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PhD Dissertation

ELEMENTS OF THE PICARESQUE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH FICTION

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Introduction

This project started off from an idea launched during a workshop discussion in the early 90s at the British Council headquarters in Bucharest, when an officer of the British Council expressed his belief that there had to be something genetic about Englishmen and travelling. In fact, he did not refer only to simple travelling, but to a tendency of the Englishmen towards the picaresque. He said that the English nation was made up of "a queen, Parliament, inn-keepers and a bunch of picaroons". The participants in the discussion tried to identify the sources of such a 'genetic disposition', and the conclusion was that there were at least two sources for such an inclination: a *historical one* – coming form the tradition of the Empire of having all sorts of categories of people travel to colonies on a regular basis and for very long periods of time; and a *psycho-anthropological* one, which could be translated into some kind of specific disposition of the English to be on the road, to get involved in all kinds of adventures, to comment on the social, moral and cultural realities they encounter, using a more or less satirical tone.

After reading more on the theory related to the rogue-tale, the trickster, the wanderer and the traveler, I was surprised to notice that these categories existed in English literature much earlier than in the European cultures in some cases, and I especially got interested in the picaresque, which 'officially' started as a baroque tale in Spain, but which seemed to have been ' instinctively' used by Chaucer almost two centuries before that moment. Following this 'lead', I have travelled with the picaresque in time, throughout centuries, and discovered that this genre might have undergone various changes and developments, it might have been used fully intentional or just as a cultural and artistic reflex, but still, it has never disappeared completely from the English (then British) literary scene.

My main objective with the present study is to demonstrate that the picaresque is a cultural and *literary invariant* of the British fiction (like the gothic, the adventure, and the satirical story). In order to do that, I had to start with the beginning, that is, with a diachronic study of theoretical approaches to genres, and to determine the place of genres in today's literary thinking. The next step was to define the picaresque. From among several definitions of the genre, I selected Ulrich Wicks' theory as being the most complete and functional. The project continues with a historical view on the tradition of the picaresque tale in Europe, as well as in Britain. The canonic Spanish texts were the source for the European archetype of the rogue tale. Nevertheless, the British novelists that have used the picaresque form, have internalized this genre and transformed it into a very 'British' one: Nashe, Defoe, Smollett, Fielding, are names of the 'creators' of the British novel, who, at the same time, employed the picaresque genre (we may say that the British novel was *born picaresque*); in the nineteenth century, Byron and Dickens (like Thackeray and Goldsmith) are also representatives of the British picaresque. They used the genre, but, at the same time, made it their own, brought their own vision and interpretation to it. The conclusion is, nevertheless, that the British novel had picaresque elements from its very beginning, and has never entirely 'lost' them.

Coming into the twentieth century, after a short period in which it seemed to fade away, new texts were written in the first

decades after WWII that show not only a revival of the rogue-tale, but also a programmatic employment of the genre as a reaction against the mannerisms of the Modernist novel. Elements of the picaresque are used by authors belonging to the "Angry Generation" or the Movement, but also by "non-angry" authors. In the same period, the *campus novels* are 'launched', displaying obvious picaresque elements.

When approaching contemporary literature, I could detect many such elements, but, in order to define, interpret, and illustrate them correctly, and to be able to support my vision on them, I had to take into consideration other factors, as well. Thus, among the 'sources of the picaresque tale', I did not only look at the historical argument (European and British canon texts and their development till contemporary times), but also at the specific moments when the rogue-tale seems to be more ' vital'. Consequently, I came to agree with such critics as Herrera and Munteanu in maintaining that the picaresque appears mainly in the baroque and, especially, the mannerist stages of established trends; the history of the genre supplied enough proof in this respect (Byron and Romanticism, Dickens and Realism, Braine and Modernism, etc.)

Another important factor in contemporary British literature is the presence of many authors coming form the former colonies, and I needed to account for their use of the picaresque. Are they just 'influenced' by the British rogue-tale as they ' learned it'? Obviously, their coming form India and Pakistan, from the far East or Africa, where the specific conditions for the picaresque are obvious (with a society very strict with casts and social status), pre-disposed them towards this genre. Moreover, they bring with them a picaresque cultural pattern of their own (from their own traditional texts). A third argument would be their own situation as authors belonging to two cultures, two literary traditions, but also their personal status as immigrants (a position that very well resembles the position of the rogue).

There are other elements in contemporary British fiction that come from a new vision of the self, of the statute of the individual in today's world. The changes brought about in the treatment of time and space during Modernism and Postmodernism are completed in this Post-post-modernist period by new tendencies, belonging to sciences, to psychology, to New Age concepts that maintain that man needs to sort out many issues concerning his position in today's world, especially his position towards scientific developments, towards beliefs in metaphysical conceptions, as well as a new conception about the non-constructed nature of the self. These debates 'deviate' very much from the traditional postmodern approaches.

To contextualize my study, I have also given attention to the concepts of 'British' and 'contemporary', and listed a few key approaches of the past decade that used such concepts ('English', 'British', 'Modern', and 'Contemporary' with their various meanings). In my approach, I adopted the vision according to which 'British' means literature coming form the United Kingdom and former colonies; and 'contemporary' means belonging to the past three decades.

The above-mentioned approaches also provided me with evidence that literature is still classified according to generic principles. I have made a note of a few examples of classifications in which such generic principles are used, among which there are some studies that even used the term *picaresque* in approaching certain novels, or categories of novels.

Consequently, the selection of the novels that I interpreted in terms of their 'display' of picaresque elements, tried to illustrate this list of *sources* of the picaresque in contemporary fiction:

a. the canon sources and the important moments of revisitation of the genre before the twentieth century, illustrated with Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*; then with novels written by Nashe, Defoe, Smollett, and Fielding in the

eighteenth century; then, I exemplified my theory with Byron's epic poems, and with Dickens's novels and gallery of characters;

b. the revival of the picaresque after WW II, in novels written by representatives of the Angry Generation (Braine's *Room At the Top*, and M. Amis's *Lucky Jim*), and of 'non-angry' writers in the period – Murdoch's *Under the Net*, and Waine's *Hurry On Down*, and a re-interpretation of M. Amis's *Lucky Jim*;

c. the Asian tradition and re-interpretation of the rogue-tale in a Postcolonial context in Rushdie's *Shame*, and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, and Kureishi's *The Buddha of the Suburbia*. I selected Rushdie as a representative author that writes in English but is pendulant between his old country and the new one, and, therefore, has to imagine them both; Kureishi writes about the second-generation immigrant and his/her special status on British settings;

d. the campus-novels, with the special situations created by their rogue-academics, who travel to and from conferences and symposia, in a permanent pursue of academic positions, represented by David Lodge's, Malcolm Bradbury's and Tom Sharpe's novels, with a special attention focused on Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale*;

e. the postmodern psychological and philosophical novel, in which metaphysical themes are re-visited (David Lodge, *Therapy*);

f. Postcolonialism seen from various settings: England in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, in tom Sharpe's *The Midden*; in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*; and in the former colonies in Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*, in Mo's *The Monkey King*. An "in-between loci" is represented by David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress*;

g. New Age theories on science and the ethics of science in Mawer's *Mendel's Dwarf*, and in Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.

I am aware of the fact that these authors have been classified and categorized within other frameworks, and against other backgrounds before. Those classifications, though, do not come to contradict my vision as to the presence of elements of the picaresque in those novels. The fact that *Shame* has generally been referred to as an expression of Rushdie's magic realism, or the acid satire that is at the core of Sharpe's *The Midden* are not contradicted by the detection of picaresque tales within these novels. This is not an attempt towards new classifications; it is an attempt to demonstrate that the picaresque is an invariant, a constant element from an aesthetic, historical, narrative and thematic point of view in British fiction.

Consequently, there are many other writers and novels that could have been analyzed here (written by Angela Carter, by Julian Barnes, by Graham Swift, etc. – as the picaresque is an invariant in British literature), but the economy of this study imposed its own restrictions and I had to illustrate all of the *sources of the picaresque* with those novels that I considered to ' respond' best to the zoom provided by Wicks' *protocols of the picaresque*. Analyzing such an eclectic list of novels, it was very important to work with clearly defined concepts. The *protocols of the picaresque* that were followed and highlighted in these novels were: *plot, rhythm, fortune, accident, character, internal instability, point of view, style* and *ending*, each with their particularities as defined by Ulrich Wicks. It is obvious that not all the novels display all the protocols – genres are always transgressed, there is no pure genre, as we know. This is why I preferred to look not for the rogue-tale genre as such,

but for elements of the picaresque that can substantiate my vision on the picaresque as an invariant of British literature.

The titles that I gave to the last three chapters are not meant, thus, to become names of categories or to offer a classification principle; they are metaphorical titles to indicate the source of the picaresque in the novels analyzed.

This angle, offered by the highlighting of the protocols of the picaresque in the novels selected on this purpose, can be considered both very generous (if the reader comes to agree with the idea of the picaresque as an aesthetic invariant of the British literature), or, it may be seen as a very limited one, from the perspective of postmodern theory with its preference for more 'technical' approaches to literature, which favour especially narratology, or from the perspective of Postcolonialism, with its demanding classifications and concepts. My dissertation is a direct reflection of my personal view on the limitations of such technical approaches; I favour those thinkers that consider that Postmodernism is downhill, and that even 'during' Postmodern times, this term was used as an 'umbrella' for too many texts. As professor Berube shows, in today's context, teaching Postmodernism, and illustrating it with texts written in the 70s and 80s is not very convincing for our contemporary students and their texts. Consequently, a generic approach, by which novels are seen from the perspective of aesthetic invariants could open new horizons.

Even if my approach is less 'technical', it is, nevertheless, rigorous, in terms of the concepts applied, and in terms of the type of reading I favoured. Some critics might consider my approach a step backwards in time, a revisitation of the 70s with their fashionable 'close reading'. Together with and 'open generic approach', close reading could also be useful in discussing such a variety of texts as the British literary scene has to offer nowadays. Still, I would not call my approach as an example of close-reading, as much as an example of taking down 'reading notes', which are presented in an essayistic form and style, with generous illustrations offered by the texts themselves. This attempt does not intend to minimalize or discard technical approaches; it tries to propose an 'inter-disciplinary' study (coming form the areas of the theory of genres, of aesthetics, of the history of literature, of anthropology, of psychology, of imagology, of traditional literary criticism, etc), under the form of a more or less impressionistic and subjective essay, which, idiosyncratic as it might be, advances a rigorously pursued cultural and literary perspective on British Fiction today, offered by the study of its generic invariants.

I am most grateful to Professor Stanciu for his immense patience with me, and for his openness to such an unorthodox critical undertaking.

I. The Picaresque Story:
Literary and Aesthetic Coordinates

1. Genres and the place of genre study in contemporary literary theory

The first chapter of my dissertation is dedicated to a theoretical approach to the theory of literary genres and to the tradition of the picaresque in Europe generally, and in England, especially.

