The Great Icons of the Lazarillo: The Bull, the Wine, the Sausage and the Turnip

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1. CRITICAL REMARKS

This analysis of Lazarillo's oppression by the blindman, and of the boy's struggle against (and victory over) his master, is part of a longer study which will deal with the book at length and with certain significant aspects of contemporary critical theory. The purpose of such a study will be twofold: to establish the objectivity of the text and to assert the primacy of literary analysis. By objectivity of the text I mean the significance of the literary artifact, that essential, constitutive property which the critic must uncover. Consequently the contrary assertion, that the critic can use the text as a neutral framework into which different meanings can be projected, is totally rejected. The affirmation that meaning is the constitutive property of the text is, in fact, the basis of my argument. I shall argue that any text has grown from a semantic soil whose essence is historical. For example, we could establish a meaning for the term Bull by looking to its different usages in a contemporary dictionary, thus discovering its nuclear semes, its cl asses emes, etc. But the sememe which will give semantic value to the lexeme Bull, will have very little to do with the icon Bull as used in the 16th century novel Lazarillo de Tormes. The reason is obvious: the term Bull carried a series of connotations that inevitably had became closely linked with it through the experience of contemporary life, and social and political events shared by the author and his readers of the 16th Century. Thus their language had a dimension which has been lost and can only be recovered through historical reconstruction. Obviously there are, apart from its zoological content, some universal characteristics of the metaphor Bull which we could consider as a general frame of meaning: «the bull may be linked with the active, masculine principle... the bull, like the he-goat, is a symbol of the father.» But these archetypal generalizations are the farthest removed from the concrete meaning of the text, precisely because this text is a vehicle of communication.
To establish, then, the poetical sense of verbal icons we must see them, as we have asserted above, in their semantic landscape as we seek out their historical roots. What was the Bull for the Spaniard of the mid-sixteenth century? It was one of the animals associated with witchcraft with the Devil. It was an emblem of rivers. It was, due to a raging controversy between the reformers of Trent (who wanted to suppress bullfighting under pain of excommunication) and the Spanish Crown (which rejected foreign interference in this most Spanish of public spectacles), a symbol of nationalistic passion. These meanings of the sign Bull were as much the property of the anonymous author of the Lazarillo as was the meaning of a particular piece of furniture associated with the lexeme Table. Thus poetic language becomes a vehicle of communication which imposes itself both on the author and his reader. The freedom of the creator consists only in enriching the term’s meaning by association with other terms, equally rich, and through which the writer forms the literary system which we call a text. To continue with other examples, I shall argue that the lexemes Sausage and Turnip had, among others, a very definite obscene meaning at the time: they were used as images of the male sexual organ. Both were part of colloquial Spanish and their obscenity carried strong comical force. In order that they be accepted in their context we must see them, obviously, in the general metaphorical system of the novella. But I feel confident that the reader will find that their interrelation is not far fetched and that, through their association, all the sardonic force of the author’s attack on the imperial values of the Castillian caste can be recovered from the semantic ruins of long forgotten meanings.

This system of interrelated icons, its structural units, constitute the work’s poetic language. They form a «langue» (a competence), of which the text is a «parole» (a performance). As competence it has a historical nature independent of both the author and the reader, and, of course, of the contemporary critic whose aim is precisely to reconstruct its meaning. We call this reconstruction literary analysis. As an historical reality the language is colored with social, racial and theological values. Through an appropriate lens we can discover these different systems embedded in the text and give to it a progressively richer and fuller meaning. In each case, however, the critic discovers only what is already there. But the careful consideration of these different systems and of their possible organization in a hierarchy, would bring us too far from the modest limits of this introduction, which aims only to give a brief outline of what will be, I hope, a longer study.


The first treatise, which develops the relationship between the blindman and the boy, seems to me, not only to contain the most expressive images of the novella, but also to create the mood which will pervade the rest of the book. In fact, I shall endeavor to show that we find in it a system of images which give us, through incomparable comic skill and a masterful command of language, a grimmer and darker view of the world than any conveyed by the most austere ascetics or the more acerbic novelists of the period. For this reason I made this episode the central piece in my analysis.

