

Rebirth of an Old Genre in a Modern Novel: Analysis of the Picaresque Nature of John Wain's *Hurry on Down*

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Abstract

There is a tendency among scholars to look upon neopicaresque novels not as genuinely picaresque narratives, but as specimens of what Claudio Guillén calls the picaresque myth. These novels, in other words, do not reflect the core features of the first picaresque novels, but include only certain picaresque characteristics. In this article, the justice of the above statement is tested by investigating the picaresque nature of John Wain's debut novel, *Hurry on Down*. The extent to which Wain's novel conforms to or deviates from the core features of the picaresque genre is measured through the application of Ulrich Wicks's theory of the picaresque to that novel. The findings of the study show that *Hurry on Down* meets all of the eight characteristics Wicks enumerates for the picaresque genre at least in a tangential way. Therefore, despite the contrary view of many critics, it is possible and reasonable to pigeonhole Wain's novel as a generically picaresque narrative.

Keywords: Picaresque; Genre; Ulrich Wicks; Postwar Novel; John Wain.

In the 1950s, a remarkable resurgence of the picaresque tradition took place in Great Britain. Dozens of novels with obvious picaresque elements in them were written in that country during that decade especially by the so-called Angry Young Men. The main picaresque elements in those novels include their lower-class, roguish anti-heroes, their episodic structure, their satirical and comic nature, the abundance of movement (both horizontal and vertical) in them, and their treatment of such themes as innocence, loneliness, role-playing, and death and rebirth. All this notwithstanding, there is a tendency among critics to view those novels not as generically picaresque narratives, but simply as picaresque-like works or specimens of what Claudio Guillén calls the picaresque myth. What causes critics to be unwilling to classify these "neopicaresque" novels as genuinely picaresque narratives is those novels' failure to reflect the core features of the first picaresque tales. J. A. Garrido Ardila (2010), for instance, points to the lack of "the *poética comprometida*, the final situation, and even a proper *picaro*" (5) in many picaresque novels of the twentieth century. The skeptical critic, Howard Mancing (1979), likewise speaks

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of the nonexistence of “even a trace of the consciousness of genre that is characteristic of the picaresque novel” (196) in these “neopicaresque” narratives. The purpose of the present study is to examine the justice of such claims by investigating the picaresque nature of one of the most influential novels by the Angry Young Men, John Wain’s *Hurry on Down*. For this purpose, Ulrich Wicks’s theory of the picaresque is applied to Wain’s novel in order to see how much it has in common with the ideal picaresque narrative and accordingly decide whether it is possible to pigeonhole it as a generically picaresque novel.

In order to understand Wicks’s theory of the picaresque, first of all, it is necessary to be acquainted with the two dominant approaches to the study of the picaresque. The first one, known as the historical or extrinsic approach, views the picaresque as a “closed” episode in the fiction of the *siglo de oro* (Golden Age) Spain, and hence “as dead as the dodo” (Wicks 1974, 240) in the twentieth century. This approach, as Wicks declares in his book, “is primarily positivistic and sees picaresque fiction diachronically as a predominantly closed phenomenon” (1989, 17). The second approach is the ahistorical or intrinsic one. As opposed to the earlier approach, this approach sees picaresque fiction synchronically as an “open” phenomenon, very broad and constantly thriving, and not limited to any specific place or time. In its extreme versions, this approach tends to categorize “anything having to do with journeys, anti-heroes, or episodic structure” as picaresque (Wicks 1971, 71). While the first approach prefers to look upon the picaresque as a “genre” with some fixed characteristics, the second one “tends more toward the formalistic, examining works themselves for technique and meaning, and in general evading the controversy about genre” (1989, 25).

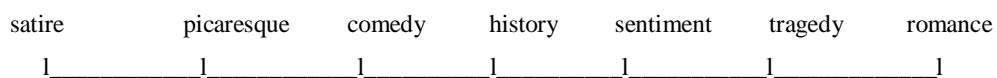
To Wicks, both of these approaches are problematic. The main problem with the historical approach is its rigidity and narrowness. What the historical, “generic” approach does is that it picks a single work as its touchstone and bases its definition of a genre on that work alone. (A famous example is Aristotle’s definition of tragedy based on *Oedipus Rex*.) As a result, according to the historical approach, there is only one individual work that can be generically pure. The extent to which other works may be judged to belong to the same genre is determined by their closeness to that prototypal model. Consequently, the more imitative and unoriginal a work of literature is, a better representative of that genre it is deemed. What is wrong with the broad, ahistorical approach is its looseness and too much inclusiveness. When works basically different from one another are all labeled picaresque, naturally the term “picaresque” becomes almost impossible to define. The emergence of so many divergent theories of the picaresque in the recent years is one of the ramifications of the increasing popularity of the ahistorical approach.

Wicks reconciles the broad and narrow meanings of the term “picaresque” by speculating that the picaresque can be approached either as a genre or as a mode. Genre is a narrow, historically determined entity, whereas mode is a broad and ahistorical concept. Genre is a literary type which places a number of similar works of literature together in one class; mode is an “ideal fictional type,” “irreducible narrative type,” or “primitive narrative form” (1974, 242). Comedy, as a genre, is by definition dramatic, but, as a mode, it may be one of the devices employed by novelists, poets, essayists, screenwriters, and other artists. Picaresque, as a genre, may refer only to the *novela picaresca* of sixteenth- and seventeenth-

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century Spain (Wicks 1974, 241). As a mode, however, it is applicable to every work, whether literary or cinematic, Spanish or English, early modern or postmodern, in which picaresque elements can be found.

