

# #13

# REMAKES, ZOMBIES AND TRADITION(S): THE CASE OF *LAZARILLO Z. MATAR* *ZOMBIS NUNCA FUE* *PAN COMIDO*

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Article || Received on: 16/12/2014 | International Advisory Board's suitability: 08/05/2015 | Published: 07/2015

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**Abstract** || After the publication of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Seth Grahame-Smith, 2009) a new literary movement appeared based on the rewriting of the classic novels with the inclusion of zombies in their storylines. In this regard, the first remake of a Hispanic classical novel was *El Lazarillo Z. Matar zombies nunca fue pan comido*. This ironic and humorous novel reviewed the original text, as well as Spanish literature and Spanish history. In this article, I focus on the remake of *Lazarillo de Tormes* to reflect, in the first place, on the fresh writing movement of the remake and its possibilities. Afterwards, I analyze the importance of these new novels in the contemporary literary scene and their potential to transform, sabotage, and deconstruct.

**Keywords** || *Lazarillo Z* | Remake | Critique and Sabotage | Deconstruction | Rewriting the tradition

## 0. Remake as a post-modern phenomenon of reading of tradition(s)

There is a hot debate in the fields of philology and comparative literature on the (re)readings of tradition(s) and, thus, the canon, or, in Even-Zohar's term, the canonized.<sup>1</sup> This discussion has not only taken place among the critics, but it has moved to literary works thanks to (re)writing phenomena such as the remake:

No se trata de una copia, no se busca la reduplicación, sino establecer parámetros de diferencias, pautas de contraste, desvíos [...]. En lugar de entregarnos la pureza del original y la degradación de las copias, entrevé en los simulacros una suerte de transgresión de lo mismo, de ruptura con las leyes de encadenamiento platónicas, en donde el efecto degradante se transmuta en juego, vibración siempre renovada, eterno retorno, variación y reciclaje continuo. El discurso que legitima el original frente a la copia se revierte, y son ahora los sucesivos simulacros los que rompen con el privilegio de la mismidad, del ser, del modelo. (Fernández Gonzalo, 2011: 169-170)

As for Jean Baudrillard, for whom simulacra preceded reality and substituted it for hiperreality, we can think that literary remake is established on the original work as a light layer that makes linguistic reference impossible: "En este paso a un espacio cuya curvatura ya no es la de lo real, ni la de la verdad, la era de la simulación se abre, pues, con la liquidación de todos los referentes" (Baudrillard, 1978: 7). Both erode—not in a negative sense—and establish themselves based on the similarities and differences with the previous stage.

However, Baudrillard's theory does not apply to certain aspects, as remake does not take part of such a radical notion of simulacrum as described here: "Lo real no tendrá nunca más ocasión de producirse" (Baudrillard, 1978: 7). By establishing on, rather than substituting, the original (in a total sense), it is permeated with it to the point of becoming a palimpsest whose most deeply marked print is that of the first work.<sup>2</sup> This way, it is established as a rewriting with a high intertextual character that points out its origin; unlike the simulacrum, which acts silently.

Also in Fernández Gonzalo's opinion, remake can be used as a mechanism to deconstruct literary tradition(s) (and therefore the original text) from inside the margins of the literary:

Deconstruir es establecer un nuevo género a medio camino entre la obra artística y las estructuras lógicas del comentario [...]. Así, el remake presenta, a un mismo tiempo, algo de obra artística y algo de comentario: un remake siempre interpreta el original, establece canales de correspondencia, lecturas, alteraciones que, en último término, nos dan la clave estructural del texto primero, ponen de relieve sus estilemas principales, acumula, mediante la desviación, juegos de perspectiva y registros de lectura que, en lugar de anular o reescribir el original, lo

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### NOTES

1 | Even-Zohar (1991) uses the terms canonized and canonization instead of canonical and canon, as, as Monserrat Iglesias points out, they allow to "subrayar que la canonicidad no es una característica inherente de los textos en ningún nivel, sino una categoría que se adquiere a lo largo de un proceso y como resultado de una actividad" (1994: 332).

