

## **Towards a Definition of Picaresque Drawing: the Comic Adaptation of *El Guitón Honofre***

**Abstract:** This paper develops the notion of picaresque drawing by analyzing a comic adaptation of the seventeenth-century tale, *El Guitón Honofre* (1604, 2005). The comic's unfinished drawing style is interpreted in light of Leoni Schmidt's (2007) notion that drawing relates to picaresque instability and migration "as it is itself unsettled, provisional, incomplete" (6). Building on Schmidt's notion of picaresque drawing, I explore how the comic medium lends itself to the tradition of the picaresque, and examine the picaro's dual-narrative role as author *and* illustrator. To conclude, I consider the symbolic value of Onofre's tale today's Spain, drawing on Ulrich Wicks' (1975) understanding of the contemporary picaro as the archetype of homelessness. I locate the illustrated *Guitón* in the Postmodern Age of the Comic, and suggest a reader-(anti)hero identification between Spain's so-called *Generación ni-ni* and Onofre; equally defined by what they are *not* against a society that figures as the (inhospitable) hero.

**Key words:** 21<sup>st</sup>-century Spain, comic, *El Guitón Honofre*, picaresque drawing

**Resumen:** Este trabajo desarrolla el concepto de *dibujo picaresco* analizando la adaptación al cómic de *El Guitón Honofre* (1604, 2005). Leemos la estética 'non finito' del cómic utilizando la reciente idea de Leoni Schmidt (2007) que el dibujo acertadamente expresa la inestabilidad y migración picaresca siendo asimismo 'inestable, provisional, inacabado' (6). Ampliamos esta noción de *dibujo picaresco* explorando cómo el cómic se presta a la tradición de la picaresca y al problematizar el asunto del pícaro-autor que narra su vida con el lenguaje verbal y visual del noveno arte. Como conclusión, consideramos el valor simbólico del *Guitón* para el presente momento sociohistórico español, siguiendo la concepción de Ulrich Wicks (1975) que el pícaro contemporáneo es el arquetipo del *homelessness*. Situamos la adaptación del *Guitón* en la edad posmoderna del cómic, proponiendo una identificación lector-(anti)héroe entre la llamada *Generación Ni-Ni* y Onofre, ambos definidos socialmente por lo que *no son*.

**Palabras clave:** cómic, dibujo picaresco, *El Guitón Honofre*, España, Siglo XXI

Scholarship on Spanish picaresque writing has flourished in recent decades, culminating in the publication of Harry Sieber's *The Picaresque* (2017). Much continues to be said about picaresque fiction from what Sieber calls its 'epistolary beginnings' in Spain in the anonymously penned *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), to what he also calls the Spanish picaro's literary 'descendants' within seventeenth-century Spain. Likewise, variations of the Spanish picaro figure are now being traced within broader European literary traditions as well as those of Latin America.<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, the tradition of the picaresque in the visual arts has yet to be adequately addressed, despite a long history of the visual arts responding to the picaresque literary tradition. Picaresque literature in early-modern Spain developed in parallel to the European tradition of oil painting, and with the creation of the genre painting the two traditions converged in what has come to be called picaresque painting. While there might appear to be a disparity between the 'fine art' of oil painting and the 'low life' picaresque subject, works such as Murillo's *Joven mendigo* or *Niños comiendo fruta* (both c. 1640-1650), or Ribera's *Niño cojo* (1642) would come to be celebrated portrayals of non-idealized subjects and scenes.

Recently, a handful of attempts have been made to analyze picaresque painting.<sup>2</sup> While existing studies provide a clear discussion of picaresque themes and subjects in what Charles McLane calls 'pictorial fictions', the discussion largely stays centred on *theme* despite the fact that, as Janice Tomlinson and Marcia Welles note, "picaresque nature is qualified as much by structure as it is by subject" (70). Tomlinson and Welles begin to address the question of a picaresque structure within visual arts, although

---

<sup>1</sup>Notably, Sieber dedicates the third part of his book, "The Picaresque Novel in Europe," to tracing what he calls a 'literary itinerary' of the picaro through Italy, Germany, France and England. With regards to Latin American literature, the only substantial work that appears to have been undertaken can be found in Timothy G Compton's book, *Mexican picaresque narratives: 'Periquillo' and kin*, (Lewisburg. Bucknell U.P., 1997), in which the author examines the picaresque characteristics of eight well-known narratives from Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, in the works cited here, McLane 2006 and Tomlinson and Welles 1996. For two additional sources see Rosa López Torijos' chapter, "El tema de la picaresca en la pintura española del siglo de oro," in *La picaresca: Orígenes, textos y estructuras. Actas del I Congreso Internacional sobre la Picaresca* (Fundación Universitaria Española, 1979, pp. 167-190), and Rita Bueno Maia's published conference paper, "Pintando la picaresca: Lazarillo de Goya la (re) construcción del pícaro y el moldear de los personajes literarios," in *Lectores, ediciones y audiencia: la recepción en la literatura hispánica* (Academia Editorial del Hispanismo, 2008, pp. 41-46).

they largely refer to the internal structure of the paintings – the arrangement of the subjects *within* the frame – and overlook the ways that the external structure of the paintings might also contribute to the picaresque character of the art.

The notion that art can be picaresque in form has been further touched upon by Art Historian Leoni Schmidt (2007), who recently introduced the notion of ‘drawing in the picaresque mode’. Schmidt establishes the idea of picaresque drawing in an examination of the complexities of migration in the current South African context, arguing that “[t]he picaresque tradition connects to drawing as a visual arts practice eminently suited to the representation of instability and migration as it is itself unsettled, provisional, incomplete” (6). Although Schmidt observes contemporary subjects in likewise contemporary artwork, her views on picaresque drawing understandably lend themselves to the traditional picaro figure, the *archetype* of a migratory subject, who wanders from one place to another and develops their destiny in the midst of their travels.

Although nothing further has been said on picaresque drawing, it is a timely issue given the recent adaptation of Gregorio González’ *El Guitón Honofre* (1604, 2005) into comic form by author and graphic artist brother-duo Luis Alberto Cabezón and Enrique Cabezón (alias KB) respectively.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that illustration has, at times, played a minor role in the picaresque literary tradition – engravings adorning the covers, elaborate frontispieces and the occasional in-text illustration, all largely found in foreign rather than Spanish editions – the question of defining picaresque drawing appears more relevant than ever following the appearance of the comic edition of *El Guitón Honofre*.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> González penned his manuscript in the village of Rincón de Soto, La Rioja, and 401 years later, the Cabezón brothers hailing from the same village published the illustrated edition of *El Guitón Honofre*. Very little is known about González himself, the most significant fact being that his location in La Rioja places him in a peripheral position with respect to the literary system of his time (Cabo 1995:24-25). Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza suggests that this geographical marginality may account for the fact that *Guitón* was not published in the wave of seventeenth-century picaresque works, but rather wandered the globe in true picaresque fashion as a manuscript until its eventual and first publication in 1973 by Hazel Genéreux Carrasco (Editorial Castalia).

<sup>4</sup> While in recent years *Lazarillo de Tormes* has also been adapted into comic form (see, for example, Carlos R. Soria’s *El Lazarillo de Tormes* published in 1982 by Larousse, Aurora Sánchez’ *Las andanzas del Lazarillo de Tormes* published in 2003 by Nobel, or Enrique Lorenzo’s *Lazarillo de Tormes* published in 2007 by Ediciones SM), the drawings as much as the writing are not a reflection of the picaro-author, but rather of the juvenile audience for whom they are written. The linear narratives characteristic of children’s literature are often achieved by omitting

Using Schmidt's ideas as a starting point, the aim of this paper is to build upon the notion of picaresque drawing through an exploration of the comic *Guitón*,<sup>5</sup> and by extension shed some more critical light on the original version through a comparative analysis of key scenes as well as the subject of authorship. Despite the burgeoning discourse surrounding picaresque literature in the last few decades, the seventeenth-century *Guitón* remains on the periphery of scholarship and has often been overlooked in scholars' overviews of the picaresque literary movement.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza, editor of the 1995 edition of *El Guitón Onofre*, (now published and referred to without the *H*), notes that without a doubt there is still much to be said about González' work and 'el lugar que ocupa dentro de la serie picaresca' (17). More recently, Sabine Schlickers argued that the text 'tiene un significado muy especial que aún no ha sido reconocido o admitido por la crítica' (190). Although seemingly not enough has been said about the original *Guitón*, nothing at all has been said about the comic version, making the secondary objective of this investigation twofold.