As Wicks himself avows, he has borrowed the idea of picaresque as a mode from the theory of fictional modes worked out by Robert Scholes in his article, "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: 4) An Approach through Genre" (1969). According to Scholes, there are three possible relations between any fictional world and the world of experience. A fictional world can be better than the world of experience, worse than it, or more or less equal to it. Romantic, satiric, and realistic are the names we commonly give to these three visions or attitudes. Thus, fiction can give us the heroic world of romance, the degraded world of satire, or the mimetic world of history (Scholes 1969, 104-05). Scholes then draws the following spectrum of fictional possibilities which consists of seven modes in all:



What makes the novel an artistically mature genre, according to Wicks, is that all of the aforementioned modes can participate in it. In every novel, of course, one of the modes is dominant. For example, in *Guzmán de Alfarache*, the picaresque is the dominant mode, but elements of romance and comedy also exist in it (Wicks, 1974, 242). The more the number of the participating modes, the more mature the novel is usually regarded. *Don Quixote*, for instance, "always a seminal book for narrative theory... mixes the romantic quest, the picaresque journey through a tricky world, the tragic and the sentimental, the comic and the satiric" (243).

Although the study of the picaresque should begin with the treatment of modes, it should not end at that point. "Modal awareness is the largest perspective we can have," Wicks says, "and, this awareness once attained, the next step is to narrow down toward a more specific generic awareness" (242). Thus, according to Wicks, the ultimate aim of picaresque studies is to establish the characteristics of the picaresque genre. Wicks suggests the following as the characteristics which would define the picaresque genre:

- 1. Dominance of the picaresque fictional mode.** The dominant mode in a generically picaresque narrative is necessarily picaresque. Picaresque, for example, is the dominant mode in the *novela picaresca* of Spain. Other modes, especially satire, comedy, history, and romance, are, of course, frequently discernible in picaresque narratives. This accounts for the satiric, comic, and realistic nature of many of those narratives and their functioning as parodies of romances.
- 2. The panoramic structure.** A picaresque narrative, "its principle of composition being a knitting together of numerous single units—figures and events—which all have their place in the sequence" (Wicks 1974, 243) is neither a novel of incident nor a novel of character but a panoramic novel. Doubtlessly, picaresque narratives owe their panoramic structure to their episodic nature. Wicks likewise speaks of the existence of two kinds of rhythm in picaresque narratives. The "external" rhythm of picaresque fiction is what may be called the Sisyphus Rhythm. The *picaro's* existential condition is similar to Sisyphus's. In the course of the novel, he strives over and over to prosper, and on many occasions he almost succeeds, but at the last moment, suddenly he loses whatever he has

gained and, in Guzmán's words, has to "beginne the world anew" (as cited in Wicks 1974, 243-44). Its "internal" rhythm is the rhythm of each separate episode. An organized plot can only be found within the episodes of a picaresque narrative; the narrative as a whole lacks any organic unity.

- 3. The first person point of view.** "The absence of the first-person form prevents a story... from being picaresque in the full sense" (Guillén 93; as cited in Wicks 1974, 244). The importance of the use of the first-person point of view in picaresque narratives is related to its creation of *narrative distance*, a quality which is achieved through the "split between an experiencing 'I' and a narrating 'I'" in the two planes of action and narration. Another reason for the indispensability of the first-person point of view to the picaresque genre is the irony occasioned by the discrepancy between "the quality of the events narrated and the narrating attitude of the protagonist" (Wicks 1974, 244). Picaresque narratives with other points of view, of course, exist. Many picaresque novels, for example, have been written in a kind of third-person point of view which uses a voice almost exclusively limited to the protagonist, so that we have the sense of perceiving everything only through the eyes and sensibility of the *picaro*. This kind of point of view is almost identical to the first-person, the only major difference being the replacement of "I" with "he."
- 4. The protagonist as a *picaro*.** Wicks defines the *picaro* as "a pragmatic, unprincipled, resilient, solitary figure who just manages to survive in his chaotic landscape, but who, in the ups and downs, can also put that world very much on the defensive" (1974, 245). Inconsistency is the essential characteristic of this protean figure. He can not only serve many masters but play different roles. He is most often a homeless orphan and almost always a rogue.
- 5. The *picaro*-landscape relationship.** This is related to the *picaro*'s relationship with his society. "Each incident of picaresque fiction moves from exclusion to attempted inclusion and back to exclusion: outside-inside-outside" (Wicks 1974, 245). At the end of the picaresque tale, usually a compromise is reached between the *picaro* and his society. Consequently, the *picaro* is able to live a dubiously happy life ever after. In the cases in which no such compromise comes to pass, the general pattern is that the *picaro* opts for a kind of voluntary exile (or self-exclusion) by renouncing the society which has always been rejecting him.
- 6. A vast gallery of human types.** People from all social classes and walks of life find their ways into picaresque fiction. As representatives of the corrupt society, these characters are most often satirical targets. Located next to satire on Scholes's spectrum of the fictional modes, picaresque has a noticeable affinity with that genre. Of course, as opposed to pure satire in which the focus is on the satirized object, in picaresque the focus is always on the observer. In other words, what is primarily important in picaresque is not the depiction of vice for its own sake, but the way the innocent and vulnerable *picaro* observes, responds to, and is affected by it.
- 7. Implied parody of other fictional types (romance) and of the picaresque itself.** The picaresque parodies romance by replacing the heroic adventures of a knight-errant with the knavish escapades of a rascal. There are numerous examples of picaresque narratives parodying older picaresque narratives too. Parody, in Wicks's opinion, is a way by which the original genre may be known

better, as, for instance, we have a better grasp of the gothic novel and the chivalric romance after reading parodies of them in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote* respectively (1989, 12-13).

8. Certain basic themes and motifs. Some of the basic themes of picaresque narratives are "vanity, or moral survival," "freedom," and "hunger, or primitive physical survival." Some picaresque motifs are "the motif of unusual birth or childhood," "the trick motif," "the role-playing motif," "the grotesque or horrible incident," and "the ejection motif" (Wicks 1974, 246-47).

If a narrative meets all of the eight characteristics listed above, it can be classified as a generically picaresque novel with absolute certainty. If one or more of the characteristics are not discernible in that narrative, then it is better to classify it as a picaresque-like novel, a non-picaresque novel with picaresque elements in it, or a specimen of what Claudio Guillén calls the picaresque myth. Bearing these points in mind, we move to the main part of our study, namely the analysis of the picaresque nature of John Wain's *Hurry on Down*, now.