2 | Fernández Gonzalo points out: "El original permanece intocado, mientras que la copia sufre todas las secuelas de reelaboración, acumula las interpretaciones y elucidaciones, acapara los designios de la crítica, del paso del tiempo, etc." (2011: 171).

propulsan, lo encaraman a su esencia, restituyen su experiencia de ser, para dejar fuera (en la disposición estructural del segundo film) los efectos de la exégesis y el poder acaparador de la lectura. (Fernández Gonzalo, 2011: 171)

Thirdly, we can read remakes from the notions developed by professor Manuel Asensi in *Crítica como Sabotaje*: first, the need to adopt (mainly as critics or readers, but also as authors of fictions) the subaltern point of view (in Spivak's sense, without forgetting Gramsci); second, the concepts of thetic and athetic texts.

When Manuel Asensi, in his prologue to Spivak's *¿Pueden hablar los subalternos?*, gives a positive answer to the question in the title of the book, he is positioning against the Indian theoretician and, at the same time, he is setting up one of the fundamental thesis of his *Crítica y sabotaje* (Asensi, 2011): the need of looking through the eyes of the subaltern to conveniently elaborate critical readings of the different discourses created by a society: "No se trata de hablar por ellos, ni de representarles, sino de adoptar su punto de vista heterogéneo, plural, lo cual debe hacerse en medio de la vigilancia y de la autoridad reflexiva más estricta", as "la mirada más privilegiada para alcanzar el conocimiento no es la que se sitúa en un afuera o en una posición superior, sino aquella que se ubica en los lugares más inferiores" (Asensi, 2011: 72). The remake allows for this possibility from the inside of the literary. It does speak out, it surely allows to be heard, and, most importantly, it can throw light on the dark areas of the original to sabotage it. In this sense, the remake can act as an athetic text: "los textos atéticos en su disposición dan a ver su composición silogística y ponen en crisis la posibilidad de esta composición" (Asensi, 2011: 53). According to this idea (intimately linked to Paul de Man and Derrida's undecidables), there are literary discourses that act as powerful sabotaging elements, even more than critics, as they operate from inside the symbolic apparatus of literature, and not from parallel spaces.

Therefore, although the remake is—or can be—partly simulacrum (Baudrillard), partly deconstructive mechanism (Derrida, Paul de Man) and partly sabotaging agent (Asensi), the above-mentioned cannot be applied to every case. As each work has its own mechanisms, which can strengthen particular areas, it is the critic who should analyse them accordingly. In any case, these rewritings open up new spaces of debate and discussion from where to observe and read tradition(s).

## 1. Z culture: zombified classics

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* has been annotated, criticized and read from different theoretical perspectives; it has been taken to the big screen (by Robert Leonard in 1940, by Sharon Maguire with the title *Bridget Jones's Diary* in 2001, by Andrew Black in 2003, by Gurinder Chadha in Bollywood in 2005 and by Joe Wright, that same year) and also to the small screen (in 1967 by Joan Craft, in 1980 with Fay Weldon's script, in 1995 directed by Simon Langton, and even sequels such as *Daniel Percival's* in 2013); it has been turned into comic by Marvel (with a script by Nancy Butler and illustrated by Hugo Petrus), and has had several sequels, such as the novels *Darcy's Story* (Janet Aylmer, 1996), the trilogy *Fitzwilliam Darcy, Gentleman* (Pamela Aidan) or *Conviction: A sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (Skylar Hamilton Burriss, 2009). But Seth Grahame-Smith was the first to include zombies on his rewriting of the plot, becoming the first author of a Z remake by publishing *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* in 2009.

Grahame-Smith maintained most of the original text, but created a zombified story where the Bennet sisters and Mr. Darcy try to survive to the attack of a zombie horde eager for human flesh in the English countryside. Its publishing success was overwhelming: it was on the top ten best-seller Amazon books for several months (Cohen, 2009), it was translated to several languages (among them, Spanish) that same year, and even a film adaptation was announced for 2015. Unsurprisingly, the model was repeated: *Alice in ZombieLand* or *Huckleberry Finn and Zombie Jim*. It also led to some other peculiar combinations: *Android Karenina*, *Romeo and Juliet and Vampire* or *Paul is Undead*—a mix of history-fiction and zombies where the two dead Beatles, turned into zombies, want to relaunch the quartet.