Accordingly, with the primary goal of working towards a broader definition of picaresque drawing through an analysis of the illustrated *Guitón*, I will begin with a general discussion of how drawing, specifically in comic form, lends itself to the tradition of the picaresque. The discussion will then move to what this alternative mode of storytelling means for the picaro-artist in his new, dual-narrative role as author *and illustrator* of his adventures and misfortunes. More specifically, I will argue how the loose brush strokes and unfinished style of the Cabezón brothers' illustrated version evokes the idea that instability is the only stability in the life of the picaro. As a means of conclusion, I will discuss

---

the picaro's prologue, and feature moralistic endings for the young reader, either within the individual episodes or in the book's conclusion. What is more, the illustrations in the *Lazarillo* comics are often meant to merely produce a comic effect for the reader, and not as second code, or language, for expressing the reality of the picaro. Thus, they should be considered picaresque drawings but rather children's illustrations of a picaresque tale.

<sup>5</sup> From this point forward the work will simply be referred to as *Guitón*. The Cabezón brothers preserved the original spelling of *Honofre* in the title of their comic edition, but refer to the protagonist throughout the story by the modernized spelling *Onofre*. This same pattern will be followed in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> Three texts are notable exceptions to this, with Sieber's aforementioned *The Picaresque* being the most recent. See the section 'Spanish descendants of the 'Lazarillo' and the 'Guzmán' (pp. 24-31) of the second part of his book, "The Picaresque in Spain: origins and definition" (pp. 5-36). Likewise, see Schlickers for an in-depth analysis of the original author of *Guitón*'s satirical motivations. Additionally, see Maravall, who locates the oft overlooked work within the picaresque literary tradition and reads how *Guitón* dialogues with Spain's social history throughout the entirety of his 800-page study.

the relevance of this adaptation in the contemporary Spanish context in which it appeared by looking at what Art Historian Erwin Panofsky calls visual arts' 'symbolical' value, its *intrinsic meaning* that can be interpreted by the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader-viewer of the comic.

In regards to this final issue, I will consider Ulrich Wicks' convincing argument that the picaro figure appears in contemporary fiction as an expression of homelessness; the "archetype of not being at home in the world" (24). I will argue that Onofre's story of wandering after the death of his parents and the devastation of their livelihood following a series of economical and agricultural crises becomes relevant once again in 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain where the decline of the middle class following the 2008 Spanish Recession has resulted in the rise of a generation who has the same sense of 'homelessness' within their nation. *Generación ni-ni*, labelled as such because *ni estudian, ni trabajan*, exists in a complex position within society that runs deeper than being defined by what they are or are *not*, just as is true of Onofre Caballero Redondo who is *not* a saint or even religious, is *not* a gentleman and is certainly *not* well fed like his surname suggests. For both Onofre and the *ni-ni*, tensions surrounding an identity built on negations in fact points more to societal deficits – their homelessness within society – than their individual self. Onofre and the *ni-ni* converge as the anti-hero within a society that is, paradoxically, the inhospitable hero. In this respect I will focus on the comic's final panel to consider the picture that *Guitón* draws for a young generation within Spain, yearning and left to wander – like Onofre – towards a blank horizon.

## 1.1 Picaresque Drawing and the Comic Form

But in order to understand the end it is important to start at the beginning, in true picaresque fashion. Mirroring the structure of the original *Guitón*, the comic version is organized into 15 chapters, each one narrating an episode of Onofre's life. Like his picaro contemporaries, Onofre narrates his life story beginning with his family origins.<sup>7</sup> However, unlike the likes of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Guzmán*

---

<sup>7</sup> As Sieber notes, the word *guitón* is synonymous with *pícaro*. As a definition, Sieber notes that '[c]ontemporary dictionaries define it more specifically as a false beggar of foreign origin who visits holy places, feigning poverty in order to collect alms and food,' but, adds that 'Onofre explicitly rejects the life of a beggar, choosing instead to

de Alfarache, whose dishonourable beginnings are owed as much to the questionable ancestry of their parents as to the ignominious ways through which they earn a living, Onofre, we are told, is born into an honourable family of *labradores* in Palazuelos, an area surrounding Sigüenza. However, Onofre is orphaned and uprooted at a young age when an agrarian crisis devastates his family's livelihood, and in second turn of events, his parents suffer untimely deaths as a result of the plague. 12-year old Onofre is placed in the care of family friend Rodrigo Serbán, who tutors and raises the boy along with his own son, Julianico. As is quickly revealed in the first two chapters, however, it is Inés, the austere housekeeper for the widowed Serbán, who is largely tasked with looking after Onofre. Onofre's relentless disobedience towards Inés, as well as his quarrels with Julianico, soon lead Serbán to accept the offer of a visiting sacristan to take the boy into his service in Sigüenza so that he "podría formarse" (30). Yet, the education that Onofre receives under Sacristan Teodoro boils down to one lesson: "mira por ti, estás sólo en el mundo" (34). This realization, coupled with his vengeful character, guides Onofre as he finds his way in the world.

Onofre's departure from his first master is the start of his wandering from one place to another, serving other masters along his way: the miserly sacristan (Chapters III-VII), the devout student, Don Diego (Chapters VIII-IX), and a second, unnamed sacristan (Chapter XIII). Likewise, during his travels he plays various roles: the trickster who outwits the wise *teatinos* (Chapters X-XI),<sup>8</sup> a self-professed astrologer (Chapter XII), an altar boy helps himself to more than his share of the sacrificial bread and collection funds (Chapter XIII), and also impersonates in writing as an aristocratic tax collector (Chapter XIV), and even the king himself (Chapter XV). These last two roles respectively land Onofre in prison and, in turn, secure his release. However, once Onofre procures his own freedom by forging the king's seal, the picaresque feels compelled to change his ways: "decidí mudar de oficio y vida... ¡Dios ha querido que siga su camino!" (146). In the end it appears that Onofre has embraced religion at last, at least

---

become a gentleman' (30). The futility of this attempt, along with the adaptation of this storyline in the comic version will be explored here.

<sup>8</sup> As Luis Cabezón notes, "[d]urante los siglos XVI y XVII era frecuente confundir los términos "teatinos" y "jesuitas", como aquí sucede. En cualquier caso, mantenemos el nombre "teatinos" por figurar así en el manuscrito original, aun a sabiendas de que hablamos de la Compañía de Jesús, esto es, los jesuitas" (2006:29).

momentarily. The final sequence of panels reveals his false conversion – or *failed* conversion, as will be discussed later – , as Onofre tells that while he respected his new priestly obligations for a matter of days, it wasn't long before "...volví por donde solía" (150).

And yet, the analogous episodic structure is where the similarity in form between the two versions ends. The seventeenth-century work has been noted for the "riqueza de su lenguaje" (Cabezón 2006: 6). Nevertheless, it has not escaped critical attention that its linguistic riches were acquired in true picaresque fashion: borrowed from earlier works. José Miguel Oltra argues that *Guitón* faithfully follows the narrations of *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán* "hasta el extremo de constituir un plagio" (58); what Cabo refers to as 'préstamos directos' of these texts. Cabo adds other sources from which González dipped his quill, noting that "hay refranes, en efecto, pero también proverbios, adagios, locuciones legales, sentencias de origen clásico, [y] terminología deudataria de un aristotelismo escolástico vulgar" (38).<sup>9</sup>

While the literary style of González' *Guitón* can be described as excessive, the Cabezón brothers' comic version tends towards visual and verbal minimalism. High-contrast, stylized visuals are drawn in a neutral palette of contrasting blacks and whites, accented with brown tones. The figures are depicted through a simplification of line and form, yet their accurate proportions as well as the depth and scale of the loosely drawn scenes reveal an artist skilled in his craft. Equally simplistic, the language from the original text is pared-down, appearing largely in the form of dialogue displayed within the speech balloons. The focus on dialogue is accentuated by limited use of captions within the panels for further scene-setting narration. What is more, many chapters feature multi-panel sequences that largely restrict the narration to the visual level.

