

## Literary Onomastics Studies

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Volume 5

Article 17

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1978

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### Repository Citation

Alvarez-Altman, Grace (1978) "Literary Onomastics in the Picaresque Novel "Lazarillo Des Tormes"," *Literary Onomastics Studies*: Vol. 5, Article 17.

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LITERARY ONOMASTICS IN

LAZARILLO de TORMES

Grace Alvarez-Altman\*

Criminologists have five types of moral delinquents: 1-insane, 2-instinctive, 3-impassioned, 4-occasional, 5-habitual. Roquery is less vicious than villainy. Logically there is no sharp distinction, only the point of view varies. Jame Hind, a popular highwayman in English literature who was drawn, hanged and quartered on Friday, Sept. 24, 1652 was celebrated by authors such as Hainam, Sadler and Morrell. Spaniards were the first to cultivate preponderant roquery. The French fabliaux and nouvelle might set forth traditional cheats and gallant ruses, the German "liber vagatorum" might paint the manners of thieves and vagabond, jest-books assembling tricks and tales of legendary outlaws, chap-books, beggar-books, character-books, conny-catching pamphlets (repentant tracts), prison tracts and canting books or lexicons might have roguish flavor but not in the true sense of genre introduced by Lazarillo de Tormes, a work imitated by all European countries. According to F.W. Chandler the most plagerized work in literatures was THE ENGLISH ROGUE. Early seventeenth century, which stole three fourths of its materials from the Spanish picaresque novel. One of the poems in the book reads:

\*This article is in honor of Dr. Walter Bowman, to whom this issue is dedicated.

Guzmán, Lázaro, Buscón, and Francion  
till thou appearest did shine as at  
high noon thy book's now extant:  
those that judge of wit say, they and  
Rabelais too fall short of it.

Lazarillo de Tormes, had three simultaneous editions (Antwerp, Alcalá, Burgos) in 1545 and was translated widely even into Hungarian from a former Latin translation (Job Herezer) in Danzig, in 1656. This genre written mostly in prose is autobiographical; low life in lieu of heroic is depicted, its corpus is determined by subject matter from observed reality and not ideals. Hunger is the impelling motive leading to mendicancy, begging and petty crime. The wealth of the most glorious nation (Spain under the Catholic monarchs, Charles V and Phillip II) was spent on reconquering the Peninsula from the Moors, exploration, colonization and settlement of the Americas, fighting to defend the Faith with the expulsion of the Moors and Jews. To this we add an increase in aversion to manual labor by the impoverished nobility, causing hunger to have even knocked at the door of the King's palace. The last paragraph in the book pin points the exact time of Charles the 5th's reign, 1525, when the king of France, Francis I, was prisoner in Madrid after his defeat in Pavia. Here is a unique literary genre with humor and no bitterness, as the corruption of society is seen through the eyes of a rogue passing from master to master.

Pícaro is a substantive of uncertain origin to be found in the jargon of the bullfighters with the word picadores (horsemen on

blindfolded horses who incite the bull to great anger by piercing them with pointed sticks in the back of their necks.) Pícaro is never mentioned in the novel Lazarillo de Tormes and was documented for the first time in 1545 meaning "sujeto vil y de mala vida". (evil person of immoral life). Picardía is the name of a fraternity of Rogues, meaning low, ruinous, vile action, cheating, childish, mischievousness coming from the name of the French province, known for its vagabonds, its poor and lazy individuals. In 1525 the phrase "pícaro de cocina" was one who worked in kitchens chopping and cutting meats and vegetables. Picaresco as an adjective has its first written documentation almost one hundred years after the appearance of Lazarillo de Tormes. A marked distinction is to be made for the Pícaro between VICE and MISERY. His misery might be because of his unemployment or ragged appearance. An easy girl, petty thief, temporary honest job-holder servant squire, maid, valet or butler all fit within the context of the Spanish literature for the word Pícaro. It must be something or an individual who roams (a soul, a coin, the devil himself, etc.) from master to master commenting on the society through his eyes and his point of view. In Fonseca's book Life of Christ, published in 1602 in Lisboa the prodigal son upon returning is called pícaro and so is the ragamuffin who appeared uninvited at the wedding parable. The idea of possible repentance and virtuosity is characteristic of the true pícaro of the Spanish literature.

