

Works Cited

- Anderson, Stanford, ed. *On Streets*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986.
- Aristotle. *Politics: The Works of Aristotle* 10. Oxford: Clarendon, 1921.
- Ballegaard, Annelise and Svend Erik Larsen, eds. *La Rue — espace ouvert*. Odense: Odense UP, 1995.
- Balzac, Honoré de. *La Cousine Bette*. 1846. Paris: Gallimard, 1972.
- Bellow, Saul. *Herzog*. Greenwich: Fawcett Crest, 1964.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Berliner Kindheit um Neunzehnhundert*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1987.
- Cauquelin, Anne. *Essai de philosophie urbaine*. Paris: PU de France, 1986.
- Çelik, Zeynep, Diane Favro, and Richard Ingersoll, eds. *Streets: Critical Perspectives on Public Space*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1994.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Painting of Modern Life*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984.
- Conrad, Peter. *The Art of the City: Views and Versions of New York*. New York: Oxford UP, 1984.
- Cosgrove, Denis. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. London: Croom Helms, 1984.
- Doctorow, E. L. *Ragtime*. 1971. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1987.
- Döblin, Alfred. *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. 1928. München: dtv, 1980.
- Dos Passos, John. U.S.A. (vol. 1: *The 42nd Parallel* [1930], vol. 2: *Nineteen Nineteen* [1932], vol. 3: *The Big Money* [1936]). New York: Signet, 1979.
- Dos Passos, John. *Century's Ebb*. Boston: Gambit, 1975.
- Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. 1900. New York: Bantam, 1992.
- Green, Nicholas. *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990.
- Johnston, John. *The Poet and the City: A Study in Urban Perspectives*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1984.
- Jukes, Peter. *A Shout in the Street*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. 1955. New York: Signet, 1985.
- Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1992.
- Larsen, Svend Erik. "Contemplation and Distraction: A Visual Analysis of Two Urbanized Natural Sceneries." *City and Nature: Changing Relations in Space and Time*. Eds. Thomas Möller Kristensen et al. Odense: Odense UP, 1993. 79-96.
- Larsen, Svend Erik. "Roads to Nature." *The Construction of Nature: A Discursive Strategy in Modern European Thought*. Ed. Stipe Grgas and Svend Erik Larsen. Odense: Odense UP, 1994a. 87-104.
- Larsen, Svend Erik. "Nature on the Move." *Ecumene* 1.3 (1994b): 283-300.
- Mérimée, Prosper. *La Colomba*. 1840. Paris: Bords, 1985.
- Nye, David. "Zur Konstruktion des touristischen Blicks." *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* 1994, in print.
- Park, Robert, Ernest Burgess, and Roderick McKenzie. *The City*. 1925. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1984.
- Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise*. Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1977.
- Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*. Ed. Richard Sennet. 1903. Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969. 47-60.
- Wattenberg, Ben J. *The Statistical History of the United States*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Zola, Émile. *La Curée*. 1871. Paris: Livre du Poche, 1984.

GEOFFREY W. GUEVARA-GEER

Lazarillo de Tormes and the Little Tramp of *Modern Times*: Two Modern *Pícaros* Find Their Way

"[N]o social role in modern times
can be a perfect fit" (Berman 22-23).

As feudalism slowly gave way in sixteenth-century Spain, a new kind of character wandered, stunned but alert, toward modernity — the *pícaro* was born. Left to fend for himself by a social order with no place for him, Lazarillo de Tormes, the first evolved *pícaro*,¹ began to improvise and survive by taking advantage of the vestiges of stability which constrained him. Later *pícaros* also survived by propping themselves up on falling social edifices and duping those who are dazzled by the shiftiness of modern times. They have continued to adapt to the escalating pace of frenzied change. This adaptability has kept the *pícaro* alive and well enough to stumble all the way from the river Tormes to Charlie Chaplin's misfit tuxedo. In this four-century stumble, the *pícaro* has wandered the borders of modernity. His path is the eroded trail of absolutes and accelerated time which brings us from feudalism to the doors of postmodernity. By observing the survival strategies of the *pícaro*, we can see the loopholes of modernity's many hegemonies from its margins. The *pícaro* offers a lesson in liberty from the school of hard knocks.