It is in this way that Onofre begins his tale. The opening panel in Chapter 1, wide and unframed, features an illustration of Palazuelos that bleeds into the gutter accentuating the expansiveness of the land. The fluid black and brown smudges running horizontally through the panel draw the reader's attention to

---

<sup>9</sup> Early evaluations of *Guitón* can be summed up in the words of Cabo in his article "*El Guitón Honofre y el modelo picaresco*" in which he describes the collective disapprobation for González as "impotente, bajo el peso de modelos" (1986:378). However, González' intentions have more recently been understood not as poor imitation of the literary tradition, but as an early satire and dissolution of the picaresque. See, for example, Schlickers' aforementioned chapter as well as Sieber's evaluation of the work in his study on the picaresque (30-31).

centre of the foreground where the figure of a man is depicted through a singular, vertical black stroke (see Figure 1). A mid-shot in the following panel reveals that this figure is in fact Onofre's father, and that the brown form extending from his midsection is in fact a young Onofre, carried in a sling.



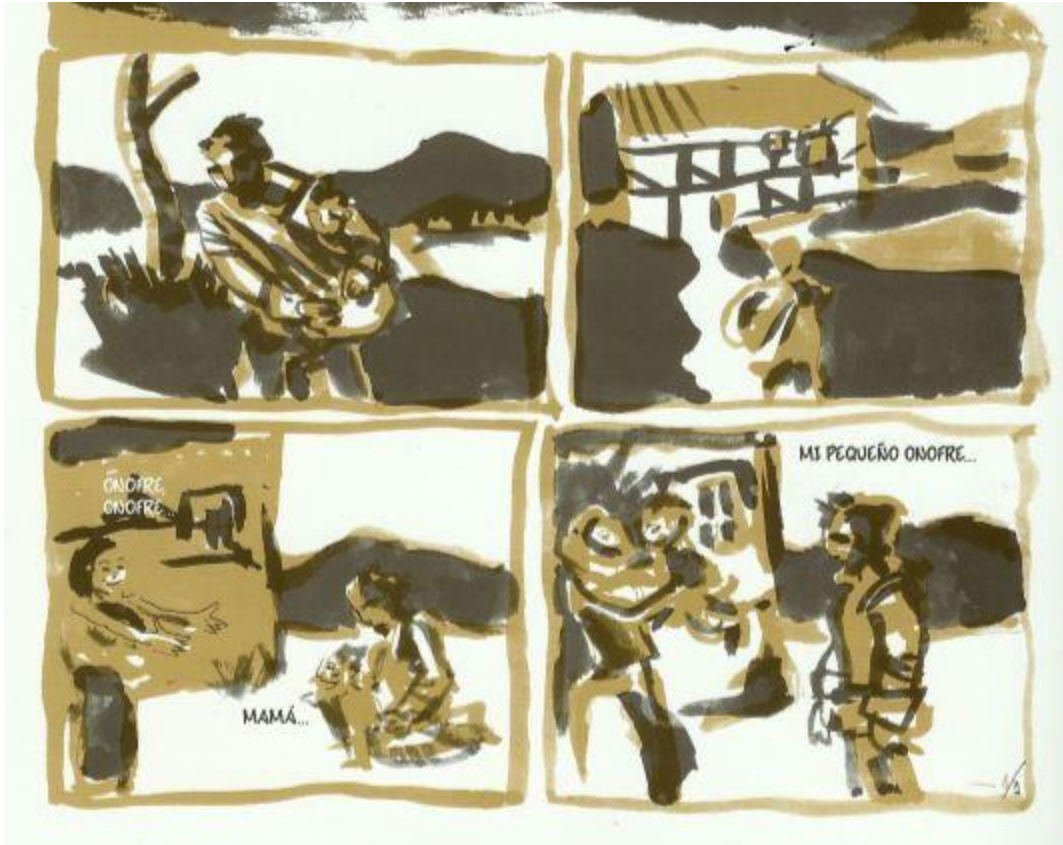
**FIGURE 1. Chapter 1, page 12.<sup>10</sup>**

In fact, all five panels of the comic's opening sequence play with the idea of Onofre as an extension of his parents; the fluid brushstrokes at once form the figure of his parents as well as his own small frame (see Figure 2). Similarly, the depiction of Onofre's figure in the opening scenes suggests an intrinsic relationship to the land of his birth. His small figure is not outlined, but rather his features appear to be at once blending in to and emerging from the scenery. The uncharacteristic use of fully-framed panels in this sequence emphasizes these memories as snapshots of a contented upbringing. Likewise, the semi-faded tones and less defined figures communicate to the reader the protagonist's blurred memory of family and home.

---

<sup>10</sup> All images are reproduced with the full permission of Luis Cabezón.





**FIGURE 2. Chapter 1, page 12.**

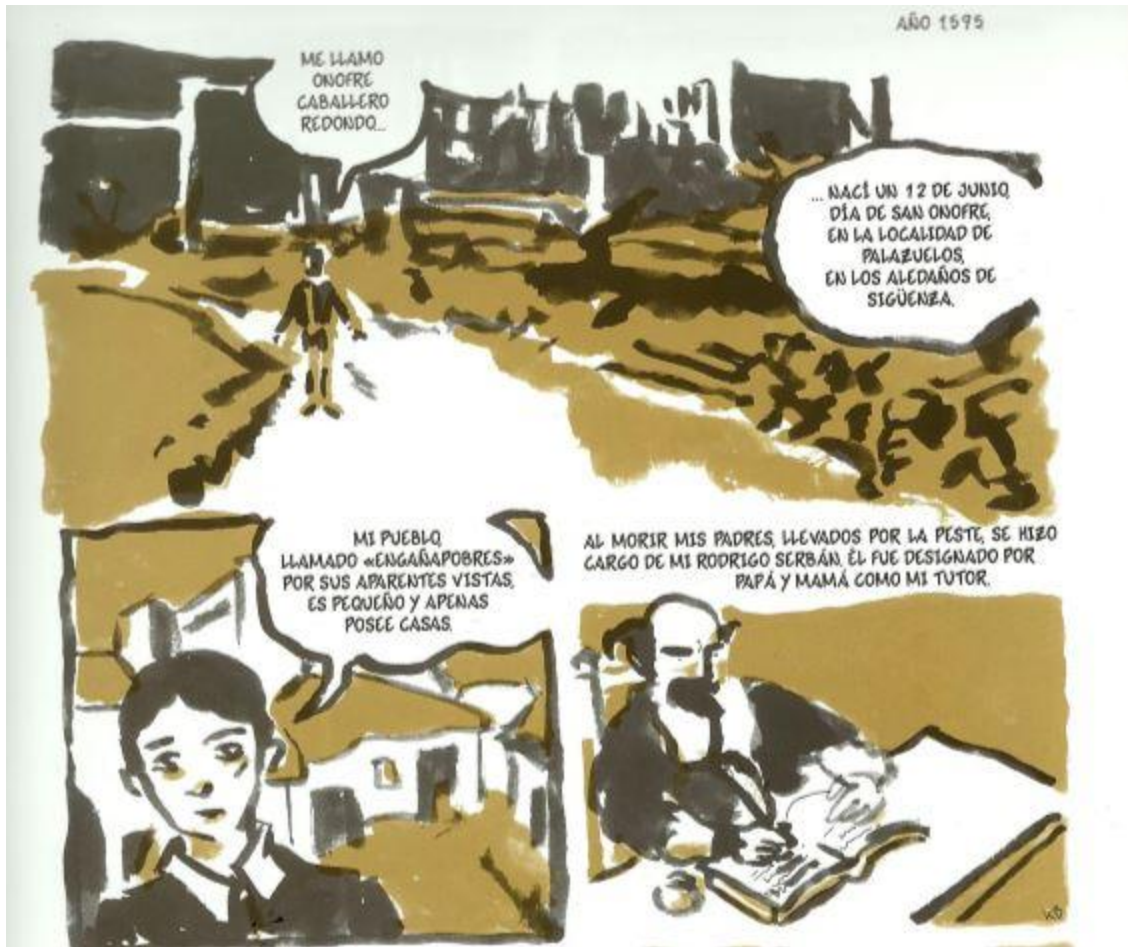
The lack of verbal language in the opening panels, restricted to proper nouns and terms of endearment, together with the unrefined quality of the visual language contrast what Sieber calls the ‘linguistic artistry’ of the traditional picaresque author (17). Lazarillo, reasons Sieber as an example, must use his writing as a tool to convince the ‘Your Grace’ to whom he must ‘sell’ his book (16). While Sieber suggests that Lazarillo’s *vida* is written in the form of an epistle, other scholars have labelled the picaresque’s objective of selling one’s life story through writing as the *relación*. Roberto González Echevarría, after Fernando Lázaro-Carreter, notes that the *relación* is “the kind of letter which functions as a legal deposition or makes a petition to a higher authority based on services rendered” (55). The recourse to this form largely has to do with the fact that the picaresque is implicitly claiming that “it is truer to life, that it is a document showing a real life enmeshed in the society of the times” (Echevarría 57). The implied authoritative reader, invited into the tale by the picaresque through the paratextual element of the prologue,