Thus, I have read many genre-related approaches, showing how the study of literary genres has changed in time. After the Greek and Latin traditions, there followed centuries in which scholars and writers never denied the existence and the characteristics of ancient genres, until Romanticism: Romantic writers and critics (influenced by Darwin and his theory of evolution) relegated the character of genres to history. They considered that every literary text is unique "a genre unto itself" as Friedrich Schlegel maintained.

After the second part of the 19th century, with its Realist, Gothic and Naturalist trends there came the beginning of the 20th century, with its Impressionism and Modernism, which deepened the idea that genres were not useful categories in dealing with literature any longer. Thus, the Russian Formalist School re-formulated the Romantic belief in the autonomy of texts. Yury Tynyanov even considered that genres appear and die.

Nevertheless, later on, Bakhtin came against the early formalist school and formulated the theory of *speech genres*, and the influence extra-literary genres have in literature (especially the second speech-genres). A second Bakhtinian theory, very much influenced the theory of genres, that is, the theory of the *chronotope* – especially in the modern formulation of the *memory schemata* principles. A very important step forward is that in this theory of the chronotope, genres are seen as categories of interaction between texts, readers and writers, with their prior reading experience. The theory of the memory schemata brings also time and space into the equation.

From here on, many studies have been dedicated to genre analysis, especially after the Second World War. To list just a few, I will mention:

- the influence of the American New Rhetoric school with the formulation of the theory of speech acts (Burke, Searle, and Austin); representative Carolyn Miller who added a social component to genre in her study "Genre as Social Action" (she sees genre as a community response and a rhetorical action that come as a typified reaction to contextual social frameworks);
- Northrop Frye, who introduced the concept of *universal genres* in his *Anatomy of Criticism*;
- Tzvetan Todorov, who re-stated the importance of genre, and spoke of transgressions of genres, as no genre is pure;
- Genette, who in *Introduction á l'architéxte* evaluated Aristotelian theories on genre, and stated that "there are no archetypes that can totally escape historicity";
- Alistair Fowler, who showed that not all features of a genre appear in any given text that can be labeled according to that genre;
- Robert Allen, who brought a vision on genres as scientific categories;
- Daniel Chandler, one of the most recent contributors to the theory of genre, and who considered genre as an abstract conception, and who demonstrated that the readers keep on classifying texts according to genres, even if critics try to argue that they do not exist;
- David Bordwell, who insisted upon the issue of genres and themes, and showed that any theme may appear in any genre;
- Robert Stam (a film critic as well as Bordwell, but with extensive literary references), who considered the types of problems the critics encounter in defining genres: *extension* problems (too broad a sense, or too narrow); *normativist*

problems (the critic 'prescribes' features to a text); *monolithic* definition problems (when a text is considered to be representative of one and only one genre); and *biologist* problems (when genres are paralleled with cycles of evolution in time);

- Swales, who maintained that critics needed to see how much a certain text is prototypical for a particular genre;
- Steve Neale, who suggested that genres were not systems, they were processes of systematization (real texts transgress clear-cut generic delimitations);
- Marxist and Feminist modern criticism, which considers that genres are nothing but yet another means for social control imposed by the propagandistic ideology;
- John Fiske, who, following Bakhtin's school, initiated a discussion on *mental scripts*, that help us interpret the world around (both writer and reader are conditioned by these mental scripts, which enable them to refer to pre-existent realities – genres function as organizing principles), thus, maintaining that there is a need for a summarizing and synthetic view on genre, relevant for all theories of genres, be they linguistic, literary, social, rhetorical, or belonging to any other type of socio-cognitive perspective.

Such summarizing definitions have been attempted by critics, of which I have detailed the defining principles of Berkenkotter and Huckin, and that belonging to Amy Devitt.

Berkenkotter and Huckin devised a framework with five criteria in defining genre: *dynamism* (which refers to rhetorical forms, and which is responsible for the idea that genre is alive, it is an ever-changing means of social-cognitive negotiations); *situatedness* (embedded cultural knowledge); *form and content* (a certain form is appropriate for a certain content both historically and rhetorically); *duality of structure* (we both participate in constituting them and in reproducing them); and *community ownership* (which refers to norms, ideology and epistemology genre is a signal of).

One of the latest summarizing definitions of genre was given by Amy Devitt, in a comprehensive study of all previous definitions. She tried to find a common view shared by such theorists as Bakhtin, Bebee, Derrida, Fishlove, Todorov (coming from literature); Freeman, Halliday, and Swales (from linguistics); Bazerman, Berkenkotter, Huckin, Jameson, Miller (rhetoric and genre study). Devitt shows that all of the above have as a common defining ground the fact that *genre is action, that genre is typified action, that typification comes from recurring conditions, and that those conditions involve a social context"* (19). Devitt brings in discussion situation, context, culture, pre-existing genres, and gives a very complex definition:

> ….that genre be seen not as a response to recurring situations, but as a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context. Genre is a reciprocal dynamic within which individuals' actions construct and are constructed by recurring contexts of situation, contexts of culture, and contexts of genres [….] genre exists through people's individual rhetorical actions at the nexus of the contexts of situation, culture and genres" (20)

This definition allows for historical interpretation, as well as for a cultural one, for a rhetorical approach, as well as a social one, and, at the same time, remains in the domain of classifications of patterns, forms and typologies.

2. A brief 'story' the Picaresque

The Picaresque seems to be so old, so outdated, it seems that everybody has agreed upon what it is, and it is easy to recognize.

Historically speaking, it appeared for the first time in 1554, in Bugos, with the publication of *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades*, which has no recognized author, and which is considered to provide the archetypal rogue tale.

There have been several critical approaches to picaresque, starting with the first very serious and dedicated, belonging to F. W. Chandler, in 1889 – *Romances of Roguery*, and in 1907 – *The Literature of Roguery*, which also provides a solid classification of picaresque texts.

The more modern views on the picaresque belong to such critics as Angela Hague, Ulrich Wicks, Giancarlo Maiorino, Javier Herrero, and so on.

Angela Hague considers that the rogue story appears when societies flourish economically and socially, while Herrera Garcia, on the contrary, maintains that writers use the picaresque when there is an economical and social downfall. Nevertheless, the Spanish picaroons existed as a historical entity; they were called *conversos* (Jews converted to Christianity), a social transgressor, in pursue of better living conditions. There are two stages of the Spanish picaresque story: a realistic stage, showing this exact history of the conversos and the need to find a better place in a society with fixed rules and unmovable social classes. A second phase is a baroque stage, when the picaresque story started having a more aesthetic function.

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, other Spanish rogue stories were written: *Guzman de Alfarache*, *La picara Justina*, *El buscon*, and the Cervantean ones: *La ilustre fregona*, *Coloquio de los perros*, *Riconete y Cortadillo*. In Germany, the first famous picaro was the hero in *Simplizissimus*, by Grimmelhausen, in France *Gil Blas*, by Lesage, while in England, there were several authors who embraced the genre: Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe, Tobias Smollett, etc.

The picaresque was traditionally defined as the story of a rogue, who is in one way or another at the margins of society, either by birth, or by social-economic-political accident, and who faces a number of adventures and situations that help him understand society; sometimes bringing him to a high social ranking, where he has worked his way to by deceit and cunning, or to total despair and misfortune, when society discovers his amoral activities. This definition was felt to be a too broad definition, as it left too few stories that were *not* picaresque. Thus, critics like Guillen and Frohock maintained that the only way to find features of the picaresque was by going back to the initial Spanish rogue stories. Thus, they underlined the characteristics of the picaresque tale as story displaying the following characteristics: the first person narrative; a natural, un-adorned language and style; un-mediated story, objective by its extreme subjectivity; one single viewpoint, which is usually a cynical one, straightforward (even if sometime modulated by a feeling of insecurity and doubt); the rogue becomes a critic not only of one place, or a single aspect of society, but, due to his travelling in space and ascending or descending on the social ladder, he is able to present a *social panorama of his age*; the rogue is generally lonely, self-reliant, his response to this hostile world is to travel, to wander form one place to another, alone, unattached, isolated, and very often, confused (in this confused, cruel world, the picaroon has no other means of resistance but his good humour, and his capacity to adapt to any circumstance); the

structure of the story is episodic, arranged in a more or less chronological way, and generally, all other characters are episodic (except for the picaroon); the themes of the story seem to be chance and fortune, with no cause-effect logical relation among events, and, therefore, there is no clear plot, or any authorial instance to be trusted; events flow apparently with no logical explanation, thus the themes of rhythm and accident are also present (thus, the core of these stories is not plot, but accidental occurrences, and the rhythm that governs these occurrences); the story gets even more confused as unrelated absurd accidents also happen; events appear in a cyclic manner, but not at a superior level each time, but, on the contrary they are the same, relentless, mechanical, and chaotic, as chaotic is the universe around; in this world, the picaroon has only objective survival, he has uncertain parentage most of the time, he is a dislocated, accidental character and needs to learn the lesson of survival, to find a place in society; his only apparent pleasure is telling his story; he narrates with pleasure, he is exact and imaginative, at the same time, understands people; he even shows empathy for there is no human flow that he cannot see through.

The picaresque appeared in Spain only to defeat two Goliaths (as Javier Herrero put it), one of them being the Shepherd (the Bucolic), and the other, the Knight (the European Romances). The appearance of the picaroon is linked by the Spanish critic with the great urban development of the seventeenth century (a situation that was also described by Erasmus, Thomas More, and Luis Vives, who spoke of Rome, London and Paris as places where the poor should be really taken seriously by the rich, both as a social problem and as a moral one).

Other critics that reconsidered the picaresque tried to identify aesthetic characteristics. Of these, Ulrich Wicks, who wrote an article entitled "The Matter of Picaresque Narrative", in which he defined the picaresque as a series of "protocols" which he (re)negotiates in relation with various novels from the past, and the present. These protocols are: *plot, rhythm, fortune, accident, character, internal instability, point of view, style,* and *ending*. In the picaresque stories, these protocols have certain features, as follows:

- Plot: episodic structure with events that assault the picaroon;
- Rhythm: too much happens too quickly, *moral order is dissolved along with expectations and hope* (Wicks, 34);
- Fortune: *God appears only as irrational*; *there is no escape from chaos*; *everything is unstable* (36);
- Accident: refers to the way reality and punishment come: *lightning strikes of reality*; *punishment comes like an accident*; *the universe seems to be accidental, violent and chaotic* (36-38);
- Internal instability: is what Wicks considered to characterise the universe of the story itself, with its unstable, curious, adventurous, impulsive, unpredictable nature, where there is a total lack of self-control and no political or religious loyalties;
- Style: characterized by *lack of transitions, jagged confusion, non-logical style, interruptions, rush of nouns, few verbs, references to the process of writing*;
- Point of view: first person narrative, restricted;
- Ending: the narrative is open, it does not have any closure;
- The picaroon: Wicks said that he is a *half-outsider*, of uncertain parentage, s/he is disordered, and he *typifies the world, which is chaotic, by becoming a trickster* (44).