In the last decade, hundreds of proposals have taken on this distinctive character of the cinema (since George A. Romero directed the famous *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968),<sup>3</sup> and 1920s and 1930s pulp culture, incredibly popular in the US. The format has been transferred to other languages, with a huge success in all its versions (western, fantastic-terror, love, science-fiction, crime, etc.).<sup>4</sup> The zombie that is now infecting literature classics has lately appeared in dozens of films (the recent Marc Foster's *World War Z* or the four *Rec* films in Spain are good examples), TV series (*The Walking Dead*, *Les Revenants* or *Dead Set*, among others), comics (*Revival*, written by Tim Seeley and illustrated by Mike Norton, or, again, *The Walking Dead*, by Robert Kirkman, etc.) or video games (the *Resident Evil* saga, *Left 4 Dead*, *Dead Rising*, etc.).

At the same time, humour (ironic, sarcastic, acid and grotesque)

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### NOTES

3 | Although Romero's film was not the first to introduce the zombie to the big screen, as films such as *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932), *The Walking Dead* (Michael Curtiz, 1936) or *Plan 9 of Outer Space* (Ed Wood, 1959), had been recorded before, it was the one that popularized the zombie phenomenon, thanks to a huge and unexpected success, both of attendance and public.

4 | The two volumes of *La novela Popular en España* (VV.AA., 2001) can be used to justify the Spanish case.



is always present in these Z rewritings and has its origins in the cinematographic splatter or gore aesthetics, popular in classic fantasy-terror comedies such as Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1981), *Evil Dead 2: Dead by Down* (1987) or *Evil Dead 3: Army of Darkness* (1992), Dan O'Bannon's *The Return of the Living Dead* (1985), or Peter Jackson's *Braindead* (1992).<sup>5</sup> A new boom of the genre comes in 2004 with the success of Edgar Wright's *Zombies Party*. As an example, the last decade has seen the release of films such as *Fido* (Andrew Currie, 2006), *Zombieland* (Ruben Fleischer, 2009), *Doghouse* (Jake West, 2009), *Dead Snow* (Tommy Wirkola, 2009) or *Evil Dead* (Fede Álvarez, 2013), a remake of Raimi's work.

In this environment, and with the success of Seth Grahame-Smith's remake in mind, many Spanish writers were aware of the huge publishing space that these kind of works opened for them, and they soon plunged into the zombification of classics. The first to be affected by the virus was Lázaro de Tormes in 2009, transformed into *Lazarillo Z. Matar zombis nunca fue pan comido*, which I will not comment now, as I will widely draw on it later.<sup>6</sup>

Soon after that, of course, the most famous gentleman of La Mancha was infected too. The Asturian writer Házael G. González (2010) presented the "real" Don Quixote story, who, obsessed with zombie stories, decides to become a knight and travel around the Castilian countryside to fight against undead hordes that only exist in his imagination. The inclusion of an explanatory prologue, usually historical, trying to ironically justify the veracity of the facts is common in this type of works. In this case, the novel starts at the Lepanto battle, where Cervantes witnesses a terrifying Turkish weapon: heads that, even cut off, keep biting all over the place. One of these bites makes the author of *Don Quixote* lose his arm. This traumatic episode prompts him to write the novel we have in our hands, which remained unpublished as Cervantes decided to give his editor the less unusual version.

The first and, for now, only zombie remake of a theatre play is *La casa de Bernarda Alba Zombi* (García Lorca, 2009).<sup>7</sup> In this case, the work was not commercialized, but distributed freely from the project's webpage.<sup>8</sup> The play that is brought up here goes far beyond Házael G. González's work, as the alleged authors (Jorge de Barnola, Roberto Bartual and Miguel Carreira) not only did rewrite the original work from a zombie perspective, but also included a critical introduction and tens of footnotes, following Editorial Cátedra's model, and even pretended to certify it was going to be published in its prestigious *Clásicos Hispánicos* collection. The introduction is written following the publisher's model and advocates for the originality of the remake, stating that the *Manuscrito Z*, found among Pepín Bello's papers, will

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## NOTES

5 | To understand the origin and success of gore up to the 1980s, the reading of the classic McCarty (1984) is recommended.