The episode of the blindman and the boy, together with most of the stories that this treatise contains, belong to immemorial folklore, and scholars as distinguished as Foulché-Delbosc, Van Kraemper, Bataillon, María Rosa Lida, Francisco Ayala, and Fernando Lázaro Carreter, to mention only the most significant names, have traced their sources to medieval, classical and oriental traditions. Stephen Gilman and Frank Durand have offered an excellent analysis of the manner in which the comic element is used in the context of the book as a whole, and of its unifying value in building an extremely solid structure with almost exclusively alien materials. In my opinion, however, this humor is an extreme form of sarcasm which embodies a sardonic, almost macabre view of the world in which obscenity is mixed with blasphemy to convey the author’s subversive message. Obviously, obscenity and blasphemy could not be freely expressed in one of the most repressive moments of Spanish history, and we can only find them through a careful examination of certain literary signs in the book. Professor Frank Durand, in his «The Author and Lázaro: Levels of Comic Meaning» writes: «There is a danger, I readily admit, of imputing nonexistent meanings to a text, and of over-complicating the reader’s response.» I will test this danger to its limits in the pages which follow, and I shall risk it not with courage, but with something approaching critical temerity. I dare to submit, however, that the systematic view contained in my analysis will give us a coherent and, I hope, a convincing view of the text.

I shall dwell on three points in my analysis of the relationship between Lázaro and the blind beggar; the image of the Bull as a metaphorical expression of the blindman’s character; the function of Wine as a literary sign which, although introduced in this treatise, pervades and unifies the whole book; and the obscene character of the Sausage-Turnip episode, which we shall show to be not the innocent joke which critics have unanimously celebrated, but the sexual expression of a conflict of wills.

2.1. THE BLINDMAN AS BULL

2.1.1. The Bull by the Tormes

The Bull’s image opens and closes the episode. In the very first moment of Lázaro’s relationship with the blind man his new master is identified with a famous statue of a bull through a metonymy of causality. By the river Tormes there is a well-known stone animal, related to the Guisando bulls, vestiges of the Vetomas and Carpetañas Tribes
of the first and second centuries B.C. The blind beggar tells the boy: «Lázaro, llega el oído a este toro y oirá gran ruido dentro del.» («Lázaro, put your ear against this bull and you will hear a loud noise inside it.») The boy does so and the brutal master gives him such a blow against the animal that, Lázaro says, the pain of its cornada (thrust with its horn) lasted more than three days. Here the statuc is referred to as el diablo del toro (that devil of a bull), the adjective adding a somewhat sinister character to it. As we shall see, the hardness of the stone reappears throughout their relationship and, progressively, not only identifies metaphorically the blindman with the animal, but finally (and that is the lesson which Lázaro learns from him) with the boy himself, who will outlast the man in resilience, hardness, and brutality. This metaphorical identification is completed in the closing act of the episode.

On a rainy evening Lázaro, ill-treated and brutalized, takes the old man to a stone-column in the plaza of Ecalona, and, hiding behind it, tells him that since the street is full of water he must jump under the portico to a stone-column in the plaza of Ecalona, and, hiding behind it, tells pilar, y doy un salto y póngome detrás del poste, como quien espera tope de toro. » («I placed him directly in front of the pillar, jumped across, and set myself behind the same column, like a matador waiting the onslaught of the bull.») The blindman jumped like an old goat (cabrón), broke his head, and fell backwards half dead. Not only is he, then, identified with the bull, but also with the cabrón, a term strongly reminiscent of witchcraft in the sixteenth century, and consequently, with the same diabolical associations which we found in the bull. Indeed, the whole point of the episode is to emphasize the parallelism of the scenes (the striking of the boy against the bull; the striking of the old man-bull against the boy) and to show how, by becoming like him, Lázaro has assimilated his master's hardnless and outgrown him.