Other critics tried to go back to the picaresque and find features that are still used in literature. One of them is Angela Willis, who, in a study entitled *El mundo alucinante*, dedicated to Reinaldo Arena, obviously, maintained that the picaresque proved to be a very protean form in time. Willis used the picaresque as a functional term in defining various works inspired from the Golden Age picaros. She disagreed with critics like Alexander Parker, Marcel Batallion or Jenaro Tallacons who declared that the picaresque was historically dated, or even dead, and sided with Eugenio d'Ors, Guiellrano Diaz-Plaja and Alejo Carpentier, who spoke about a revival of the baroque throughout centuries, but also about a "Baroque Spirit", or a "Constant Baroque". She also sided with Peter Dunn, in considering that the picaresque not only was a genre whose laws and regulations had to be observed, but *a bundle of possibilities, which could be taken apart, and exploited separately* (Dunn, 94).

Many critics proclaimed the 'universality' of the picaresque (Willis, Reinaldo Arenas and the Romanian critic Romul Munteanu), showing that in moments of social and economical downfall, as well as in moments when established trends get to a baroque (even mannerist) moment, the picaresque appears. We may consider that contemporary literature is at such a crossroads; it is a baroque period of postmodernism (or, as some argue, even in a mannerist period of Modernism). Postmodernism and mannerism in the vision of Jean Roussell have a few characteristics in common: instability, mobility, metamorphosis, and a domination of decorum. The mannerist hero is anxious, his acts are conducted by impulses, he has a "reveur spirit", sometimes loses contact with reality; as space and time are rapidly dislocated, he has a feeling of haphazard and provisory; he is week, alone, a non-hero. Uncertain, and suspicious; he is on the hide, he is in disguise, sometimes he dies for no reason, his whole life is in vain, he prefers an anonymous, illegal type of living. In a de-centred world, *the baroque man looks for the existential periphery. […] the baroque man often appears in the hypostasis of an absurd being, with deranged senses. His social and ethical values are mobile*. (Munteanu, 112).

As to the aesthetic categories, besides the ugly and the grotesque, which were introduced by the baroque, mannerism introduces the monstrous, a tendency towards triviality, towards a discourse in which several registers of language are present.

II. The Rogue Tale in the History of English Literature Before the 20th Century

1. Beginnings of he British rogue story: "La inclination picaresca" of the British writers

In British fiction, Chaucer, almost two centuries before the Spanish picaresque, proved to have that "inclination picaresca" Cervantes spoke about in the Preface to *La ilustre fregona*. He used almost all the consecrated literary forms of his day: the dream-bestiary, confessions, chivalry love-stories (romances), fabliaux, pious tales, sermons, didactic essays, elements of the miracle plays with humorous interludes. Chaucer put them into the formal heroic couplet, he summarized all of these literary forms, and then, he undermined them from within, and he de-constructed them by using an all-conquering irony (Tupan). He not only comprised, circumscribed and undermined literary forms and mannerisms of his time, but he also 'launched' other forms,

which today are approached from a modern viewpoint, using terms like: *unreliable narrator*, *dialogical form*, *constructed contexts*, *interpolation by commentary*, *handling of juxtaposition and framing devices*, *art of context*, *contextualizing received materials*, *consciousness of historical distance* (Tupan, *A Survey*..). In the group of pilgrims who meet at Tabard Inn we will not only find characters who are of a well-defined group like clergy, knights, tradesmen, merchants, representatives of the law, but also characters who try to transgress their place in society, who cannot be pinpointed in any well-defined group, a gallery of characters within which Chaucer placed himself, too, and who can be labeled as *rogues*: the reeve, the Miller, the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Maniple.

As Claudio Guillen showed in his chapter entitled "Towards a Definition of the Picaresque", the rogue is both a *half-outsider*, and an *ongoing philosopher*; this role of the rogue brings about a whole discussion on identity as the rogue-tale is nothing but a series of trails of transgressions of identity on the part of the rogue, who does not fit in any social category.

Chaucer expresses this inclination of the English towards the chronotope of the high road (in Bakhtian terms), towards the motif of meeting on the high-road, the traveler, the pilgrim (in Tomashevsky's or Propp's terms); or the super-structural function of the inn and the road (in Van Dijk's terminology). For them the high-road chronotope is not only a mongrel of plot, space and time, or a part of a larger, generic chronotope of the picaresque story: it is all of the above, but it is also a typically British mode of both finding reality, and escaping from it.

The picaroon isolates himself on the road, as he is almost always in disguise. The unique status of the rogue is that of an un-dogmatic observer: the very condition of being a traveler, a displaced hero, both geographically, and socially, gives the rogue a certain freedom, in a carnivalesque world, in which 'normal' rules are very often presented upside-down.

2. Smollett, Fielding, and Defoe: picaresque stories and experimentation with the narrative

After *The Canterbury* Tales, by Chaucer, whom I consider to be the forefather of the English picaresque, as much as any other Spanish author, the first famous rogue tale in English was *The Unfortunate Traveller*, by Thomas Nashe, published in 1594. As Gosse showed, Nashe's writings are a *storehouse of oddity and fantastic wit* (viii). Here are two elements that I would call of pre-eminent interest when we refer to the British picaresque: the *storehouse of oddity*, and the *fantastic wit*. Irrelevant of the epoch, starting from this late sixteenth century 'pretence' of a novel, these two characteristics will always be there when it comes to British authors. This is not an anthropological study, and I have no claim at writing such a study; nor do I profess to be a specialist in imagology or national stereotyping, but I am sure that these two features, as they appear in all the novels that I am going to discuss in this dissertation, are not commonplace features of British picaresque stories, but intrinsic characteristics of both the stories, and that embedded inclination towards the picaresque of the British writers.

In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe collected numerous types of narratives (like Chaucer before him): social satire, picaresque tales, travel stories, anti-romance elements, Elizabethan pamphlet, jest book and literary parody (Gonzàles, 7).

The eighteenth century meant the beginning of the British novel it also meant the century when two 'giant' authors lived, Fielding and Richardson, who became so famous in their day, that we can compare them to today's public figures. Nevertheless, there were other very important authors in the day, of great talent and importance, like Defoe, Sterne, and

Smollett. Of all of the above, only Richardson did not write picaresque novels.

Smollett, declared by George Orwell "Scotland's Best Novelist", translated Cervantes and Lesage in English. He wrote *The Adventures of Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, which are two of the best satires of English society: farcical, harmlessly pornographic, witty, portraying the middle class of his age, who were trying to mimic aristocratic behaviour. *He accepts as a law of nature the viciousness, the nepotism and the disorder of 18th century society* (Orwell). Roderick Random is always ready for a practical joke, for entrapping an heiress, for a fight against the British (like Svejk would do), and then, with a Frenchman who insulted the British.

Ferdinand Count Fathom is considered his closest novel to the Spanish picaresque. Nevertheless, the romantic solutions he found, sometimes, brought him a little closer to the quixotic tradition.

What makes him a great author? Orwell showed that there were three reasons: a. he was funny; b. by showing no respect for conventions he was truthful and disclosed realities that very seldom were shown by other authors of his day; and c. his writings are of great historical interest.

Daniel Defoe, with his *Moll Flanders*, continued the tradition of the Spanish 'picara', except that the author had her change heart at the end (which was a picaresque element, too, as the moral fable appeared at the very beginning of the picaresque tradition). Moll is of low breeding and birth, endowed for acting, and masks; she understands the instability of the universe and the uncertainty of her life; her character is exemplified in a series of fragmentary adventures; she is witty, ironic, adaptable, she survives by sacrificing 'values' and 'moral integrity', she is also very mobile – a very good representative of the British rogue. Her Britishness lies in her speck, her irony and her wit.

Anne Kaler maintained that *Roxana* was the 'most picaresque' work belonging to Defoe; Roxana is an immigrant, therefore a displaced person, who needs to find solutions for survival in a new country. For those times, the solution for women was reduced to getting married or becoming a prostitute. Showing the situation of women in his times, Defoe 's picaresque is realistic in nature.

Henry Fielding was the author of several picaresque novels: *Jonathan Wilde*, *Tom Jones*, *Joseph Andrews*, *The Journey from this World to the Next*. This last novel brings in terms of novelty the way Fielding uses the rogue as a sort of a central reflector avant la lettre, as a mirror; the rogue is the measure to which the author compares the world to, a funny, yet, objective guide, as well as a judge of the world. More than anything, though, he is an observer. Another important innovation: the metamorphoses of the character under the pressure of the conditions and adventures he goes through.

Fortunate or unfortunate, immoral or amoral, redeemed or not, the picaros and the picaras of the eighteenth century British literature are at the foundation of literature in English as we know it today. At the same time, they brought with them a few of the immanent characteristics of British literature: an inclination towards satire, towards oddity and acid laughter, and towards social critique mixed with benevolent comedy. The picaresque entered with these novelists and their novels in the British literature DNA.

3. The nineteenth century English picaresque: Byron and Dickens

As Chaucer and Shakespeare before him, as Cervantes did in Spain, Byron is the romantic second wave poet who started decomposing, dismantling all major symbols and creeds of the literature of his time.

Child Harold Pilgrimage, *Don Juan*, and *Beppo* are three epic poems written by this poet who was himself a cast out, a misfit, a person who had no country, no family. He introduced in his poems elements form the eighteenth century novels like: satire, humour, comic and grotesque characters, and the exemplary travelogue of an intellectual picaroon. He travelled in the outside world (all over Europe and not only), and in the 'inside' world of history, in the collective imaginary of his people or other peoples (Italian and Greek). Byron transformed the picaresque of his predecessor novelists in an imaginary journey, which did not 'happen' only geographically and chronologically, but also on the inside of his own mind, as well as other peoples' minds. Nevertheless, the social critique is still there, even more powerful than before, with more precision and intent; the sarcasm, the irony, the oddities are still there, in a vigorous and acid verse; the attempt to leave any false pretenses, any social convention that was just that - convention- is even more acute than with the novelists.

Don Juan, in Byron's version, is nothing but a powerless picaroon, who is manipulated by women. The rogue is in his view opposed to the genius (to Lara, or Manfred); he lacks force he is clever but not intelligent, he is an outcast because of his flaws not because of his courage; he is witty but stupid at the same time; he is condemned to go through the same adventure all over again because he learns nothing from it.

Charles Dickens's novels listed as picaresque novels, comprise such titles as *Martin Chuzzlewit*, with his American adventures; *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* with its several rogues, members of the 'scientific club'. Other critics maintain that there are some picaresque elements in *Nicholas Nickleby*, in *David Copperfield*, and especially in *Oliver Twists*, with all that infamous gallery of low-casts. The truth is that Dickens created such a vast gallery of characters – absurd, grotesque, comic, beautiful and ugly, that it would have been impossible for him not to create rogues as well. What is, then, picaresque in Dickens's novels? I would say that the very essence of his writing is picaresque: the fragmentary narrative, the intervention of fate and fortune (not as much romantic, as picaresque in nature), the presentation of an unstable and unreliable world, the flow of events that happen in an accelerated rhythm, the misfits, the outsiders, the uprooted and the grounded, the displaced and the misplaced, the misunderstood, the marrying ups, and the ladder climbers, the treacherous dealers and the half-witted servants. Thus, the picaresque is interwoven in the canvas of Dickens's stories.