6 | I do not analyse the second parts of many works, such as the Avellaneda's *Quijote* (1614) or the *Segunda parte del Lazarillo de Tormes* (Amberes, 1555), where Lázaro turns into a tuna, as well as works based in the classics, as the *Lazarillo de Manzanares* (1617), by Juan Cortés de Tolosa. The remake is different, as it does not continue or take the original as a model, but reelaborates the work from the beginning.

7 | Although of course the author is not Federico García Lorca, I cite according to the indications of the book. I follow the same criteria in the bibliography. The quotes of the introduction are attributed to their authors, Roberto Bartual and Miguel Carreira.

8 | <http://bernardaalbazombi.blogspot.com.es/>

change the history of Spanish theatre forever:

Pepín Bello tuvo que escribir el *Manuscrito Z* al poco de comprar la máquina de escribir, es decir, entre 1930 y 1934, lo cual nos obliga a enfrentarnos a un hecho sorprendente: la versión que durante todos estos años hemos conocido de *La casa de Bernarda Alba* es, en realidad, un plagio de la versión con zombies que escribió Pepín. (Bartual and Carreira, 2009: 25)

This inversion is highly fruitful, as it allows to point out intertextualities of *Manuscrito Z* in Lorca's work, establishing constant strains between fiction and reality. Towards the end of the introduction, Bartual and Carreira suggest an interpretation: zombies symbolise "la misma horda reaccionaria e hipócrita que hizo estallar la Guerra Civil en España, dándose la paradoja de que la misma Bernarda es incluso más reaccionaria e hipócrita que los reaccionarios que rodean su pueblo" (2009: 34-35).

Z remake, inserted in this wide cultural phenomenon of the zombie, moves away from the traditional continuations and revisions of classics and at the same time stands indebted to them, embracing the post-structuralist theoretical principles mentioned before. This way, it has to be treated as a symptom of the existence of new awareness and implementation of re-readings and rewritings of the most canonized literary tradition(s).

## 2. Zombie, fantasy and politics

In *Tras los límites de lo real*, David Roas states that "lo fantástico se caracteriza por proponer un conflicto entre (nuestra idea de) lo real y lo imposible. Y lo esencial para que dicho conflicto genere un efecto fantástico es [...] la inexplicabilidad del fenómeno" (2011: 30). Initially, the zombie character seems to fit: a being that is not dead, neither alive, as it has characteristics from both, cannot be explained rationally.

However, many later fictions have usually chosen to offer a pseudo-scientific explanation that eliminates the fantastic effect produced by the unknown: viruses (*28 Days Later*), mutations (*Resident Evil*) or chemical escapes (*Invasion by the Atomic Zombies*) have been usually claimed as the cause of the plagues. In this sense, we must distinguish physical fear, that "tiene que ver con la amenaza física, la muerte y lo materialmente espantoso. Es un efecto habitual en lo fantástico [...] que también está presente en aquellas obras literarias y cinematográficas donde se consigue aterrorizar al lector por medios naturales" (Roas, 2011: 95), from metaphysical fear, that is exclusive of fantasy and "atañe directamente al receptor, puesto

que se produce cuando nuestras convicciones sobre lo real dejan de funcionar” (Roas, 2011: 95-96). The usually pseudo-explained figure of the zombie moves away from fantasy in fictions, and its effect is more similar to that of the serial killer than to Dracula or Cthulhu, to name but two prototypical fantasy characters:

La cuestión, sin embargo, no es si nos fijamos en uno u otro tópico, sino que en el caso de la ficción zombi nunca se nos problematiza nuestra realidad. Tal vez sea porque el zombi es el monstruo posmoderno por excelencia, y nuestra sociedad posmoderna ya es lo suficientemente problemática de por sí. O tal vez porque lo problemático no es ya el mundo o la relación del sujeto con él, sino el propio sujeto posmoderno. En ese sentido, nosotros somos los zombis. (Viciano Fernández, 2014: 120)

The figure of the zombie is linked to a logic of economics that is exploited in many works with the aim of pointing out particular areas of reality that are hidden.

