitanas como gitanos, desde el punto casi que salen de las mantillas y saben andar" (680) [their wicked customs, their falsities and lies, the robberies they perpetuate, so are Gypsy men and Gypsy women from the time they leave the womb and learn to walk]. When Ginés and the other galley slaves refuse to appear before Don Quixote's beloved Dulcinea to proclaim their gratitude for his service in liberating them, the knight furiously names Pasamonte "don Ginesillo de Paropillo" (210), recalling and rhyming with "Lazarillo" and "Guzmanillo," and likewise mocking the origins of Lazarillo "de Tormes" or Guzmán "de Alfarache." Other allusions reveal that Cervantes toys with the picaresque in this episode. By calling Ginés' story *La vida de Ginés de Pasamonte*, Cervantes may be mocking the formulaic method of titling picaresque texts. He surely acquainted himself enough with the picaresque to know the general formula these works followed.

Ginés' authorial defense sheds the most light on Cervantes' views concerning the picaresque in *Don Quixote*. Ginés claims to be writing a story so truthful about himself that no lies or flourishes could possibly equal them: "Lo que le sé decir a vocés es que trata verdades, y que son verdades tan lindas y tan donosas, que no pueden haber mentiras que se le iguales"(209) [All I can say is that it deals with truths, and they are truths so appealing and entertaining that no lies could equal them]. In the very first chapter of *Guzmán*, Alemán's positions "truth" alongside "lies" and warns the reader that he has no need to embellish his story because its veracity is obvious. Ginés, however, advises that his story is similarly candid, yet his truths are "appealing and entertaining," reminding us that the truth is a relative construct in the hands of a picaro, and perhaps signaling Cervantes' disbelief regarding the supposed verisimilitude of the picaresque autobiography.

Another significant problem is the "caso," or case, the impulse for the picaro to write his or her memoir. The formula began with Lazarillo, whose
supposed motivation for putting his life on paper is a request from the mysterious “Your Excellency” to explain a certain “case”: “Y pues Vuestra Merced escribe se le escriba y relate el caso muy por extenso” (11) [Your Excellency has written asking me for a full account of the case]. Lázaro’s story becomes a written defense and disclosure of the minimal successes of an uneven life that has culminated in some sort of illicit relationship between his wife and the Archpriest—the “case”—of which he is not only aware and approving, but willfully complicit. Guzmán similarly has a “case” to explain—his criminal behavior leading to his stint in the galleys where he has been condemned for his crimes. Guzmán’s religious conversion yields a series of sermons that serve as final commentary on the morality of his own actions, and the destructive nature of the society that has helped shape him. However, as Gustavo García López reminds us, Ginés has no “case,” no illicit background story propelling his narrative. Moreover, he does not repent—or even attempt to repent—as Guzmán does at the end of his narrative, demonstrating that the galley slave’s story contains no moral or ethical message he wishes to impart. Also unlike Guzmán’s story, Ginés’ story lacks scorn for the society that has twice sentenced him to the galleys. Quite to the contrary, before being freed by Don Quixote, Ginés happily embraces his second sentence to ten years in prison because it will allow for time to finish the book he previously left in pawn: “y no me pesa mucho de ir a ellas, porque allí tendré lugar de acabar mi libro; que me quedan muchas cosas que decir, y en las galeras de España hay más sosiego de aquel que sería menester, aunque no es menester mucho más para lo que yo tengo de escribir, porque me lo sé de coro” (209) [I’m not too sorry to go there, because there I will have time to finish my book, for I still have lots of things to say, and on the galleys of Spain there’s more leisure than I’ll need, though I don’t need that much for what I have to write, because I know it by heart]. The reader of Guzmán de Alfarache never gets the feeling that the galleys are so pleasant that an author can perfect his writing there.