2.1.2. Castile as a Bull

But several brief remarks are necessary to achieve a broader understanding of the semantic value of the metaphor. In a primary sense, the bull is a symbol of innate, sexual energy, of the masculine principle in its purity (that is to say, with no mixture of femininity) and, consequently, like the he-goat, of the Father. In classical mythology the bull is also a personification of rivers, and in this case, placed over the Torres, there can be little doubt that it is linking Lázaro to the world he belongs to, and where literally he was born. Sebastian de Covarrubias himself, the great linguist who wrote the first Spanish dictionary, the Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española (1611), asserts that the Romans, who built this bridge, put the bull on it: «yesta [la figura del toro] es cierto averse puesto quando se hizo dicha puente, y en el toro querian significar ser el dicho río caudaloso.» («and it is true that it was placed there when the said bridge was built, and the bull was meant to symbolize the full river.») Covarrubias, «Toro de la puente de Salaman-
ca». But this fusion of the symbolic bull with Castilian soil had a deep, almost violent significance during the period in which the Lazarillo was written. Spain had been identified with the Bull since Roman times, and Strabo had asserted that its territory had the shape of a bull’s hide. But during the sixteenth century, and especially from the preparation of the Council of Trent and its moral reform of public spectacles, the bullfight had become the center of a passionate controversy in which the Spaniards felt their national and religious pride had been seriously offended. The ecclesiastical attack on the national sport as a pagan and immoral event culminated in the 1560’s and 1570’s with the Papal edict of November 1567 which excommunicated anybody participating in or attending bullfights. It would take Philip III twenty years to reverse the papal decision. Of course we must realize that the Emperor Charles himself had taken great pride in his accomplishment as a «matador,” and that for more than a century the bullfight had been closely associated with religious events. For example, in Cáceres there was a Brotherhood devoted to the Virgin’s cult, and no gentleman could join who had not proved himself to be an accomplished bullfighter. And in 1622, to celebrate the canonization of St. Teresa, St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, more than two hundred bulls were killed, some of them, as in Palencia, inside the cathedral itself. If we attempt to envisage this general atmosphere as the appropriate emotional and consequently semantic background of the image of the bull, we can well understand the richness of the metaphor. This diabolical bull is not only the blindman, the Torres, and Salamanca, but Castile itself which, with its horns, is teaching Lázaro that he has no mother, that he is alone, and that this mythical monster is ready to attack him during his helpless childhood. Lázaro says as much. Immediately after the cornada he comments: Parescómo que en aquel instante desperté de la simpleza en que, como niño dormido, estaba. Dije entre mi: «Verdad dice éste, que me cumple avisar el ojo y avisar, pues sólo soy, y pensar cómo me sepa valer.»

(It seemed to me that in that instant I awoke from the naivety in which, as a child, I had been sleeping. I said to myself: «This fellow is right in charging me to sharpen up my eye and to take stock of myself. Now that I am on my own, I must consider how to get along in this world.»

2.1.3. Toro corrido: Lust and Blasphemy

The blindman is metaphorically, not only a bull, but he is a toro corrido: a bull who knows the arena, that is to say, all the dirty tricks. In familiar language toro corrido meant «a person who is very difficult to trick because he is very experienced» («sujeto es dificultoso de engañar por su mucha experiencia» Martin Alonso, Enciclopedia del idioma, Vol. 11, «Toro Corrido,» Fig. Fam.). And this is indeed an apt description of Lázaro’s master. All through the book Lázaro will talk about him with undisguised admiration: «Vuestra Merced sepa que,

ca».
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2.2. The wine as icon

The old beggar starves Lazaro, and the tricks (burlas) through which the boy manages to obtain food and drink from such a formidable enemy are the subject of most of the treatise. They only indirectly interest us here, and we shall examine only two episodes. The first one I have selected because it introduces one of the more significant images of the book—the Wine—and as such is essential to this study; but also because, reinforcing the image blindman-bull, it introduces a very significant character.