In line with this, one of the most repeated relations connects the zombie to the sociological and philosophical concept of mass, as Jorge Martínez Lucena points out:

Criatura idónea para la crítica de las sociedades de masas. Quizá un poco esperpéntica y demasiado esquemática o simple, ya que la alienación simbólica en un zombi no es más que un secreto a voces, pero al fin y al cabo válida para representar, de un modo extremadamente sencillo, esa amenaza cacotópica. (Martínez Lucena, 2010: 98)

From English-speaking (Australian, British, US and Canadian) cinema examples, Jon Stratton develops a theory that links the zombie with the figure of the displaced or refugee and Agamben’s concept of bare life<sup>9</sup>:

Zombies provide a monster for our time because they express our anxieties over the relationship between bare life and the modern state. As I have noted previously, zombies are an expression of bare life. From the viewpoint of the members of those countries of the West, the displaced people attempting to enter them are also bare life. They have no protection from any state. This underlying similitude enables the same metaphors to be used for both zombies and displaced people. Where zombies appear as a remorseless threat laying siege to wherever humans manage to collect to defend themselves, displaced people are constructed in the same way, as a threat at the border of the state. (Stratton, 2011: 277)

Another reading, by Ángel Ferrero and Saúl Roas, postulates that the zombie works as a contra-cultural metaphor that not only represents fear to death (physical) and to the unknown (metaphysical), but also fear of being controlled and manipulated, that is, of losing free will:

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## NOTES

9 | Stratton uses the concept of *bare life* in the following terms: “bare life has a dual meaning. In the first place it refers to lack of legal protection by the state. Without that protection, the person reduced to bare life can become transformed into the second understanding of bare life: the liminal condition of death-in-life” (Stratton, 2011: 278).



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El zombi no es realmente un monstruo al uso, sino una metáfora del ser humano corriente que ha sido infectado y manipulado. Y aunque siempre acaba cometiendo algún tipo de crimen, no es realmente por voluntad propia. De esta forma el zombi se convierte en monstruo y víctima a un mismo tiempo, y esta dualidad le hace todavía más aterrador. Es víctima porque no puede ni escapar de sus instintos ni del contagio, y es monstruo porque aparentemente nadie le obliga a actuar de ese modo. Es monstruo y víctima porque ni es consciente de su maldad, como sí ocurre con Drácula u otros monstruos, ni es consciente de su lamentable situación. El zombi representa así a ese ser humano que ha perdido su humanidad, y es esa pérdida de humanidad, transmitida por nuestros semejantes como un virus, la que nos aterroriza realmente. (Ferrero and Roas, 2011: 7)

In line with a similar reflection on the relation between the zombie and totalitarianisms in current societies, Jorge Martínez Lucena states in *Ensayo Z: Una antropología de la carne percedera* that “los monstruos que salían de las tumbas no son nada comparados con los que llevamos dentro del corazón” (2012: 75). Although he links it to Hannah Arendt ideas, I believe it can also relate to some of Michel Foucault reflections:

El enemigo mayor, el adversario estratégico. Y no únicamente el fascismo histórico de Hitler y de Mussolini, sino además el fascismo que está en todos nosotros, en nuestras cabezas y en nuestros comportamientos cotidianos, el fascismo que nos hace amar al poder [...] ¿Cómo hacer para no volverse fascista incluso cuando (sobre todo cuando) uno se cree un militante revolucionario? ¿Cómo eliminar el fascismo de nuestros discursos y de nuestros actos, de nuestros corazones y de nuestros placeres? ¿Cómo desalojar el fascismo que se ha alojado en nuestros comportamientos? (Foucault, 1994: 90)

In this sense, to speak of the principles of classic totalitarianisms that are still present in contemporary societies, some critics and cultural theorists, such as Antonio Méndez Rubio, have proposed (following Foucault himself) a rather controversial term to make us reflect on the new state structures: low-intensity fascism:

El *fascismo de baja intensidad*, como nueva forma de totalitarismo, se define por su acierto a la hora de conjugar la captura de nuestros afectos con la voluntad sistémica de destrucción de la vida y del querer vivir. Este nuevo fascismo sustituye, sin abandonarla, la prioridad de la agresión física o por la fuerza reemplazándola por la prioridad de la incidencia ideológica, persuasiva y seductora, en una dinámica tendencia que ha deshecho a la clase trabajadora sin una sola bala. (Méndez Rubio, 2012: 95)