In the pages that follow, I will show how Lazarillo and the Little Tramp, though separated by centuries and continents, share the time and space of modernity. Inevitably, this will begin with a discussion of modernity itself. Of interest here is how the tradition of modern representation has changed since its early Renaissance manifestation in *Lazarillo*, to its later, more recent incarnation in *Modern Times*. The times and trials of modernity, we will see, are reflected in the picaresque character, a character born with the genesis of modernity. Careful attention will be paid to how these two characters each survive their

1 The standard English translations of the *pícaro* as a rascal or rogue seem inadequate here. By using the Spanish word *pícaro*, I hope to call attention to this character's birth in Renaissance Spain as a literary birth of early modernity.

trying circumstance with clever strategies of improvisation, Lazarillo from the nascent modernity of Renaissance Spain, and the Little Tramp from accelerated post-industrial America. Having situated these two itinerant characters at the temporal ends of modernity, we may have a better understanding of modernity's emergence, advancement, and potential unraveling.

Perhaps some preliminary qualifications are in order. Lazarillo de Tormes, for instance, cannot be considered a card-carrying modern character in any strict sense. Usually discussed as a pre-modern work written before the *Quijote*, *Lazarillo de Tormes* is often ousted from modernity altogether with an easy reference to the undeveloped character of its protagonist. The reader does not "know" him, the argument goes but rather sees him react to the flux of his hostile environment. This common dismissal from modernity, although precise in reserving full modern membership for later characters, errs in the simplicity it imposes on Lazarillo.

First of all, one need not dismiss all works written before the *Quijote* with a facile reference to character development as if that were the only consideration. Matei Calinescu argues that the very notion of modernity took form in the (pre-) *Quijote* early Renaissance. His argument hinges not upon character development but on the treatment of time. "Insofar as the Renaissance was self-conscious and saw itself as the beginning of a new cycle in history, it accomplished an ideologically revolutionary alliance with time" (22). Calinescu is precise about the innovations of this revolution in the representation of time:

The opposition "modern/ancient" took on particularly dramatic aspects in the consciousness of the Renaissance with its sharply contradictory awareness of time in both historical and psychological terms ... [t]he medieval mind "could exist in an attitude of temporal ease. Neither time nor change appear[ed] to be critical, and hence there was no great worry about controlling the future." This situation changed dramatically in the Renaissance. (19)

The attributes of modernity stressed by Calinescu, "the awareness of time in historical and psychological terms" and the lack of "temporal ease," are the same which will later reveal the affinities between Lazarillo and the Little Tramp.

Secondly, to pigeon-hole *Lazarillo de Tormes* as wholly pre-modern due to limitations in the character of the protagonist fails by its own terms. It is striking that Lazarillo, while being criticized for his stunted psychological development, has also spawned a wealth of criticism dedicated to determining his moral character (for two chief contenders in this debate see Mancing and Jaen). Unlike medieval characters, which are often examined to reveal the more immutable truths of *amor cortés* or orthodox Aristotelianism, critics look to Lazarillo to poke at the depths of his character. Leaving aside the questions of validity begged by analyzing a fictional character as if he were real, it is clear that the

fictional characterization of Lazarillo was three-dimensional enough to make way for a modern interrogation of his character.

Furthermore, this same criterion of psychological development, or the lack of it, is seemingly forgotten in criticism of more recent modern texts. In the *nouveau roman*, for example, this criterion is turned on its head. In such works as Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*, character is purposefully engulfed by a wealth of neo-impressionistic detail. The fragmentation of character in response to stimuli, the character in a time-bound tumultuous flux, is often presented as evidence of later modernity's instability. Robbe-Grillet seems almost to speak from Lazarillo's world of feudalism in impending crisis when he writes "notre monde, aujourd'hui, est moins sûr de lui-même, moins anthropocentriste et [il] a perdu son meilleur soutien d'autrefois, le héros" (28).