The kinship between John Wain's debut novel, *Hurry on Down*, and the picaresque tradition has been affirmed by almost every critic commenting on that novel. Allsop (1969) has described it as a "brave attempt at the picaresque" (69), Bradbury (1993) as "a realistic picaresque novel" (317), Mellow (1969) as "a picaresque adventure story" (331), Hoggart as an "interesting contribution in the new picaresque mode" (as cited in O'Connor 1963, 31), and Gindin (1976) as a "mock picaresque" novel (129). Harveit has devoted an entire chapter of his book, *Workings of the Picaresque in the British Novel* (1983), to the analysis of that novel's picaresque nature. Other critics who have referred to *Hurry on Down* as a picaresque narrative are Pritchett (1957), Rabinovitz (1967), Schleussner (1969), Katona (1969), Hewison (1981), Hague (1986), Tomoiagă (2012), and Godsland (2015).

Hurry on Down is, in fact, one of the closest British novels of the fifties to the picaresque formula. Almost every picaresque element can be found in it. Its "hero," a talented yet oafish young man, has many characteristics in common with the traditional *picaro*. Its world is the chaotic world of picaresque fiction. Its plot is episodic, its narrative mode realistic, and its language plain. A relatively large gallery of human types appears in the novel, through which the writer satirizes various classes of British society. The novel consciously parodies romances and other picaresque narratives. Finally, many of the picaresque themes and motifs such as death and rebirth, materialism, difference between appearance and reality, poverty, movement, ejection, and trick are developed in Wain's novel.

Charles Lumley, the protagonist of *Hurry on Down*, is in many respects similar to a traditional *picaro*. First of all, at least in a psychological sense, he is an orphan. Though he has parents, and they are still alive, to him they are no more than dead people. They never appear in the novel. He never meets them, talks with them on the phone, or exchanges any letters with them. As Robert Tharkles, his prospective brother-in-law, discloses, he has not even given his parents his own address (Wain 1985, 17). In the whole novel, he only mentions his parents casually once or twice. For example, at the beginning of chapter 5, he reminisces the time when he took "his mother shopping in the family ten-horsepower saloon" (92). Based on this statement, Charles's family is far from indigent. Having a car in the mid-

twentieth century meant good financial condition. This may seem to be at odds with the picaresque formula. After all, as a general rule, *picaros* belong to the lowest and most penurious strata of society. This, however, is not a strict requirement. Picaresque novels with high-born protagonists exist. A notable example is Tobias Smollett's *Roderick Random*, whose title character, according to Wicks (1989), "is high born, and unlike Simplicissimus... he always knows it" (299).

Contrary to his parents, Charles has to struggle with poverty most of the times, especially when he is jobless. The poverty he experiences, of course, is in no way comparable with the poverty experienced by the Spanish *picaro*. While Lazarillo was several times on the verge of dying from hunger, what is defined as poverty for Charles is his inability to smoke expensive cigarettes or keep a high-class mistress. Abject poverty, of course, is not a totally foreign experience for Charles. He experiences it toward the end of the novel when he leaves Mr. Braceweight's service in consequence of an accident which made a wreck of that old man's expensive Daimler. Having no money to pay for a lodging, he has to stay out of doors a whole cold night. The only way he finds to make himself warm is by covering himself with sheets of newspaper collected from a litterbox. One or two of the sheets, having been used for wrapping fish and chips, cause him to stink "to high heaven of fish" (227). The following morning, when in London and seriously in need of food, he decides to sell his cigarettes "to make enough to eat for two or three days" (228). Other instances of his poverty are when he has to pay his last pound note for a ticket to the town where his fiancé, Sheila, lives (11) and when, too penniless to buy new cigarettes, he is forced to puff on a cigarette which has been somehow bent, "holding it so that one finger exactly covered the torn spot" (24).

Like all *picaros*, Charles is a lonely figure and an outsider. Part of his isolation is, of course, voluntary. Too much disgusted with the snobbish values of the bourgeois class of his origin, he not only disowns his middle-class family, but terminates his relationship with his fiancé, Sheila, whose sister and brother-in-law, Edith and Robert Tharkles, are epitomes of the bourgeois culture he so much detests. Furthermore, despite having a bachelor's degree in history from Oxford University, he chooses to become a window-cleaner, the last job conceivable for a person in his position. This, of course, does not mean that he has decided to become a working-class member. Too much the individualist and a worshiper of freedom, Charles does not like to be associated with any social class. His ideal, rather, is to be "outside the class structure altogether" (52). It is for this reason that he does not consider joining the workers' Union, despite the obvious advantages of such a step. Membership in the Union "would have meant official enrolment as a member of the working class" (52), something which Charles does not have the least inclination to be. Despite its dilapidated state, Froulish and Betty's loft is Charles's ideal lodging just because of its classless quality: "He, who had rejected and been rejected by both the class of his origin and the life of the 'worker', might find the classless setting of his dreams in sharing a roof with a neurotic sham artist and a trousered tart" (43). Charles's attempt to evade social class, of course, is ultimately useless. As it will be explained in the following paragraphs, every job he chooses "is involved with society and carries some sort of class identification" (Gindin 1976, 130).

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Like traditional *picaros*, Charles has many jobs and many masters. In the course of the novel, he works successively as a window-cleaner, an export delivery driver, a drug trafficker, a hospital orderly, a chauffeur, a nightclub bouncer, and a radio comedy scriptwriter. As Allsop (1969) notes, "he zigzags from one job to another, never adjusting, never assimilating" (76). What all of these jobs have in common is their humbleness and lack of social prestige. Furthermore, most of them are affiliated with the working class and do not need so much skill or expertise. As Curran (2015) points out, Charles "plots his course through a succession of often responsibility- and skill-free jobs, seemingly liberated from the onus on self-betterment and the idea of 'success'" (34). Somewhere in the novel, the narrator reveals that Charles's ideal job is "an honest, useful craft" which he has taught himself "without being helped" by anyone (52). Elsewhere, he speaks of Charles's preference for jobs which are done "out of doors" and fulfill "his major needs in being laborious but not quite back-breaking, and in being obviously useful" (164). Significantly, Charles's first profession (window-cleaning) fulfills all of these requirements. It is an honest and useful job which no one has taught him. Moreover, it is an outdoor job and a manual one, but certainly not back-breaking. This job is ideal for a *picaro* whose characteristic traits are lack of ambition, self-reliance, freedom, individualism, basic honesty, and laziness.