Z literature, inasmuch it is a remake, can be established as a first order sabotaging or deconstructing mechanism. As Manuel Asensi writes in a brief article about Derrida, deconstruction is a form of political resistance against any form of fascism, one of the most liberating political strategies since Marxism and its variations

revealed their limitations (Asensi 2004:11). In Derrida's opinion, the first object of deconstruction is metaphysics.<sup>10</sup> Asensi states: "En realidad, lo que la deconstrucción vigila no es la metafísica, sino la posibilidad de que la metafísica devenga fascista, el riesgo potencial autoritario, su matriz más básica, la barra", so "el peligro de esta no reside tanto en crear oposiciones jerárquicas como en conferirles un valor ontológico" (Asensi, 2004: 12).

Ultimately, the zombie can be a deconstructing or sabotaging tool with potential possibilities for fighting the monsters of our hearts and our pleasures (Foucault) from (re)writings of the classics that operate with new critical, theoretical and philosophical postulates. No wonder Jorge Fernández Gonzalo says in this sense that zombie "es un problema de escritura [...] con el que infectar cualquiera de los signos que componen nuestros códigos culturales y, desde ahí, volver a pensarlo nuevamente" (2011: 75).

### 3. The case of *Lazarillo Z. Matar zombis nunca fue pan comido*

José de Ribera's *El patizambo* now carries a bleeding head and in the background, on the hills painted by Españoleto in 1642, we discern the shape of a being that flounders with its hands reaching forward. This is the cover of a zombified book that aims to throw light on the wrongly narrated story of Lázaro de Tormes. The life of this young *pícaro*, described in the classic *Lazarillo de Tormes*, is, we are told, false. For more than four thousand years we have been deluded, or that is what Charles I states in the first text of the novel:

Por fin ve la luz lo que jamás te enseñaron en la escuela, la verdadera historia de Lázaro de Tormes, contada por él mismo:

De cómo ciertas criaturas se empeñaban en no descansar en paz. De cómo Lázaro se unió a un escuadrón de asalto paranormal. De cómo sobrevivió en un país con mucho hideputa suelto (de ultratumba y de más acá). De cómo, en resumidas cuentas, Lázaro de Tormes se convirtió en uno de los mayores cazadores de zombis del Imperio, y de los problemas que esto le trajo con la Corte y la Santa Inquisición. (2010: 2)

The main characteristics of *Lazarillo Z* are summarized in these lines: the inclusion of the zombie, the systematic use of humour and irony, and the rereading and rewriting of history and literature.

Similarly to the other Z remakes which I briefly analysed before, *Lazarillo Z* is structured as a set of Chinese boxes or diegetic levels starting from the commonplace of the found manuscript, which

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## NOTES

10 | The summarized definition of metaphysics given by Asensi in that article is as follows: "el pensamiento del ser como simple presencia [...]. Lo importante de ella no es tanto su contenido como la matriz que crea, el espacio vacío y formal a que da lugar, de manera que los contenidos que van apareciendo en ella, dentro de sus límites, están sobredeterminados por esa matriz" (Asensi, 2004: 12), establishing binary hierarchical positions between its elements, separated by a bar ( / ): "hombre/mujer, habla/escritura, espíritu/materia, élite/popular, teoría/práctica, etc., lo característico es que los términos que aparecen en primer lugar, ocupan una posición jerárquica superior respecto a los términos que aparecen en segundo lugar" (Asensi, 2004: 12).

contributes, according to Ana Baquero Escudero, to conceal the fictionality of the work and give historical authenticity by distancing the author, who is not shown as the main creator, but as a kind of transcriber or editor (Baquero Escudero, 2007: 249-250).