The *pícaro*, without the structuring support of a poetics of heroism, is thrown into an almost existential struggle for self-definition in an unsure universe. In *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* — *The Experience of Modernity*, Marshall Berman suggests that we think of modernity as "as a struggle to make ourselves at home in a constantly changing world" (6). This description certainly fits Lazarillo, whose struggle to make himself at home requires that he "roll with the punches" and thus precludes any fixed character. I am not arguing that Lazarillo fits perfectly into modernity, indeed in the final *tratado* he falls into the complacent stability of his time, but I believe that the novel is deserving of González Echevarría's cautious label, "*Lazarillo* [is] the very 'first' novel" (10), a novel which makes its mark just inside modernity.

Just as Lazarillo requires an induction into modernity, *Modern Times'* Little Tramp also needs an induction into the company of *pícaros*. After all, his closest picaresque company might be his distant cousin Huckleberry Finn and both have come a long way from such accomplices as the eponymous Guzmán de Alfarache and Pablos of *El bursón*. Despite this separation, however, Lazarillo, one of the paradigm *pícaros*, has a great deal in common with the Little Tramp. Both, for example, wander from master to master in itinerant quests which change direction from moment to moment. This wandering fulfills Díaz-Plaja's first requirement for *pícaro* identification, he writes: "[i]t is an essential characteristic of the *pícaro* to be a nomad, as are most of those who dwell in the margins of stable society"² (x, my translation). Picaresque drifting is riddled with episodic interaction with society where *pícaros* become provisional members looking for food. Food, of course, means work and so the *pícaro* earns the one title that fits and defines him: he is a "mozo de muchos amos," a servant of many masters. For Lazarillo, work means serving, in succession, a blind man, a priest, a would-be nobleman, a friar, a pardoner, and a chaplain. To earn his daily bread, the

2 " ... [e]ls condición fundamental del pícaro ser un nómada, como suelen serlo los seres que viven al margen de la sociedad estabilizada" (x).

Little Tramp works in a factory, a prison (while an inmate), a shipyard, a department store, beside a machinist, as a singing waiter, and ends up unemployed and more vagrant than ever. Because neither manages to hold these jobs, or none of these jobs manages to hold down these *pícaros*, neither character actually produces anything or establishes himself in society. Thus, Lazarillo and the Little Tramp remain on the margins of society, more parasites of society than hosts to its values. As Díaz-Plaja observes, "[the] *pícaro* is a parasite that depends upon *stable* society in order to survive"³ (my translation and emphasis). Societal norms and conventions, apparently seamless when seen officially but very porous to the *pícaro's* penetrating eye, provide a relatively stable backboard for a *pícaro's* shifty self-definition. By tracing the *pícaro's* movements in the margins of stable society, one can better see how the conventions of modernity work and where they falter.

Chief among the social conventions which sway both Lazarillo and the Little Tramp is time. Although both live in societies governed by chronological time, neither seems to work by this model. The motifs of time that fill both the book and the film are times of inactivity for our *pícaros*, a subjective time often spent waiting for some exterior event to happen. In *Lazarillo de Tormes* this is clearest in the *tratado tercero* where, as Claudio Guillén notes: "The hours pass, slow and desperate. The bell tolls eight times, eleven times, one time, two times, and the next day two times and four times, until Lazarillo, once more at the edge of the abyss, is forced to beg for charity"⁴ (my translation 275). For Lazarillo, this time does not mark and measure work hours, mass, or meals; this is time as it passes for the hungry. Time does not advance and become dinner-time or lunch-time, it stagnates and brings Lazarillo to "the edge of the abyss" (275). This is what Guillén calls "the technique of *tempo lento*, in which the chronology accentuates ... the oppressive slowness of internal suffering [and] coincides with the moments of greatest affliction"⁵ (my translation 274). What is crucial here is that Lazarillo inhabits a distinct and subjective time outside of officialdom, he dormantly watches the scurry of social events around him as he waits for the moment which will be decisive in attaining his goal, namely, scarfing down his next meal.