Despite his general satisfaction with his window-washing profession, once he falls in love with a high-class girl named Veronica, Charles realizes that it is not possible for him to keep that job any more. "Money, good clothes, social position" (77) are what he needs in order to have any chance of entering the circle of that girl's friends and acquaintances. By a stroke of fortune, he finds the job he needs. One day, when he goes to the court to watch the trial of his friend and fellow window-cleaner, Ern Ollershaw, he gets acquainted with a young man named Bunder who offers him a job as an export delivery driver. An export delivery driver is a person employed by car manufacturers to drive their newly-finished vehicles from the factory to the docks in order to be exported to foreign countries. Though this job does not offer the freedom and independence of the window-washing profession, due to its being better-paying and more prestigious than the latter job, Charles readily accepts it. This is an obvious instance of compromise. Charles abandons some of his values for the sake of a woman. The compromise, of course, does not end here. Once his relationship with Veronica becomes more intimate and they have to see each other more often, Charles finds the wages he receives from the car factory insufficient to meet his needs. He, therefore, goes to Bunder and asks him to let him in the "racket that brings [him] in pretty big money" (106). The "racket" Charles refers to is drug trafficking. Bunder and some of the other export delivery drivers are, in fact, criminals who smuggle narcotic drugs into the country on their way back from the docks. This is what the love of a woman can make of a man. Charles, for whom the honesty and usefulness of a job was the most important criterion for its acceptability, now voluntarily becomes a sort of a criminal and, in his own thought, a Judas figure: "He had thrown his humanity into the gutter, he had betrayed the trust that men place in one another, and with his thirty pieces of silver he had bought... what had he bought?" (122).

"The hero of the *picaresque novel*," declares Holman (1980), "usually stops just short of being an actual criminal" (331). Before Charles is irretrievably contaminated by vice, something happens which

changes the course of his life completely. One of his former classmates, Dogson, who is an ambitious journalist now, is murdered by Bunder when he finds out the manner in which Bunder's team smuggle drugs into England. Bunder and Charles escape from the scene of crime in a stolen car while they are being pursued by the police. Charles tries to stop the car in order to surrender himself to the police. Bunder's reaction is to push him out of the automobile and escape alone. When Charles opens his eyes, he finds himself in a hospital recovering from the injuries he has suffered due to his fall out of the car. He likewise learns that a "generous friend" (Wain 1985, 157) of his named Bernard Roderick has been paying the expenses of his hospitalization. Charles knows Roderick. He is Veronica's uncle and a very wealthy man. One day Roderick comes to the hospital and reveals to Charles that Veronica is not his niece. She is actually the old man's mistress. This revelation causes Charles to make a complete return to his older values. As soon as he recovers his health, he starts to work in the hospital as an orderly. This job is the meanest possible one for a university graduate. "Carrying buckets about and emptying bedpans" (173) is practically what he does in the hospital. However, he likes it quite well. Not only is it an honest and useful job, but it offers him the "anonymity, obscurity," and "relief from strain" (165) he values so much. It is not, of course, as good a job as window-cleaning, because it is not an outdoor job and he is not as free and independent as a window-cleaner. As a whole, nonetheless, the job is good enough for Charles to become his permanent calling.

But this does not happen. As Hague (1986) observes, "in picaresque literature such protected havens from the outside world always prove to be temporary" (216). When Mr. Braceweight, a wealthy gentleman hospitalized in Charles's workplace, tells him that he needs a chauffeur, a single one who does not have any intention of marriage in the near future, and after Charles terminates, without any justifiable cause, his betrothal with Rosa, a working-class girl and his coworker at the hospital, and therefore it is no longer possible for him to stay there, he leaves his profession as an orderly and goes to the country to work for Mr. Braceweight. This new job turns out to be as congenial to Charles's taste as any one he has had before. Apart from fulfilling most of the requirements he has specified for an ideal job (usefulness, honesty, simplicity, and obscurity), it makes it possible for him to experience "a sense of idyllic, almost pastoral calm, flowing in upon him from the tranquil beauty of the country-side" (Wain 1985, 198). The only major drawback of the job is "the lack of personal freedom" (211). He can never be far away, but must be near at hand during most of the twenty-four hours. This feature of the job, having caused many of Mr. Braceweight's chauffeurs to become discontented and leave him, has compelled him to offer an unusually high wage for the job. Charles enjoys the high wage "without any hankering for more freedom" (211). This is another instance of compromise in the novel. Like the traditional *picaro*, Charles gives up his personal freedom as soon as a financially comfortable life is offered to him.

Despite Charles's satisfaction with his job as Mr. Braceweight's chauffeur, he has to resign from it when he fails to prevent an accident which reduces that wealthy man's Daimler to a wreck. Entirely penniless (he forfeits the last part of his wages in compensation for the damage his negligence has caused), he travels to London in quest of a new job. It is there that, by pure luck, he bumps into one of his acquaintances, Mr. Blearney. Blearney is a successful businessman with whom Charles was acquainted in

