

## CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM TEXT TO IMAGE AND FILM:

TWO VISUAL RECREATIONS OF *LAZARILLO DE TORMES*

BY FRANCISCO DE GOYA AND FERNANDO FERNÁN GÓMEZ

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The aim of this essay is to explore the aesthetic interaction between literature, art and cinema that occurs in the relationship between one of the most famous books written in Castilian, *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus Fortunas y Adversidades*, a painting on a subject taken from that book by one of Spain's most important artists and a film based on the original text of *Lazarillo* and adapted by an acclaimed Spanish cinematographer. The hitherto anonymous sixteenth-century Castilian literary text *Lazarillo de Tormes*<sup>1</sup>, a work described by one of its editors, Victor García de la Concha<sup>2</sup>, as the most revolutionary in Spanish literature, enjoyed enormous popularity and became celebrated as the first example of the Picaresque genre, and the forerunner of the modern Spanish novel. Its lively, comic narrative appeals to the eye of the imagination, yet in spite of its powerful

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<sup>1</sup> The question of the authorship of the text has been inconclusively debated. The recent book by Mercedes Agulló Cobo, 2010, claims that there is definitive evidence that the author was Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. I am most grateful to Inmaculada Medina Barco for drawing my attention to this new publication.

<sup>2</sup> All textual quotations will be taken from the edition of *Lazarillo de Tormes* by Victor García de la Concha.

influence upon picaresque narratives in other European languages, it has had few reincarnations in visual form, a circumstance which renders the two visual versions under discussion here even more fascinating.

These are, firstly, a visual interpretation of an episode from the story of *Lazarillo* which appears in an early nineteenth-century oil painting by Francisco de Goya with the title *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, and secondly, the Spanish film *Lázaro de Tormes*, released in 2001 and adapted by the award-winning director and actor Fernando Fernán Gómez. I would like to consider the reasons why Goya chose this subject for his painting, and in particular the choice of scene he depicts, and also examine some of the artistic techniques he uses, which I will compare with the creative aims of the Spanish film, which offers a high degree of historical verisimilitude, yet departs substantially from the original literary text. The purpose of this comparison will be to investigate the ways in which two different artistic media from different time periods interact with the original written narrative, leading to a reflection upon what this interaction tells us about both the painting and the film, and perhaps most importantly, what it reveals about the literary text itself.

Modern literary criticism and formal discussion of visual arts have largely proceeded along separate paths, as John Dixon Hunt indicates in his preface to *Encounters*, a book of essays on the interaction between art and literature (7). However, the distinguished nineteenth-century critic Walter Pater noted the longevity of the debate over the validity of discussing one art form in relation to another, while eloquently expressing his own view on the subject as follows:

...although each art has thus its own specific order of impressions, and an untranslatable charm, while a first apprehension of the ultimate differences of the arts is the beginning of aesthetic criticism, yet it is noticeable that, in its special mode of handling its given material, each art may be observed to pass into the condition of some other art, by what German critics term an *Anders—streben*— a partial alienation from its own limitations, through which the arts are able, not indeed to supply the place of each other, but reciprocally to lend each other new forces. (45).

This perspective will inform the exploration of the three artistic media under discussion. In other words, I would like to touch upon what the uniqueness of the media of painting and of film reveals about the literary text, and vice versa, while also engaging with their interaction. As Dixon Hunt observes, encounters between specific literary and visual works can disturb our comfortable assumptions about a period and can sharpen our reading of a text. They can “recover fresh insights into literary experience by considering the relationship of the verbal

creation to the visions common to a whole society at a given point” (10). In this light, we might explore how the sixteenth-century literary work in question relates to the kind of visions common to the societies of early nineteenth-century Spain through the vehicle of Goya’s painting, and to those of twenty-first century Spain via the cinematic genre. In turn, we may consider what those encounters bring to our reading of the original written narrative.