From the above mentioned letter, which constitutes the first diegetic level, the compiler, Juan Diego Barreda, starts his task. The reader would only know him at the end: “periodista y escritor especializado en temas paranormales. Sus libros sobre vampirismo y otros fenómenos sobrenaturales le han granjeado una sólida reputación entre los aficionados al género” (2010: 143). His is the introductory annotation (2010: 5)—where he explains the difficulties to write the next part of the work, which forms a new diegetic level, due to the lack of sources—and a final explanation (2010: 142-143)—where he explains the difficulties to know what happened after the events of the third diegetic level and specifies that both the security guard, Juan Dámaso Villar, and Lázaro de Tormes escaped, being considered as suspects of the massacre.

On the third level, an extra-diegetic narrator tells the events of “La macabra cena de San Bartolomé” in three different moments: “14 de septiembre de 2009 / 1.00” (2010: 6-12), “14 de septiembre de 2009 / 4.20” (2010: 79-80) and “14 de septiembre de 2009 / 6.00” (2010: 135-141).

The first one narrates the escape of the patient Lázaro González Pérez from his room in the Psychiatric Hospital of San Bartolomé and how doctor Torres finds an old manuscript and starts reading, leading to the fourth diegetic level that tells the real life of Lázaro de Tormes, which I will comment on later.

In the brief “14 de septiembre de 2009 / 4.20”, doctor Torres unsuccessfully googles the terms “Lázaro, no muertos, Toledo, siglo XVI” (2010: 79), while the nurse Joaquín Arroyo does his round and the security guard María del Pilar Gómez sends a text that is transcribed in *Lazarillo Z’s* endnotes.<sup>11</sup>

The last fragment of this level describes the macabre scenes of tens of zombified patients feeding on the bodies of doctor Torres, nurse Arroyo and the security guard.

The most important and extensive of the diegetic levels is the fourth one, which corresponds to the manuscript “La vida de Lázaro de Tormes y de sus luchas y transformaciones” and has two parts: from page 13 to 78 (prologue and three first treaties) and from page 81 to 134 (fourth to seventh treaties). As in the original work, an intra-diegetic narrator (Lázaro) tells the true history of his life to refute “el

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## NOTES

11 | The seven endnotes (146-153) clarify aspects of the “Macabra cena de San Bartolomé”.

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hatajo de mentiras y medias verdades que componen la historia de Lázaro de Tormes, ese muchacho avispado y hambriento que se movía por el mundo en la primera mitad del siglo XVI” (2010: 14) and to teach “cosas que os resulten útiles en la guerra que vendrá; porque mis batallas, queridos lectores, pronto serán las vuestras; mis enemigos serán vuestros verdugos y mis sedientos aliados de la noche se convertirán en los ángeles guardianes que velarán vuestros turbados sueños” (2010: 15).

In the face of such a remake, we need to establish a series of links to the original work and to the original and reception historical contexts. Presenting a *Lazarillo Z* without paratexts to orient the reading would not induce the effect the author wants to trigger, which is precisely playing with the apparent truths and supposed lies of history and literature. Therefore, the reader enters a game of intertextual references to fictional worlds and to Spanish history. This confrontation with the classic in a fair dialectic of assemblings infected by the zombie, where the reader plays a fundamental role by identifying the differences and similarities with the original work, puts the original *Lazarillo* in a position to be judged. As Fernández Gonzalo said, it is possible to infect the anonymous 16th century work with the zombie from the margins of fiction, not to substitute the original, but to reread its pages. Zombification allows to watch the original text from another point of view that can establish new relationships, whether deconstructive or saboteur.

Although the relationship to the original work is fundamental in paratexts, it becomes more important in the fragments narrated by Lázaro. In the original *Lazarillo*, the protagonist had at least eight masters throughout the seven treaties: the blind man (Treaty I), the priest (T. II), the squire (T. III), the friar of the order of Mercy (T. IV), the pardoner (T. V), the artist who paints tambourines (T. VI), the chaplain (T. VI) and the Archpriest of San Salvador (T. VII). In *Lazarillo Z*, also in seven treaties, only four masters appear: the blind man (T. I), the priest (T. II), the squire (T. III) and the pardoner (T. V), with particularities that distance them clearly from the original ones.