2.2.1. Heaven's Crash

The old man kept his wine in a jug, and Lazaro devised several ploys to get to it. The language he uses to express his love for his wine helps us to see how, in the miserable life of the mistreated child, the sweet wine becomes a celestial joy, a heavenly gift. In fact, as the second treatise will make clear, this wine is really the sacramental wine, the «blood of Christ» which opens the door to celestial happiness. Drifting it, Lazaro gave it «a couple of silent kisses» («daba un par de besos callados»); it had for him the attraction of a «magnet» («piedra imán»); when he was deprived of it, he was dying for it («moría por él»). He devised different ways to get to the wine, but the old man found him out. Finally, to keep the jug safe, the beggar kept it tightly between his legs while they ate dinner so that it hung close to his body. And covering it with his hand he was preventing (or so he thought) the resourceful boy from getting at it in any way. But Lazaro appeals to an extreme recourse. He makes a tiny hole in the bottom of the jug, and covers it with wax. When they sit down for a meal Lazaro complains of the cold and crawls «between the legs of the old man» where the jug is hanging, and where they kept a «small fire» («pobrecilla lumbre») for heating. In this position, and with the wax melted from the fire, the boy tested his beloved liquor. He describes his joy in this almost ecstatic way:

Estando recibiendo aquellos dulces tragos, mi cara puesta hacia el cielo, un poco cerrar los ojos por mejor gustar el sabroso licor, sintió el desesperado vicio que ahora tenía el tiempo de tomar de mi venganza.

(While I was taking in those sweet draughts with my head turned to heaven, and with my eyes slightly closed in order to enjoy the full flavor of the delicious poison, the desperate blind man perceived that this was his chance for revenge.)

With confident joy, the boy, whose face is gratefully turned toward the heavens, seems to be receiving from Heaven itself this almost celestial ambrosia. The answer from Heaven did not keep him waiting: the blindman, who had guessed the burla and found the leak, raised the jug and broke it over the relaxed and happy («descuidado y gozosho») ooy. The pieces cut his face, and the blow broke his teeth, which he lost forever. Lazaro says: «Verdaderamente me pareció que el cielo, con todo lo que en él hay, me había caído encima» («Truly it seemed that heaven, and everything in it, had crashed down upon me»).

2.2.2. The Cow-Mother

I do not think that the author needs to have known Freud and Jung or to have studied contemporary psychoanalytical and myth-criticism for us to see here an effort, on the part of Lazaro, to recover the lost paradise of motherly love, metaphorically represented by the wine. More surprising, however, might seem my assertion that a careful analysis of the scene, in all the complexity of its elaborated construction, will show us that the author does this by presenting an iconic transformation of the mythical bull, a folk emblem of fierce masculinity, into a mythical cow. Let us recall for a moment the scene described previously: The boy crouches between the legs of the old man, under the jug, and in front of the fire. It is very difficult to imagine him in that position,
and indeed, a well-known critic has used this description as an argument against the «realism» of the novel. 17 I agree with González Palencia that it is very strange, but I think that this very old folk motif has been introduced here for rhetorical reasons which are fully coherent with the poetic system of the novel, and have nothing to do with what we usually call «realism.» Let us place these elements in the context of our already established images: we have, between the legs of our bull, a fire and hanging jug. Gonzalo Correa, in his impressive Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales, includes this extraordinary saying: «El vino es la teta del viejo» 18 («Wine is the teat of the old man»), and José María Sbarbi give us the version «El vino es la leche del viejo» 19 («Wine is the milk of the old man»). Both show in the colloquial Spanish of the Golden Age, wine was associated, in certain cases, with teats and old men. 20 Since, as I am going to show immediately, bonfire, furnace, oven, etc. are used in the Lazarillo as images of the vagina, it becomes clear that what the whole complex image suggests is that Lázaro is trying to milk the jug-teat of the old man which implies the wish to change the Bull into a Cow, to recover his only experience of heavenly joy, the lost love of the mother.

2.3. WILLS AT WAR: THE SAUSAGE AND THE TURNIP

The other burla which I want to look into is the apparently naive one of changing a sausage into a turnip. The protagonists are at an inn in Escalona, a Castilian town where the blindman will finally meet his doom through Lázaro’s sly revenge. The beggar first asks the boy to roast a sausage and then gives him money to buy some wine in a tavern. The hungry boy cannot resist the temptation and takes the sausage with him. Finding by the fire a little turnip «skinny and shriveled, which must have been thrown away because it was unfit for the pot» he leaves the beggar «trying to roast the turnip which had escaped the stew because of its worthlessness,» and goes to search for the wine.