The essay will focus upon the specific episode from the literary work which Goya interprets in his painting, and which also appears in the film version, thereby comparing the same narrative event across all three media. The original *Lazarillo de Tormes* is set in early sixteenth-century Spain, amid the poverty-stricken lower classes, where the young boy Lazarillo is living with his widowed mother and her Moorish lover. At the age of eight, his mother sends him out into the world to work for a series of cruel, corrupt and impoverished masters, beginning with the *ciego*, the blind man whom Lazarillo guides (and from which the Castilian word ‘lazarillo’ meaning ‘blind man’s boy’ or ‘guide’ originates), and from whom he learns the hard lessons of survival in the corrupt and hypocritical society in which he finds himself. Pulling himself up by his bootstraps, he finally achieves what he describes as “la cumbre de la buena fortuna” (the height of good fortune) when he gains employment as a town crier in Toledo, one of the humblest of jobs, and is able to buy himself second-hand clothes. His marriage to a local girl becomes problematical, since she acts as housekeeper for the local archpriest, with whom she conducts a passionate affair, while the adult Lázaro turns a blind eye. So although Lazarillo has risen from the depths to some form of social respectability, it is at the inevitable expense of his own moral integrity.

The text is written in the first person in the form of a letter to an anonymous person whom the narrator addresses as ‘Vuestra Merced’, meaning Your Honour or Your Worship, whose identity has been the subject of much speculation, as has the author of the work. It is this apparently autobiographical account of a likeable rogue which became the fundamental definition of the Picaresque novel, a genre which enjoyed great popularity and spread from Spain to England, France and Germany. *Lazarillo de Tormes*, or to give the work its full title, *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas y adversidades*, which is a parody of the titles of chivalric romances, has strong visual and performance qualities, combining slapstick and linguistic humour in discrete narrative episodes which are theatrical by virtue of the prevalent use of dialogue and in the presence of dramatic conflict, all centring upon the theme of appearance and reality which was so ubiquitous in literature and art in Early Modern Spain. The text is ambiguous and enigmatic in its characterization and its pseudo-autobiography; beneath the comic surface lies the bitter satire of social and religious corruption and hypocrisy which

led it to be put on the list of prohibited books by the Inquisition. In 1573, the Crown allowed circulation of a version which omitted Chapters 4 and 5 and assorted paragraphs from other parts of the book, but a complete version did not appear in Spain until the nineteenth century. Even this was a version of the manuscript published in Antwerp that circulated throughout Europe.

I would like to suggest that it is the fundamental theme of inner and outer appearances, of *ser y parecer*, which informs the two visual interpretations to be discussed. The episode which forms the centrepiece of this essay is one in which Lazarillo, who is driven mad with hunger, contrives to deceive his master the blind man by stealing his *longaniza*, a long pork sausage, substituting a turnip for the meat which the *ciego* is cooking on the fire. The blind man becomes furious when he discovers the trick, seizes the boy and tries to smell whether he has eaten the sausage by poking his long nose into Lazarillo's mouth. The text follows in Spanish, with an English translation:

Estábamos en Escalona, villa del duque della, en un mesón, y diome un pedazo de longaniza que le asase. Ya que la longaniza había pringado y comídose las pringadas, sacó un maravedí de la bolsa y mandó que fuese por él de vino a la taberna. Púsome el demonio el aparejo delante los ojos, el cual, como suelen decir, hace al ladrón, y fue que había cabe el fuego un nabo pequeño, larguillo y ruinoso, y tal que por no ser para la olla debió ser echado allí. Y como al presente nadie estuviese sino él y yo solos, como me vi con apetito goloso, habiéndome puesto dentro el sabroso olor de la longaniza, del cual solamente sabía que había de gozar, no mirando qué me podría suceder, pospuesto todo el temor por cumplir con el deseo, en tanto que el ciego sacaba de la bolsa el dinero, 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 deméritos había escapado.

Yo fui por el vino, con el cual no tardé en despachar la longaniza, y cuando vine, hallé al pecador del ciego que tenía entre dos rebanadas apretado el nabo, al cual aún no había conosciado por no lo haber tentado con la mano. Como tomase las rebanadas y mordiese en ellas pensando también llevar parte de la longaniza, hallóse en frío con el frío nabo. Alteróse y dijo:

—¿Qué es esto, Lazarillo?

—¡Lacerado de mí! — dije yo —. ¿Si queries a mí echar algo? ¿Yo no vengo de traer el vino? Alguno estaba ahí y, por burlar, haría esto.