It is quite likely, then, that Cervantes’ Ginés de Pasamonte is a parodic figure meant to recall picaresque antiheroes such as Guzmán, but whose development is intentionally stunted. Cervantes sets Ginés alongside other criminals to reveal his opinion of the picaresque: like Lazarillo and, especially, Guzmán, the author-protagonists of these works are, despite their hardships and bad luck, no more than criminals. And criminals do not naturally or normally write their life stories. Such a viewpoint should not be hard to believe if we keep in mind Cervantes’ own confrontations with the law and resulting prison sentences. When Ginés returns in part 2 (chapters 25–27) as Master Peter the puppeteer, neither he nor the narrator ever men-
tions the purported autobiography he has begun, perhaps underscoring its temporality, its displacement, or even its unimportance. Did his adventures during the one or two months between his liberation and his journey across the plains of La Mancha as a puppet master with a deceptive fortune-telling monkey get included in his *The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte*? We will never know, since Cervantes abandoned the entire autobiographical-picaresque project. This is further accentuated when Don Quixote asks Ginés if he has finished his autobiography: “—¿Cómo puede estar acabado—respondió él—, si aún no está acabada mi vida? Lo que está escrito es desde mi nacimiento hasta el punto que esta última vez me han echado en galeras” (209) [“How can it be finished,” he responded, “when my life isn’t finished yet? What I’ve written goes from my birth up to the last time they sentenced me to the galleys”]. For Dunn, Ginés’ autobiography indeed can be read as a parody of the picaresque due to the genre’s perpetual unfinished state, and because picaresque authors always tell us more is forthcoming without delivering on the promise.32 This means, of course, that the picaresque autobiography can never conclude and therefore can never truly divulge all that it purports to tell. For Cervantes, autobiography can have no convincing plot, and therefore no true or reliable resolution. We may take this to imply that the picaresque is amusing but disingenuous, even misleading. The model of a picaro (in the Alemán scheme) who undergoes a conversion that leads him to write his story as an example for others does not exist here. Ignoring the obvious problem that picaresque narratives are supposedly written by illiterate rogues who cite classical texts, in Cervantes’ world such a scenario invites skepticism because real-life picaros do not repent and do not sermonize or moralize. Besides, their life’s end sometimes comes before their narratives can be finalized because—as Guzmán shows us—it involves the executioner.

If there is any doubt that Cervantes was intrigued by the picaresque following the increase in works published around the time of the *Exemplary Novels*, a brief look at *The Illustrious Kitchen Maid* might be in order. On the surface, this *novela* disguises itself as a picaresque tale of youthful indiscretions. Indeed, time and again, Cervantes explicitly labels his protagonists “picaros” and their training and education as worthy of the best rogues. The story goes something like this: two young men from noble families, Carriazo and Avendaño, abandon their homes, deliberately disguise themselves as picaros and seek out adventures. While working at a Toledo inn, Avendaño falls in love with the beautiful Costanza, the kitchen maid of the story’s title, who works at the same inn polishing silver and carrying out kitchen duties. As in other *Exemplary Novels*, the end is unsurprisingly joy-
ous and contrived, involving the discovery that Costanza, like Avendaño, is really of noble lineage, which allows the couple to discard their costumes, return to Burgos, marry, and assume the highborn stations.

What stands out most in this tale with respect to the picaresque is its artificiality. These so-called picaros do not conform at all to what had become aligned with the picaresque. They are picaros by choice, not by necessity, not habituated to this lifestyle—its very unlike Lazarillo's daily ordeal—and thus innocent of the real hardships brought about by low birth, poverty, and hunger. A similar point is made clear by the narrator in his introduction of the pair: “Trece años, o poco más, tendría Carriazo cuando, llevado de una inclinación picaresca, sin forzarle a ello algún mal tratamiento que sus padres le hiciesen, sólo por gusto y antojo, se desgarró, como dicen los muchachos, de casa de sus padres” (613) [Carriazo was more or less thirteen when, carried away by a picaresque inclination and not because of any mistreatment by his parents, but rather for pleasure and appetite, he let go, as boys say, of his parents' house]. Like Don Quixote who pretends to be a knight, the two well-to-do sons of nobility are plainly roleplaying, and they know full well they can abandon the game at any time. True picaros, after all, are not afforded an opportunity to change voluntarily their social status by shedding their clothes and leaving behind their former lifestyle. Such may have been the design of the authors of both Lazarillo and the Buscón, where Lazarillo and Pablos believe that a change of clothing or geographic location would bring about an improvement in their fortunes, but such changes do not have their intended results. On the contrary, both Diego de Carriazo and Tomás de Avendaño already hail from virtuous and wealthy circumstances and consciously choose to upend their own privileged lives. The overturning and reversing of the picaro's trajectory implies yet another Cervantine attempt at parody or an alternate starting point for the picaro life.

Cervantes overtly applies picaresque traits to Carriazo, who is described as so intelligent (read “cunning”) that he is able to impose his own will at virtually any time, underscoring an absence of determinate origins or endings for the story's characters. For example, the narrator initially informs the reader of Carriazo's uncanny ability to play the role of the ideal picaro: “En fin, en Carriazo vio el mundo un picaro virtuoso, limpio, bien criado y más que medianamente discreto. Pasó por todos los grados de picaro hasta que se graduó de maestro en las almadrabas de Zahara, donde es el finibusterrae de la picaresca” (613) [Therefore, in Carriazo the world saw a virtuous picaro, clean, well mannered, and more than a little prudent. He passed all the classes for being a picaro and graduated as a master from the
fish houses of Cádiz, the home of the picaresque]. Immediately, the reader is faced with the polar opposite of either Lazarillo or Guzmán: a well-educated, well-groomed, and well-spoken young man who has figured out how to worsen his life and become something he is not. Moreover, he is so good at it that he could even teach Guzmán de Alfarache a thing or two: “salió tan bien con el asunto de pícaro, que pudiera leer cátedra en la facultad al famoso de Alfarache” (613) [he did so well as a picaro that he could dissertate on the topic to the famous Alfarache]. The explicit reference to Alemán’s novel is the only one in Cervantes’ works; it is likewise the clearest example of Cervantes’ acknowledgment of the Guzmán’s success. Evidently, by the time of writing The Ilustrious Kitchen Maid, the impact of Mateo Alemán’s narrative was great enough for the Guzmán de Alfarache to be named as the worthiest model for picaresque fiction in Cervantes’ day.