In *Modern Times*, the objective time of society is depicted by constant images of clocks, the image which opens the film itself. Once again, however, this official time does not apply to the *pícaro*. Whether doing time or working, the Little Tramp lives in a time different from that of the society around him. While

others work, he punches out of company time to relax in the rest room. While guarding a large department store he roller skates between punch-in points, covering twice the distance in half the time. Ironically, the only episode when he does obey the rules of official time is precisely when he should disregard them. When the chief machinist is sucked between the cogs of a turbine the Little Tramp does not try to free him but observes the lunch whistle and takes time off. For the first and last time, the lunch whistle does signal lunch for the Little Tramp while his boss is left hanging — upside-down and backwards — and demanding to be freed immediately. The *pícaro* thrives off a break-down in the system. This *stolen* time is the only uninterrupted break the Little Tramp gets while at the factory. In both cases, Lazarillo's slow fast and the Little Tramp's uninterrupted break, official time does not rule the *pícaro*.

This un-official sense of picaresque temporality brings about another important divide between the *pícaro's* wayward path and the mechanisms of official modernity — the *pícaro* improvises. The story of modernity is often told as the quest of some utopia, some sense of unchanging stasis. This stasis was in place in feudal Spain, class permitting. The few nobles had it, many *hidalgos* wanted to go back to it, and, as modernity rolled along, this promise of stasis could move the masses who, to the chagrin of early Marxists and other utopianists, kept moving but never settled down. The situation was quite different for the *pícaro*, however, since his goal is always provisional — he looks to the next meal. A being of consumption before modern modes of production were established, the *pícaro* lives from moment to moment and hand-to-mouth while others move in or toward stasis.

The improvisation of the *pícaro* feeds off the stability of officialdom and mocks it. For Lazarillo, a sense of improvisation is at the center of self-definition. His very name is testament to last-minute thinking. He is Lazarillo *de Tormes* not because of any tradition which fixes his identity, as Spanish Renaissance names traditionally did in the tales of the errant knights, but because, as he tells us: "I was born in the Tormes river, which is why I took the surname I bear"⁶ (41). This profane baptism in Heraclitan waters makes Lazarillo's very name an emblem of his itinerancy.

Similar improvisational topoi mark what Guillén calls the "the three primordial scenes, the episode of the jug, that of the grapes and that of the sausage"⁷ (273, my translation). In each episode Lazarillo notes an established pattern in his blind master's behavior, cleverly devises a way to exploit the pattern in his favor, executes his plan, and fills his belly. The system is undermined, at least for a moment, by the anti-systemic thinking of the *pícaro*.

3 " ... [el pícaro] [e]s un parásito que necesita de la sociedad estable para vivir" (my emphasis).

4 "Las horas se suceden lentas y desesperantes. Dan las ocho, las once, la una, las dos, y al día siguiente, las dos y las cuatro, hasta que Lazarillo, otra vez al borde del abismo, [es forzado] a pedir limosna" (275).

5 "la técnica de *tempo lento*, en que la cronología acentúa ... la apremiante lentitud del sufrimiento interior [y] coincide con los momentos de mayor desconsuelo" (274).

6 "Mi nacimiento fue dentro del río Tormes, por la cual causa tomé el sobrenombre" (91).

7 "... tres escenas primordiales: el episodio del jarrazo, el de las uvas y el de la longaniza" (273).

In the episode of the jug, we can see the flexibility of Lazarillo's quick-thinking to discern new loopholes in a changing system. To get at the blind man's wine, he found "a long rye straw and slid it into the mouth of the jug, and with that [he] sucked up the wine until it had all gone bye-byes"⁸ (51). When this approach fails, when the blind man "stuck the jug between his legs and put his hand over the top of it. That way he kept his wine safe for himself"⁹ (51), Lazarillo invents another approach to get around the blind man's hand of authority. He tells us:

Then when it was time to eat I pretended I was cold and slid between the wretched blind man's legs to warm myself at the miserable little fire we had — which gave out enough heat, just the same, to soften the wax, and since it was very thin, before long the hold started dripping, and by that time I had got my mouth under it, so that not one damned drop was lost.¹⁰ (51)

These ingenious improvisations do not bring permanent victory over systemization, nor could they. What is important is that Lazarillo's last-minute fix has undermined the time-established system of his blind master long enough to gorge himself once more.