—No, no, — dijo él —, que yo no he dejado el asador de la mano; no es posible.

Yo torné a jurar y perjurar que estaba libre de aquel trueco y cambio; mas poco me aprovechó, pues a las astucias del maldito ciego nada se le escondía. Levantóse y asióme 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 agonía que llevaba, asiéndome con las manos, abríame la boca más de su derecho y desatentadamente metía la nariz, la cual él tenía luenga y afilada y a aquella sazón, con el enojo, se había aumentado un palmo; con el pico de la cual me llegó a la gulilla. Y con esto, y con el gran miedo que tenía, y con la brevedad del tiempo, la negra longaniza aún no había hecho asiento en el estómago, y lo más principal, con el destiento de la cumplidísima nariz, medio cuasi ahogándome, todas estas cosas se juntaron y fueron causa que el hecho y golosina se manifestase y lo suyo fuese vuelto a su dueño. De manera que, antes que el mal ciego sacase de mi boca su trompa, tal alteración sintió mi estómago, que le dio con el hurto en ella; de suerte que su nariz y la negra mal maxcada longaniza a un tiempo salieron de mi boca.

¡Oh gran Dios, quién estuviera aquella hora sepultado, que muerto ya lo estaba! Fue tal el coraje del perverso ciego, que, si al ruido no acudieran, pienso que no me dejara con la vida. Sacáronme de entre sus manos, dejándoselas llenas de aquellos pocos cabellos que tenía, arañada la cara y rascañado el pescuezo y la garganta. Y esto bien lo merecía, pues por su maldad me venían tantas persecuciones. (*La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, 1987, 12-14).

(We were in Escalona, a town in that dukedom, at an inn, and the blind man gave me a piece of long pork sausage to roast for him. When the sausage had spattered out some greasy juices, which he ate on a piece of bread, he took a small coin out of his bag and sent me to the tavern for some wine. The devil gave me the means that makes the thief, as they say. Because it happened that a small, long, misshapen turnip lay beside the fire, which had been thrown there because it was not good enough to go in the pot.

And since at that moment only the blind man and I were there, and I was starving hungry because I had scented the delicious smell of the sausage, which I knew was all I was likely to enjoy of it, and not thinking what might befall me, I put all fear aside to fulfil my desire. As soon as the blind man took the money out of his bag, I snatched the sausage and in a trice I put the aforesaid turnip on the roasting dish in its place. My master gave me the money, took the roasting dish and started to turn the turnip over the fire and cook what had not been deemed fit for the pot due to its shortcomings.

I went for the wine, and on the way I soon despatched the sausage. When I got back, I found the sinful old blind man with the turnip grasped between two slices of bread, but without knowing it, for he hadn't yet touched it with his hands. As he picked up the bread and bit into it, imagining he would bite off a piece of sausage as well, he came up hard against the cold turnip. He got angry and said:

'What is this, Lazarillo?'

'Oh, how wretched I am! I said, 'So you want to blame me for this? Haven't I just been to get the wine? Someone must have been here and done this for a trick.'

'No, no', he said, 'I've had the roasting dish in my hand all the time. It's not possible.'

I kept swearing over and over that I was not the trickster who had exchanged the turnip for the sausage, but little good it did me, as nothing was hidden from the cunning mind of that cursed old blind man. He got up and seized me by the head and leant closer to smell me. And like a good hound, he tried to sniff my breath to ascertain the truth better. I was in agony because he had hold of me with his hands, yet he opened my mouth wider than it could comfortably go, and ill-advisedly stuck in his nose, which was long and pointed, and at that moment, it had grown six inches with rage, so that the tip reached my gullet.

And what with that and my great fear, and the short time that had elapsed since I'd eaten it, the blackened sausage had not settled in my stomach. The worst thing was that his ample nose was half choking me, and all these things conspired and caused both the truth and the tasty morsel to manifest themselves. It was returned to its rightful owner, and what happened was that before the evil old man took his snout out of my mouth, my stomach turned up, and the stolen goods rose up against him, so that his nose and the black poorly chewed sausage flew out of my mouth at the same time.