Estábamos en Escalona, villa del duque della, en un mesón, y dijóme un pedazo de longaniza que le asaso... había cebé el fuego un nabo pequeño, larguillo y ruinso, y tal que no por ser para la olla debía ser echado allí... saqué la longaniza y muy presto metí el sobredicho nabo en el asador. El cual mi amo, dándome el dinero para el vino, tomó y comenzó a dar vueltas al fuego, queriendo asar al que de ser cocido por sus demásitos había escapado...

When he returns, he finds that the blindman has made a sandwich with the turnip and is trying to eat it. When the old man discovers the nature of his presumed sausage, he goes into a wild rage and accuses the boy of the burla. How could he have done it, argues Lázaro, if he was away? But the old man, mad with fury, prays the boy’s mouth open and smells his throat:

Levantóse y así mismo por la cabeza y llegóse a olerme. Y como debió sentir el huelgo, a uso de buen podenco, por mejor satisfacerse de la verdad, y con la gran azogía que llevaba, así dándome con las manos, abrasé la boca más de su derecho y desatontadamente metí la nariz. La cual él tenía larga y afilada, y a aquella razón, con el enfojo, se había aumentado de un palmo; con el pico de la cual me llegó a la guilla... antes que el mal ciego sacase de mi boca su trompa, tal alteración sintió mi estómago, que le dio con el huelgo de ella, de suerte que su nariz y la negra mal maxcada longaniza a un tiempo salieron de mi boca... Hicieronnos amigos la mesonera y los que allí estaban, y con el vino que para beber le había de un palmo; con el pico de la cual me llegó a la guilla... antes que el mal ciego donaires, diciendo: —Por verdad, más vino me gusta este mozo en lavatorios al cabo del año, que yo bebo en dos. A lo menos, Lázaro, eres en más de lo que se da a un padre, que por ello he de despertar, mas el vino mil te ha dado la vida. —Y luego contaba cuántas veces me había descalabrado y arpa la cara y con vino luego sanaba. —Yo te digo —dijo — que si un hombre en el mundo ha de ser bienaventurado con vino, que serás tú.

(He got up, seized by the head, and came close to smell me. He must have sniffed my breath, like a good bloodhound, and in order to verify his suspicions and to relieve the great distress he felt, he took my jaws in his hands and opened my mouth far wider than it was supposed to open. Now his nose was long and thin, and with the wretched tint he had enlarged it a hand’s breadth. He poked the end of it all the way down my gullet.

Because of such unpleasant manipulations, Lázaro in a fit of nausea,

discharged the stolen goods in his face so that his nose and that hastily chewed sausage left my mouth at the same instant.

The beggar gave the boy such a beating that,

if a crow had not been attracted by the nose I do not think that he would have let me off with my life.

The new arrivals calm them, and the blindman washes his face and throat with the wine, accompanying the cure with a witticism which will be proved prophetic later in the story:

At last, Lázaro, you owe more to wine than to your father: he gave you life only once, and wine has given you your life a thousand times... I tell you, he said, if any man in the world is going to be lucky with wine, it will be you.

The metaphors of bread and wine are among the most important poetic structures in the book, and especially so the one of the wine, which really, as we mentioned before, pervades and organizes the totality of the text. Obviously, in such a violent religious satire as the Lazarillo, the primary meaning of bread and wine is a sacramental one. In these quotes it seems that the style itself is a parody of the gospels:
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2.3.1. Fire and Cooking

The different pieces of food here mentioned and the act of cooking itself are among the most popular and well-known obscene symbols of Golden Age colloquial Spanish and, indeed, some of them have their origin in the great satirists of classical literature, especially as Méndez y Pelayo had already established with regard to Lucian, who was present in the atmosphere of the schools of the sixteenth century. Not only the Lazarillo, but the entire genre seems to have been deeply stamped with Lucian's influence: «The Lucian spirit really dominates the whole of picaresque literature. The autobiographical character, which gives such a cruel force to the narrative of the misfortunes and humiliations of the hero, was learned in The Ass and the True History. In this sense, the Lazarillo, itself [. . .] inherits the influence of Lucian.» In fact the blasphemous irony of Lucian's religious satire and his use of animal icons as instruments of his destructive sarcasm are among the most remarkable characteristics of our novella.