The Ilustrious Kitchen Maid is richest when the two boys witness aspects of the picaresque lifestyle that unfold around them, without, however, having that environment engulf them. In fact, the two do not really test those waters in any way. On the contrary, Avendano is an incongruous character, so enamored with Costanza that he dedicates love poems to her. Such techniques are subversive to the picaresque and further define the story as a “noveísta idealista.” If we consider the role-playing function in the story, and we view Cervantes’ execution of the picaresque in artificial or even parodic terms, Costanza and Avendaño indeed emerge as romanticized figures. He is never depicted as an actual picaresque character, despite his appearing as one, and throughout the story she exhibits qualities that later will correspond to her noble birthright. The fact that Costanza and Avendaño can trade one life for another without difficulty and live in wedded bliss subverts all that has come to be associated with picaresque fiction. No prison sentences or cheating spouses here. We are told that even Carriazo, given to us at the most roguish of the characters, is happily married and has three sons studying at the University of Salamanca, none of whom knows anything about their father’s education in Cádiz’s “academia de la pesca de atunes” (613) [tuna fishing academy], the home of the picaresque. Moreover, Carriazo has come full circle and no longer has any recollection of the picaro life he once led: “apenas vee algún asno de aguador, cuando se le representa y viene a la memoria el que tuvo en Toledo” (632) [he hardly remembers the donkey he had as a water seller in Toledo]. The citation reminds us that Carriazo never took seriously the picaro game, while his past occupation as a water seller references Lazarillo de Tormes, who for a time sold water on Toledo’s streets. There seems to be a degree of irony in the quote, however: the notion that Carriazo no longer recalls his former profession may be a
nod toward the picaresque narrator-protagonists whose memory, to Cervantes, must have seemed similarly faulty.

The picaresque artificiality of The Illustrious Kitchen Maid similarly extends to Rinconete y Cortadillo, the Exemplary Novel most often associated with the picaresque in part because of its extensive detail regarding the criminal activity of a band of picaro youths in Seville, imperial Spain's commercial capital. In this tale, criminality seems the marker for denoting a text as picaresque. The tale progresses from the specific to the general, by tracing the trajectory of two petty criminals who eventually join up with a larger criminal association. In the process of the narration the reader is provided details regarding the motivations for the individual's journey into criminality, followed by a wider view of an entire sector of delinquents. On the road between Toledo and Córdoba, two boys, Pedro del Rincón and Diego Cortado, meet at the door of an inn. The story's opening paragraph is dedicated entirely to detailing their ragged exterior as if to recall clearly the impoverished state of the picaro: neither has a cloak nor stockings, they are dressed in torn and nearly soleless shoes, fray ed and tattered shirts, and ripped headpieces that barely pass for hats. Their initial conversation is at odds with their actual appearance. They address one another using aristocratic forms ("Vuestra Merced," "señor gentilhombre," and "señor caballero") that are hard not to take as parody or comedy. The reader then learns that one is a petty thief, the other a swindler. Because of their proximity and age—Rincón is seventeen and the more authoritative, Cortado fifteen and docile—as well as their outward appearance and chosen professions, the two become fast friends and decide to work together. Their first victim is a mule driver who feels lucky to be admitted as a third player into a game of cards only to lose everything to the two cheats. The boys then take up with a group headed to Seville, steal from them, and discard the group once in the city. Seville will present many opportunities for the boys to perfect their skills, and as soon as they arrive they go to work stealing a purse. Observing the crime is another youth who advises the two that if they wish to steal in Seville, they must request Monipodio's permission so he can properly register them as accomplices. The youth guides the pair to Monipodio's residence where they—and the reader—realize that there is an organized, efficient, and structured society of thieves supervised by the benevolent, but physically repulsive, Monipodio. Rincón and Cortado are told of the association's statutes as well as its agreements with the police and other corrupt officials. Monipodio accepts the two boys into his union and assigns them the names "Rinconete" and "Cortadillo," which clarifies their status as novices in training.
At this point in the story, the attention shifts to Monipodio and his band of thieves. In fact, Rincón and Cortado are relegated to the same role as the reader—that of mere observers. The narrator goes to great pains to demonstrate Monipodio’s compassionate but strict character, drawn as more upright than any government supervisor. Seville’s underworld characters respect and obey Monipodio. His society is organized around daily tasks directed according to a particular schedule and based on the skills of each worker. Monipodio’s organization is not only orderly and efficient but also ruled by jurisprudence. There is a group charged with judging and resolving disputes, and they also keep written records of transgressions they must commit against others (or are contracted to carry out): Monipodio “sacó un libro de memoria que traía ... y diósele a Rinconete que leyese, porque él no sabía leer. Abrióle Rinconete, y en la primera hoja vio que decía: Memoria de las cuchilladas que se han de dar esta semana” [took out a diary ... and gave it to Rinconete to read because he didn’t know how. Rinconete opened it and on the first page saw that it said Memorandum of Cuts to be Given this Week. Further down the page Rinconete reads “Memoria de agravios comunes. Conviene a saber: redomazos, untos de miera, clavazón de sambenitos y cuernos, matracas, espantos, alborotos y cuchilladas fingidas, publicación de libelos, etc.” (568) [Memorandum of Common Injuries: Namely, Beatings, Staining People with Oil, Defamations and Libels, False Alarms, Threats, False Disturbances and Fake Stabbings, Publicizing Lies, etc.].