Oh dear Lord! Who at that time would not rather have been buried, for I was already dead! Such was the rage of the perverse blind man that if people hadn't come running to see what the commotion was, I think I would have been a gonner. They dragged me from his clutches, leaving him with handfuls of the few locks of hair I had. My face was scratched and so were my neck and throat, which deserved it, since their evildoing caused me such persecution.)

This comic scene is one of several in which Lazarillo shows both his capacity to resist the cruel treatment of his master, and also his cleverness in adapting his behaviour in order to survive. The vocabulary of hunger prevails in the first part of the book, and is at the heart of Lazarillo's fight for survival. This particular episode demonstrates the tension between the boy's subjection, in this case to the blind man, and in general terms, to the society he lives in, and his constant struggle to escape that subjection and fight for his own independence. It has strong theatrical qualities in its witty dialogue and in the collusion of the reader with Lazarillo in his deception. It plays upon the idea of appearance and reality —the blind man thinks he has a sausage in his bread, when it is really a turnip, and Lazarillo thinks he has played his trick successfully, only to be punished cruelly and lose the benefit of the sausage as well!.

It is this scene which Goya takes as the subject of his painting *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, which was listed in his collection in 1812 and probably painted prior to this date. It is an oil painting on canvas measuring 0.80 x 0.65m, and is now in the Colección Araoz, belonging to the widow of the literary critic and writer Gregorio Marañón, in Madrid. The painting has an intriguing equivocalness, since among others, Marañón, the original owner, believed it represented popular medical

practice. The scene depicted was perceived to show an attempt to cure 'el garrotillo', a word usually meaning 'croup', but also having the possible meaning of 'diphtheria'. The only evidence for this interpretation lay in the fact that Goya's physician, Dr Arrieta, was interested in diphtheria (1964, 303) combined with an awareness of many desperate attempts to help children dying of the slow asphyxiation caused by the disease, by trying to free the respiratory tract from its constricting membranes. However, cataloguing information has unequivocally identified the title of the painting as *El Lazarillo de Tormes*, listed as no. 25 on the inventory of Goya's goods in 1812.



Figure 1. *El Lazarillo de Tormes* by Francisco de Goya.

This work has been virtually ignored by art historians, with the exception of the English Hispanist Nigel Glendinning, who refers to it briefly in an article in *The Listener* in 1964. In relation to its written source, he notes that Goya's willingness to turn to literature for his images rendered accessibility more difficult for the less intellectual public of his time and also for modern or non-Spanish audiences (302). In this case, the unpleasant-looking man who can be seen holding a boy between his knees, while he forces open his mouth to poke his fingers inside is not a benevolent doctor, but the blind beggar, whose long nose in this image is necessary to the story, since finally it causes Lazarillo to bring up the stolen sausage.

Three questions arise from a more detailed examination of the painting. Firstly, what drew Goya to this subject? Secondly, what does it reveal about his own preoccupations and those of his time? And thirdly, what light does it shed upon the literary work? As regards the subject, the depiction of boys and young *pícaros* with

torn clothing who live in the street and eat whatever they can steal appear in the series of genre paintings by Murillo dated between 1665 and 1675, and it is known that the poet Quintana, who corresponded with Goya, likened aspects of his work to those of the earlier painter. In the picture by Murillo in Figure 2, dated 1650, these boys eating stolen melon and grapes present a snapshot in the life of the ragged street urchins of poverty-stricken Seville after the 1649 plague. Perhaps Goya had these works in mind in considering his subject, whose drab colours and thematic focus on assuaging hunger are similar to Goya's painting of *Lazarillo*; even the haircuts and bare chests of the boys mirror the later work. Goya's choice of subject may also indicate the contemporary popularity or currency of the text at the start of the nineteenth century, which is likely to have enjoyed renewed attention since the unexpurgated version was newly available in Spanish at this time. In choosing this literary source of inspiration, the artist is mapping the fictional narrative onto an everyday scene of low-class life. The art historian John Moffitt notes that Goya returned to that native tradition which considers painting as a vehicle for moral instruction rather art for art's sake, and reiterates Goya's attachment to social commentary, including an implicit proletarian self-identification (178).

The technical aspects of the picture suggest a number of the artist's preoccupations, both as regards style and in terms of what he wished to convey. In order to illuminate these aspects more clearly, it is helpful to compare another painting of this subject, *El Lazarillo de Tormes* by Luis Santamaría Pizarro, painted about 1887.