It is not surprising, then, to discover that «the pot of fire» as an icon of sexual intercourse comes from Lucian. In Lucius, the Ass we are told how Lucius arrives at Hypata, in Thessaly, and lodges in the house of a miser, Hipparchos. He stays there for some time, and one night he watches Palestrina, the maid, standing by the fire cooking dinner. Excited by her gracious movements, he tells her: «Palestrina, my dear, you give your rump and your pot such a nice rhythm!... I envy the man who's had a chance to dip into that.» To which the girl, not in the least bashful, answers: «I am steaming hot. You just touch it and you'll get a burn that'll keep you right alongside me forever.»

But we find this usage of «cooking» and «pot», «firepan,» as indeed «fire,» «oven,» and food materials like «sausage,» «turnip,» and to complete the semantic value of our scene, even «nose,» in many sixteenth century texts. A good repertory of these meanings can be found in Cela's Diccionario secreto. I have preferred, however, to take almost all my examples from that inexhaustible source of popular wit, Quevedo's satirical poetry. This same sense of «fire-female genitals» we find in a well-known poem in which a Count meets a scrubbing girl washing her laundry in a river. With great courtesy he asks her if she is cold. She answers that she always carries with her a firepan. The Count asks her if he could kindle his candle in it, to which the girl, raising her skirts, replies: «Please, your Highness, blow this firebrand.»

Estaba una fregona por enero
metida hasta los muslos en el río,
lavando los paños, con tal arte y brio,
que mil necios tráen al retortero.

Un cierto conde, alegre y placentero,
le preguntó con gracia: «¿Tenéis tío?»
Respondió la fregona: «Sólo niño,
siempre llevo consigo un brasero.

El conde, que era astuto y supo dónde,
le dijo, haciendo rueda como paño,
que le encendiese un cirio que tenía.

Y dijo entonces la fregona al conde,
alzándose las faldas hasta el rabo:
«Pues sople este tizón vuéseñor.»

A stronger, and an especially irreverent example, is contained in a parodic description of the love affair between Venus and Mars (probably also influenced by Lucian who was, with Seneca and Martial, one of the great classical models of Quevedo): «Herrería es de por sí / la diosa. hija del agua / yunque ya de muchos golpes / horno ya de muchas caldas» («Smithy is by herself / The Goddess, daughter of the Sea / Anvil which has received many blows / Furnace which has melted many irons»). Venus’ «anvil» has received more blows than her husband’s, and her «furnace» has melted more irons than Vulcan’s.

2.3.2. Sausage and Turnip

Sausage and turnip are even more easily established images; so obvious are they, that we could multiply the examples indefinitely. I shall limit myself to two. In a poem about a wedding night, Quevedo tells us how the anxious bridegroom wanted to take a potion of Spanish
fly to prepare for the event. By mistake, however, he drank a purge which was prepared for an elderly gentleman, who, in turn, drank the other beverage. The results of the events can easily be guessed. What interests us, however, are the not very delicate remarks of the bride. She complains of her husband’s passivity which prevents him from feeding her, and hopes that his «sausage,» which has left her fasting tonight, could some day satisfy her gluttony:

La barriga soñolienta
y la humanidad con murría
para dieta se acostaba
de quien esperaba gula.