Cervantes portrays Monipodio’s “cofradia” [brotherhood] as morally upstanding, as boys who even consider themselves good Catholics. They direct a portion of their earnings to purchasing candles in honor of saints and the virgin, regularly attend Mass (with the exception of confession), and always return stolen church property, or make swift restitution. Through this portrait of Spain’s criminal underworld, the reader becomes familiar with the pilfering and deception for which Seville and a few other large cities had become infamous. The view is quite disarming however, since clearly the narrator revels in illuminating an unexpected side of criminal association. Moreover, it implicitly contrasts with Spain’s economic, ecclesiastical, and governmental institutions, all of which reached their zenith in Seville, with its Casa de Contratación [House of Trade], the empire’s official commercial control facility. Seville was home to hundreds of ruffians, swindlers, and opportunists who descended on the city hoping to receive permission to sail for the New World where they could make their fortunes, only to be largely denied permission. As a metaphor positioned against a depiction of imperial Spain’s disreputable citizens and corrupt institutions, Cervantes describes Monipodio’s association as a competent organization that challenged the old maxim about the absence of “honor among thieves.”
In terms of the picaresque commonalities, Cervantes’ sympathy toward the protagonists of *Rinconete and Cortadillo* suggests a degree of imitation almost to the extent of parody. For Blanco Aguinaga the story is precisely a parody or at least a “cuadro de costumbres” [a sketch of lifestyles and customs], whose realism is far removed from its picaresque precursors such as *Guzmán*.³⁸ Avalle-Arce notes that the juvenile cheerfulness (“alegría juvenil”) openly contradicts the *Guzmán*’s murkiness and pessimism, making it difficult to label the work picaresque. After all, the two boys *intentionally* set out to be common criminals, and, along with the thieves they meet in Seville, are depicted comically. When Rincón describes being whipped for stealing money from the sale of papal bulls, he does so amusingly with little concern for either the crime or the punishment.³⁹ When the reader is introduced to the parade of scandalous characters at Monipodio’s compound, they are presented bluntly and matter-of-factly, as if they are common citizens and their routine illicit deeds are quite ordinary. Such adaptations suggest that Cervantes views the picaresque as open to appropriation, but he did not mean to take it—or to take it up—seriously.

If in *The Illustrious Kitchen Maid* the narrator informs the reader about some of the traits commonly associated with the picaresque—only to subvert them later on—in *Rinconete and Cortadillo* such a task falls to the characters themselves: all of their actions belie a subversion of picaresque narratives where the protagonists fight real hunger and an unforgiving society. Indeed, neither Rinconete nor Cortadillo provide any reason for abandoning their homes (neither is orphaned like Lazarillo), or expect to improve their social status. Nowhere does the narrator imply that they will compose their own autobiographies. In other words, Monipodio’s petty thieves, ruffians, swindlers, and prostitutes are, in the end, ordinary criminals. Gone is the sympathetic view of the picaro’s humble origins, his lifelong search for respectability, or his social climbing. On the contrary, as Avalle-Arce has pointed out, Cervantes’ picaresque experimentation in *Rinconete and Cortadillo* is lighter and less serious than what might be found in *Guzmán*, suggesting opposition to some aspects of Alemán’s novel: “Cervantes sí quiso entrar en competencia con Mateo Alemán en el campo de la picaresca, pero no aceptó hacerlo en los términos planteados por la poética del Guzmán” [Cervantes did want to enter into competition with Mateo Alemán in the picaresque field, but he refused to do so based on the terms imposed by the poetics of the *Guzmán*].⁴⁰ Such opposition to any formulaic picaresque conventions is clear at the end of *Rinconete and Cortadillo* when the entire story, which has transpired over dozens of pages, is unceremoniously overturned in the final paragraphs. There, the narrator says that the
very young, astute, and refined Rinconete found Monipodio “un hombre bárbaro, rustic y desalmado” (569) [a barbarous, coarse, and callous man], and marveled at “cuán descuidada justicia había en aquella tan famosa ciudad de Sevilla, pues casi al descubierto vivía tan perdida y tan mala, tan inquieta y tan libre y disoluta” [how carelessly justice was administered in the famous city of Seville since such pernicious, evil and worrisome ruffians lived openly and dissolutely]. As a result, Rinconete decides to dissuade his friend from continuing with such a terrible life, but not before spending some months with the group, “en los cuales le sucedieron cosas que piden más longa escritura” (569-70) [during which things happened that require a longer story]. The story’s ending, then, remains open to more details as in picaresque pseudo-autobiographies, but yet undermines the previous pages by suggesting that the two protagonists will ultimately abandon that life. In other words, as in The Illustrious Kitchen Maid, in Rinconete and Cortadillo Cervantes employs the picaresque as a construct that shifts and transforms at the whim of the characters.