Figure 2. *Niños comiendo melón y uvas* by Murillo.





Figure 3. *El Lazarillo de Tormes* by Luis Santamaría Pizarro.

Santamaría Pizarro studied at the Escuela Especial de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado in Madrid, and took part in National Fine Art exhibitions between 1884 and 1912. He presented *El Lazarillo de Tormes* in 1887, and it is his best known work, an oil painting on canvas measuring 160 x 200cm, now held in the Museo de Almería. It does not depict the same episode, but instead shows with great realism the scene in which Lazarillo steals some of the blind man's wine using a straw. It is an interior scene, indicated by some steps leading to a door, which focuses on the two protagonists in the foreground. These two figures encapsulate the narrative impact of the picture, which is painted in sober neutral colours. The presentation of detailed observation is accomplished, though the work lacks emotional force. If we then compare Goya's painting, the contrast is striking. The latter's spatial conception is relatively simple, with great prominence given to the black background. Gudiol notes the outlining in black of the figure of the man is a method Goya introduced in *The Flagellants* and in *The Burial of the Sardine* (155). The two figures are vividly, even luridly, lit in the foreground, and appear to emerge from a great dark area only broken up by the vibrant red of the fire on the right, where the blind man has been attempting to cook his sausage. Its flames suggest the hell that Lazarillo finds himself in. John Moffitt describes certain stylistic traits of Goya which he believes were derived from the medium of weaving, a technique with which Goya was very familiar, having drawn many cartoons for tapestries in the earlier part of his career. In this painting we can see schematised colour areas, simple silhouettes in *chiaroscuro* and a narrative focus which suppresses irrelevant details, all of which were characteristic of tapestry

design (Moffitt 182). The effect of these traits in this painting is to emphasize the violence of the scene, which represents these two figures as almost physically the same being, as if Lazarillo is actually growing out of the blind man, so tightly is he being subjected by his master's knees while being grasped firmly by the neck. This physical connectedness suggests the mutual dependency of their relationship —the *ciego* cannot see to walk without his guide, and Lazarillo needs the blind man to provide what food and shelter there is— but its antagonistic nature is powerfully conveyed by Lazarillo's half-comic expression of fear, with the whites of his eyes showing as he tries to look at the old man, whose own eyes remain ironically closed and sightless. Goya's use of earthen colours and warm underpainting underlines the drabness and poverty of life at this social level, while the inherent drama of the relationship between the two protagonists is conveyed by the dramatic contrast of light and shade. We have a strong sense of the power and authority wielded by the man over the boy, illustrating a more general point made by Moffitt that Goya's portraits show a new emphasis on psychology rather than on physiology (184).

In an article on modern art, David Sylvester points out the frequent and significant depiction of the mouth in Goya's works:

The mouth plays a role in Goya's art more prominent than in that of any other major artist. Mouths leer, grin, gape, gasp, moan, shriek, belch. A hanged man's mouth lies open and a woman reaches up to filch his teeth. Grown men stick fingers in their mouths like sucking infants. (1).

Sylvester remarks on Goya's depiction of Saturn devouring his children, and suggests that the painting of Lazarillo is its comic counterpart. While this is debateable, his claim that mouths are focal points in many scenes other than those depicting oral aggression or symbolising oral sexuality holds true for this picture —Lazarillo's mouth draws the eye at once to the centre of the image, and constitutes a visual reference to the thematic idea of hunger, which in this episode is the boy's sole motivation and his downfall. Sylvester also remarks on Goya's figures as looming shapes, often menacing, often in cloak or cowl, as is the blind beggar in this scene. All that is visible of him are his face with its blind eyes, and his hands and knees, the instruments of violence towards his guide. All in all it has the quality of a nightmare, which creates an interesting conflict with its technical perfection and vitality.