For *Modern Times'* Little Tramp, self-definition and survival likewise depend on improvisation. Like Lazarillo, the Little Tramp's identity is not based on something handed down or earned, it fits more like something he "just threw on this morning." Instead of a name which fraudulently appropriates and mocks codes of social status, the Little Tramp has a tuxedo he may put on whenever it suits him. This tuxedo is pathetic, a distorted vestment of aristocracy which comically fits the misfit like shoes fit a clown. The image might be telling of Charlie Chaplin's European experience in the "New World," but it tells more when read as a quick quip to dis-established and outmoded values of gentility. The Little Tramp's suit has no more historical weight than Lazarillo's last name, and like Lazarillo's last name it has been grafted from the momentary impulse of picaresque time to stand in for a tradition that is not there.

Like *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Modern Times* is narrated with improvisational topoi. On a whim, the Little Tramp cleverly turns a chicken into a funnel, a crushed oil can into a shovel, and, in a moment of musical improvisation, scats

and mimes his way through a song whose written text he lost while performing. The Little Tramp is constantly required to think quickly to save his skin. In each of these cases, a split-second decision brings him a step closer to eating. Like Lazarillo, he cleverly takes advantage of rigid convention to slip away with another meal.

It is important to emphasize that these improvisations cannot be systematized — they are paralogical not logical. Picaresque strategies only make sense in contrast to the backdrop of stability and it is for this reason that Lazarillo and the Little Tramp "depend upon stable society in order to survive"¹¹ (Díaz-Plaja x, my translation). Like most parasites, the *pícaro* does not shut down the mechanism that feeds him, he just profits from the entropy of its system. Guillén has referred to the non-plus economy of picaresque tactics as a "weaving and unweaving ... the motif of Penelope"¹² (265, my translation), a topic which appears several times in *Lazarillo de Tormes*. With this doing and undoing, the *pícaro* does not enrich himself — he just manages to eat more time. In the first *tratado* we read of one of his first feeding strategies: "I was able, often, to bleed the side of the miserly sack through a place in the seam which I would unpick and then sew up again"¹³ (49). Such advancement only counts as progress because it keeps him alive for another day. In the second *tratado* the same figure appears when the priest insists on building a better breadbox which Lazarillo continually dismantles and perforates with holes "as often as he blocked them up in the daytime I unblocked them at night"¹⁴ (81). This episode allows the priest to see the (loop)holes in his apparently hermetic system and gives him a glimpse into the time frame of the *pícaro*: "Where one door shuts, another opens. In fact it was as though we were hard at work in Penelope's loom — what he wove in the daytime I undid at night"¹⁵ (81). This exclamation describes how the *pícaro* views officialdom: he finds loopholes where he can, but, in his rapidly changing environment, the same approach rarely works twice.

The same motif of Penelope appears frequently in *Modern Times*. The sight gags that made Chaplin famous usually require a slapstick universe where things fall apart as quickly as the Little Tramp puts them together. For him, even setting the table lends itself to near-infinite regression. Placing the plate on the table causes the table to fall, fixing the table causes the floor to fall through,

11 "[El pícaro] [e]s un parásito que necesita de la sociedad estable para vivir" (x, my emphasis).

12 "... tejer and destejer ... el motivo de Penélope" (265).

13 "... por un poco de costura, que muchas veces del un lado del fardel descosía y tornaba a coser sangraba el avariento fardel" (98).

14 "... cuantos [agujeros] él tapaba de día destapaba yo de noche" (123).

15 "Donde una puerta se cierra, otra se abre. Finalmente, parecíamos tener a destajo la tela de Penélope, pues cuanto él desteja de día rompía yo de noche" (123).

8 "... una paja larga de centeno, que para aquel menester tenía hecha, la cual metiéndola en la boca del jarro, chupando el vino lo dejaba a buenas noches" (100).

9 "asentaba su jarro entre las piernas y atápale con la mano, y así bebía seguro" (100).