If the picaresque seems simulated in either The Illustrious Kitchen Maid or Rinconete and Cortadillo, The Dialogue of the Dogs, a framed story contained within The Deceitful Wedding, represents Cervantes’ fullest development of the picaresque. In the outer frame Ensign Campuzano bumps into his old lawyer friend Licenciate Peralta and tells of his decision to marry in order to take advantage of his wife’s wealth. As it turns out, she is actually quite poor and, moreover, has been just as deceived since her initial intention was to marry the Ensign because she believed him to be rich. When Campuzano complains of his misfortune, Peralta’s response is morally poignant: “el que tiene costumbre y gusto de engañar a otro, no se debe quejar cuando es engañado” (662) [he who is accustomed and enjoys deceiving others should not complain when he himself is deceived]. The Ensign’s wedding present is a painful case of syphilis for which he seeks treatment in the Hospital of the Resurrection in Valladolid where he meets up with Peralta. While undergoing treatment, Campuzano claims to have overheard and transcribed the nighttime conversation between two watchdogs. As Peralta reads the transcript, the Dialogue of the Dogs—analogous to a theater script since it appears in dialogue format—we are reading over his shoulder in much the same way we read the Curioso Impertinente [The Man Who Was Recklessly Curious] while the priest reads aloud to guests at the inn in Don Quixote. In this way, Campuzano declares his story to someone in authority and by doing so upholds the picaresque tradition of a submissive teller informing an authoritative listener, but this listener is not inquisitional like the reader of Lazarillo.41
As in the other Exemplary Novels, in The Dialogue of the Dogs Cervantes abandons the unsupported first-person narrative so common in picaresque fiction and replaces it with a dialogue dominated by Berganza, who tells his story as if it were a memoir, thus conserving some of the first-person authority. Within this inner frame the transcript begins in much the way we might expect from a picaresque narrative: the long-winded Berganza tells the reserved Cipién the details of his life, including his birth near the slaughterhouse, who his parents were, his education under different masters, and his meeting with the witch La Camacha, who informs the dog that he is actually the offspring of a relationship between a witch named La Montiela and the devil. The illicit affair appears to be one of the reasons for the dogs’ ability to talk, and, it seems, could stand in for the “case,” although it does not propel the narrative. The bulk of Berganza’s account unfolds through a series of depressing episodes featuring different masters who represent a cross-section of what is perceived to be Spain’s most miserable players: witches, thieves, grafters, swindlers, gypsies, shepherds, butchers, merchants, Moriscos, and even poets. Berganza’s critique is laden with humor and wit, but underlying it is a gloomy portrait of Spanish society that emerges from a presumably neutral eyewitness observer, who, like the boy picares, has his station in life forced upon him. Indeed, like Guzmán or Lazarillo, Berganza endures at the behest of his masters, and often survival depends on outsma rtin g them. Similar to the Guzmán, but unlike other Exemplary Novels studied above, many of the stories and side commentaries are highly moralistic. Cervantes depicts Berganza as a semi-outsider, somebody generally subject to the whims of others who avoids becoming a part of the greed, corruption, and outright deception he sees unfolding around him by fleeing to the next master, where he provides another stinging set of observations. His experiential wisdom not only reflects on his unfortunate existence, but also provides a basis by which the reader may learn to overcome such predicaments in his or her own life.