Sin duda quedarás bueno
aunque yo quede en ayunas;
mas días hay que longaeizas
y más si cuentan las tuyas. 24

«Turnip» used in the same sense is almost as common. Quevedo has a whole poem built on the double sense resulting from using flowers and vegetables in both their proper and metaphorical (sexual) sense. The satire ends in a frank reference to «turnips» as male organs. We find here in a few verses several of the elements included in the Lazarillo fragment. Some «noses» come to smell the flowers. They (the flowers = femail organs) are frightened and join forces to fight the «noses» away. But Quevedo encourages the turnips to aim at the women, whom he now clearly identifies as whores and bawds:

Y para la batalla
que quieran darse
 aparecen sus flores
—Aprecian los nabos
 tías y madres
 la puntera
 a las alca-madres
 y güetas— tías. 25

With these semantic qualifications, then, the reading of the scene should be quite simple. We could, I think, see in this complex interplay of images a sexual vilification of the boy by the brutal beggar. It is possible, and indeed probable, that something like this is suggested. Emphasis has been placed on the lustful character of the old man. The bull itself, as a personification of erotic aggression, is a well-known element in folk humor. The fact that the boy cooks the old man’s sausage could well be interpreted as a form of sexual abuse, and the nose, which grows a foot, thrust into the depth’s of Lazarro’s throat, is an image of oppression difficult to disregard. But, even if we accept a general shadow of sexual brutality, I think that such an interpretation as the best, and the only one, leaves several components unexplained. After all, the boy was attracted to the sausage; he stole it and ate it; and, what do we do with the pitiful, skinny turnip? Why did he exchange it? It seems to me that the first and most important meaning of the episode is the metaphorical expression of a collision of wills which, in a way immensely popular in the Spanish colloquial tradition, is expressed as a conflict of genital organs. Let us not forget that the scene takes place at a moment in the book when a silent war is raging between the two, and immediately after which Lázaro will achieve his resounding (literally) victory over his cruel master. As a preparation for this climax we have a grotesque and tremendously powerful scene. The blindman imposes his organ on the boy (makes him «cook» it). Lázaro tries to rob him of it and absorb it, giving the old man his own weak one which cannot yet be «cooked.» The master retaliates with a brutal assertion of his sexual superiority. Lázaro says later that he wished he had cut off the offensive nose with his teeth. This is wishful thinking, an expression of his will to castrate his father-enemy. He does not dare to do so yet, but soon he will impose his virility on the old man, this time in the world of reality and not of fantasy. Like a bullfighter he will call him to his huge, solid stone-sword and leave him, half dead and with his head cracked, on that Castilian soil whose brutal obscenity has been so powerfully expressed. By using this rich imagery in his recreation of the Spanish world of the mid-sixteenth century, the author makes us feel with ominous intensity the forces that are confronting Lázaro, and the sinister brutality of a society which is thrusting its horns at him and that he must, somehow, learn to torear.

2.4. THE KILLING OF THE BULL. THE COLUMN AS STONE-SWORD

The text of Lázaro’s final revenge tells us, literally, that he provoked the blindman to jump against the column just as a bullfighter provokes a bull:

Yo leveño derecho de un pilar o poste de piedra que en la plaza estaba, sobre el cual y sobre otros cargaban saladezos de aquellas casas... Yo le puse bien derecho enfrente del pilar, y doy un salto y pongo el poste de la espada. Y sin que empuje tope de toro...

(I led him under the portico and took him straight to a stone column, or pillar, one of those that supported the overhanging part of the upper stories of the buildings on the plaza... I placed him directly in front of the pillar, jumped across, and set myself behind the same column, like a matador awaiting the onslaught of the bull...) 26

The column is itself part of the plaza of Escalona. The author has taken care to show both the organic integration of the column with the rest of the plaza (one of those that supported the overhanging part of the upper stories of the buildings of the plaza), and the aristocratic character of Escalona: «Estábamos en Escalona, villa del duque della, en un
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Javier Herrera

