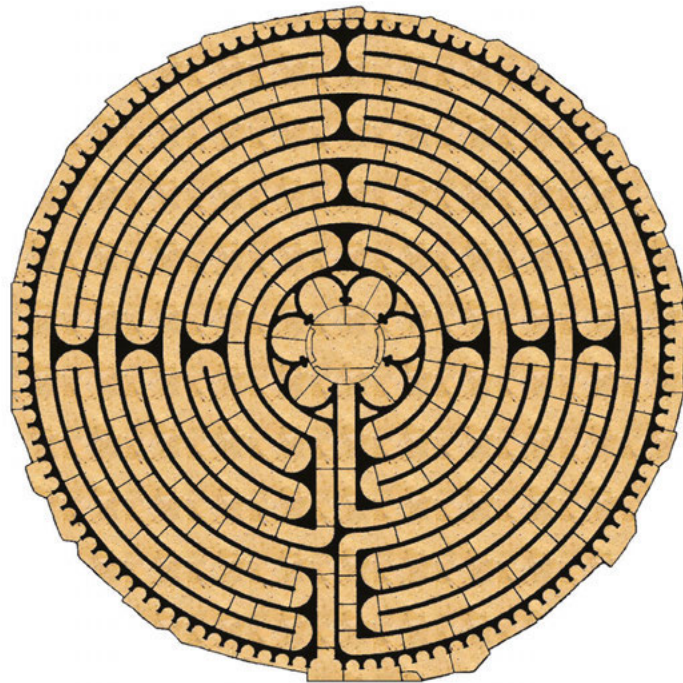


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Edward H. Friedman, editor. *A Companion to the Spanish Picaresque Novel*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Tamesis, 2022. ISBN: 978-1855663671. 240 pp.

The criticism of picaresque literature is having a revival in the last few years, both in Spanish- and English-speaking academia. Works such as Barbara Fuchs's *Knowing Fictions* (2020), the volume on *Burlas picarescas* in the series *Antología de la literatura burlesca del Siglo de Oro*, edited by Victoriano Roncero López (2020), Jorge Téllez's *The Picaresque and the Writing Life in Mexico* (2021), Daniele Arciello and Juan Matas Caballero's (eds.) *Pícaros y picarismo: nuevos estudios en torno a la picaresca, desde sus orígenes hasta la actualidad* (2023), and Edward H. Friedman's *A Companion to the Spanish Picaresque Novel* (2022), all speak to this interest.

Friedman's companion collects sixteen essays written by fifteen scholars, most of whom hold positions at universities in the United States, and some of whom have held long careers with scholarly work on early modern Spanish literature, such as Enrique García Santo-Tomás, Anne J. Cruz, and Hilaire Kallendorf. A short foreword sets the main interests of the discussion that follows, starting with a brief definition of the term "picaresque," and explains the overall structure of the book. The first three chapters, by Edward H. Friedman, Anne J. Cruz, and Marta Albalá Pelegrín, offer a preliminary exposition to the métier, discussing the problems surrounding the definition of the genre and its ancient and more immediate literary predecessors. In this sense, Cruz makes important work tracing the origins of the Spanish picaresque novel as based on classical authors Lucian, Aesop, Apuleius, and Petronius, drawing from them some of its most important features such as its "satirical language, its episodic structure, and its narrator-protagonist who survives by his wits in a corrupt society" (8).

The next chapters, by J. A. Garrido Ardila, Howard Mancing, and Friedman, offer new readings of the canonical Spanish picaresque novels: the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), and Francisco de Quevedo's *La vida del Buscón llamado don Pablos* (1626). The next group of chapters continues with readings of five novels generally studied as picaresque, Francisco López de Úbeda's *Libro de entretenimiento de la pícaro Justina* (1606), where Brian M. Phillips pays attention to the use of iconographic symbolism in the frontispiece. Enrique García Santo-Tomás examines Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo's *La hija de Celestina* (1612), Vicente Pérez de León comments on Cervantes's approach to the subgenre in both his narrative and dramatic work, John C. Parrack explores Vicente Espinel's *Marcos de Obregón* (1618), Antón García-Fernández investigates Carlos García's *La desordenada codicia de los bienes ajenos* (1619), and Faith S. Harden analyzes the anonymous *Estebanillo González* (1646). The four final articles by Hilaire Kallendorf, José Luis Gastañaga Ponce de León, Richard Squibbs, and Andrés Zamora provide

the reader with an overview of different critical perspectives and other lines of research to study the picaresque genre beyond the Spanish Golden Age tradition.

This volume is a great tool for the study of a crucial subgenre in the history of the Spanish literature, of interest not only to students but also to scholars looking for a well informed and updated revision of the picaresque and the history of its criticism, as can be seen in its twenty-three pages of bibliography engaging both classic and very recent studies of early modern literature and the picaresque. The articles offering readings of novels contain a good summary of the primary text along with an original thesis that combined help to identify previous and potential themes for research, such as its Greco-Romans origins, and its reappropriation in Colonial American texts, giving voice to the *criollo*. The variety of theoretical frames used by the contributors make this companion an excellent reference to approach literary works in or related to the subgenre.

As an example, the first article by Friedman, “The picaresque as a genre” (pp. 1-6) includes a list of research questions that aims to cover the interests of this wide-ranging scholarship, questions that could potentially foster more reflection and interpretation by students interested in this literature. There is also a selective bibliography of book-length studies on the genre from the 1960s to the most recent work in 2022. Additionally, it features a list of recommended reviews and short publications to “gain a sense of the discussions and debates” (4), ranging from renowned authors such as Fernando Lázaro Carreter, Alexander A. Parker, Edmond Cros, Claudio Guillén, Francisco Rico, to the most recent authors working on this field, such as Barbara Fuchs, Jorge Téllez, Anne J. Cruz, and David Lozano Mañero. Finally, Edward H. Friedman offers an open and flexible list of twenty features of the genre that can help to engage many literary works and artworks of different media in the discussion of the picaresque in very fruitful ways.

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