becomes the judge of veracity, and the picaresque narrates his tale in such a way that his reader is in a position that allows him to see the entire story from the start.

The idea of painting a mental picture for the reader becomes much more achievable through the comic's dual-narrative structure. However, the way in which the comic medium affords the picaresque to use other forms of artistry than linguistics implies a change from the traditional relationship outlined above between the picaresque author and the reader. The comic requires a more active reader, one that participates in the storytelling by filling in the visual gaps. If we consider what comic theorist Will Eisner suggests about the way in which the control of the participatory reader must be attained and retained through images (58), the picaresque-artist is required to use a new type of artistry to provoke or attract the reader's attention, and to retain it through the intelligibility and logical arrangement of the images.

In consideration of the idea that the picaresque writes his life so that his reader may *see*, it becomes immediately apparent that the comic medium lends itself to the picaresque tradition in remarkable ways. For starters, the traditional picaresque's structure of loosely-tied episodes goes hand-in-hand with the notion of *sequence* at the heart of the comic. Eisner, in fact, used the term "sequential art" to define the comic, a definition which was later modified by Scott McCloud as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). The second half of McCloud's definition aligns itself with Eisner's earlier mentioned notion that the creator of a comic aims to control their reader through the visual imagery, meanwhile allowing them to participate in a story as they *respond* to it.

This notion of a reader who participates in and responds to Onofre's story was introduced through an examination of the opening panels, in which the reader ascertains Onofre's intrinsic relationship with family and home. As the first chapter continues to unfold, the knowledge of the boy's dependency and belonging generates a response in the reader as they see Onofre's small figure in a second wide panel where he introduces himself:



**FIGURE 3. Chapter 1, Page 15.**

This panel juxtaposes the first wide panel in the comic’s opening sequence. As seen in Figure 3, Onofre’s small frame exists alone, standing within the vast landscape of the long shot. The visual narration does not actually communicate his birth – the subject of the verbal narration – but rather it reiterates the death and absence of his parents, which is mentioned in one of the subsequent panels. The lack of frames around both panels creates a connection between the two, allowing the reader’s gaze to flow back upwards to Onofre’s lone figure as they respond to the knowledge of his parents’ death. Onofre’s reference to his parents through childlike speech (“mamá” and “papá”) coincides with his small silhouette to reemphasize his childishness. Likewise, Onofre’s speech balloons opening up into the margins and gutters visually imply his displacement and decentring following the death of his parents. That Onofre’s figure is suddenly more visually defined against his surroundings also communicates his

parents' death as a defining moment in his life, and one that sets him on a picaresque trajectory. As his form becomes dislocated from land and family, Onofre communicates the idea of "the *solo soy* basic to the picaro's condition" (Wicks 45 emphasis in original). Ulrich Wicks reads Lazarillo's *solo soy* lament as part of what he calls the 'essential picaresque fictional situation', or the 'picaresque mode,' highlighting the picaro's status of 'dis-integration' with society; repeated yet futile efforts to integrate themselves into society (22).

The basic elements that comprise a comic allow this social exclusion to be visually communicated by the picaro-artist, and the way in which *Guitón* plays with the gutters and frames mimics Onofre's perpetual rhythm of 'dis-integration.' Notably, the extensive use of partially-drawn frames suggests this tension, as the frames appear to be quite literally disintegrating. In chapter 2, the fact that Serbán's son, Julianico, is on a social visit underscores Onofre's own exclusion from greater society as well as his physical containment within – but not inside – the Serbán household. Onofre's positioning against an exterior wall of the house in the chapter's opening panel, from where he watches the horses feed while his own stomach growls in hunger, metaphorically reinforces his dis-integration. This partial integration within the Serbán home is visually reinforced throughout the chapter through the consistent use of partial frames. In fact, the only two sequences that display complete, solid black frames are instances in which Onofre takes the matter of inclusion into his own hands.

In the first instance this is quite literal, as Onofre helps himself to the contents of the cooking pot after Inés has taken leave to collect Julianico (20). The four, full black frames in this six-panel page force the reader's gaze to slow down as Onofre likewise experiences in slow motion the irresistible aroma of the stew. The unframed close-up of Onofre's face peering into the pot, eyes wide in hunger and awe, reveals the enormity of his moment of temptation, yet Onofre's slight frown suggests a moment's hesitation. The final, fully-framed panel features Onofre looking cautiously over his shoulder as he at last ladles the stew into his mouth. Literally and metaphorically framing himself in this last shot, Onofre reveals to himself and the reader his picaro ways.

The second sequence of fully-framed panels in this chapter depicts Onofre's punishment for his unlawful feast at the hands of Serbán, made worse by his repeated insistence to Inés that "fue el gato quien tiro la olla..." (26). The full, black frames in this five-panel sequence become thicker in line and darker in tone as Onofre's 'essential situation' as picaro – to borrow Wicks' term – becomes more defined. The earlier hesitation in his eyes has transformed into a wild gaze, and Onofre's laughter that carries throughout the final two panels in this sequence suggests that he has found his place within the Serbán family and society by extension: that of the trickster. With eyes wide open and a maniacal grin, this scene visually plays out Onofre's picaro awakening.

Conversely, a complete *lack* of frames in many other episodes likewise insinuates Onofre's social exclusion. The lacking borders between the action in the panel and the gutters and margins often results in Onofre's figure blending into the gutter, or appearing to emerge from this space. We see this visual communication of marginality in the opening sequence of panels in chapter 8 which depict Onofre on the run from Sigüenza and his second master, the sacristan. The sequence showing his getaway spans the better half of the first page (see Figure 4). On the run, Onofre finds himself in a state of inbetweenness from society – neither here nor there in a sense that goes beyond geographically, a sentiment that is reiterated by the lack of frames on this page. The margins between panels become an extension of Onofre's path; he slips into the gutters and margins of the comic just as he repeatedly slips into the margins of society, appearing as "an emerging or disappearing thing in the landscape" (Wicks 32). For Wicks, the idea that the picaro could be indistinguishable from the landscape is an indication of their exile, as a way of expressing their extreme marginality. Interestingly, this principle is seen in reverse in the first chapter where Onofre's *indistinguishability* from landscape demonstrates his intrinsic relationship to home and family. These initial scenes, however, serve to highlight for the reader the change that occurs to his relationship with landscape.