Vis-à-vis the picaresque, the Dialogue has been interpreted as a criticism, parody, satire, rejection, and an attempt at progressing beyond it. While I agree that the Dialogue of the Dogs is not a picaresque work, there are far too many resemblances to state unequivocally that Cervantes did not mean to mimic Guzmán or Lazarillo to some degree. I certainly do not share Blanco Aguinaga’s perspective that the Dialogue of the Dogs ridicules the picaresque novel. Such remarks may well be applicable to The Illustrious Kitchen Maid and Rinconete and Cortadillo, but Cervantes’ interaction with the picaresque is much more complex in The Dialogue of the Dogs. Perhaps, following Helen Reed’s view of Cervantes’ interplay with the picaresque, we can call it meta-picaresque since several prominent features are shared.
by the exemplary story and its picaresque precursors. Much of the action unfolds in Seville, a well-known picaresque haunt and described as the “amparo de pobres y refugio de desechados, que en su grandeza no solo caben los pequeños, pero no se echan de ver los grandes” (668) [protection for the poor and refuge for the rejected where, in its immensity, not only is there space for the little people, but also for the higher-ups], which by and large appears unflatteringly in several of Cervantes’ stories. Furthermore, a wide variety of masters (nine in all) emerge whose evil nature is described in exceptional and authentic detail. Berganza’s satirical or moralizing point of view is laden with social criticism and informed by a gritty realism; such criticism is leveled equally at the underside of Spanish life as the professionals and upper-class citizens who are supposed to be virtuous and honest but are really not. Berganza highlights his own constant suffering and continual hunger as well as that of others he meets: “cuando las miserias y desdichas tienen larga la corriente y son continuas, o se acaban presto con la muerte, o la continuación dellas hace un hábito y costumbre en padecerlas, que suele ser su mayor rigor servir de alivio” (670) [when misery and misfortune enjoy a long and continuous run, or their continuity becomes habitual and customary, death usually becomes the greatest kind of relief]; and, as mentioned above, a general authoritative autobiographical form is followed, though in dialogue.

Moving from master to master, Berganza is a keen observer of a corrupted society, but such movement engenders a series of meandering stories, gossip, and tangential diatribes for which he is scolded by Cipión, leading to mutual backbiting. As interlocutor, Cipión’s role is to correct Berganza, add brief commentary, and, more than anything else, keep Berganza on track: “adelante y no hagas soga, por no decir cola, de tu historia” (671) [keep moving and don’t unnecessarily lengthen your story]; “sigue tu historia y no te desvíes del camino carretero con impertinentes digresiones; y así, por larga que sea, la acabarás pronto” (671) [continue your story and don’t depart from its path with impertinent digressions and regardless of whatever length it is you will finish is quickly]; “no más, Berganza; no volvamos a lo pasado: sigue, que se va la noche, y no querría que al salir del sol quedásemos a la sombra del silencio” (675) [no more, Berganza, let’s not return to the past. Keep going because the night is ending and I don’t want the sun to replace the silence of dark]. These and many other similar quotes remind us of how storytelling can sometimes be marked by forays into unimportant topics, built around a loose narrative style, utilizing an overabundance of detail, and disregarding the listener/reader almost completely. William Clamurro sees such digressions as part of Cervantes’
narrative innovation because “the effect of this dialogic strategy is not only to interrupt and vary the flow of the ostensible main story, i.e., Berganza’s recounting of his life up to the moment of the telling, but it is also to raise certain other questions critical to the act of narration.” 45 Constant interruption and deviation from the subject matter feature prominently in Guzmán, and critics have seen this technique as a criticism of Alemán. Alemán’s narrative often is held together loosely by digressions and extraneous material which at times make the novel ungainly and disruptive. Indeed, from the perspective of narrative style, Guzmán seems more postmodern than early modern, and to some extent Cervantes imitates its wandering digressions. 46 Several critics have noted similarities. Gonzalo Sobejano believes that Berganza is Guzmán’s Cervantine equivalent, and Viviana Díaz Balsera calls him an “allegory” for the new sort of picaresque perfected by Alemán. 47 Ricapito holds that Berganza’s “verbal level” matches “the style and diction” of Guzmán, while Antonio Rey Hazas perceptively notes certain linguistic and rhetorical correspondences between Cervantes and Guzmán de Alfarache: “si hay una novela autobiográfica y picaresca que constantemente interrumpe la relación de su vida para interpolar en ella una ingente cantidad de digresiones discursivas, reflexiones, moralizaciones, anécdotas, ejemplos, fábulas, cuentos, etc. ésta es la obra de Mateo Alemán” [if there is an autobiographical picaresque novel that constantly interrupts the story to interpolate an astounding number of discursive digressions, reflections, moralizations, anecdotes, examples, fables, stories, etc., it is Mateo Alemán’s work]. 48 In style and substance, The Dialogue of the Dogs more closely tracks Guzmán than any other Cervantine work.