10 "... acordé en el suelo del jarro hacerle una fuentejilla y agujero sotil, y delicadamente con una muy delgada torrilla de cera taparlo, y al tiempo de comer, fingiendo haber frío, entrába entre las piernas del triste ciego a calentarme en la pobrejilla lumbre que teníamos, y al calor della luego derretida la cera (por ser muy poca), comenzaba la fuentejilla a destilarme en la boca, la cual yo de tal manera ponía, que maldita la gota se perdía" (100).

fixing the floor caves the ceiling in and stabilizing the ceiling brings the wall crashing down. Like Lazarillo, the Little Tramp gets along by continually doing and undoing; systemization itself is foiled by "the motif of Penelope." By his very nature the *pícaro* can make no progress. No permutation of the hero's "boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy wins girl and lives happily ever after" can work for him because he strives to consume. The true modernist picaresque plot, "*pícaro* bucks the system to eat" can know no closure. Hunger follows eating and eating follows hunger onward to infinite. The *pícaro* embodies the modernity's will to consume and feeds off its excess consumption.

It is at this point that our two *pícaros* must part company and the *pícaro* from *Tormes* is exposed as a part-time *pícaro* and an incomplete modern. Although Lazarillo lives to consume, and lives only by improvising new ways to eat, Lázaro falls short of modernity because he "struggles to make himself at home in a changing world" (Berman 6) but ends up making himself a home. He succeeds in his plan to "cleave unto the good [ones]"¹⁶ (151) and settles down. In his service to the governor, Lazarillo the *pícaro* has sold out to society. Having shirked the "... essential characteristic of the *pícaro* to be a nomad..." he can no longer be considered a "... parasite that depends upon *stable* society" because he himself has become a stable fixture in that society. As Lazarillo becomes a member of the society he has been outwitting, he loses the reader's sympathy as an underdog and leaves the distinct impression that he does not belong in his sedentary complacency. How can Lazarillo, who has been a wanderer all his life, settle for and with marriage to the local Arcipreste's lover? As Howard Mancing observes "[o]ne cannot suffer complacent cuckoldry in a prosperous adult as one can lying, cheating, and vengeance in a starving waif" (430). What Mancing calls a "moral earthquake" (430) can also be described as the *marvais* *foi* feudalization of a nearly modern character. Lázaro exits the movement of modernity and lodges himself in a feudal pigeonhole out of our view. Lázaro has left the margins we know as moderns to merge with an establishment we can't condone or even understand. The picaresque time of rapid-fire improvisation is abandoned in favor of the static chronology of feudal officialdom with its square meals and pigeon-holed characterization.

Lázaro shows the workings of nascent modernity where self-establishment is difficult but not yet impossible. One can still seek shelter in the eroding stasis of feudalism. At the end of *Lazarillo de Tormes* the reader realizes that Lazarillo has been executing a double plan. Along with the improvisational hand-to-mouth tactics proper to the modern *pícaro*, Lazarillo has managed to find a stable foothold in his "cleave to the good [ones]" strategy. It is this strategy he uses to halt the acceleration of modernity which had prodded him from master to master.

16 "... arrimar[se] a los buenos..." (175).

Such a solution is no longer possible for a truly modern *pícaro* like the Little Tramp. Always a step away from utopia, the Little Tramp is frustrated at every attempt at self-establishment. He finds a home temporarily, but leaves it to go to work, loses his job and loses his home. He is even forcibly ousted from his prison cell. Stasis is closest in the penultimate scene when the Little Tramp is offered reliable work as, of all things, a singing waiter. "I'll give you a steady job," he is promised. A moment later however, utopia is postponed once more, he and the Gamin are off and running again — wanted by the law. *Modern Times* is a film, indeed a world, without closure. The final words of the film merely perpetuate the road to nowhere nomadic movement of modernity: "Buck up, never say die. We'll get along." For the modern *pícaro*, getting along is the only possible goal.