**FIGURE 4. Chapter 8, page 74.**

Three close-up shots of Onofre’s face reveal what can be read as fear, then weariness, and then impassiveness. We read in the original *Guitón* that “[p]or el camino, volvía la cabeza atrás tan a menudo que mil veces entendí quedarme hecho piedra majano como la mujer de Lot, mas tal iba de temor” (139). However, in the comic version the picaro’s fear appears to fade into resignation. Onofre’s shifting emotions reveal that for contemporary picaro, to be on the run is routine, evoking the notion of homelessness central to Wick’s understanding of the modern picaro. The shapelessness of the path, the way that it emerges from one gutter only to flow into the next, is heightened by the lack of frames, visually evoking the Sisyphus rhythm commonly associated with the fate of the picaro.

However, as Wicks argues, narration, for the picaro, is “a step towards integration, a yearning for order that is being satisfied through the act of telling about his disordered life” (33). Narration is the

picaro's main defence against the Sisyphus rhythm of their life, shaping their existence through storytelling. The picaro gains visibility and order by narrating their story, and in the case of the comic medium this is especially true. While the comic medium arguably allows for a narrative to be presented in a variety of ways, it is notable that Onofre's narrative is characterized by *monotony* (of colour), *formality* (of the size, orientation and positions and shape of the panels in the layout), and *consistency* (of the composition of the images and figures, and of dialogue as the principal mode of verbal language).

*Guitón's* monotonous, formal and consistent aesthetic suggests that the comic medium provides valuable tools for the picaro to visibly bring order to his lived experiences. In the picaro's yearning for order, the aforementioned notion of sequence at the heart of the comic stands out as the ultimate tool. Interestingly, the consistent narrative structure in the comic version contrasts the narrative structure of the original manuscript. Cabo, among others, have been quick to point out the "escasa consistencia narrativa" of González' novel (1986:372). So how then, can the disaccord between the narrative chaos of the original *Guitón* and the picaresque yearning towards consistency and order in the comic adaptation be understood?

## 1.2 The picaro-artist as the "Projecting-I" that creates the fiction

For starters, the comic version positions the picaro as author (and artist) by means of the paratextual elements, a notable change from the seventeenth-century version in which the paratextual elements affirm González as author and Onofre strictly as the central character *within* the story. It is well-known that the original *Guitón* is written as a false autobiography. The preliminary poems not only confirm González' role as author, but also *affirm* it; numerous sonnets applaud his singular work of literature, as well as the protagonist that he created. Likewise, the prologue details the reasons and motivations González held for writing Onofre's story. As the reader turns to the first chapter, it is clear that Onofre Caballero Redondo is merely González' character; a picaro author contained within the fiction.

Conversely, in Cervantine fashion, the comic version features various framing and distancing techniques that situate Onofre as the author and illustrator of the comic, and the Cabezón brothers in the

role of editor of a ‘found’ manuscript. Doing away with the preliminary poems, the comic instead opens with a Letter from the Editor, signed Luis Alberto Cabezón. Most notably, however, the prologue and chapters are preceded by uniform title pages, marked only by the chapter title in a sizeable black, calligraphic font. The lack of aesthetic harmony between these paratextual title pages and the hand-drawn aesthetic of the chapter pages gives the impression that they have been later inserted into the comic to provide further order and structure to the picaro’s tale. The tawny-coloured backgrounds distinguish them from the white pages of the comic, just as the ornate calligraphic typeface of the titles juxtaposes the casual but legible hand lettering and loose drawing of the picaro’s tale. This contrast, coupled with the suggestive negative space on the chapter title pages – devoid of any visual narration – furthers the idea a ‘found’ manuscript and the role of Cabezón brothers as compilers of the picaro-artist’s text. Ultimately, the text itself and paratextual elements suggest the working of distinct hands with markedly different tools.

Most notably, the comic’s prologue functions to confirm Onofre’s role as author, and to, in an ironic turn, contain González within the fiction. The visual and verbal aesthetics of the prologue reveal that it is unquestionably created by the same hand as the main text, although the *yo* of the prologue belongs to González instead, whose role in the comic version is thus limited to fictional author. González becomes a type of Cide Hamete, a construct of the picaro-artist’s imagination. As the voice of González describes his illness and affinity for literature, he is converted into a sort of delusional Don Quixote: “paso las tardes en mi biblioteca. Convaleciente de la rabia, vivo apartado de mis obligaciones como jurista” which, he further reveals is due to the fact that “[m]i pasión por la literatura, forjada en muchas horas de lectura de clásicos y en distintas universidades españoles no han hecho de mi un profesional de las letras, aunque escribo.” The *aunque* highlights the futility of his quixotic mission. Simultaneously, the allusion to Cide Hamete surfaces again in the conclusion of the prologue, as González utters, “dejo la pluma,” in a way that echoes Hamete’s command to his quill in the conclusion to the second part of the *Quijote*, “Aquí quedarás”.



What occurs then in the prologue is a reversal of the false autobiography of the original *Guitón*, as Onofre takes the pen into his own hands to create a conventional picaresque autobiography. While González reveals a certain level of social determinism seen in other early works such as Aleman's *Guzmán*, by denying his picaro a true conversion in the end, he also goes one step further to deny Onofre even the authorship of his own story. The comic version, however, gives agency back to the picaro in terms of authorship as well as social ambition.

With this understanding of authorship in mind, the yearning towards consistency and order in the comic's narrative structure can be understood by Onofre's roles of one experiencing life and simultaneously narrating the same. In so doing, Onofre faces a challenge that many other picaro authors do not. The picaro most often narrates his life after experiencing a conversion of sorts and having gained perspective on his former picaro ways. Onofre does not manage to better his social position, and in the end is likewise unable to commit to his religious conversion, and so re-entering in his picaresque ways he finds himself in the dual role of narrator and protagonist simultaneously as he takes up writing his tale. What is more, Onofre plays a second set of roles in the comic version, as both author *and illustrator* of his adventures and misfortunes. The apparent tension between the orderly layout and a drawing style that is 'unsettled, provisional, incomplete' to borrow Schmidt's fitting terms, is telling of Onofre's struggle against himself as a narrator straining towards stability and someone still experiencing a life of instability.

Looking back to Figure 4, it is not hard to imagine how this aesthetic tension arises by the hand of someone who is on the run, wanting to tell his story but also living it, rather precariously, at the same time. The trichromatic palette of neutral tones at first glance speaks to the antiquity of the work being recreated. However, reflecting again upon the above discussion of picaro as artist, the earth tones ultimately speak to a lack of tools or possessions. For, although the comic version of *Guitón* appears at a time in which advanced technology has led to creative illustrative techniques, from digital painting to 3D modeling, the simplicity of its inked drawing technique is significant. Onofre narrates his story with the tools available to him, those which can be found in the landscape on the run; the hues reminiscent of dirt,

ash and dust are not only a practical choice but also a reiteration of the picaresque's intrinsic relationship to his landscape – as indistinguishable from the landscape.

The question of the artist's tools is an important one when exploring picaresque drawing. Tim Cresswell, following Anne Cruz and Sherman Eoff, points out that “[t]he picaresque has no faith in material possessions, and considers freedom and happiness to be the product of lack of roots and attachments” (243). Onofre's earthy aesthetic, as well as his use of quick dialogue, appears to be a creative solution to the conundrum of the picaresque wishing to write (and draw) his tale, and yet hardly having the time or means to do so. In an examination of the picaresque's motive for writing, Sieber argues that language is the basis of social reality, and that “we are no more, no less, than the language we speak and write” (17). To Sieber's assertion we would add “and draw”. What can be concluded from Sieber's words is that there is a link between language and self; that language – including visual language – is a type of self-portrait for the picaresque. The language in which Onofre speaks, the provisional tools and neutral colours points back to the picaresque-artist.