III. Revisitations of the Picaresque in the English Literature of the 50s and the 60s

1. The twentieth century: in search of new means of expression after World War I, and the re-discovery of adventure after World War II

The chapter begins with a short survey of pre-Modernist and Modernist times, of the social writers and writers of utopias. In this part I wanted to demonstrate that not even during Modernist times did the British novels yield to one established literary

trend. There were writers who were still realists; there were naturalists, social commentators, as well as utopians, in parallel with the impressionists, or the modernists.

After World War II, a new type of literature was needed, a new rhythm, something more energetic (even violent) a style that would express that new feeling of apprehension and weariness after the war. One of the models in style was Graham Greene (*Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory*), who also marked the re-birth of adventure and mystery.

George Orwell also influenced the generation after the war with his non-fiction, his description of he great Depression (even though that was historically past tense), and with his pamphlets against totalitarianism.

2. Adventure, fantasy, anger, and erudition in the post-war novel

Not all writers in post-war Britain were 'angry' or belonged to the Movement. For example, Tolkien favoured fantasy fiction, and created a mythical universe. Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time*, displayed a mild social critique; V. S,. Pritchett wrote short stories, in which he used an illuminated, elegant and pure style. Erudition and beautiful writing are the main attributes of Iris Murdoch, who wrote about the ethics of art, the aesthetics of living, weaving philosophy with intellectual satire. She was followed by other powerful women novelists like Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble, A. S. Byatt, Anita Brookner.

What I want to show by this short reference to the entire canopy of the post-war Britain and after, is that writers did not necessarily belong to any particular trend; there were several paths they took, more or less experimental.

As to the picaresque story, after the war, several writers went back to this traditional genre, especially the 'angry' writers, who were not only 'looking back in anger' at the recent history of their country, but they were also in search of new literary means of expression. They went further back in history, and discovered the picaresque, as a very 'suitable' form of showing their feeling, their perception of their lives as being marginal, unimportant, lacking any security and stability. Thus, the most renowned representatives of this revolutionary generation, Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*), John Waine (*Hurry on Down*), John Braine (*Room at the Top*), Alan Sillitoe (*The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*), as well as Stan Barstow (*A Kind of Loving*), re-invented the picaresque story, together with a new tendency towards adventure and social critique.

3. The picaroons of the Angry Generation

A. The Angry Young Men and their times

After a period of economic and social disarray, after rationalization and enormous efforts to re-construct a country, a period of wealth and economic boom followed. TV sets and cars, new and beautiful clothes, and parents who had money for allowances brought to light a generation that had not been taken into consideration before: the youth. They were given a name, ' teenagers', and a newly recognized cultural status: they would launch new music, new styles, new make up and hairdos.

Other aspects of the life on the British islands brought about concern: the beginning of the Cold War, the Suez business, the Soviets invading Hungary, and the realization that as compared to other countries, the British economic boom was not that

spectacular.

The Education Act of 1944 made it much easier for the children and the young people coming from the working class to study, thus, for the perseverant, intelligent and hard-working youth there were real chances to have a career that also meant advancement in social class. Young people in universities started to be a class of its own.

The above are the main sources of the Movement, of the Angry Generation philosophy and literature.

B. Joe Lampton and Jim Dixon; two "angry" picaroons

Although the stories of the Angry Young Men are not picaresque in the traditional sense of the word, they display the most important characteristics: they are concentrated around one character, who is a social climber, with pretensions of accessing a world that was denied to them at birth, and who leave aside their pride, their convictions, in order that they make peace with society and settle in a high position, generally by 'grabbing' any opportunity of becoming 'one of them' (the rich and the powerful).

Joe Lampton, the main character in *A Room at the Top*, and *Life at the Top* is a true rogue, telling his story in the first person narrative, in a direct and sincere manner. He is intelligent, witty, he notices the faults and inequity of society, he is the beneficiary of good fortune (his finding a room in a house much above his class and material means), and from then on, events flow rapidly: he falls in love, but he has to choose between his lover, Alice, and the daughter of the wealthiest man in town. For the rogue, the choice is obvious. Alice is a modern Becky Sharp, a picara herself, who, after a lifetime of deceit, finds out that the commodity of welfare was not worth the sacrifice of her youth.

Jim Dixon is the main character of Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*. He is a university man, a beneficiary of the Education Act; he is aggressive, rude, unappreciative; he criticizes the high-intellectual and aristocratic society, but, when offered the possibility of becoming one of them (with the help of a woman, again), he does not hesitate to jump at that opportunity.

C. Picaresque elements in the non-angry novels of the 50s

The picaresque was re-visited by writers of the post-war Britain, even by those who were not representatives of the Movement, or the Angry Generation.

Such authors are John Wain, in *Hurry on Down* (1953), Iris Murdoch, in *Under the Net* (1954), and even Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* can be re-considered from this point of view. These novels did not belong to the movement, as they had already been published before Osborne's first performance of *Look Back in Anger*. These novels were attributed 'angry' qualities only in retrospect, and they were considered prototypes of the angry movement.

Although Amis denied that there was any resemblance between his novel and the other two, he eventually admitted that Waine's and Murdoch's novels

> …..were similar in their evident feeling that the novel of a consistent mode of emotional keys, was outmoded [and the novelists] have successfully combined the violent and the absurd, the grotesque and the romantic, the farcical

and the horrific within a single novel. (Amis, quoted by Hague, 210)

Amis also spoke about a *Fielding revival*.

William Van O'Connor showed that 'Lucky Jim types' of characters are *seedy, ineffectual, comic, descendants of Samuel Beckett's Murphy*. (O'Connor, 70); whereas V. S. Pritchett demonstrated a similitude between Amis's, Waine's and Braine's novels with the novels written in the seventeenth century in England. Pritchett drew a parallel between Defoe's style, and his purposeful decision to refuse the 'nice' English of his day, with the style of these new novelists who used:

> ….desultory vernacular, using every popular circumlocution, or slang phrase, or image to avoid the literary expression of feeling. (Pritchett, 38)

The critic who analysed the three novels in view of Guillen's categories of the picaresque was Angela Hague. Thus, the picaro is *involved in a tangle, an economic predicament*, he is *an insular, isolated being*, he is a *half-outsider, and an ongoing philosopher*, he *plays a role which is ludicrous as it is indispensable*. The picaresque story is *a pseudo autobiography* , and it *offers a double perspective of self-concealment and self-revelation*. The narrator's point of view *offers no synthesis of human life*. The episodic structure is a consequence of its double character as well as of its different motifs: *material existence, sordid facts, hunger, money, social classes, professions, characters, cities, and nations* (Hague 77-82).

The three main heroes, Jim Dixon, Charles Lumley and Jake Donaghue are all half-outsiders endowed with a certain charm. Murdochs' Jake Donaghue moves about the London bohemia, mocking his *never revealed social class* (Hague 214). Charles Lumley describes himself as a *fugitive*, without a passport, while Jim Dixon even calls himself *a special agent, a picaroon*, (Hague, 214).

These three characters and the respective novels were criticized in their day for their lack of social-political critique; they even reject political convictions - therefore, they are obviously not representatives of the Movement. V. S. Pritchett expressed his disappointment overtly. Viewed as picaresque novels, though, they make more sense. Guillen's description of the society that most provokes authors to use picaros is very consistent with England after the war: uncertainty, disorder, discouragement, lack of social commitment, lack of trust and courage. All of these characterize this period, as well as the three novels.

IV. The Study of Genres in Contemporary British Literature:

Postmodernist and New Age Criteria

1. Matters of the 'self' and of 'identity' in Postmodern and post-post-modern times

A. Postmodernism and the new approach to history

In this chapter I reviewed some of the theories on postmodernism that I found useful in the discussion on the new sensitivity of man in the contemporary world. One such overview on theoretical issues was that belonging to Martin Irvine, another one refers to Post\modernism and Hermeneutics, and was proposed by Adrian Oțoiu. While the first author highlights more the 'spirit of the age', the second was more concentrated on changes in narrative technique. Postmodernist theories were very much indebted to new tendencies in sciences and technology, especially to their undermining of any stability and continuity, of any layer of the universe. At the same time, the condition of man in today's world was dramatically changed; we use technology so much, that we do not rely on our biological/ natural body anymore, we have acquired a cyber-body. Our senses are 'prolonged' or enhanced by an army of technological aid. Our five senses are today 'enforced' by stereos, iPods, computers, the Internet, cell phones, fax machines, screen phones, webcams, TV satellites, etc. In *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture*, D. Cavallaro spoke about the "posthuman body" of the human being. The post-human stage combines with the post-historical age. History appears as yet another narrative, a series of negotiations of meaning, and invention – plausible or not – about the past.

This sea-change in approaching history, meaning and truth, had a domino effect on the concept of identity, which was seen as nothing but stereotyped narrative.

In the literary world, these changes brought about the discussion on postmodernism and indeterminacy. Still, Ihab Hassan himself also declared that in trying to depart from Modernism, Postmodern literature had to go back to some older forms and genres.

B. Postmodern subjectivity and the new conception of the self

In a 1990 study on the 'self', Jane Flax summarized the ideas on the self belonging to the Enlightenment. The self was considered to be stable, coherent and knowable, conscious, rational, autonomous and universal; non-dependant on physical conditions or differences. This self 'worked' in a world of reason, it knew itself, it was conscious of its rationality. (Flax, 41)

If we take the above list and reverse it completely, we will arrive to the conception of the culturally, historically and religiously constructed self of postmodernism.

Still, in the past decade, many psychologists (Chandler, 2000, Shotter, 2000) begun to reject the theory according to which the self was only a constructed concept. These psychologists based their conclusions on Ulrich Neisser's studies and his maintaining that there are five aspects of the self, the *ecological self*, the *interpersonal self*, the *extended or remembered*

self, the *private self*, and the *conceptual self* of which, the first two 'stages 'are non-verbal, and therefore they are non-mediated constructs. The other three are the result of reflective thinking. Still, it is only the last one, the conceptual self that comes close to the ideas of the social constructionists, to a culturally and socially constructed self.

These new concepts prove that postmodern thought on history and the self can be, and should be challenged, and that while *learning from social constructionism, it is necessary to move past it*. (Polkinghorne, 271)

C. The new conception of the self and the perception of time and space

In his study about *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990), David Harvey, a Marxist critic, launched his theory about the compressed time and space, and about man's reaction to this compression. He identified three types of reactions: one belonging to deconstructionists, who reacted by being silent, and submitting to the vastity and inescapability of the phenomenon; then another reaction of those who deny the complexity of the world and use extremely simplified rhetorical propositions to refer to it; the third response was a 'niche' response, used by politicians and intellectuals who wanted to bend reality to their benefit. A fourth possible answer was suggested by the author, according to which man can

> …try and ride the tiger of the time-space compression through construction of a language and imagery that can mirror and hopefully command it. (351)

Other views, like that belonging to Susan Suleiman, in her study on trauma and self-representation, give a new perspective on time that relies on the way the self perceives time past, and is able to relate to it. Subjective time past is always there, in the present, and configuring the future.