LAZARILLO DE TORMES

Lazarillo is the diminutive of Lázaro. Since Spanish surnames do not use the article with names of rivers, De Tormes is for being born on the banks of the river Tormes. A most positive reaction against the inflated tales of chivalric prowess was seen in the picaresque novel. Lazarillo serves eight masters in about ten years. This anti-hero, innocent of ideas and concerned only with keeping alive lives by his wits, passes from master to master who keep their food under constant lock and key.

All that I could find and conceive to sustain my life: and I believe that hunger was a light to me in finding these darksome contrivances, for they say the wits are animated by it.<sup>2</sup>

González was his father's name, one of the numerous patronyms popularized during the time of the visigothic domination of Spain. It is made up of two bellicose gothic words accommodated to the Latin and romance morphology and phonetics. Gund (th) meaning "battle, combat, fight" and Alv the gothic alf, elfo or albo, spirit of nature or duende of the germanic mythology, thus "the elf of the battle" or better yet "the genius in battle" would be the perfect name for Lazarillo De Tormes due to his ingenuity in staying alive. Amazing is his battle of wit and philosophy. His mother's name Pérez may be "son of Pedro-rock, that is "rock rolling from place to place." However, by transcultural homonyms due to the Jewish influence in all walks of life

in Spain, Perez may be the name found in I-Chronicles 13: 9-11 and in Samuel 6: 6-8, given to Uzza upon dropping dead for having touched the sacred ark. Its meaning of "Broken, cracked, stricken" would be most apropos for Lazarillo. When his mother gave him away to his first master, a blind beggar, he was ten or eleven years old and his initiation into the picaresque life starts in the following manner:

Lazarus, put thine ear close to this bull  
and you shall hear a great noise inside.  
Naively I went, believing this to be so..  
he swung out his hand hard and gave my head  
a great blow against the devil of a bull,  
so that for three days the pain of the  
butting remained.<sup>3</sup>

Now from his stay with the second master, a priest who did not know Lazarus was the snake:

Lifting the stick high, thinking he had  
the snake underneath and would give it  
such a cudgelling as should kill it, with  
all his might he discharged so great a  
whack upon my head that he left me  
senseless and very badly wounded.<sup>4</sup>

If statistics prove that 75% of the World population in modern times goes to bed hungry we can only imagine what it was in the sixteenth century.

The genius in battle, the son of a rolling rock, the broken and battered one, were not names fitting to portray the misery, pathos, satire, agonies, and vicissitudes of this anti-hero. This protagonist, who amplified human frailties, crude realities needed a

name more in depth, a name to create pity, sympathy, and compassion. We would like to consider the five possibilities of the depth and impact of the name Lazarus:

I- The transitive infinitive LACERAR is a modern version of the old latin LACERARE meaning "mangle, tear in pieces, hurt, strangle," while LACERAR, the intransitive infinitive denotes "to suffer, be in deep pain." The intransitive infinitive LAZRAR "to suffer miserably" is found only in Portuguese and Spanish. LACERIA means a conglomeration of knots difficult to unwind. Even though the form LAZRAR became the most forceful, we cannot conceive nor does there exist a later LAZERUS in the Spanish due to the fact that a syncope LAZRO doesn't occur since the internal A of the last syllable (rar) is never lost. Yet to make this more bewildering we find a substantive in old Spanish LAZRADO, a gerund (lazdrar) "he who suffers tribulations and misery."

II - The English substantive LAZAR might be thought to be cognate of the Spanish LAZAR. On the other hand "a person stricken with leprosy" is the English meaning and "to tie into many knots" is the Spanish meaning.

III - LAZARUS is the only proper name attached to a character in any of the parables of Jesus. Luke 16: 20 "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full with sores...the dogs came to lick his sores." The blind beggar, first master of Lazarillo

should have been given this name, but he was too astute to fall into that pattern. More details are given of the first year training with this master than with any of the other seven.