In this regard, the *non-colours* black and white reflect Onofre's status of *not* being within society. The subtly varied shades of what can best be described as *pardo* provide depth to the black and white figures within each scene,<sup>11</sup> and likewise points to Onofre's position within (but not *in*) society. In seventeenth-century Spain minds such as lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias (1611 and 1647) equated the colour with the lowerclass: “el vestido pardo es de gente humilde, y el mas basto se llama pardillo”.<sup>12</sup> In fact, in sticking to contrasting black, white and earth tones, Onofre's artistic technique of illuminating and shadowing elements within each frame reflects that of the Spanish baroque painting tradition

---

<sup>11</sup> At present, the Royal Academy defines *pardo* as a color “[s]emejante al de la tierra o al de la piel del oso, y que tira a marrón o a rojizo,” although the history of the term proves to be as unstable as that of the picaresque figure. For a detailed history of the etymology and definitions of *pardo* in the Spanish-speaking world, as well its perceptions and connotations with regards to class and race in the Spanish colonies see Chapter 4, “*Loros, Pardos and Mestizos: Classifying Brown Peoples*,” of Jack Forbes' study *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (University of Illinois Press, 1993) pp. 93-130, especially 115-123.

<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon is likewise reflected in literature, as seen for example in the opening lines of Lope de Vega's Romance XXXIV: “No tengas dulce Belisa/en poca cuenta a Belardo,/por las abarcas que lleva/y porque viste de pardo,” ...

*claroscuro*, or *tenebrismo*, placing his artwork in line with the likes of other artistic portrayals of picaresque figures such as Murillo's *Joven mendigo* and Ribera's *Niño cojo*.

However, unlike these refined works of art, Onofre's reproduction of *la vida picaresca* is perhaps far more accurate for the fact that it appears to be unfinished, or *non finito*. This was, after all, one of the tensions of the picaresque literary tradition commented on by the likes of Cervantes: the genre's perpetual unfinished state due to the picaresque narrators' inability to complete their own memoir.<sup>13</sup> And surely, following in the literary footsteps of *Lazarillo* among others, González tells his reader that his work is unfinished when Onofre reveals in the final chapter that although many tale-worthy things happened to him, "los dejo para la segunda parte, donde, dándome Dios salud y no faltándome tiempo, irán algunos referidos juntamente con la renunciación del hábito que se les siguió" (220-221). Yet the unfinished aesthetic housed within the picaresque literary tradition, long fulfilled by the promise of a second part, becomes even more apparent, immediate, and above all *visible* through the particular *non finito* aesthetic that marks the comic's visual narration throughout the tale. Picaresque drawing, then, is a form of narrating in the *present tense*, an action – yet unfinished – that makes visible the tension of the picaresque as "the projecting 'I' that creates the fiction itself" (Wicks 28).

Fittingly, Onofre's projections of self are as unstable as his existence. Perhaps the most revealing way in which he illustrates himself is in the excrement episode in Chapter 4. When Onofre unsuspectingly begins to consume his roommate's excrement, vengefully left on the plate in place of the blood sausages Onofre believes to be awaiting him as a result of one of his latest tricks, his cry, "¡Mierda! Es Mierda..." not only reveals himself as the supposed *duende* to his roommates that he feigns nightly to be, but more importantly it is a verbalization of his essential picaresque situation, often expressed by the picaresque himself through the metaphor of the dungheap, or dunghill.<sup>14</sup> Fittingly, the term *pícaro* has its roots in the verb

---

<sup>13</sup> On Cervantes and the Picaresque, see for example, Chad M. Gasta, "The picaresque according to Cervantes" in *Philological Quarterly* 89.10 (2010): 31-53.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, in the original *Guitón*, Onofre expresses this metaphor from the very first chapter: "[c]omenzaré en poco, pero sospecho que tengo de ser como vaho de muladar, que, aunque nace de principio humilde, como es su natural ir arriba, se sube al cielo" (71). For other notable examples, see Wicks (24-25) who highlights this rhetoric

*picar*, meaning to peck or to nibble at, and what this scene narrates is a consuming of a metaphorical self: the excess, or excrement, of the social order.

While the majority of the comic's pages make use of fewer panels to allow for greater visual detail and dialogue, the excrement episode is narrated with smaller panels featuring simplified figures and minimal detail, set against simple or altogether bare backgrounds. As Onofre's narration reaches the climax of this episode, the dialogue all but disappears from the panels. The simplification of the scene can be understood as Onofre's way of speeding up the pace of his reader, not wanting to dwell on the telling just as much as he does not want the reader to dwell on the *disgracia* that happened to him. It is here where the expressionism that is said to have influenced the comic style becomes the most notable: the unrefined style in which Onofre depicts himself is an external expression of the internal emotions he feels as he is revealed to his reader.



**Figure 5. Chapter 4, page 44.**

---

of excrement in Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599, 1604), Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* (1743), Romero's *La vida inútil de Pito Pérez* (1938), and Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942).

This expressive drawing style also appears in the opening page of chapter 13, where Onofre, a vagrant in Valladolid, is sketched with faint black lines, appearing as a shadow of himself. The transparency of his torso and extremities communicates the hollowness of his belly, which he soon manages to fill by posing as an altar boy in the Iglesia de San Salvador, and helping himself to more than his share of the sacrificial bread. As Onofre fills up, his figure fills out, gaining slightly more detail and depth through dull brown shading, the same as the bread that he ingests. The plainness with which he draws himself in these situations of scarcity is juxtaposed by, for example, the vibrancy and detail with which he draws his experiences of Madrid in Chapter 8.

In this episode, Onofre serves his third and most beloved master, don Diego. In his mutual respect for Onofre, don Diego becomes set on teaching him the error of his ways and instructing him in the habits of virtue and honour so that he may “vivir bien y ser buen cristiano” (77). He also educates Onofre in lessons that go beyond the singular lesson he taught to him by the sacristan (*mira por ti, estás sólo en el mundo*), expanding his world and his view of himself in it. In this chapter, the wide and oversized panels reveal an expanding world and worldview, and likewise become more refined and cultured in parallel to Onofre himself who explores the plaza and central avenues of Madrid in “una semana de entretenamiento viendo juegos, carreras, esgrima y comedias...” (78). The visual detail as well as the lack of dialogue in the over-sized panels, make the illustrations appear more as stable works of art such as paintings, rather than panels in a comic comprising a story of instability. The long shots and bird’s-eye-views combat the sense of immediacy and urgency with which Onofre writes the majority of his tale (See Figures 6 and 7). In contrast to speeding up the narrative and reading pace through simplification and minimalism as highlighted above, it appears that the picaresque artist slows down to tell this part of his tale, reflecting the momentary stability found in the presence of his new master.



**Figures 6 and 7: Chapter 8, page 79.**

Yet ultimately, Onofre's stylistic change is a further indication of his unstable existence. Here we recall the 'linguistic artistry' that Sieber speaks of in regards to the traditional picaresque author, and consider the visual artistry with which Onofre narrates his experience of Madrid through a long shot of the *corral de comedias* and a birds-eye view of the Plaza Mayor. The uncharacteristic vibrancy with which these moments of Onofre's life are drawn only reinforces their ephemeral nature. Onofre will not succeed at becoming the cultured *caballero* that he desires to be. As mentioned, in the early *Guitón*, Onofre is robbed of his desired conversion for self-improvement by González, for as Sieber aptly puts it, "Gonzalez, who seems to be a real gentleman, takes the attitude of Quevedo by preventing his rogue from attaining his goal" (30).

However, the comic version alters this conclusion in ways that are significant to the picaresque artist as well as his relationship with the original author. The final panel of the comic, featuring Onofre with his back turned on his reader as he wanders away towards a blank horizon, rings true with Schmidt's assertion that picaresque drawing works by "showing the backside rather than the face; on foregrounding constant movement rather than stable proportions" (6). In refusing to perpetuate the common picaresque trope of promising a second part, Onofre ultimately walks away from yet another role: that of author and illustrator of his life. In this sense, we can understand the fast and loose sketching that characterizes the visual narrative in another way. Relaxed and confident in his art, Onofre does not wish to linger in this

role, for his as role picaro-artist is provisional, just as his drawing has a provisional quality. Accordingly, the comic is a clever choice for his motives, given that, following Eisner, the comic does not afford the luxury of time and space as it is fundamentally “más sencillo y más rápido” (13).