So in this picture, in which the comic and the fearful form a grotesque image, Goya may have been alluding to the unpleasant reality of life around him during the Spanish War of Independence against the French invaders which took place between 1808 and 1812. At this time people suffered great cruelty, violence

and poverty, which the artist depicted in his series of paintings known as *Los Caprichos*. Some of the attention to detailed realism shown in those works is also conveyed here. We can look at this painting without knowing its title, or the names of its protagonists, and receive an impression of fear and violence. However, its title proves crucial to our fuller understanding. My suggestion is that Goya wanted to emphasize the close links between art, literature and reality in creating this image taken from a specific and popular work, which might also represent an albeit unpalatable aspect of daily life. He has perceived the enigmatic nature of the literary work, and created the same in his painting. Nigel Glendinning lights upon the presence of mystery and divergent meaning in Goya's work:

Goya is indeed the tongue of war. He speaks of other sources of human suffering too, and their causes in human behaviour, social and political attitudes and the nature of things. Goya is also the tongue of beauty and joy. There is laughter as well as anger in his work; hope and despair. We listen to the tongue, try to interpret it. We say how line or colour or texture seem to be. Yet still in the end, as Wittgenstein said: "Whatever we see could be other than it is. Whatever we can describe at all could be other than it is. (1977, 254).

Goya hit on the essence of this written text in his portrayal of its laughter, its anger and its equivocalness in this still image of the satirical black humour of *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

The second visual recreation of the literary text to be discussed is the 2001 Spanish film *Lázaro de Tormes*, a highly acclaimed production which won two Goya awards, one for the Best Script Adaptation, carried out by the eminent actor and director Fernando Fernán Gómez, and one for Best Costume Design. José Luis García Sánchez was the director, and the film was produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez. The famous Spanish actor Rafael Álvarez, El Brujo, plays Lázaro, a role he had performed many times on the stage as a solo act. In a very favourable review in the arts supplement to the national newspaper *El País* (21 Jan 2001) Ángel Fernández-Santos alights upon certain aspects of the film which are directly relevant to this discussion. He speaks of the written text of *Lazarillo de Tormes* as being more than just a book because it combines an idea of life which has universal meaning with elements which would be unimaginable outside the Spain in which they are rooted. He identifies the painterly quality of the visual spectacle in the film, describing it as "un lienzo tenebrista poblado por delicados fognazos de luz negra. Se ven en ella ecos de Velázquez, de Zurbarán" (a tenebrist canvas full of delicate flashes of black or dark light. One can see echoes of Velázquez, of

Zurbarán). Although there is no reference to Goya, this is an astute comment on some scenes whose strong narrative content is reinforced by *chiaroscuro* lighting effects, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Chiaroscuro lighting effects, *Lázaro de Tormes*, 2001.

Fernández-Santos also emphasizes the potential of the text to offer many different readings. He states: “Hay [...] tantos *Lazarillos* como lecturas de él” (There are as many *Lazarillos* as there are readings of it). He develops this idea further:

Y bajo la piel del *Lázaro* con que han ennoblecido el cine español un puñado de ingenios en estado de gracia no late una sola lectura, sino varias que convergen y crean en la pantalla esa inconfundible sensación de densa ligereza que brota del cine complejo cuando es resuelto con sencillez.

(And beneath the surface of the *Lázaro* with which a small group of inspired minds has ennobled Spanish cinema there is not a single reading, but various readings which converge and create on the screen that unmistakable sensation of frivolity combined with real underlying substance characteristic of complex cinema when it is presented with simplicity.)

This capacity of the text to invite different interpretations underpins the narrative structure of the film, as the very title indicates. The use of the name Lázaro rather than Lazarillo at once alerts the viewer familiar with the original to the fact that the story is to be presented from the perspective of the grown man, whose lively, charismatic personality weaves together past and present adventures from a mature vantage point, and links the narrative sequences. In passing, it is interesting to note that the two previous films made on the same subject, a 1925 version now lost, and the 1959/60 film directed by César Ardavín, both use the title *El Lazarillo de Tormes*. However, the written text begins in the form of a letter written in maturity to an unknown authority figure, and the literary narrative then follows the chronological sequence of Lazarillo's life as a young boy. In the case of the film, the director plays with this chronological sequence to rework the plot structure.