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a train on his way back from the docks. He is also one of Roderick's friends. In fact, it was through Blearney that Charles gained admittance to the circle of Veronica's acquaintances. When Charles notifies Blearney of his need for a job, the middle-aged man lets him know that he needs a "chucker-out" for his nightclub, "the Golden Peach" (234). The chucker-out's task is to throw the people who cause trouble out of the club. What is good about this job is its rather high pay and the additional fringe benefits ("a square meal every night, a bed in one of the private rooms when they're not all being used," [334]). All the same, it does not seem to be Charles's favorite job. It is basically different from the sort of job Charles has always perceived as his ideal. For one thing, he is too close to human beings and too much in touch with them to feel independent and free. It is not an outdoor job. Furthermore, though a rogue, Charles is not particularly willing to engage himself in physical conflicts. That is why he changes his job as soon as one is offered to him. One night, while doing his duty at the Golden Peach Club, Charles meets his old acquaintance and friend, the novelist Edwin Froulish, wearing an "expensive shirt and [a] new silk tie" (240). Froulish lets him know that he is working for a man called Terence Frush, "the biggest name in the gag-writing business" (241). He further reveals that Frush, believing that seven is a golden number, has given him the assignment of finding a Seventh Man for their team. It is Charles's lot to become the Seventh Man of the team, and as the content of the letter written by Frush a few months later explicitly reveals, seven proves to be a truly golden number for not only Frush but for Charles as well. In the letter, Frush discloses how much he is satisfied with Charles and how much he needs him as one of the members of his team. He asks Charles to sign the three-year contract enclosed with the letter and to "be good enough to treat this contract as confidential, as I have so far not felt able to offer similar terms to any of your colleagues" (249).

This is the way Charles's search for an ideal job ends. His last job is in many respects different from and, at least in the eyes of the society, better than his previous ones. First of all, it is much more prestigious than any occupation he has had before. It is due to this feature of the job that at the end of the novel Veronica, the high-class girl of his dreams, terminates her relationship with Roderick and comes to Charles to live permanently with him. Prestigiousness, of course, is not the only good aspect of the job. As Gindin (1976) points out, it meets some of the requirements of the ideal job Charles has always borne in his mind: "Now, working for the radio comic, Charles can preserve his anonymity as one of seven, avoid the pressure of social definition that poverty demands, and retain sufficient leisure and independence to realize both what he is and what others are" (131). Another thing to say about this job is its middle-class status. That Charles should find his ideal profession in the middle class, the class which he despises so much, is one of the ironies of the novel. He is too much imprisoned in his social class to be able to find his salvation elsewhere. The outcome of his rebellion is nothing but conformity.

Like all *picares*, Charles is a rogue. He is a liar, a role-player, a heavy smoker and drinker, a lawbreaker, at times a rude person, at times a thug. He is a very clever person with an unusually powerful presence of mind. He does not need to think in order to fabricate a lie. Lies come out of his mind almost spontaneously. At the beginning of the novel, when his inquisitive landlady, Mrs. Smythe, pesters him with questions about his job and the cause of his decision to leave her place, in order to get rid of her once

and for all, Charles improvises a complicated story about his being a private detective working for Jehovah's Witnesses, an infamous religious sect. His plan turns out to be completely successful: "If she had one desire in the world, it was to see the last of Charles Lumley. His point was gained" (Wain 1985, 9). Another time, when Charles pursues Robert Tharkles and Betty, Froulish's girl, into a hotel in order to discover the nature of their relationship and he is interrogated by one of the servants of the hotel as to his business there, he is shrewd enough to quickly answer: "I've brought the catgut... The landlord ordered it by telephone" (82). Too bewildered to understand what he means, the servant goes away to ask the manager, leaving Charles alone to pursue his own business.

In one of the sections of the novel, the narrator refers to cigarette and alcohol as "the twin deities of his [i.e. Charles's] world" (24). Surprisingly, Charles's need for these two is even greater than his need for food. After he leaves the Tharkles' place in anger and frustration, he goes to a bar and spends his last six shillings on liquor, "for he wanted more than anything in the world to get drunk" (23). Having "nowhere to go, no money and no plans" (27), the only solace he can seek is in alcohol. Alcohol is, in fact, Charles's defense mechanism. It gives back to him what his bourgeois training and Oxford education have taken away from him, namely his "sharp edges": "From the nursery onwards, he had been taught to modulate the natural loudness of his voice, to efface himself in every possible way, to defer to others" (25). Alcohol causes him to be more assertive and even insolent, less respectful to others, and less minding how they think about him. When too intoxicated to have any control over what he does he burns a man's mustache, thereby rousing not only that man's fury but oaths and curses from everybody in the bar, instead of feeling ashamed or terrified and stammering out his apologies as he would have done in his normal condition, he calmly opens the door and goes out. Lacking self-confidence due to his low position in the world, Charles dares to act only when he is intoxicated, as, for instance, he finds the courage to speak with Veronica during their first meeting only after "drinking three whiskies on an empty stomach" (104).

One of the facets of Charles's roguery is his rudeness to the people he does not like. Instances of his rudeness can be found on the very first pages of the novel. Annoyed with Tharkles for that man's negative comments on his personality, Charles retaliates by suggesting that Tharkles's mustache could be used for making "one of those brushes you see hanging out of windows next to the waste pipe" (19). Before the infuriated Tharkles can show any reaction, Charles lunges across to the sink, snatches up the washing-up bowl, and pours the scummy grey water in it on him and his wife, an action which may be interpreted symbolically as Charles's wish to besmirch the smug middle class with its self-righteous airs. The Tharkles, of course, are not the only victims of such rogueries. George Hutchins, one of his fellow students in Oxford, is one of the main recipients of Charles's roguish actions. Hutchins is an ambitious person desirous of moving up the social ladder. His ultimate aim being a professorship in Oxford or another prestigious university, he applies himself diligently to his studies and, as his working-class father informs Charles, he even attains a degree of success in the form of a "Fellowship" (13). However, as his reappearance later in the novel as tutor to Walter, Braceweight's mechanical son, clearly shows, Hutchins's Oxford education does not finally move him to any better position than Charles's. Both of

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them are, in effect, Braceweight's servants, one driving his car, the other teaching his son. Hutchins, of course, does not think this way. When he meets Charles at the train station and learns that he is Braceweight's chauffeur, he says how sorry he is to find him "down on [his] luck" and offers to write him a recommendation that would probably get him a job in a prep school (205). Hutchins is a product of the bourgeois culture of his society. Affiliation with the working class is so disgraceful to him that when his working-class parents come to his dormitory in order to see him, he refuses to introduce them to Charles with the hope of hiding his working-class identity from his classmate. It is this snobbishness of Hutchins's that makes Charles so disgusted with him. He exhibits his hatred for that phoney snob by not only insulting him verbally (as when he sarcastically refers to him as "a parasite" and "a louse on the scalp of the society" [205]), but by playing juvenile tricks on him with the aim of disturbing the peace of his mind (as when he arranges several vague telegrams signed "Merde" to be sent to him from different post offices). When, in his disparagement of the "heroes" of postwar novels, W. Somerset Maugham mentions their writing of "anonymous letters to harass a fellow undergraduate" (as cited in O'Connor 1962, 172), surely he has this section of *Hurry on Down* in his mind.

