

Lázaro de Tormes. *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

Ed. Francisco Rico. Biblioteca Clásica de la Real Academia Española 29. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2011. xii + 328 pp. €22.74. ISBN: 978-84-8109-961-4.

Rico's edition of *Lazarillo de Tormes* is highly idiosyncratic. It boldly rejects the quadruple-published first edition in favor of a seemingly purer version that allegedly did not contain the division in *tractados*. This is, of course, to ignore the strong fact that the book was published in four cities simultaneously, and that all four editions contain the known division in *tractados*. Rico denies this act of maximum dissemination with a simple negation of any possible and legitimate doubt about his own conjectures ("son sin duda ajenos al novelista"), in spite of never having had in front of him the "pure" edition that he now disseminates with a violent force that would prove equivalent to that of the primitive dissemination. It looks as if Rico would counteract the formidable speech act of *Lazarillo's* quadruple birth with his own *tour de force*, using the maximum machine of reader-coercion existing in Spain: the Real Academia Española. An extremely personal edition, bold and subjective, such as this one, should be an edition headed by the words "In my opinion . . ." Instead of that, Rico makes it the edition of editions, the official one, just as he did with his also highly debatable edition of *Don Quixote*, taking advantage of the abundant power, and taxpayers' money, available during the 2005 anniversary of Cervantes's work.

The text of *Lazarillo* that Rico proposes has never been read by anyone. It is a virtual *Lazarillo*, which, using the force of that old tyrannical parasite, the R. A. E., presents itself as real, and, even worse, the mandatory reading in any school — especially in elementary schools, where teachers are not going to dare contest the official wisdom of the Spanish State in a country accustomed since the times of the *Index* to monopolistic reading-writing practices, where anything that manages to obtain the tag of official is sacred, undisputed, and case-closing, and where, by the same token, any attempt to disagree with the word that passes for official is always already dismissed as false. Rico's edition, an exercise in curious manipulation of both text and philological procedure, which could be of some heuristic interest to philologists, becomes the text to obliterate all competitors, including the real, existing-in-real-life quadruple edition princeps of this fundamental Renaissance masterpiece. After the seal of approval of the R. A. E., this review of mine, on the other hand, will be read as heretical, preposterous, even unpatriotic.

There are, of course, reasons why Rico would want to rewrite *Lazarillo de Tormes*. One example: his reading of what all other critical editions call *Tractado cuarto* has famously refused to acknowledge what most scholars see: that there is something fishy being (un)told in the *tractado* — namely the (homo)sexual initiation of Lázaro; that it is precisely in order to underline that the main thing is not being told that the text highlights these few lines by giving them the marquee of a *tractado*. Rico eliminates the discussion with a "nothing indicates here that we

must suppose an obscene insinuation,” which simply obliterates the many *indicios* that a majority of critics have found; and, of course, he eliminates the discussion itself, by eliminating *Tractado cuarto* altogether.

The edition is intimidating, much like the edition of *Don Quixote* was. Not only does it reserve much more space to Rico’s text than to the original, but the editor’s space is structured in several layers of notes: general notes, footnotes, endnotes, notes to pages, and complementary notes. The reader needs a map to navigate it all, much like the user of the famous library of *The Name of the Rose*. It signals to the reader — as did the *Quixote* edition — that he/she who does not know the secrets of computers has no place reading or criticizing it. In sum: it disguises itself as a labyrinth — and I would happily welcome a labyrinth to keep me inside *Lazarillo* with optimal enjoyment; but underneath the disguise it is simply a map, a military chart of what is left of a masterpiece after the heavy, carpet-style bombardment by an unholy alliance leaves it in a state of rigor (*mortis*).

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