These new views on time and space affected modern subjectivity profoundly. They also changed narratives, literature in a dramatic way. One of the most obvious changes is also the statute and importance of the reader. The reader started to be 'in charge' of finding the 'probabilities' of the narrative universe, and of re-writing it according to a logic that had nothing to do with chronology, or fixed spaces anymore. In a way, the reader acts like a controlling agent of chaos and order, he is taken to apparent chaos by the narrative, imposes a certain order to it, and then, after having understood the conventions of the text, he can afford to go back to chaos. It is a game, a play of expectation and discovery, of anticipation and retrospect.

The subjectivity of the reader is faced with at least three types of uncertainties: a. uncertainty related to his/her own position in the universe outside the text; b. uncertainty related to his/ her position within the universe of the text itself; c. uncertainty related to the new perception of time and space.

With so much ambiguity around, it is not a surprise that we also witness a tendency towards finding new certainties. Such certainties may come from either a belief in transcendence, or by trying to resist postmodernism, by trying to identify at least some reliable elements in the world, and in culture.

D. Tendencies towards a reconstruction of the self and the spirit of New Age theories

One answer to the uncertainties of our modern lives, deepened by the new perceptions of time and space, and even more accentuated by science, is the belief in transcendental certainties. Vaclav Havel, in a speech entitled "The Need for Transcendence in Postmodern World" refers to two such ideas of our times: the Anthropic Cosmological Principle, and the Gaia Hypothesis. If we start re-thinking our relation with the world and the universe in terms of these two hypotheses, we will accept the fact that there are at least two certainties: our connection with Mother Earth, and our connection with the Universe that we can depend on.

Other responses to postmodern indeterminacies are given by such authors like Joseph Francese, who in his 1997 *Narrating Postmodern Time and Space*, after defining the new relation of our subjectivity with time and space today, and after showing the impossibility of recuperation of the temporal depth we have lost in postmodernity, also mentioned that writers and readers should 'resist' postmodernism and still believe in some form of determinism.

Postmodernism has been challenged lately by many scholars; Michael Berube, for instance, who wrote in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in May 2000 that he arrived to the conclusion that he had been teaching postmodernist theory for over ten years, but he was not sure that the trend existed, he claimed that after teaching his students that there was no transcendental truth, that there was no foundationalist idea at the basis of our world, he realised that he could not illustrate these with narratives, as literature was not *postmodern enough;* he found himself illustrating his course with a selection of texts, most of which being written before his students were born.

The same point of view was re-stated by professor Alan Kirby, who, six years later, in 2006, even proclaimed the death of postmodernism, and maintained that postmodernism was not contemporary any longer.

2. Towards a generic classification of contemporary British literature

In the previous subchapter, I concentrated on some of the ideas that marked the end of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, as to the differences between Modernism and Postmodernism, the change in the vision on history, time, space, and the self, as well as a few New Age ideas that seem to influence contemporary thought more and more, especially in view of a new definition of 'our times', as Post-post-modernity (or Radical Modernity as French commentators call it). All the above concur to the way literature is seen generally, and the way texts are categorized, especially. It is my intention to link these old and new ideas with a new appreciation of the opportunity of genre analysis, and with the vision I have on the immanent character of some diegetic dispositions, like the picaresque, in British literature. If we consider that this is a baroque, or even a mannerist moment in literature, when at least one trend (Postmodernism) is downhill, and the others (like Postcolonialism) are not established firmly yet, the theory according to which this is the moment when the picaresque is even more luring for the writers, will also fit into place. In order to demonstrate that generic classification is not obsolete, some contemporary types of classifications of British narratives have been taken into consideration.

Thus, in *The Best Novels of the Nineties: a Reader's Guide* (2000), Linda Parent Lesher (an American writer, editor and critic) decided upon a classification that foregrounded both literary and aesthetic criteria, as well as anthropological and philosophical criteria, especially ideas related to time and space, ethnicity and nation, geographical identification. She has chapters that refer to Innovators (magical realists, fabulists, postmodernists) and to those opposing these trends, which she

called "provocateurs" (like Martin Amis and Ian Banks). She also had generic classifications in chapters that refer to time, mystery and humour.

A very personal generic approach was given by Suzanne Keen, who in 2001 published a book entitled *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* – a new genre that she proposed, with sub-genres, destined to imagine the past, the more or less recent past, in an effort to explain the present.

In 2002, Zachary Leader edited a volume entitled *On Modern British Fiction* – a collection of essays, the contribution of several notable writers and critics, participants in the conference "The novel in Britain: 1950-2000", like Martin Amis, Catherine Bucknell, Wendy Lesser, Ian McEwan, Elaine Showalter, etc. Besides the essays dedicated to various writers, all contributors confessed that the most difficult task for them was to define the concepts of 'modern ' and ' British'.

A more traditional socio-historical view in classifying novels can be met with in Dominic Head's 2002 *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000*, where the same period that some authors call 'contemporary,' was labeled as 'modern'. Some chapters even have an anthropological and imagologic character (referring to "National Identity" or the "Multicultural Personae"). Head also included generic classifications in such chapters as "Country and Suburbia", where he listed the Pastoral and the post-pastoral Novel, and "Beyond 2000", where he spoke about Realism and Experimentalism, Technology and The New Science, Towards the New Confessional, etc.

The 2004 *Routledge Guide to Modern English Writing: Britain and Ireland*, John McRae and Ronald Carter used the terms 'modern' and 'English' when referring to literature written since the 1950s in the United Kingdom.

The main themes of the past few decades were dealt with by Philip Tew, in his *The Contemporary British Novel*, published in 2004, where contemporary means since the middle 70s. The classification of novels was of a more anthropological-literary type, comprising such themes as "Britishness", "Urban Identities", or "Multiplicities and Hybridity".

Contemporary British Novelists, published by Nick Rennison in 2005 proposed a list of 'best' novelists of the past twenty years that by the way they integrated traditions, a view of the past, with contemporary diversity, gave an image of what ' great literature' means.

Editors James Acheson and Sarah Ross invited several writers to use and blur as many contemporary -isms as possible in *The Contemporary British Novel Since 1980*. There are chapters dedicated to contemporary Realism, to the Novel of ideas, to Postcolonialism and Feminism, to Postmodernism and Postmodern Historicism.

Brian Shaffer is the editor of the 2005 *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel, 1945-2000,* as well as of the 2006 *Reading the Novel in English*. The first has a chronological ordering of texts and trends, whereas the second, written by Shaffer himself, is a reading of ten novels, in an attempt to *map out and explore the variety of breadth of novel writing in English within the relevant period and geographical boundaries* (IX). The minute and detailed readings of the ten novels appear to re-instate the 'close reading' of the 70s.

A rather anthropological/theoretical view on modern times, and the way the contemporary is reflected in novels can be followed in Philip Tew's and Rod Maughan's edition of *British Fiction Today*. Living, life, modern life, contemporary living, distortion, history dreams and states of identity, are the main elements in the volume.

A Companion to Contemporary British Fiction (2006) edited by James English, brought into discussion a few cultural

issues that appear around the literary phenomena: the book trade, the celebrity culture, the film industry, together with other chapters that continue the anthropological, cultural and literary discussions.

Paraphrasing a famous Anthony Burgess title, Richard Bradford published in 2007 *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction*, which he began with an account of the 'battle' between realism and modernism, about

> ….how fiction of the past three decades has absorbed and obscured the distinction between modernism and realism. (vi)

He devised chapters on generic grouping of novels under such labels as Spy Fiction, Nation, Race and Class Fiction, Gay Fiction, etc.

Trends, literary periods, anthropological and cultural debates, genres, categories related to space, time and identity, all supplied organizing principles for the above-mentioned authors and editors. Other such organizing principles were supplied by other aesthetic and narrative categories, such as palinodes (a counterpoint technique which uses the same structures and puts them forward and backward – and which were used in literature at either a syntagmatic or at a structural level); palindromes (a progression followed by a symmetrical regression); and palimpsest (a superimposition of hypertexts one upon the other as a major quality of history).

Other types of classifications that I have mentioned belong to two Romanian professors, Lidia Vianu, who proposes an umbrella concept – the *desperadoes*; and Ana-Maria Tupan, who devises five broad categories of novels and novelists, which are then sub-categorized into twenty sub-categories. I was especially interested in these two approaches due to Prof. Vianu's metaphorical titles and to Prof. Tupan's last three sub-categories, that directly refer to genres and especially to the picaresque.

Genres in contemporary literature are also referred to by the professors who created the web on Postimperial and Postcolonial Literature in English: David Cody (Hartwick College), Andrea Allingham (Lakehead University, Ontario), Cecilia Shalen-Bridge (National University of Singapore); Wadso Lecaros (Lund University); George Landow (Brown University); Suzanne Keen (Washington University), etc.

As a conclusion to this entire chapter, in which I tried to draw the reader's attention on aspects related to various theories about literature, theories concerning our modern times regarding conceptions of time, space, and the self; on categorizing principles, as well as on terminology issues, I have come to the following conclusions:

1. Whatever the theoretical conceptions one may hold, no matter what theory one may support, contemporary British literature can, and is approached from the point of view of literary genres.
2. Super/sub/reversed/ mock/historical/modern genres, as we may call them, play an important role in contemporary literature, especially in view of the ordering principle that they may provide.
3. Many of the contemporary texts make use of elements of the picaresque, even to the point where we would be safe to label the entire narrative as picaresque.
4. Besides traditional picaresque texts, we may highlight the presence of contemporary picaresque categories ("new Age picaresque", or "Social realism picaresque" proposed by some authors)

3. In search of the protocols of the picaresque in contemporary British literature: postmodern revisitations of the genre

In order to go on with the discussion on a revival of the picaresque in contemporary British novels, I have already clarified my view on issues of genres theoretically, as well as on the issue of genre-related classifications; I have also given an overview of the picaresque from a historical, and theoretical point of view, as well as an account on its use in the English literature since Chaucer, to the Angry and Non-angry novelists of the 1960s. What remains to be clarified from a theoretical point of view, are the other concepts that are present in the title – 'contemporary' and 'British"; as well as the protocols of the picaresque genre that I consider to be the most useful and logical in dealing with contemporary British texts.

Thus, I use the term 'contemporary ' in its most 'generous' understanding, that is, the literature belonging to the past forty years (as many of the authors and the editors I mentioned in the previous sub-chapter). As to 'British', I have sided with those critics that by 'British' mean the entire former empire, of course referring to authors writing in English.