Despite his roguery, like all other *picares*, Charles is a basically good person. One instance of his goodness is his generosity with the little money he has. He pays Froulish and Betty's overdue rent and in this way prevents their eviction from the loft in which they lodge. Knowing that Froulish is fond of drinking, he is always ready to take him to bars and spend what he has on liquors. His generosity, of course, is not limited to financial matters. His magnanimity is best revealed when he "shields" Walter (Braceweight's son) by claiming that he himself has crashed the old man's Daimler. He writes a letter to his master in which he explains how his negligence has been responsible for the accident and what measures he has taken to have the car repaired. The irony is that in the last section of the novel Charles receives a letter from Braceweight in which the old man accuses him of stealing a valuable jade figurine from his wife's writing table before leaving his estate. In the letter, the old man calls Charles a "specimen of the ordinary criminal type" and expresses his wish not to hear from or of him in the future (238). As it is expected of a *picares*, Charles, too magnanimous to strike even at his arch enemy, leaves this letter unanswered. (The jade figurine has actually been stolen by Hutchins to pay the cost of an abortion, the outcome of his adulterous relationship with his promiscuous girlfriend, June Veeber.) The roguish protagonist of Wain's novel is, in fact, a much more honest person than the outwardly respectable characters around him.

Finally, like all *picares*, Charles is a resilient figure. No matter how unpleasant and even traumatic his experiences are, he is not likely to collapse under them irrecoverably. He may, of course, become depressed for a short while, which is quite natural, but very soon he regains mastery over himself and pursues his normal life. When Roderick apprises him of the nature of his relationship with Veronica, after a very short period of bewailing, he recollects himself and decides to commence a new phase of his life. He never loses his equanimity or allows panic and despair to overcome him. Even when he has to wander along the streets of London entirely aimless and penniless, he does not succumb to those feelings. He may suffer a lot, but he never breaks down.

In his analysis of picaresque fiction, Ulrich Wicks refers to the dominance of the picaresque mode as one of the major requirements for any narrative to be classified as picaresque. He defines the essential picaresque situation as “that of an unheroic protagonist, worse than we, caught up in a chaotic world, worse than ours, in which he is on an eternal journey of encounters that allow him to be alternately both victim of that world and its exploiter” (1989, 54). Picaresque is certainly the dominant mode in *Hurry on Down*. The central character of the novel, Charles Lumley, a young man who, despite graduating from the most prestigious university of his country, has “no job and no prospects” (Wain 1985, 7), hence moving from location to location and job to job in search of his proper place in the world, is definitely the “unheroic protagonist, worse than we” Wicks speaks about. In real life, after all, few, if any, Oxford graduates as shiftless and aimless as he can be found. The world of the novel, the world of outlaws like Bunder and his gang, snobs like Scrodd, Tharkles, Hutchins, Burge, and Stan, greedy materialists like Froulish’s landlady, and prostitutes like Betty, June Veeber, and Veronica, if not worse than our own world, is at least a reflection of the ugliest sides of it. It is the world in which a pretty girl accepts to become an elderly man’s mistress just because of that man’s money. It is the world in which a poor woman is forced to present herself to a married man once a week in order to have enough money not to die. It is the world in which a nymphomaniac completes her studies in the most accredited university of her country and then becomes the president of a literary society. Children’s favorite game in this world is “war,” and adults’ best pastime is listening to dirty jokes on the radio. Charles is caught up in such a phony world and struggles to make himself free. Sometimes, as when he is deceived by Veronica or when he is unjustly charged with robbery, he is the victim of that world, and at other times, as when he becomes Bunder’s accomplice or when he plays tricks on his adversaries, he is its exploiter. Neither he nor his society is finally the winner of the conflict. As he contemplates toward the end of the novel, “the running fight between himself and the society had ended in a draw” (250). Compromise – and not victory or failure – is the outcome of this *picaro*’s battle with his society.

Picaresque is not the only mode present in *Hurry on Down*. Traces of other modes, particularly satire, comedy, history, and romance, can also be detected in Wain’s novel. The satire of *Hurry on Down* is mostly directed at the bourgeois class and the inefficient system of education in postwar England. The source of the comedy of the novel is its protagonist’s naivety, its happy ending, the existence of farcical episodes in it, and the narrator’s occasional wry comments. The mode known as history displays itself in the realism of the novel and its reflection of such adequately documented historical facts as the noticeable improvement of the financial condition of workers and the lowering of the quality of universities and their students in postwar England. Elements of romance are clearly visible in the fairy tale pattern of the novel and its structural similarity to medieval chivalric romances. In addition to being a *picaro*, Charles is a Cinderella figure rising, with the aid of magic-like chance, from penury to affluence and finally winning the hand of the princess of his dreams (fairy tale pattern). *Hurry on Down*, like medieval chivalric romances, narrates the adventures of a “hero” (Charles) who removes many obstacles in his way (his poverty and joblessness) before rescuing a fair damsel (Veronica) from the bondage of a fiendish villain (Roderick).