NOTES


3 Already in the late nineteenth century M. Fatio in his well-known Etudes sur L'Espagne (Paris, 1887) had asserted that our short novel was really a collection of disparate elements. The book was a little more than a collection of folk tales and traditional fictional material: "L'imagination ne joue ici qu'un rôle secondaire, et plusieurs chapitres de cette nouvelle, qui semble si originale et qui tient en effet à certains égard, on dit pris ailleurs." (p. 166). R. Foulché-Delboeuf, although correcting some of the indications of M. Fatio, shows the existence of medieval sources for some of the more important episodes of the story. Especially interesting in his reproduction of the illustration for a manuscript of the Decretales (first half of the fourteenth century) in which he gives a picture of the blind man's guide drinking his wine through a straw (R. Foulché-Delboeuf, Remarques sur Lazarillo de Tormes, Revue hispanique [1890], 81-97). In fact, the relationship between a blind man and a mischievous valet was a very popular motif for centuries before the Lazarillo was written, and was the subject, not only of tales and jokes, but also of religiously and laconically drawn literatures romanesca depuis le moyen âge jusqu'au XVIIIe siècle (Complete issue of the Societas Scientiarum Fennica, Commentationes Humanarum Literarum, XIII, 6, Helsinki, 1946), 41-131. The sources, however, go back to classical antiquity, and after Leon Minolti's article "Lazarillo de Tormes et les Metamorphoses d'Apuile" (Bulletin Hispanique [1963], 322-333) there can be little doubt that the Metamorphoses played a significant part in the general conception of the book and in certain concrete episodes. The folk and literary tradition have, then, been established as well by similarity of solidity, and, as we have seen, extend back more than a millennium. It also embraces most of the episodes of the Lazarillo, as recent criticism has proved (among the essential articles in this respect, M. R. Lida de Malek, "La función del cuerpo popular en el Lazarillo de Tormes", actas del primer congreso internacional de hispanistas [Oxford: 1964], 349-349; Marcel Baratillon, Nuevos y fundamentales del Lazarillo de Tormes [Madrid: 1968], 27-30; Francisco Ayala, El Lazarillo: reexaminado [Madrid: Cuadernos Taurus, 1971], pp. 36-79). Finally, a discussion and a comprehensive analysis of most of these sources can be found in Lázaro Carreter's Lazarillo de Tormes (Madrid: 

4 Stephen Gilman, "The Death of Lazarillo de Tormes", PMLA (1966), 149-166; Frank Durand, "The Author and Lazarillo: Levels of Comic Meaning", Bulletin of Hispanic Studies (1968), 89-101. Gilman's article is one of the most profound and significant contributions to the interpretation of the Lazarillo and I am pleased to acknowledge here my indebtedness to his brilliant insights.

5 Loc. cit., 91.


8 Ríos. p. 70; Markley, p. 20.

9 The bibliography on this subject is, of course, immense. For a synthesis, see J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols [quoted in note 2].

10 The best general information is contained in José María de Cossio, Los Toros, 3 vol. (Madrid: 1943-1947). A special edition has been done on the polemics of bullfighting contained in the book, in which abundant material about our topic can be found: Polémicas sobre la licitud y conveniencia de la fiesta (Madrid: 1944). For Andalucía and bullfighting see Ludwig Freyherr von Pastor, The History of the Papacy (St. Louis: 1891-1900), vols. XVII, pp. 206-208, XVII, pp. 33-34.

11 Ríos. p. 15; Markley, p. 9.


14 Gilman, loc. cit., p. 162.

15 Ríos. p. 18; Markley, p. 12.

16 Ríos. p. 19; Markley, p. 12.

17 Angel González Palencia, "Ejemplo el Lazarillo de Tormes", Escorial (1944), 17-23.

19 Rico, pp. 22-25; Markley, pp. 17-19.

20 Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Orígenes de la novela (1, VII), «estaba en la atmósfera de las escuelas del siglo XVI»; quoted by Lázaro Carreter, loc. cit., pp. 36, 38. In fact, it is Lázaro Carreter himself, as it should be obvious by the previous quotations, who has firmly established Lucius, The Ass, as one of the most significant sources of the Lazarillo (ibid., 28-40). In the text I translated the quote from Lázaro Carreter, p. 40.


24 Ibid., III, 39-40.

25 Ibid., III, 26-30.

26 Rico, p. 26; Markley, pp. 19-20.

27 Rico, p. 22; Markley, p. 17.