Yet the pace of the final scene is more relaxed. The ellipses following each narration indicate Onofre’s pause before he continues, as well force the reader to pause and reflect upon each moment within the scene. Onofre draws his story to a close telling us how he settles in to his life in the religious order, as he explains that “[c]ada día acudía a instruirme en las prácticas de la religión...Hasta que llegó el domingo, día en que concebí el santo hábito...”. However, he continues to reveal that although he respected his new duty for a week, “...volví por donde solía” (150).



FIGURE 8. Chapter 15, page 150.

What is more, Onofre's singing in the comic's final panel suggests a feeling of home in his wandering, and of having found harmony in the instability. Conversely, his laughter can be read as the picaresque's pleasure at having gotten the last word, not González. Accordingly, the comic emerges as Onofre's greatest trick yet. In re-creating his own story, the picaresque not only rejects the religious habit in the end, but also the deterministic resolve of the author who created him. In fact, while the social determinism that González subjected his picaresque to would be anticipated and agreed upon by many seventeenth-century readers, this ideology would not fit for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century comic (anti)hero and reader alike. In fact, the cover image of Onofre drawn into the moment of Original sin can be read as a bold and immediate statement of Onofre's free will this time around; a piece of forbidden fruit in each hand, his outward gaze challenges the spectator to look, as well as to bear witness to what "fruit" his story might offer the reader. And justly, questions of *Guitón*'s continuation – its relevance – in the current Spanish context can be raised in light of the Cabezón brothers' choice to revive of his tale over four centuries later with a picaresque characterized by free will and a will to author his own tale.

### 1.3 Conclusion

The comic in Spain has a custom of telling the anti-hero's story, especially in the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of the underground comic (or *comix*). The antiheroes that emerged were a substitution to the traditional heroes of the Spanish mainstream comic, and a change to past ideals and values. As Pablo Dopico notes, street-dwelling anarchistic types of dubious moral character such as Anarcoma, Gustavo, Slober, Fermín and Piker replaced the likes of Capitán Trueno, el Guerrero del Antifaz, Cuto, Roberto Alcázar and Pedrín (170). While *Guitón* could perhaps be considered a very late comer to the *comix* movement, Onofre's displacement and juvenile penchant for mischievousness don't quite place him on the same level as the anarchistic street-dwelling antihero. Conversely, *Guitón* can also be seen as a precursor to – and appropriately on the margins of – the Postmodern Age of the mainstream comic, thought to be happening now, in which the central characters are more unconventional heroes. The lives of previously marginalized demographics in areas such as gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status are now being featured in the pages of the comic. While the Modern Age of the comic sought idealization



through their superheroes, and the underground comics a reader-accomplice who also can be said to ‘vivir al Límite’ (Dopico 176), the goal of the Postmodern comic lies on a subtler identification with the reader, who sees the protagonist as a reflection of themselves: a likewise marginalized being.

To suggest that the artistic adaptation of *Guitón* seeks identification with a modern day picaresco type is plausible and even necessary in light of Erwin Panofsky’s suggestion, following Ernst Cassirer, that art holds a ‘symbolical’ value, and can be viewed “as a symptom of something else” (8). The spectator, as the art historian suggests, interprets iconographical features of the artwork as more particularized evidence of that ‘something else.’ To understand the intrinsic meaning, one must discover the “underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class” (7). In the case of *Guitón*, all three of these qualifiers – nation-period-class – are of extreme importance when considering what the adaptation could be symbolic and symptomatic of in present day Spain.

Wicks offers a valuable starting point for considering what Onofre’s authorial artwork might symbolize for the contemporary comic reader in Spain through his evaluation of modern-day picaresco as a “human expression of homelessness” and “the archetype of not being at home in the world” (24). The fact that it is Onofre’s story that is being retold, as opposed to that of a more canonical picaresco, is of extreme importance for relating to the current sociohistorical Spanish context. Onofre’s honourable origins set him apart from his picaresco contemporaries, as previously mentioned, and while debates about his social standing being born into a family of *labradores* range from ‘not poor’ as Joseph H. Silverman esteems in the Forward to the 1983 version of *El Guitón Onofre* (31), to relatively poor (‘el que tiene algo, pero poco’ as Jose Antonio Maravall suggests 37), it is not the definition of his social standing at birth that makes his figure symbolic, but rather his *redefinition* as definitively poor following that loss of livelihood and familial ties that immediately makes his story transferable, symbolic and interpretable in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Spain.

The picaresco literary tradition emerged in response to a series of economic crises in the late sixteenth century that “propelled Spain’s feudalistic society to the beginnings of capitalistic enterprise” and demanded “a redefinition of the poor based on their role in that changing society” (Cruz 21). Of all

the early picaresque works, *El Guitón Honofre* has been singled out for the way in which it dialogues with this particular aspect of the social crisis, weaving throughout its narrative a valuation of the treatment that the poor deserve, despite their poverty, as Maravall argues, and in so doing awakening the consciousness of the poor not to their role in the world according to divine law, but rather of their right to personhood. (156). In this vein, *Guitón* goes against the literary grain for not establishing as the picaro's main objective the conventional 'virtue' of social usurpation (Maravall 374), despite the fact that, as Maravall esteems, it is this particular aim that 'mueve la acción desviada del picaro' (527). While Onofre certainly aims to better his lot in life, his narrative foregrounds what is considered to be the 'vice' to this 'virtue:' as Onofre verbalizes in the 17-century version, "es peor caer un hombre de su estado que levantarse más de lo que merece» (188). In the comic, the opening scenes that visually depict the distant memories of family and home introduce the central theme of poverty not as an existing and natural condition, but rather as a symptom of a social crisis in which the ranks of the poor grow steadily in numbers.

The illustrated adaptation of *Guitón* likewise emerged in the years surrounding significant economic crises within Spain's history, resulting in a parallel demographic situation that saw a redefinition of the 'poor' along with a changing view of their role in society. As has been frequently reported in the media, the risk for children of Spain's middle-class to experience a lower quality of life than their parents is more evident now than it has been centuries.<sup>15</sup> The Great Spanish Recession has resulted in a disappearing middle class, as they move towards income poverty and social exclusion and Spain's ever-widening gap between rich and poor becomes the largest in Europe. While a modern-day redefinition of the poor is occurring in Spain, the children of this middle class have come to be defined in the media as *Generación ni-ni* for their simultaneous lack of participation in both the work force and the education sector. Yet their situation of inaction is more complex than mere complacency: recent figures have shown that 23.7% of Spaniards between 15 and 29 years of age – a reported 1.9 million persons – are what has been called 'the embodiment of a cluster of defects' in the productive system and

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Barbería, José Luis. "Generación 'ni-ni': ni estudia ni trabaja." *El País* 22.6 (2009).

educational system.<sup>16</sup> Thus, their inaction is, at least in part, a symptom of a society that is unable to provide for its youth in many sectors. The notion of the *ni-ni* as an embodiment of a defective system echoes the way in which Maravall describes the 17<sup>th</sup>-century *picaro* as ‘insalvablemente una prueba de gran desbarajuste social’ (10).

If the *picaro* is considered to be the anti-hero, as he undoubtedly is, then it is against society, the hero, that he is defined, and in the case of Onofre in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Spain this is through a series of things that he is *not*, the same that is occurring for the *ni-ni* today. Onofre’s blurred vision of his past is comprehensible and relatable to such an ideal reader that is also straining to see a now somewhat distant picture of the Spanish nation into which they were born. Yet, their very act of reading *Guitón* could be viewed as an attempt to define oneself if we consider French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of ‘cultural capital’.<sup>17</sup> For Bourdieu, cultural capital involves the ability to define one’s self through the accumulation of embodied, objectified or institutionalized assets, in addition to economic wealth and social class. The *ni-ni*, like Onofre, find themselves unable to accumulate institutionalized assets: they are doubly denied accreditation and job titles as their nickname signifies (or in Onofre’s case, of false, self-proclaimed accreditations and a string of job titles which in reality point to his joblessness and wandering). Yet, if we consider the comic version of *Guitón* as an objectified asset, both for the rise of the comic in Spain’s contemporary literary landscape as well as the portal the comic becomes for accessing one of Spain’s lasting and canonical literary traditions, *Guitón* provides the reader with some measure of cultural capital and one aspect of identity in terms of cultural competence. The Post Modern Age of the comic, in placing the marginalized and disenfranchised in the spotlight, and in seeking a reader that identifies with such a figure, makes accessible this cultural capital to otherwise disqualified demographics.