The Dialogue of the Dogs can be considered the culmination and the conclusion of Cervantes’ interaction with either Lazarillo de Tormes or Guzmán de Alfarache, or any of the other works that pertain to “that genre,” as Ginés de Pasamonte put it. 49 Nonetheless, even as The Dialogue intersects at various points with the picaresque, with some exceptions, it and the other works studied here are marked more than anything else by an absence of elements prevalent in either of the two founding picaresque works: a pseudo-autobiographical first-person point of view; main characters of humble origins who suffer hunger, abuse, and social exclusion; an instigating “case” in need of resolution; a series of different masters modeled after ecclesiastical, social, and political types (the exception being The Dialogue of the Dogs); a fatalistic and gritty realism (especially in The Illustrious Kitchen Maid); and seriousness of purpose through constant moral sermonizing and example, in addition to the many other characteristics described above. However, as my examination of The Dialogue of the Dogs shows, none of this undercuts
Cervantes' connection to the picaresque. On the contrary, Cervantes not only valued *Lazarillo* but appreciated what Alemán was able to achieve in *Guzmán*, especially in terms of narrative richness and point of view, depth of character, and elaborate plot and subplot structures. As several critics have asserted, Cervantes' conception of narrative owes something to the *Guzmán*, for without it we might not have had the self-conscious and unreliable narrator, psychological complexity, episodic plot structure, and realism of *Don Quixote*. Hence, Cervantes likely found in the picaresque fertile ground for literary creation, but at the same time considered it woefully inadequate for the complexity he was moving toward. Perhaps that is why his so-called picaresques inhabit an idealized world and why their lives rarely approach the distasteful existence of either Guzmanillo or Lazarillo.

In summarizing Cervantes' interplay with the picaresque, we can state without equivocation that none of his literary works adopts the accepted traits of picaresque fiction as embodied in either *Lazarillo* or *Guzmán*, though in some instances he comes close. Similarly, none of his characters are picaresques in the strict sense, and *Don Quixote*, his most famous protagonist, does not display any traits whatsoever that conform to the picaresque.

_In Iowa State University_

**NOTES**

1 Far too many scholars view the picaresque so inclusively that nearly any fictional work featuring any character with any picaresque trait becomes a part of that body of literature. The question is studied in Alexander A. Parker's seminal *Literature and the Delinquent* (Edinburgh U. Press, 1967), 2–3, and Robert Alter, *Rogues Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Harvard U. Press, 1964), which discuss such confusion within the European context. More recently, J. A. G. Ardila, "The Influence and Reception of Cervantes in Britain, 1607–2005," *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain*, ed. J. A. G. Ardila (London: Legenda, 2009), 3, equates the adulteration of the term "picaresque novel" with the common misunderstanding of "quixotic fiction" in English-speaking countries. The problem existed even during Cervantes' time, especially in other European countries. As early as 1652 in England, Richard Codrington referred to Cervantes as "the same gentleman that composed *Guzmán de Alfarache* and the second part of *Don Quixote*" (quoted in Frank W. Chandler, *Romances of Roguery* [New York: Burt Franklin, 1974], 353), a statement that not only mistakenly ties Cervantes to a fictional work he did not write, but also blurs the distinction between the picaresque as embodied in the *Guzmán* and the decidedly non-picaresque *Don Quixote*.

Joseph V. Ricapito, "From Reading to Seeing: The Picaresque in Films," Hispanic Studies in Honor of Robert L. Fiore, ed. Chad M. Gasta and Julia Domínguez (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2009), 447.

As Daniel Eisenberg points out in "Does the Picaresque Novel Exist?" Kentucky Romance Quarterly 26 (1979): 203-19, neither the term "picaresque" nor the concept "picaresque novel" existed in Golden Age Spain. These are inventions from the second half of the nineteenth century commonly used to identify a group of literary works featuring certain characteristics and appearing around the same time in early modern Spain. My own vague or imprecise description suggests how difficult and controversial it has been to characterize the novels that may form part of the picaresque canon, if a canon can be said to exist at all.

Mateo Luján de Sayavedra published his spurious part 2 in 1602 in Valencia, compelling Aleman to complete his own part 2, probably in a hurry. A similar incident occurred with Cervantes: as he was composing a second part of Don Quixote, a spurious version was published in 1614 under the pseudonym Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. Cervantes, horrified that his first successful literary creation had been appropriated, responded by taking aim at Avellaneda in his own 1615 preface to part 2 and by textually altering the course of his own protagonist so as to disconnect any relation between Avellaneda's "false" Don Quixote and Cervantes' "true" protagonist.

The most complete analysis of the writing and publication date for Don Quixote is Geoffrey Stagg, "Castro del Río, ¿cuna del Quijote?," Clavileño 36 (1955): 1-11. Basing his hypothesis on the "Scrutiny of the Library" in part 1, Stagg proposes 1592 as the year Cervantes began the novel.

It is generally believed that Cervantes wrote the Exemplary Novels between 1590 and 1613.