The medium of film lends itself to this kind of restructuring, the purpose of which in this case is to allow the narrative to focus upon the 'lío de faldas', the love triangle between Lázaro, his wife and the splendidly characterized archpriest, who has no defining features apart from his lust in the written story, but who is splendidly drawn in the film as a genial, 'bon vivant' type, who gives Lázaro a job selling wine from the archpriest's own vineyard, performs his priestly duties when required and devotes himself to good food, wine and Lázaro's wife the rest of the time. Their triangular relationship enables Lázaro to have the dignity of a wife and home of his own, as well as gainful employment, provided he turns a blind eye to the adulterous affair being carried on under his nose.

The strong performance dimension of the original *Lazarillo* is enhanced by cinematic techniques, which amplify the effects of both dialogue and dramatic monologue, of humour and of the dramatic tensions and conflict between characters. These dimensions and the reconfiguring of the chronological sequence fundamental to Lázaro's storytelling, which is at the heart of this film, are exemplified in the episode in which he narrates the story of his relationship with the blind beggar, including the famous episode with the sausage. These sequences are beautifully constructed using a series of contrasts and ironies, framed by the figure of Lázaro, who is doing what he knows best, which is to put on a show, to act a part. He is cast in the mould of the medieval juglar or minstrel, who tells entertaining stories for a living. This lends Lázaro himself an archetypal, timeless dimension which places him firmly within an ancient Spanish folkloric and oral tradition. While this role is portrayed through the ubiquitous art form of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the film, the juxtaposition of content and form is not uncomfortable, instead reinforcing both the medieval and the modern as they come together to create a new vision. It is interesting to note in this regard the importance that early

film theorists such as Eisenstein and Balázs placed upon the links between cinema and medieval art, conceiving of the medium of film as a medieval medium par excellence, particularly in the capacity of both media to show outer likeness and inner essence to perfection.<sup>3</sup>

As Lázaro entertains the scruffy boys on the street with his tale, an ironic contrast becomes apparent between his affectionate, lively relationship with them in the present, and the flashbacks portraying him as a young boy of the same age as those listening, sent out into the world aged eight never to see his mother again, and cruelly treated by his first master. The scene in which he leaves his mother to work as a guide for the blind man is filmed in black and white, marking, to my mind, not only the distant past, but also the point at which his childhood ends and he steps into an uncomfortable reality. The further irony of the boy and blind man walking hand in hand into the huge orange sunset as if they are characters in a fairytale sharpens the cruelty and realism of the following episode, in which the old man bangs the boy's head against the stone bull on the bridge outside Salamanca.



*Figure 5. Lazarillo leaves his mother.*

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this interesting theoretical view, see Bettina Bildhauer, 2009, 40-59.

This is the point in both book and film at which Lazarillo awakens from his 'simpleza' as he calls it, and begins to employ the cunning and quick-wittedness of what would become known as the *pícaro*, in order to survive.

This brings us to the episode in which Lazarillo steals the sausage, which is the first in this film to illustrate the boy's opportunism and quick intelligence, heightened by his perpetual hunger. The moving image draws out certain qualities which are not apparent in Goya's version, nor even in the original, although the lighting creates a similar *chiaroscuro* effect to that in the painting. It focuses the viewers' attention upon the art of deception with great humour—in the written text, the turnip which the boy substitutes for the sausage is not good enough even for the pot, but its shape is not described. In the film, the visual similarity in size and shape with the sausage provides an opportunity for the starving boy, who instantly sees how he can steal himself a meal. The subsequent cruelty of the blind man is perhaps born of his vulnerability to deception, which has taught him to be alert to every kind of trickery, and to use it himself.



Figure 6. The blind man seeks his sausage.

Figure 6 captures the moment when the blind man grabs Lazarillo and yanks his mouth open to see whether he has eaten the *longaniza* sausage. The still image bears a strong resemblance to the depiction of the same scene in Goya's

painting; both images suggest a physical interdependency between the two protagonists, and the pose is the same, although in the case of the film shot, Lazarillo is not the direct focus of the viewer as he is to the left, while he is to the right and in the foreground of the oil painting. Drab brown colours are given a warm glow in the film still, which has nothing of the luridness of Goya's image; it has the effect of softening and idealizing the scene, in stark contrast with the harsh violence suggested by Goya. The amusement of this scene in the movie hinges upon the tension between the two tricksters, who pit their wits against each other over the lowly *longaniza*, which takes on vital yet disturbing importance in the fight against hunger and for survival. Finally the narration of the episode returns to the present as Lázaro mimes the end of the story to his audience of street urchins.