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The episodic (or panoramic, as Wicks prefers to term it¹) structure of *Hurry on Down* is another feature of that novel which links it with the picaresque tradition. *Hurry on Down* is composed not of one protracted incident but of many different adventures “loosely strung together” (O’Connor 1963, 44). One can divide the novel into at least six discrete episodes, each reflecting a different stage of Charles’s life. The first episode covers his early experiences from the beginning of the novel up to the moment when he decides to become a window-cleaner. The second one narrates his adventures as a window-cleaner and Froulish’s roommate at the loft. The third gives an account of his affair with Veronica while working as an export delivery driver and drug trafficker. The fourth episode encompasses the phase of his life spent in the hospital and as Rosa’s prospective husband. The fifth shows him working for Mr. Braceweight on that man’s country estate. The sixth and last episode portrays his life in London and provides an account of how he finally achieves materialistic success. At the end of each of these episodes, Charles dies as one man and gets reborn as another. It is due to these successive deaths and rebirths that he never becomes rotten. Before it is possible for him to rot, he turns into a new man with fresh hopes and desires.

The external rhythm of *Hurry on Down* is definitely what Wicks calls the Sisyphus rhythm. Charles’s existential condition is like Sisyphus’s in that, whenever he gets close to the realization of his dreams, something happens which forces him to relinquish that dream and “beginne the world anew.” Each episode of the novel begins with “a confrontation... out of need,” continues with “some scheme to satisfy that need” and “a complication that endangers the picaro’s existence,” and ends with the *picaro*’s “extrication” (Wicks 1989, 55). Episode three, for example, begins with Charles’s “confrontation” with the problem of how to procure enough money for keeping a high-class mistress. His “scheme” for solving that problem is to turn to drug-dealing. The “complication” endangering his existence turns up when Bunder murders Dogson, and Charles and Bunder are forced to escape in a stolen car. His “extrication” takes place when he is pushed out of the car by Bunder. In episode four, Charles “confronts” with the horrible information that Veronica is Roderick’s mistress. The “scheme” he devises is to marry Veronica’s foil, the working-class Rosa. The “complication” endangering his spiritual life is that Veronica, and not Rosa, is the girl he still loves. He “extricates” himself from his dilemma by bringing his relationship with Rosa to an end and moving out of that town forever.

The first-person point of view is generally considered to be the most suitable kind of point of view for picaresque fiction. An equally acceptable kind of point of view, of course, is a third-person one whose narrative voice is that of the *picaro*. This is the point of view of *Hurry on Down*. All of the events in this novel are presented through Charles’s consciousness, a circumstance responsible for a large part of the novel’s humor and irony. It is not an impersonal narrator who describes Edith’s father as a “yellowed scarecrow” (Wain 1985, 17) or viciously sees similarities between Tharkles’s mustache and an Airedale’s (19). The mind of the “angry” and roguish Charles is the narrator of all of the events of the story. Consequently, the narrator, and for that matter the reader, cannot possibly know anything more than Charles himself does at the moment. The reader, for example, comes to know the nature of the relationship between Roderick and Veronica only when Charles himself is apprised of it. Foreshadowings, of course, exist which help the reader to guess beforehand what will be revealed later.

For example, long before Charles and the reader of the novel come to know that Roderick is not Veronica's uncle, the narrator mentions the nonexistence of any "family resemblance" (103) between the man and the girl, or Roderick is obviously jealous when Charles and Veronica talk with each other at Blearney's party (114). These foreshadowings, of course, are too vague to be noticed by the reader on his first reading of the novel. It is only on the second and subsequent readings of the novel that the reader begins to notice them.

Charles's relationship with the landscape (the term Wicks uses to refer to the society) is exactly similar to a *picaro's*. According to Wicks (1989), the *picaro's* "interaction with society... is a movement from exclusion to attempted inclusion and back to exclusion: outside, inside, outside" (61). In every episode of *Hurry on Down*, Charles, an outsider, makes an attempt to find himself a place somewhere in his society, an attempt, however, which fails, leaving him the same solitary man at the end of the episode as he has been at its beginning. In the first episode, for example, he goes to the Tharkles's place to see Sheila and, if possible, mend his relationship with her. The outcome of his visit, however, is nothing except the termination of his engagement with that girl. He leaves the Tharkles's house as lonely a figure as he was when he entered it. In the second episode, finding the classless quality of Froulish and Betty's life congenial to his taste, he decides to live with them at their loft. His residence there, nonetheless, does not last long. When he discovers that the money Betty brings home every Sunday is the wages she receives from Tharkles, Charles's arch enemy, in return for surrendering her body to that vicious man, he finds it impossible to live with the couple any more and leaves them to resume his life as a solitary man once again. The only episode of the novel which does not end with Charles's exclusion is the last one. Of course, considering the fact that a picaresque novel does not end but stops, it can be argued that even this last episode, if continued to relate the later events, might end in Charles's exclusion from his society.

A vast gallery of human types representing almost every social class and walk of life in postwar England appears in *Hurry on Down*. This gallery includes as diverse people as the country gentleman, Braceweight, the rich industrialist, Roderick, the successful businessman, Blearney, the university professor, Lockwood, the school headmaster, Scrodd, the sham novelist, Froulish, the social climber, Hutchins, the ambitious journalist, Dogson, the self-satisfied petty bourgeois, Tharkles, the criminal, Bunder, the honest worker, Rosa's father, the housewife, Rosa's mother, the nymphomaniac, June Veeber, and a host of other characters with sundry professions and social functions. As representatives of social orders or institutions, most of these characters serve as satiric objects. A number of them, however, are basically good characters. Three of these characters are Rosa, the kind-hearted and childlike working-class girl with whom Charles decides to marry after he discovers Veronica's deception, Ern Ollershaw, Charles's partner in the window-cleaning profession, who has a golden heart beneath his rough appearance, and Simon, one of his workmates at the export delivery business, who warns him about his friendship with Bunder. The existence of these characters shows that, though rare, honesty is not an entire nonentity in the chaotic world of picaresque fiction.