---

<sup>16</sup> Teruel, Ana, and J. A. Auni6n. "Espa1a es el pa6s de Europa con m1s j6venes que ni estudian ni trabajan." *Elpa6s.com* 12 (2012).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Bourdieu’s essay, “*Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction*,” in *Classic Readings in Race, Class, and Gender* (Grusky, David B., and Szonja Szel6nyi, eds. Westview Press, 2006).

But how would the current generation of Spaniards that fails to insert themselves into the labour market or education system, one that lacks a definitive vision for their future, identify with Onofre in his final moment of turning his back on society, on his story, and carrying on whilst whistling his tune? While Onofre's singing in the final panel may seem an odd reaction as he sets off to wander once more, his gaze set on a notably void background, his nonchalance rather than despair towards his situation can be read symbolically for the fact that, as one media article reports, for the *ni-ni*, in situations of extreme adversity the notion of committing to a life project it is not emotionally profitable because they assume it would be subjected to constant ups and downs and would unlikely result in success ("difícilmente llegaría a un buen puerto").<sup>18</sup>

This seems to be the same decision that Onofre comes to after experiencing the various ups and downs whilst trying to better his lot in life. In the end his 'safe harbour' is his picaro existence; he is at home in his wandering. The frame around this path in this final panel is telling that this is a defining moment, as has been argued in other moments in the comic. On a symbolic level, this final panel also serves as a snapshot of what is faced by many of the current youth in Spain: a direct path towards a blank horizon, trod rhythmically by a wandering, aimless youth, while the full frame suggests a certain inescapability.

Returning again to the cover image, Onofre's symbolic participation in the Original sin communicates a disobedience that leads, as antiquity goes, to his expulsion from home. Yet, in Onofre's case it was not he who ran away from home, but rather home that escaped him, sending him on his path from good to 'evil' (or vengeance and vagrancy in his case). Likewise, we can consider Onofre's seemingly sincere repentance in the final chapter as prodigal son moment, a desire to return home, although home no longer exists. The *ni-ni* are likewise one from whom home has escaped. For, the biggest challenge that Spain faces in this generation, or that this generation faces in Spain, is that the

---

<sup>18</sup> Barbería, José Luis. "Generación 'ni-ni': ni estudia ni trabaja." *El País* 22.6 (2009).

transition of the youth to the adult life is not possible in a society in which they do not feel 'at home' as Wicks says.

In this sense both Onofre and the ni-ni become defined by another negation: they are *not* the generation before them, and they are not able to become the next generation of Spaniards. Facing this impossible transition, they are trapped in a liminal space. The question that this final image asks through the trail of footprints leading toward the bleak horizon is what mark this generation can leave on Spain. The footsteps ahead of Onofre, fading until they disappear without a trace, are not a positive picture of the future. In this sense too, the fact that drawing disappears from the story tells us something more about drawing in the picaresque mode: drawing is subject to fading, it is erasable, and incapable of leaving a permanent mark. As Schmidt argues, drawing "is a practice which purposefully marginalises itself, signalling a refusal to be final or fixed or completed and even proudly announcing its own slightness and rootlessness" (Schmidt 7). In this final notion we see a direct relation between picaresque drawing and Onofre's particular unfinished story, and his role in directing it.

Adding then to Schmidt's notion that picaresque drawing is 'unsettled, provisional, incomplete' we have aimed to show here that drawing in the picaresque mode reveals a tension of (in)stability though an external structure that is orderly, repetitive and uniform and an internal structure that is chaotic, loose and unfinished. It has been argued that picaresque drawing is equally defined by negative spaces: margins and the gutters in the case of the comic, as well as the way in which the action is framed, or not framed. Following Schmidt it has been affirmed that picaresque drawing is fast and free, revealing a skilled artist that does not linger in his role or tie himself to it. It is provisional, and need not be permanent. Finally, it has been argued that as a style, drawing in the picaresque mode is not confined to representing the traditional picaro figure, but rather symbolically lends itself to the greater Other marked by alterity, marginality and instability across nations and generations, as is the case of *Generación ni-ni* in present day Spain.

## Works Cited

- Cabezón, Luis. *El guitón Honofre*. Kabemayor Ediciones, 2005.
- Cabezón, Luis. "El guitón Honofre novela picaresca riojana." *Cuadernos de Kabemayor* 4 (2006):1-38.
- Cabo Aseguinolaza, Fernando, ed. *El guitón Onofre*. Gobierno de la Rioja, 1995.
- . "El Guitón Honofre" y el modelo picaresco." *Revista de literatura* 48.96 (1986): 367-286.
- Cresswell, Tim. "The vagrant/vagabond: The curious career of a mobile subject." In *Geographies of mobilities: Practices, spaces, subjects*. Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman, eds. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2011. 239-254.
- Cruz, Anne J. *Discourses of Poverty: Social Reform and the Picaresque Novel in Early Modern Spain*. University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Dopico, Pablo. "Espustos de papel. La historieta 'underground' española." *Arbor* 187.Extra\_2 (2011): 169-181.
- Echevarría, Roberto González. *Celestina's Brood: Continuities of the Baroque in Spanish and Latin American Literatures*. Duke University Press, 1993.
- Eisner, Will. *La narración gráfica*. Norma, 1998.
- Eoff, Sherman. "The picaresque psychology of Guzmán de Alfarache." *Hispanic Review* (1953): 107-119.
- González, Gregorio. *El Guitón Onofre*. ed. de F. Cabo Biblioteca Rioja: 1995.
- Lázaro-Carreter, Fernando. *Lazarillo de tormes en la picaresca*. Ariel, 1983.
- Maia, Rita Bueno. "Pintando la picaresca: Lazarillo de Goya la (re) construcción del pícaro y el moldear de los personajes literarios." *Lectores, ediciones y audiencia: la recepción en la literatura hispánica*. Academia Editorial del Hispanismo, 2008.
- Maravall, José Antonio. *La literatura picaresca desde la historia social (siglos XVI y XVII)*. Madrid: Taurus, 1986.
- McCloud, Scott. *Understanding comics*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 1993.
- McLane, Charles Preston. *Alessandro Magnasco and the Painterly Picaresque*. Diss. Florida

State University, 2006.

- Schlickers, Sabine. "Gregorio Gonzalez: El Guitón Honofre (1604)." In. *La novela picaresca: concepto genérico y evolución del género (siglos XVI y XVII)*. Meyer-Minnemann, Klaus, and Sabine Schlickers, eds. Vol. 54. Iberoamericana Editorial, 2008. 177-192.
- Schmidt, Leoni. "Complexities of migration: picaresque drawing." *South African Journal of Art History* 22.2 (2007): 1-13.
- Sieber, Harry. *The picaresque*. Vol. 31. Routledge, 2017.
- Tomás, José Miguel Oltra. "Los modelos narrativos el *El Guiton Honofre*, de Gregorio González." *Cuadernos de investigación filológica* 10 (1984): 55-76.
- Tomlinson, Janice A. and Welles, Marcia L. "Picturing the Picaresque: *Lazarillo* and Murillo's *Four Figures on a Step*." In *The Picaresque: Tradition and Displacement*. Giancarlo Maiorino, ed. Vol. 12. U of Minnesota Press, 1996. 66-85.
- Wicks, Ulrich. "Onlyman." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 8.3 (1975): 21-47.