As to the picaresque elements that I am about to trace in the texts that I selected, these are inspired by the American critic Giancarlo Maiorino, the organizer of the conferences dedicated to the rogue tale, and the editor of *Revisiting the Picaresque in Postmodern Times*. Maiorino suggests that *contemporary critical and theoretical interest in the 'marginal', the unheroic, the every day, can be brought to bear fruitfully upon the reexamination of the picaresque.*(76). The picaresque cannot 'end', as long as there are writers of *comic biographies*, or of *fictional autobiographies,* of *realistic* or *satirical novels;* it will be used when authors refer to social delinquency, to *moral ambiguity, decadence and honour*. These categories, though, are too comprehensive, too spacious to be practical in determining which are the main /minimal constituents of the picaresque that we can work with, as the contemporary novels may display picaresque elements, even if they are not picaresque texts in the traditional meaning of the word.

To sum up the tradition of the picaresque in British literature, I may say that in my view, the picaresque even before its emergence in Spain and its subsequent transfer in England, was present as a 'natural disposition' in Chaucer's tales. Then, after the tralsation of the canonical Spanish rogue-tales, British writers embraced the genre quite enthusiastically: Nashe, Smollett, Sterne, Fielding, Defoe, Goldsmith, Byron, Thackeray, Dickens, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as Waugh, M. Amis, Wain, Murdoch, Braine, Sillitoe in the twentieth are just a few names of important authors who continued this tradition.

There is not just one 'red thread' that is continued by the use of the picaresque, but several, subsumed to it. In other word, I think that the picaresque 'fitted' the British 'soul' very well, due to some of the intrinsic characteristics of the islanders.

First the British islanders (because of their being islanders) have been in a permanent hesitation as to whether they want to be Europeans as well. I consider this island-dwelling one of the 'red threads' responsible for the continuation of the picaresque: how comfortable it is to just 'travel' around, without taking anything at heart, from the position of the outsider (just remember that many British authors chose European exiles as if Europe were a far-far-away place)!

Second, I will refer to their extraordinary pleasure at being travelers, whether they need to travel for economical reasons, or social reasons, or to study the arts and culture around the globe, the British need to travel. The 'going away' always has a '

coming back' side, this moment is also very much linked with British stories. Depending on the typicality of such stories, there are several possibilities of narrative choices, and the picaresque is one of these possible choices.

For people used to go at sea for years on end, for islanders used to travelling and noticing other people's lives, it is only normal that the main forms of telling these stories are the travelogue, the high-road story, and the picaresque. In fact, as I have already mentioned, there are four types of narratives that seem to have never died in British literature: the fantastic narratives, the gothic narratives, the adventure stories, and the picaresque stories. More realistic or more romantic, modernist or postmodernist, colonial or post-colonial, there is always a new story that belongs to one of these categories that is being written.

In order that I take my demonstration one step forward, into contemporary times, besides the clarification of the concepts I used and my vision on the British picaresque in general, I also need to find those invariables those deep layer constituents of the picaresque that might be traced in contemporary British novels. The most complete, complex and functional ones belong to Ulrich Wicks, the so-called protocols of the picaresque narratives. Thus, in the contemporary novels that I will refer to, I will try to identify and analyse the protocols as Wicks formulated them: plot, rhythm, fortune, accident, character, internal instability, point of view, style, and ending.

V. Picaresque as Displacement

1. Salman Rushdie's Shame, and The Ground Beneath Her Feet: displacement of both the character and the narrator

As Rushdie points out, what he calls *decentering of the individual protagonist* is the main difference between the Western novel and novels from the former colonies (Angblom, 394). As postcolonial literature is so diverse (writers residing in the former colonies and writing in English, first generation immigrants, second generation, etc.), when looking for the protocols of the picaresque, two aspects are revealed clearly: a. that postcolonial writers fit best the concept of *generic transgression*, Fowler spoke about, as these writers come with the *luggage* (Rushdie) of their own ethnical narrative patterns; they adopted several other protocols and genres from writers coming from the English world freely, mixing literary traditions, genres, and trends and mixing them according to their own interests and outlooks on literature; b. the condition of the writers coming from the former colonies (especially from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) prepared them towards the employment of the picaresque (the strict social class-based and cast-based system, where ascending in society from one class to another was a very difficult task) the rogue as a preferred character makes really good sense.

Another aspect that needs to be emphasized, is the fact that the picaresque is employed by writers coming from the former colonies because of the special position of the authors as uprooted, dislocated individuals, both geographically and culturally, some of these immigrants have he acute feeling that they are left 'hanging' in between two worlds: they have left the 'old' country, but they have not adapted to the 'new one', either; they are outsiders, observers, misfits, the other, the displaced. The picaresque narrative becomes in telling the experiences of these so special authors, a story of displacement.

Rushdie's employment of the picaresque comes form both a Western source, and from an Eastern one: he plunged into ancient Asian narratives, with the great tradition of oral story-telling, of beautiful allegories, of the Arabian Nights' fragmented epic, from the colossal satires, and grotesque fairy tales.

When applying the protocols of the picaresque on Rushdie's *Shame*, it is clear that most of them are present ; the main picaroon is Omar Khayyam Shakil – his story is a never ending story of mis-/dis-placement, with events assaulting him; the *episodic structure* of *Shame*, with the characters that *appear and disappear;* the lack of any apparent *order*; the details the narrator conspicuously gives about the narratives in a pure Sternean tradition); the rapid action patterns; the blind series of misfortunes –all account for a picaresque narrative.

The survival Rushdie speaks about in *Shame* is not the one in the Spanish canon stories – biological survival, getting food and shelter – but a spiritual one. Omar feels the instability of the universe to the fullest – he has an acute feeling that the world is upside-down, of his being a morally and socially misfit.

There is at least one other rogue in this story, the narrator; his story is one of displacement; he is uprooted and hanging between two worlds; his old country and his new one; he has to imagine them both, they are fictional for him; he feels he lacks identity both as a member of the nation he was born in, and as a writer who does not have access to his own language.

With Salman Rushdie, the picaresque is not only a 'revived' genre, it is not only a kind of resuscitated genre for practical reasons; it is the genre that best suits the need of the author to render that special situation of the colonized as a displaced self. Displacement is the main agent that fragments the universe of he picaroon, it is the initial condition that ignites him in his progress, in his attempts to adapt, it also gives him the statute of an observer, of a person at the margins, of he other, of someone who can also be objective, as he is not attached to any system, or to any part of any country. He is a picaroon because he is in search of an identity, and the success of his search depends on his own resourcefulness.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, gives another interpretation of the rogue: the condition of the artist seen as a displaced picaroon.

Myths taken from the east, the Greeks, the West, in high and popular culture, are mixed, providing a kind of 'undercover' safety net, providing some organizing principles to a widely spread out narrative, where the first person singular stretches till it becomes an 'omniscient first person singular', an unfair, unreliable, still profoundly believable narrator.

Tony Morrison left a message on this novel's Facebook wall, saying that *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a *world novel*. It is not merely a novel belonging to what we may call 'postcolonial' or 'postmodernist' novels, but a more overwhelmingly large project, in which the history of the past five decades of the world is presented in a series of fragmentary happenings, presented by an unreliable rogue photographer, who believes he is going to change the face of the earth with his art, but who, in fact, is nothing but a mirror in which the fragility of this world can be 'tested'. This would be displacement of a second degree, when there is no world in which the rogue can try and adapt. He is just that, a rogue, always on the road, trying on all the possible masks, fighting all the possible wind-mills, but getting nowhere.

2. Hanif Kureishi The Buddha of Suburbia: second generation immigrants in quest of an

identity

The novel shows Karim's progress from being the *Paki's child*, till he constructs his identity as an Englishman with Indian ancestry, and plays on his identity, not minding anymore the way he is perceived, but trying to take advantage of that situation – as a rogue would do. It is not that he feels comfortable in his shoes, but he is happy he is able to let go of his rebellious feeling, take the money, and enjoy himself: the pragmatic vision of a true picaroon.

He tells his story in the first person singular, a narrative comprising his progress, his growth, his coming to terms with a very mixed world, in which he cannot find a place. He needs to construct this own identity in such a way as to survive, both materially, and spiritually. He will try on several masks, several costumes, he will assume several identities; he will balance between worlds, between staying and leaving, and he will serve quite a few masters.

VI. The Rogue's Progress in the Remains of the Empire

1. University rogues and European postmodern picaroons in novels by Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge

The picaresque stories of the academia (the campus novels) accompanied in a sort of consonant backing orchestra the major cultural, literary and philosophical changes of the past decades; thus, they started off during the Angry Generation, made their mark during the punk and hippie times of the 70s, continued into the Postmodern swing of the 80s and 90s, showed many of the conceptions of the Glasnost and New Age ideas after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, from the point of view of those who actually founded, promoted and foregrounded these new concepts and ideas – professors, writers, philosophers, critics and artists.

A main characteristic of the campus novels (or the university picaresque novels) is that they are mostly satires, using humour and postmodern satirical techniques, in the best picaresque tradition. Most of the times the authors prefer a story concentrated around on-two characters, and the reader is taken on these characters' voyages, pilgrimages, tribulations, and compromises, in quest of a secure position, academic tenure, fame, money, and love. They also use narrative techniques reminding the reader of the eighteen century rogue stories: fragmentariness, first person narratives, a mixture of narrative with comments on various other issues, a direct flow of the narrative with the narrator addressing directly the reader at times, a quick of events that take both the reader, and the characters by surprise, self-reflexiveness, and an entire range of aesthetic categories in the grotesque, the absurd, the comic, and the comic-tragic scenes.

Present on this list of campus-picaresque novels are David Lodge, with *Changing Places* (1975), *Small World* (1984), *Nice Work* (1988); Malcolm Bradbury, with *Stepping Westwards* (1965), *Rates of Exchange* (1983); and Tom Sharpe, with *Vintage Stuff* (1982), and *The Great Pursuit* (1977).

A. David Lodge, *Therapy* (1996): the rogue in search of his immortal soul

Lodge employs two genres of great stature in English literature; the story of religious pilgrimages, and the picaresque. The rogue here does not look for material security, he is not an orphan looking for constructing an appropriate identity, he is not a social climber; on the contrary, he is settled, married, successful, happy. One by one, all the certainties of his life disappear, and he is overwhelmed by a feeling of loss, of angst, of inner desperation. It is the craving of the soul for its metaphysical dimension.

Although Laurence Passmore is not a rogue in the true meaning of the word, the story he tells is of a picaresque nature: he speaks about himself in various ways: first person account, vignettes of other people's descriptions of him, a memoir, all offering a personal view on his personality. He is not the rogue who needs to compromise in order to survive, he is the rogue who has already compromised, who has already found means of survival, and now he needs to be on the road so that he might find what he has lost on the way – his immortal soul.

B. The postmodern European rogue in Malcolm Bradbury's *Doctor Criminale*

The Europe of the 90s does not appear to be but a carnivalesque locus, in which everything is upside down. In such a world all characters are rogues in a way: Criminale with his belonging to several countries and to none, Francis Jay with his totally improper lack of knowledge of recent history and exclusive drive towards survival; Ildiko with her wish to take revenge on Criminale; Sandor Hollo (a hollow man), the so-called disciple of Criminale's, but who is ready to take on any mask just to survive.