All generically picaresque novels, according to Wicks, parody romances and other picaresque fictions. Earlier in this essay, it was explained how *Hurry on Down* parodies fairy tales and the chivalric

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romances of the medieval era. Older picaresque novels, particularly Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, are likewise parodied in Wain's novel. A most explicit allusion is actually made to Defoe's novel in the last scene of *Hurry on Down*. Charles is contemplating the success he has recently achieved as the Seventh Man of Frush's team when the telephone rings. The janitor lets him know that a lady introducing herself as "Miss Flanders" wishes to see him. When the lady comes in, Charles sees that she is Veronica:

"I wasn't quite sure about giving my right name to the man," she said, "so I just gave him the first name that entered my head, Moll Flanders. I've just been reading about her."

"I never got to the end of that book," he said, "Has it got a happy ending?"

"Not really. It doesn't end, it just stops. She turns respectable and repents, but you know that from the beginning." (Wain 1985, 250-51)

The above passage shows clearly that Wain wrote *Hurry on Down* consciously as a picaresque novel. His consciousness of the picaresque genre is deducible not only from the deliberate mention he makes of *Moll Flanders*, to some critics the British picaresque novel *par excellence*,² but also from his citing of one of the most well-known truisms about picaresque narratives, that they do not end, but just stop. Significantly, *Hurry on Down* also does not end, but just stops. The last sentence of the novel is: "They [Charles and Veronica] looked at each other, baffled and inquiring" (252). This sentence does not make it clear whether Charles finally accepts to marry Veronica or not. The writer leaves it to his readers to end the novel according to their own wish. *Hurry on Down* is, in fact, an open-ended novel.

Finally, most of the themes and motifs Wicks and other scholars have enumerated as central to picaresque fiction are detectable in *Hurry on Down*. It has already been explained how the themes of loneliness, hunger, freedom, movement, dishonesty, gullibility, disillusionment, death and rebirth, and difference between appearance and reality have all been explored in Wain's novel. Out of the five motifs Wicks has mentioned in his article and book only the one he calls "unusual birth or childhood" has no relevance to *Hurry on Down*. The other four motifs are all discernible in the novel. The motif "trick" recurs dozens of times throughout the novel. Charles and his landscape are constantly playing tricks on each other. "Role playing" is also what the characters in the novel are constantly doing. At the hospital, Charles plays the role of a person who has lost his memory completely due to his accident, Hutchins plays the role of an upper-class person, and Roderick and Veronica play the roles of an uncle and a niece. As for the "grotesque or horrible incident," traces of this motif are discernible in not only such episodes as the one in which Charles is assaulted by the bald man and the one in which Dogson is killed, but also in one of Charles's drunken fantasies in which he sees George Hutchins and Lockwood playing football with the head of Hutchins's father (29). Finally, "ejection," sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, is what Charles experiences many times in the novel.

Based on what was said in the foregoing paragraphs, the kinship of John Wain's *Hurry on Down* with the picaresque tradition seems to be obvious. Out of the eight characteristics Wicks has enumerated for the picaresque genre, seven of them are easily discernible in that novel. The only picaresque property from which *Hurry on Down* seems to deviate noticeably is the first-person point of view. Of course,

considering the fact that the third-person narrator of Wain's novel is, in effect, Charles himself, this deviation can, with a little leniency, be overlooked. Every other deviation from the picaresque formula a hair-splitter may detect in that novel is equally negligible when such factors as the date of its publication are taken into account. If, for example, someone questions the affinity of *Hurry on Down* with the picaresque tradition on account of its protagonist's being educated or connected to a rather well-to-do family, he need only be reminded that Wain's novel reflects England of the 1950s, a setting categorically different from that of the earliest picaresque novels. Obviously, we cannot expect the protagonist of a twentieth-century British novel to be exactly similar in the condition of his life to the central character of a seventeenth-century Spanish narrative. To sum up, if we are not a follower of the "narrow" approaches which look upon the picaresque as a monopoly of Golden Age Spain, we can easily categorize *Hurry on Down* as a generically picaresque novel.

إحياء نوع روائي قديم في رواية حديثة: تحليل طبيعة بيكاريسكي لجون وين (عجل للأسفل)

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الملخص

هناك نزعة بين العلماء للنظر إلى روايات البيكاريسك الجديدة ليس على أنها روايات بيكاريسكي حقيقية، ولكن كونها نماذج لما يسميه كلاوديو جيلين أسطورة البيكاريسك، بعبارة أخرى، لا تعكس هذه الروايات السمات الأساسية للروايات البيكارية الأولى، ولكنها تتضمن فقط بعض الخصائص البيكارية. في هذه المقالة، يُختبر صحة البيان أعلاه من خلال التحقيق في الطبيعة البيكارية لرواية (جون وين) الأولى، (عجل للأسفل)، ويُقاس مدى توافق رواية (وين) مع السمات الأساسية لنوع بيارسك أو انحرافه عنها من خلال تطبيق نظرية أولريش ويكس عن بيارسك على تلك الرواية، وتظهر نتائج الدراسة أن (عجل للأسفل) يسلب الضوء على جميع الخصائص الثمانية التي يعدها ويكس لنوع البياريسكي على الأقل بصورة غير مباشرة. لذلك، على الرغم من وجهة النظر المعاكسة للعديد من النقاد، فمن الممكن والمعقول تصنيف رواية (وين) باعتبارها سرداً للبيكاريس بصورة عامة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: بيكاريسك، النوع، أولريش ويكس، رواية ما بعد الحرب، جون وين.

Notes

1. Contrary to the word “episodic,” which suggests the randomness of the arrangement of the parts (episodes can be shifted from one place to another without affecting the plot), the word “panoramic” implies the existence of prearranged order (the shift of the place of individual images in a panoramic picture destroys the whole picture). Since, as opposed to romance, the order of events in picaresque fiction is important, Wicks prefers to call the structure of that kind of fiction “panoramic” rather than “episodic.” (See Ardila’s differentiation between the *hence* narrative structure of the (picaresque) novel and the *and-then* structure of the romance in his article, “Origins and Definition of the Picaresque Genre.” [2015])
2. Maurice Molho, for example, considers *Moll Flanders*, along with *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, and *El Buscón*, as the only narrative which “merit[s] the label picaresque” (Ardila, “Introduction” 5).

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