Edward C. Riley, "Romance, the Picaresque and Don Quixote I," Studies in Honor of Bruce W. Wardropper (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1989), 237.

Cervantes' several stints in jail (1592, 1594, 1597, 1605), his time as a soldier in the Mediterranean (1570-75), his imprisonment in Algiers (1575-80), and his journeys across the plains of central and southern Spain as an army procurer (1587-97) would have brought him into contact with a diverse group of criminal types, some of which could have provided a foundation for his conception of the picaresque.


Close, "Legacy of Don Quijote," 22.

These years frame the publication of Lazarillo de Tormes through the Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, hombre de buen humor [Life and Deeds of Estebanillo González, Man of Good Humor]. Lázaro Carreter, followed by Francisco Rico, proposed that only two works are rightly picaresque: Lazarillo and Guzmán. Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, in “Cervantes y la picaresca: notas sobre dos tipos de realismo,” Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica 11 (1957): 314, argues for one, the Guzmán.


The scholarship regarding Cervantes and the picaresque is abundant, certainly too extensive to be cited here. A useful starting point is Joseph V. Ricapito’s Bibliografía razonada y anotada de las obras maestros de la picaresca española (Madrid: Castalia, 1980), esp. 193–200.


Dunn, “Cervantes De/Re-Constructs the Picaresque,” 112.


Ricapito, “Cervantes and the Picaresque,” 342.

All Spanish citations from Don Quijote and the Novelas ejemplares are taken from the edition of Cervantes’ Obras completas by Florencio Sevilla (Madrid: Castalia, 1999). Citations from Lazarillo are taken from Francisco Rico’s edition (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987). Page numbers appear parenthetically, and all English translations throughout are my own.


29 Riley, "Romance, the Picaresque," 244.


31 Guillén, Literature as System, 135–58, reminds us that Ginés de Pasamonte also is a reader, and in this episode Cervantes gives an encounter between two readers, Ginés and Don Quixote. Dunn, "Cervantes De/Re-Constructs the Picaresque," 119, takes this comparison a bit further, stating that both protagonists are readers and writers who eliminate their critics in order to abolish any difference between "story" and "diegesis" and "between the teller, the telling, and the told."

32 Dunn, "Cervantes De/Re-Constructs the Picaresque," 122.


34 Dunn, "Cervantes De/Re-Constructs the Picaresque." Clark Colahan and Alfred Rodriguez, "Parodic Alteration of the Picaresque in Cervantes' Ginés de Pasamonte/Ginesillo de Parapilla," MLR 85 (1990): 610. According to Colahan and Rodriguez, the name Ginés de Pasamonte denotes "hidalguía" ("lower nobility") while his other monicker, Ginesillo de Parapilla, refers to the names of well-known picaresque antiheroes Lazarillo de Tormes and Guzmán de Alfarache. As such, Ginés has followed a life trajectory similar to Carriazo in The Illustrious Kitchen Maid in that he was a onetime nobleman who became a pica. For these critics this identity transformation reveals Cervantes' intention to provide parodically an alternate starting point for the picares' life, or as a means to question the verisimilitude of the picaresque, particularly that an uneducated pica could compose a literary work.


36 Borrowing Blanco Aguinaga's term in "Cervantes y la picaresca," 338.

37 Since its founding in 1503, all people, foodstuffs, valuables, and commodities heading to or returning from the New World were required to pass through Seville. Hence, this city held the monopoly on transatlantic trade, and through it the crown attempted to maintain a stranglehold on everything entering and leaving Spain.

38 Blanco Aguinaga, "Cervantes y la picaresca," 337.


40 Avalle-Arce, "Cervantes entre picares," 559.


In part 2 of Don Quixote (1615), Sansón Carrasco reminds us that readers of part 1 complained that it contained distracting digressions such as the "Curioso Impertinente."


Ricapito, "Cervantes and the Picaresque," 336; Antonio Rey Hazas, "Género y estructura de El coloquio de los perros o como se hace una novela," Lenguaje, ideología y organización textual en las "Novelas Ejemplares," ed. José Jesús Bustos Tovar (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1983), 131. Rey Hazas' other insightful observation on this point is helpful: "Por ellos su ridiculización no va sólo contra la novela picaresca en general, sino especialmente, contra la teoría y práctica de la novela que implican Guzmán y Justina, desmedidamente digresiva y plagada de interpolaciones del relato" (132) [Therefore his ridicule is not directed solely at the picaresque novel in general but rather especially against the theory and practice of the novel as implied by Guzmán and Justina, immeasurably digressive and plagued with interpolations].

The Dialogue of the Dogs is the final story in the Exemplary Novels and presumably Cervantes' last interaction with the picaresque. Rinconete and Cortadillo is the third story of the series and The Illustrious Kitchen Maid the eighth. No firm date of writing has been fixed for any of them.