For after God this man gave me my life,  
and although blind lighted and guided  
me in the career of living..he had a  
thousand other modes and fashions for  
getting money: he said he knew prayers  
to many and diverse effects:..he had all  
the world marching after him, especially  
the women, for they believed whatever  
he told them; from them he extracted large  
profits...and used to gain more in a  
month than a hundred blind men in a year.<sup>5</sup>

This universal force could not be given any specific name. He represented 95% or more of the World population starving and in misery. He is nameless, just like the other seven masters, reminding us of the "priviledge myth" of the Sufis in Eastern cultures and of Basilides, agnostic in Alexandria during the second century who propagated the idea that nameless entities are even more powerful.

IV - Is there an analogy with leprosy in this protagonist's name? Yes. The order of St. Lazarus, established in the twelfth century for their care in France confirms that the average life span of a person sticken with leprosy was ten years. It is exactly ten years from the time that Lazrillo de Tormes, as a ten year old child starts his roguery until he abandons it at the age of twenty.

V - The true origin of his name takes us to the Pentateuch (Genesis 15:2, Exodus 18:4, Exodus 6:23) and also to the Hagiograph



(I Chronicle 23:15, 17) the name Eliezar, Eleazar. The hebrew, "El 'azar" means "God has helped" or "God is my help." Moses was so thankful for his deliverance from the Egyptians that his second son was named Eliezar. The greek form of Eliezar is LAZAROS and the latin is LAZARO. The author has added the diminutive suffix "illo" to convey a very affectionate tone. The ragged leper whose salvation is envied by the rich man known as LAZARUS is not to be confused with the LAZARUS dating back to the sixth century. Lazarillo de Tormes lives during the reign of Charles V, whose empire equalled only that of the Roman in extension, prestige and corruption. Both the LAZARUS of Bethany and the beggar, whose lacerations were licked by the dogs are symbols of transcending poverty, malice, disease, corruption, and perversion. This is the basis of the name Lazarillo de Tormes, the outstanding picaresque protagonist, whose name added a new neologism to the Spanish vocabulary, i.e., "leader of the blind, eye-opener, one who enlightens by observations not bitter, not caustic but compassionate and merciful." Lazarillo de Tormes scales the five levels of the religious world. Of his second master the priest:

I escaped from the thunder and got into the lightening, for this blind beggar as, compared to this one he was an Alexander the great (symbol of generosity)...I say no more, except that all the meanness of the world was enclosed in this one; I know not whether it was his own invention, or if he had annexed it with the clerical habit.

Of his master the indulgence seller, whose business Martin Luther highly criticized in 1523, Lazarillo expounds:

After fooling the populace with tricks and promises he sold 3,000 indulgences.. how many of these games these cheats must play among the innocent.<sup>7</sup>

Amount derived from sale of the pardons in 1551 is supposed to have been 440,000 ducats, of which the Church recieved only 20,000.

Friars are revealed to us in depth, the chaplain with whom he spends four of his teen-age years conducted his business so wisely that Lazarillo finds himself dressing and eating almost like a gentleman. To appease his conscious he decides to serve a master outside of the religious world but quickly returns to it and marries the servant of his last master, the archpriest:

Sir, I told him I determined to stick to honest people, true it's that some of my friends more than thrice told me she (his servant woman) had three childbirths from you before I married her.<sup>8</sup>

Lazarillo de Tormes is a superhuman force (the soul of the biblical Lazarus in heaven) with human understanding, compassionate of the weaknesses and corruption of society, especially within the Religious World. The nameless masters of Lazarillo de Tormes are to be divided into two groups; the poverty stricken whose sole purpose in life is to survive and in modern times materialistic man, while the other group

comprises the religious governments. Through the eyes of a youngster, teenager and young adult, the Inquisition and readers of those days tolerated the truths and caustic realities, coated with humour and compassion, which is one of the peculiar characteristics of the Spanish Picaresque Novel.

#### NOTES

- 1 Frank Wadleigh Chandler, The Literature of Roquery, Vol. 1 (Boston; University Press, Cambridge, 1907) p. 10
- 2 The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and his Fortunes and Adversities translated by R. Boulche-Delbosc (New York: Mitchell Kennerby, 1971) p. 15
- 3 Ibid, p. 10
- 4 Ibid, p. 11
- 5 Ibid, p. 33-34
- 6 Ibid, p. 37
- 7 Ibid, p. 114
- 8 Ibid, p. 123