2. Kazuo Ishiguro, The Remains of the Day and When We Were Orphans: the displaced picaresque narrative and the fading of Englishness

The lack of obvious drama, the lack of demonstrativeness is the trap that Ishiguro sets up for the reader. Stevens is anything but an objective viewer. He equates being a butler with being an Englishman. Barry Lewis points out that at the beginning of the novel this creed is at least *candid*. But, unfortunately, it becomes totally void of meaning when it is only words, when dignity is only an illusion that Steven still has about himself as a person, and mistakes rigidity and lack of imagination in his work with dignity and a life ideal.

The code of 'nobility' Stevens speaks about is made up of *rank, position, honourable office, manner and style, degree of estimation, a title*; all of these show that there is little dignity in his service, all of these are nothing but exterior qualities; these are nothing but mannerisms, characteristic of a world in decline. Thus, Stevens is not a representative of Englishness, but on the contrary, a representative of the decline of Englishness, of the loss of force, of imagination, of satire and humour , of a spirit of adventure and courage, of that initial romantic inclination that once defined the same territory. His journey in England, trying to find meaning for a lost life, as well as in history, trying to justify his lack of initiative, is a mock of the adventurous, daring, sometimes faulty, sometimes amoral, but never inhuman quests of the English specific highly spirited rogue, serving many masters, but being fooled by none.

Putting his father's condition aside, as well as Miss Kenton's tears, in order that he might give absolute priority to serving

his master, and being proud of it, does nothing but destroy the myth of the witty English servant from within, and with it, Englishness itself.

The Remains of the Day is not the story of a displaced rogue; it is itself a 'displaced rogue story'.

The only quality that remains of Lord Darlington is his having been a 'gentleman'. Like Stevens – the picaroon that has only the appearance but not he substance of the pragmatic, witty, materialistic though realistic, funny creature that populated English literature as well as its numerous inns and mansions, the 'gentlemanliness' of his lordship is void of any real substance.

The beautiful English language this novel is written in, is also an opposition to the picaresque, in the sense that the narrator does not address the reader freely, as he would have in the good, old tradition of the English rogue-story; he does not stop to wink at the reader, give him indications, be boisterous and funny; he does not laugh with one eye and cry with the other; speaking his mind and knowing that his faults, blamable as they might be, are nothing 'foreign' for the mind of the reader, who will understand his action. Stevens misses out on his opportunity of becoming a notable picaroon, on his opportunity of demonstrating his belonging to one of Englishmen's most celebrated traditions, and he also misses out on his own life.

If the story is a displaced picaresque tale, and Stevens an anti-rogue, there are still a few elements that are truly picaresque in the novel: fragmentariness, the telling and the un-telling of the story, the marginal status of the characters, the time that is fluid. Stevens is an semi-orphan, we may infer form the 'holes' in the story that he might have suffered in his childhood. Brian Finney maintains that this need of Ishiguro's characters to clarify their childhood and find security is a *trope*.

In *When We Were Orphans*, Ishiguro loosens his narrative even more, and creates a novel that both revives and subverts both the detective story, and the picaresque.

Fragmentariness, the unreliable first person singular, the world collapsing around, the instability of the universe, an avalanche of unbelievable events driven by fate – all speak about a kind of parodic picaresque, as well as the 'cosmeticized' language of the 'inner' thoughts of the character, all speak about a parodic stream-of-consciousness technique. As to the detective story, Ishiguro definitely presents that in a parodic manner, as well.

2. Tom Sharpe, The Midden: the comic and the grotesque gathering of rogues struggling to find a long-lost Empire

The satire of the today British life unfolds luxuriously in an avalanche of comic adventures irrationally, in a disordered, unstable world, where everything seems to be possible, but nothing that one would expect really to happen, does, actually, happen.

Although this story is not one in which one picaroon progresses among fragments of narrative, but, as I have already mentioned, almost all characters seem to be picaroons, the story is made up of their stories put together, like a gigantic, comic kaleidoscope of rogue stories.

All the hilarious happenings appearing one after another, proving the instability of any system and the immorality of any man, are written according to the protocols of the picaresque, and are populated by rogues. They are representatives of a grotesque vision of what England has become after the loss of the Empire.

3. Timothy Mo, The Monkey King, and Sour Sweet: the rogue among 'pieces' and 'left-over's' of colonial times

The main character of *The Monkey King*, Wallace, is a true rogue: serving the masters he needs to serve, trying to find wealth and security in a world that is upside-down, being a mercenary of family life, trying to adapt to any conditions just to survive. Still, his progress is not only a picaresque one – he also achieves personal growth, maturity and wisdom, as well as a feeling of belonging he has been in search for.

The two rogues, Wallace and May Ling, start their true adventure of advancement in life, by grabbing all opportunities that appear in their way, by trying to emerge form the statute of a 'post-colonial' couple, speaking broken English (pidgin, in fact), being a combination of Chinese and Portuguese ancestry, with unique parentage and a natural disposition towards the good life and wealth. They start re-creating the old traditions, in a way, but by taking tradition apart, deconstructing it, and reconstructing it in a new, advanced manner. The name of the street they live on is very suggestive of this undertaking: Robinson path. They represent humanity itself, and give a lesson of survival.

Sour Sweet is the story of the migrant Chen family, with all the adventures that they have to undergo, until the ones who do not adapt die, or are eliminated, and those who adapt, and understand their particular status of picaroons in a 'new country' can survive, even if they have to give up to their most cherished traditions.

4. David Dabydeen, A Harlot's Progress: the tragic story of involuntary rogues

The picaresque form is employed by Dabydeen for at least three reasons: firstly, the Hogarth plates were engraved in 1732, when the picaresque started to be the preferred narrative form – the title given to the engravings suggest that; secondly, the character is a rogue in the true meaning of the word – he has a strange parentage, he is lost and found, he is taken to incredible adventures during which his main concern is to survive, he has the marginal position that allows him to notice details of the society and people he encounters; thirdly, the narrative suits the need of the author to demonstrate that reality is made up of fragments of our stories, and that the whole history of mankind is nothing but a construct that is made u of stories in which we are each other's heroes. At the same time, the narrative is a puzzle of so many fragments and voices, and attitudes as to suggest the scarcity of English language when it comes to rendering one's African soul: Mungo does not remember his name, let alone his language. He has to tell his story, as well as the story of a continent, in the language of the enslaver.

Mungo *is* a cross-cultural an trans-historical story, a text, lost in the many variants, told by a totally untrustworthy narrator, who does not even have a name, who has lost his memory, who is driven by his need to survive. He tells the story and at the same time destroys it, especially by relating the voices of the villagers in his head, who constantly contradict him. Dabydeen uses a kind of palindrome, with the story going forward, and backwards, constructing and deconstructing itself.

I have decided to include David Dabydeen's novel in the chapter dedicated to the Remains of the Empire, and not in the one dedicated to displacement, because *The Harlot's Progress* is not that much a story of displacement. Mungo does not have an 'old' world to compare the new one with; he has lost it for good. He does not have any expectations of the new world, either. He is forced into being a migrant; he does not have an identity, but a stereotypical image he is trying to destroy in the

name of his entire race.

He is a locus of stories he has read, written by white men, invented by his imagination. He is not displaced, he is misplaced, even though this novel's form is obviously a picaresque one, the spirit of the British picaresque, with its all-embracing irony, with its subtle mind games and acid satire, is lost in the tragic tones of Mungo's narrative. The use of the picaresque story that Dabydeen chooses is less picaresque in spirit than the others I have presented; it has the contrary effect – it does not speak of the picaresque inclination of the English, with their good-humoured satire and sound comic comments on manners and morality; on the contrary, it reveals the deep structure of evil and racism and of unpardonable prejudices against other human beings.

VII. The Rogue and the New Ethics of Science

1. Simon Mawer's Mendel's Dwarf: the 'science' rogue and the two-folded 'otherness'

It presents the parallel lives of two scientists, one who is the fictionalized image of Gregor Mendel, the Bohemian monk who discovered the gene by working with plants, especially peas, and Ben Lombard, a modern-day genetics scientist, who is Mendel's great-great-great-grand nephew, and who is a dwarf. He dedicated his research to finding out the gene that is responsible for his dwarfism, and when he discovers it, he cannot resist temptation to 'select it out', when it comes to selecting embryos of which his future son will be born.

The parallel narrative suggests that there is great resemblance between the two scientists, that even if Mendel is not a dwarf, his condition of a monk, who chooses to be a monk because he has been very poor, and can not think of anything else he could afford to do, also destines him to an outer vision on life, to feeling like a misfit, a man pendulant between two worlds, like someone totally non-adapted, peripheral, trying hard to transgress his status. Lombard seems to be closer, in a way, to such a transgression, had it not been for his stature. What poverty and lack of chance and poverty means for Mendel, physical deformity means for Ben. The modern scientist is a mastermind of tricks, a trickster, a rogue, a person who is always trying to play people to his interest, and who is capable to influence others, from his position of 'the other'. He does that as he basis his actions on his total lack of morals, on his taking fun at playing with people's minds, as a means to get back to fortune, which has made him what he is. The author, though, denies him any tragic stature, on the contrary, he is treated ironically at times, even if irony does get tragic accents here and there.

With such a subject, the main danger lies in turning the story into a macabre, arid lecture on ethics and morals in today's world and science, in a moralizing essay on the problems of the physically impaired. Mawer, notwithstanding, is able to save his story from getting there, by avoiding this trap, and one of the means that he resorts to in order to do that, is the employment of several protocols of the picaresque: the plot has an episodic structure, with happenings that come one after another in a rather fragmented way, and although they are on two time-levels, the action patterns are rapid, and the characters are victims of the blind series of misfortunes, Wicks mentioned as an important characteristic of the picaresque. Moreover, the fictional world has

a serious degree of instability, as well as the 'reflected' world outside, and the characters are up for being accidentally punished for their mistakes. If the above features would account for the Cervantean *inclination picaresca*, the true picaresque character is given to the story by its fragmentary construction, by the first person narrative, and by the presence of the two picaroons (presented in the mirror)

The genius-rogue functions in a different way as compared to the traditional rogue: he does not want a place in high society necessarily, he does not want recognition, as much as he wants to be accepted by the 'normal' people, he needs a place to hide from society so that he would not be hurt, because he is not 'normal'; he is the result of a mechanical accident, or the result of pure malevolent chance. This place Mendel has found in the monastery, and Ben in the lab. The whole universe is so unpredictable, so unstable, made up of chance possibilities, disordered and chaotic, that, practically, any creature on earth is a result, a consequence of an accident, of pure chance.

Like many other picaroons, Ben is the 'product' of his own construction. He understands early in his life that he has to deal with his condition, with reality on his own; that there is nobody he can count on. Even if he has a mother who loves him, even if he has friends, he knows he will always be pushed away, and that he has to find a viable solution to go on living the next day.

2. The clone-rogues of Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go: the humanity of the non-human

Written in the first person narrative, with a fragmented plot, and a restricted point of view, the story of the rogues in this novel is practically the story of non-persons, of 'people' who are fighting to get reality, contour and definition.