Modern Times narrates the latter end of modernity. Whereas system was always a given for Lazarillo, a changing system but system nonetheless, the Little Tramp must pit his ability to improvise against an environment which changes as quickly as he does. It appears that the modern *pícaro* may have found its *point de saturation* in *Modern Times* where it is barely possible to keep pace with the times. The clever games of substitution, a chicken for a funnel, a crushed oil can for a shovel, etc., begin to get away from the Little Tramp. He can no longer decipher a system where meaning itself erodes, where the rag that marks a wide load becomes flag for the Communist Party, where salt is interchangeable with cocaine, and where a chicken becomes a football. This is because change is now dictated by machine. The machine, the central metaphor of *Modern Times*, paves the way for system without meaning. The prison, where salt becomes cocaine, works like a machine replete with beeps to steer the human robots within it. The dance hall, where a chicken becomes a football, works like a machine where Pavlovian Skinner-dancers dance to the beat of a pre-programmed orchestra. The Little Tramp, a sort of picaresque ghost in the machine, is pushed through the mechanisms like a pinball. He is pulled through the cogs of the factory, bounced through the line-ups at the prison, and ricocheted through the dancers at the dance hall. The systems of *Modern Times* are mechanized and offer no eye for the picaresque sleight of hand to fool. The values of *Modern Times* are so unstable that official margins begin to merge with the picaresque.

In review, *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Modern Times* offer samples from the two extremes of the modernist spectrum. Both remain on the margins of modernity by living outside the objective time of officialdom. Furthermore, both survive by improvisation; slighting the hand that starves you is the only way to eat for the *pícaro*. However, *Lazarillo de Tormes* reveals its feudal roots as our would-be hero fastens himself to the stability of his class. Lazarillo the character is striking in his novel emergence into modernity, but a Lazarillo of flesh and bone could have concocted similar ruses throughout the Middle Ages. The difference lies between reality and representation — the reader witnesses a character whose

environs are anchored in a feudal stasis but whose actions belie a later temporal alertness.

Lazarillo de Tormes presents a shift in how character can be imagined and written. His time marks the (incomplete) emergence of modern time in a novel that pushes us toward modernity by urging us to think in a new temporal frame of spontaneous improvisations. However, the frenzied momentum is not maintained and we end up in the "temporal ease" proper to Lazarillo's reality. By abandoning the nomadic pilgrimage of the *pícaro*, Lazarillo steps back from modernity's rush into the commonplace complacency of the feudal caste system.

The Little Tramp, on the other hand, can have no such release from his hurries. On the contrary, his every step must go forward to keep pace with the times. His ability to improvise and out-think the system is in jeopardy as the system abandons thinking altogether and becomes automated. Chaplin allows us to glimpse the prospect of falling out of modernity, not to a more static premodernity as with Lazarillo, but to an even more aimless postmodernity where illusive absolutes are betrayed by their substitutes. As modernity abandons its utopias to pursue a fruitless ethic of production, the Little Tramp is faced with the dim possibility of structure without value. Even the quick-witted *pícaro* is dumbfounded as signs multiply and interchange before his eyes, eluding the illusionist and rewriting the rules of his game.

For the *pícaro* this could mean extinction as no one will feed him for cleverness. Born into and defined by the temporal character of modernity, the *pícaro* may well stay there even as his spontaneity grows antiquated. Perhaps his need to eat speeds to a blur as consumption accelerates and multiplies. What might *Modern Times* mean for us, we who must hurry through Charlie Chaplin's motion pictures on high speed so as to move on to our next consumption?¹⁷

The Pennsylvania State University

17 The films of Charlie Chaplin have been accelerated so as not to bore the modern viewer.

Works Cited

- Berman, Marshall. *All That is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin, 1988.
 Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
 Chaplin, Charles, dir. *Modern Times*. With Chaplin and Paulette Goddard. United Artists, 1936.
 Díaz-Plaja, Guillermo, ed. *Lazarillo de Tormes—Vida del buscón*. Mexico: Porrúa, 1986.
 González Echevarría, Roberto. *Myth and Archive*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990.
 Guillén, Claudio. "La disposición temporal del Lazarillo de Tormes." *HR* 25 (1957): 264-79.
 Jaen, Didier. "La ambigüedad moral del Lazarillo de Tormes." *PMLA* 83 (1968): 130-34.
Lazarillo de Tormes. Clásicos Castalia: Madrid, 1982.
The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes. Trans. W.S. Merwin. New York: Anchor Books Doubleday & Company, 1962.
 Mancing, Howard. "The Deceptiveness of *Lazarillo de Tormes*." *PMLA* 90 (1975): 426-32.
 Robbe-Grillet, Alain. *Pour un nouveau roman*. Paris: Minuit, 1963.