In their vivid flashbacks and dynamic performativity, these sequences capture the essence of how the cinematic form transforms the source text by reconstructing the temporal structure and emphasizing its dramatic qualities in the dual performances of man and boy, of Lázaro and Lazarillo. Two key motifs, food and wine, are significant here, and are developed in the rest of the film in a kind of counterpoint in which lack of food and the resultant clawing hunger that Lázaro describes at the beginning are a source of considerable suffering, while wine, which the blind man demands, later becomes a source of profit and enjoyment when Lázaro earns his living as a wine seller for the archpriest. The conventional association of wine with religious communion is transformed into a kind of secular communion, as it brings the three protagonists of the love triangle together, as well as those of the local community who drink at the inn.

In conclusion, I wish to return to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay. What does the recreation of the literary text of *Lazarillo de Tormes* tell us, firstly, about Goya's painting, and secondly, about Fernando Fernán Gómez's adaptation for the film? In the first case, it provides evidence of Goya's familiarity with works of literature, and of his interest in using them as suitable subjects, an aspect of his artistic inspiration which is virtually overlooked. This is further confirmed by his predilection for the theme of the 'celestina' or bawd which appears in a pair of paintings almost contemporary with the one of Lazarillo, and in all likelihood inspired by the famous literary work *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas dating from about 1500. In addition, in the struggle between Lazarillo and the blind man in Goya's image, we see a fight between youth and age which gives the work what the art historian José Gudiol describes as a kind of obsessive power in its expression of the reality of everyday human drama. It seems unquestionable that the painter was deeply affected by the horrors of the War of Independence; in this work the closeness in Goya's mind of the fictional and the real reveals the relevance of Lazarillo's world for the artist's own time.



In the film version, the subjective interpretation of both the director and the adaptor of the script is crucial, as are the individual interpretations of the actors. In this case a whole visually stunning world is created and conceived with great historical verisimilitude in terms of costume, set, lighting effects and specially composed music. At the same time, the medium of film allows the reconstruction of chronology and of plot; it permits the complex chopping and interlayering of the narrative to produce an affectionate and somewhat idealized version of the original which concentrates upon the humorous side of things, softens the narrative and removes its heretical feel. The producer Andrés Vicente Gómez describes his film as “un chiaroscuro barroco de horror y risa” (a Baroque chiaroscuro of horror and laughter), while acknowledging that the storyline offers what he calls a very contemporary and authentic experience for the viewer. He does not elaborate on this remark, though in part it must relate to the wonderful verisimilitude of the set design and costumes. Undoubtedly the story of the poor boy who makes his way in a cruel world, in combination with the comic love triangle with its darker side are plotlines we can relate to as easily in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as in the sixteenth.

So what do these two reinterpretations in different media reveal about the literary text itself, and why is this important? We can say that Goya’s painting highlights the power of literature to convey social realism; it also shows the essential ambiguity of meaning at the heart of the written work, in which situations and people seem to be one thing on the outside while the inner reality is different. This is in a way reflected in the ambiguousness of the subject of the painting, which juxtaposes the comically fearful Lazarillo and the cruel, domineering blind beggar, youth and age, and reinforces those dualisms in the written text which create much of its vivid intensity and drama.

The cinematic version of the story does something different again. Its benign good humour brings the cruel, penetrating satire of the literary work more sharply into focus for us, while still underlining the multivalency of the original, whose enigmatic qualities lend themselves to varying readings and interpretations.

Why do these conclusions matter? In the works under discussion, we can see one subject given life in three different artistic media, which bring the concerns of Lazarillo’s time, early sixteenth-century Spain, into dialogue with the later era of the Spanish War of Independence in the early nineteenth-century, and also with our own times, in a manner which enhances our understanding of each. The reception of *Lazarillo de Tormes* via the media of art and cinema is evidence of the enduring appeal of a literary masterpiece, which has inspired new creative visions of contemporary relevance. It shows how very fruitful the interaction of literature with painting and film can be.

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