At a first glance it is not easy to assimilate Ishiguro's clones in *Never Let Me Go*, with the picaresque. In a way, we might say that this is an anti-picaresque story, as Stevens the butler's story is, as well. This mechanical, un-human component of each of their stories seems to be at the other end of the rogue's tale, which is quintessential human. What I have identified as picaresque in Ishiguro's 'clone-tale' are a few narrative elements: fragmentariness, first person narration, the subjectivity of the narration, its rhythm. Arguably, the position of the rogue is not very clear but I think that we may call the clones *second degree rogues*, because their position is even more insecure, they are not at the margins of society but out of society altogether, and have no real hope to ever be able to 'cheat' anyone into being received as true members of society. They have no freedom to move. The tone of the story is even anti-picaresque, with the tragic shades, with the seriously dark images, with the lack of hope and overwhelming solitude. There is no ironic or satirical view on society's mannerisms, the story is dystopian, tragic, and humourless. It can be read into as being in a way anti-picaresque, if we define the picaresque as the most human ways humanity expresses itself in stories. *Never Let Me Go* is a picaresque story by omission; it has all the elements, all the protocols of the picaresque: the instability of the universe, the feeling of alienation and displacement, the need to transgress one's boundaries… Weirdness is introduced little by little by Ishiguro; the characters are true rogues, but something is missing: they are denied the ' high road', they cannot show themselves outside, they cannot be part of pilgrimages where they could tell their stories; they are second degree rogues. What these picaroons do not have, is a meaning for their lives, because their condition of birth-less, child-less, and death-less creatures does not allow them to have a meaning outside their own condition of 'donors'. The

progress of these rogues is not from the predicament of an impossible life situation, on the road, living through numerous adventures until reaching a semi-official social position. Their progress is from guessing their fate, to hoping it might at least be ' sweetened' if they try hard enough, and their fully realization that there is absolutely no road they might take that can lead them anywhere worth going.

Even if this novel is not a picaresque novel *per se*, the picaresque elements that Ishiguro makes use of, are very important, they give it that very important human characteristic without which this story would have fallen into the same literary category with the numerous 'ordinary' scientific dystopias.

Conclusions

This dissertation started from the idea that the study of literary genres is not outdated - on the contrary, there are quite a few texts in the past decade dealing with literary genres, of which the picaresque seems to be the genre of choice for many such authors. Another idea that contributed to this study is that the picaresque has never really 'left the scene' of British literature, and can be ascertained throughout the centuries, since Chaucer to present day narratives, almost in all periods. The third hypothesis is represented by the belief that there are a few characteristics of the picaresque narrative that can be identified in the canon texts of the picaresque of the seventeenth and eighteenth century that can still be analyzed in contemporary texts, making, thus, the argumentation in favour of the picaresque valid. Nevertheless, I have avoided to assert that certain British contemporary texts *are* picaresque tales as such, merely preferring to specify that some texts evince 'elements of the picaresque tale'.

The British picaresque can be considered to have been preserved in contemporary literature due to several abiding coordinates:

1. *An aesthetic coordinate*: the picaresque is always present in periods when a literary trend is declining, in the baroque and, especially, the mannerist stages of a literary trend. I have shown how the picaresque genre 'appeared' in Chaucer's times, when it was no yet established as a genre in Spain, yet; then in Nashe's times, who actually used all literary forms of his day in order to undermine them and prepare the British 'scene' for the great novelists of the eighteenth century; it was then used by Byron towards the end of the Romantic period, and by Dickens to 'sabotage' Realism; it was used after Modernism, in the literature of the 'Angry Young Men', immediately after the war, when the pretensions of the modernism meta-narratives started not to satisfy the readers any longer; and is present today, in the baroque, and, arguably, mannerist phase of Postmodernism in literature.

2. *The European literary tradition*: starting with the rogue tales of the sixteenth century Spain, the rogue tale spread all over Europe, giving such canonical texts as *Simplizissimus*, in Germany, *Gil Blas* in France, and even afterwards, in the centuries to come the picaresque has never left the scene. In the twentieth century there are quite a few exemplary novels that are picaresque (Hasek's *The Adventures of the Good Brave Soldier Svejk*, Bulgakov's *The Master and Marguerite*, or Grass' *The Tin Drum* could be three of the most famous examples). Consequently, we may say that the picaresque genre has

not left the European literary scene, not only the British one.

3. *The British literary tradition*: starting from Chaucer, even before the Spanish picaresque canonical texts (almost two hundred years before), the British writers seem to have been attracted by the rogue tale. There is virtually no period in which there should not be found an important writer who employed the picaresque: the eighteenth century novelists 'invented' the novel in the picaresque 'mood' – Defoe, Sterne, Smollett, Fielding being the four important figures of the epoch that preferred the 'new' genre. During Romantic times, when literature was so much inclined towards poetry, Byron, one of the most important second 'wave' Romantic poets writes picaresque epic poems. The fragmentary narrative of the picaresque was especially suitable for the conditions in which Dickens published his novels – in monthly installments in literary journals and magazines. This fact and the novelist's extraordinary inclination towards creating the widest range of characters made it possible for the rogue tale to be present in the mainstream Realist trend in Britain. Even during Modernism, when most of the 'other' voices than those of the Impressionists faded out, the picaresque is still present in such novels as those written by Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. After World War II, in a period of post-modernity, during the so-called Movement, or the literature of the 'Angry Young Men', there are several texts that display elements of the picaresque, some critics even speaking about a 'Fielding revival'. With Lodge's, Bradbury's and Sharpe's 'campus novels' of the 70s and 80s; with the magic-realist novels of Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mo and Angela Carter; with the postcolonial literature of displacement, belonging to such authors as Kazuo Ishiguro, David Dabydeen, Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie, etc., the elements of the picaresque are present in the Postmodern period, as well as in the post-post-modernist period (as some call the first decades of the twenty-first century). Another development will be found in science fiction novels, in Cyberpunk literature, as well as in the novels dealing with ethics in science and with environmental issues. In this paper, I have only concentrated on Simon Mawer and Kazuo Ishiguro as authors who debate the themes related to ethics and science, by using a rogue tale.

4. *A specific British inclination* towards travelogues, books of adventures presenting a first person account of all happenings, towards humorous and satirical views on society. This inclination is present with many authors, and the very fact that the first picaresque writing, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* display fragments of picaresque avant la lettre is a representative example of this natural inclination of the British towards this genre. At the same time, the picaresque offers the proper background for the manifestation of the specific British sense of humour, of a more or less dark shade, as well as their inclination towards oddity, and the grotesque.

5. *The Asian tradition and civilization*. Although many of the British writers who come from former colonies were actually born and raised in Britain, acquiring, thus, a profound and extensive knowledge of British culture, one cannot say that the inclination towards the picaresque just 'rubbed off' on them so easily. Obviously, for some of them, the English picaresque stories were powerful enough, and they considered such a genre suitable for both their objectives in writing novels, generally those related with the theme of the displaced character, and for the continuation of the Asian tradition, especially that of the *Arabian Nights*. Thus, the Eastern traditions of the rogue sounded very much alike the Western ones. Consequently, the picaresque seems to be one of the western genres that sounded natural in the minds of the writers coming form older colonies. The very position of the writers in English from the former colonies, who, whether they remained in the former colonies, or they migrated to the British Isles, needed to find a specific genre in the 'host' language, that would suit their specific way of thinking,

their style, and especially their most important themes regarding adaptation, displacement, the otherness, etc.

6. *Postmodernism and the revaluation of genres*. The postmodernist theory speaks of today's world in terms of instability, relativity, anti-representationality, inter-textuality, the constructed character of the self and of history, fragmentariness and unreliability. At a closer look, most of these characteristic features of the postmodern literature can be found in the picaresque story, even since Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. The picaresque narrative also makes use of self-reflexivity, direct address, de-centeredness, decorum and mixing non-fictional essays with the fictional text. At the same time, Postmodernism also practices revitalization and a mixing of genres coming from previous literary trends and traditions.

7. *Conceptions of the self and of identity in contemporary times*. After a period of almost fifty years when Postmodernist thinking only spoke about the constructed structure of human self, and about the specific condition of the self in a de-centered, disunited, peripheral world, in which the main characteristic is instability, in the past few years other ideas and considerations about the self started to emerge. Thus, several scientists and philosophers consider that only the 'cultural' self is constructed, that there are other 'levels' of the self and of man's identity that are not socially, culturally, religiously or historically constructed: there is a basic human level in which man reacts the same, no matter what part of the world he may come from. This is the non-learned part, which also accounts for a human need for transcendence, but also a need for social equilibrium and equality, for a fight against simulacra and reification (promoted by the Marxists and the Feminists especially). The picaresque with its more or less acid and ironical satire responds to these orientations very well.

8. *New Age ideas related to environment and the ethics of science*. There are many ideas in today's world related to the importance of a new conception about life, by which man should find a new ethics, should discuss whatever remained dark and un-resolved from the past, and look towards future in a less selfish manner. At the same time, such themes are quite difficult to treat in literature and not transform them in some kind of moralizing pamphlets, or sermons on ethics. Thus, such authors as the ones I have chosen in this dissertation, Simon Mawer and Kazuo Ishiguro, treated these sensitive subjects in such a way as not to forget that their primordial objective is to write literature, and not any other kind of writing. The picaresque gave them the most appropriate framework for such an undertaking, as it does for many other writings, like the science fiction ones.

Looking back at these more or less 'constant' coordinates, it is clear that I have found reasons for the use of the picaresque in today's British literature coming form various domains: anthropology, generic studies, the history of literature, culture and civilization, the history of ideas, narratology, philosophy, and psychology. I cannot profess to have exhausted any of these studies, but I have tried to read at least a few important texts coming from various domains, in my lookout for elements of the picaresque, or revaluations of genres in contemporary studies. Starting from here on, there are other studies that can be carried out, for instance, the cyberpunk literature could be one of the sources of several picaresque texts.

In dealing with texts, I have used two methods: first, I have looked for the elements of the picaresque that I could find according to a 'list' of such characteristics devised by Ulrich Wicks – the so-called protocols of the picaresque; secondly, I have tried to read texts as closely as possible, not necessarily going back to the tradition of text interpretation of the 70s, but keeping as close to the text as possible.

The labeling of various texts as modern, or contemporary, as well as British, comes from a study of several writings in the domain, where I have looked at various types of classifications of English/British novels, in which these concepts were used in

various interpretations. Thus, I could choose from among these the most permissive ones, those that refer to novels as ' contemporary' if they were written since the mid-60s to this day; whereas British means in my dissertation, literature in English coming from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Commonwealth. I have not dealt, though, with any Canadian, Australian or South African authors.

I have not devised my own classification of the picaresque novels as such, I just gathered more texts under three main metaphorical titles referring to picaresque as displacement, picaresque as a mark of the dissolution of the empire, and the picaresque employed by novels dedicated to the new ethics of science.

A general conclusion would be that the picaresque genre contradicts neither of the theoretical influences of the past, nor does it come in contradiction with any literary trend, historical period or outlook on life; on the contrary, it can serve any of the above, and especially on the British territory.

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