The Tiresian blind man is capable of seeing more and better than those who have all their senses: “Algunas noches las tumbas aparecen abiertas, hay huellas en la tierra... [...] Sois ciego, y como muchos de ellos tenéis la habilidad de saber sin ver: creedme, yo sé que mi hijo se acerca a mí en mitad del sueño y pide mi ayuda.” (2010: 26). Notwithstanding the misfortunes he goes through during his time with him, for the original Lázaro the blind man was the master who taught him most. He was greedy and mean, but had the wisdom of experience and gave him valuable advice in fortunes and adversities, or rather, through tricks and wiles (such as the episode of

the bull or the one of the grapes). These characteristics are repeated in the remake, and it is in fact the blind man who warns him firstly about the zombie plague that devastates Spain :

Los reconocerás por el olor y por el tacto: parecen vivos, como tú y como yo, pero no lo están. Despiden un hedor a podrido, porque sus vísceras se deshacen, la sangre se les corrompe y su piel es fría como la de una culebra; pero aparte de eso hablan, se mueven y respiran como los demás. ¡Aléjate de ellos! No sé de dónde han salido, pero sí sé que no traen nada bueno. (2010: 29)

However, the end of the blind man differs greatly from the original: a torrential rain takes them by surprise and they decide to take shelter in a church where a mass is taking place. Inside, Lázaro notices some macabre details: “A ambos lados unos cirios oscuros iluminaban el altar, detrás del cual había un crucifijo de grandes dimensiones, tan grande que parecía cernirse sobre los allí presentes, vigilarlos desde las alturas” (2010: 36) or “¿eran imaginaciones mías o la sangre goteaba del Cristo?” (2010: 36). In the sacred moment of communion, the Host “desprendía un olor extraño, como a podrido, y de sus extremos goteaba un líquido parduzco” (2010: 36). Lázaro takes it and throws it to the floor: “ante mi horror se deslizó por él, latiendo como si estuviera viva” (2010: 37). The protagonist manages to escape, while the priest yells in an unknown language, and the zombified, a mass (Martínez Lucena, 2010) of beings without free will (Ferrero y Roas, 2011), jump on the priest, whose destiny is not to smash his head into a pillar, but to be devoured by a hungry horde of undead:

Farfullaba algo, me llamaba a gritos, pero su voz se extinguió enseguida. Saltaron sobre él, como una jauría de canes negros. Uno de ellos le quitó el bastón y lo arrojó hacia el pasillo. Yo corría, perseguido por varias alimañas que haciendo honor a este nombre avanzaban a cuatro patas y a gran velocidad; intenté desesperadamente alcanzar la puerta. (2010: 37)

Inés rescues Lázaro and he runs to Maqueda, where he starts serving a friar of the order of the Mercy. Inés is a core character in the novel, as she is the young vampire who later introduces him to the clan of zombie hunters and turns him into a vampire at his request.

The portrait of the different social levels of the 16th century Spain, in the original *Lazarillo*, criticises the greed of priests, the pretentiousness of squires, the lust of the friars of the order of Mercy, etc.<sup>12</sup> The Z version goes along the same line. Lázaro, already in Maqueda, hears some strange noises in one room and he goes in to investigate, using a key he bought from a boilermaker. At the same time, the priest of Maqueda gets back to the house with young Inés and takes her to the room Lázaro entered a few minutes before.

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12 | In this sense, some critics affirm that probably the work was not signed to avoid possible accusations of the Catholic Church (Morros, 2007: VII-X).



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Surprised, he discovers that his master is a pederast and that Inés is not the unwary, weak and deluded young girl she seems to be, but a heartless killer (he does not know yet she is a vampire) who kills the priest in front of him. Still in the room, Inés gives Lázaro the first explanation of the strange events:

Algo ha estado sucediendo en este país, algo que ha llegado de muy lejos y que levantaba a los muertos de las tumbas. No descansaban en paz: se estremecían, nerviosos, buscaban la salida; rascaban con sus uñas moradas la tierra que les cubría, sacaban sus cuerpos decrepitos y se arrastraban hacia sus antiguos hogares. Se negaban a seguir muertos pero difundían su hedor y su podredumbre por doquier. Hasta ahora se conformaban con eso: con salir de madrugada para visitar a los seres que los habían querido en vida... Últimamente, las cosas han cambiado. (2010: 60)

Pederasty in some sectors of the Church is a current issue that has been in the news worldwide in the last few years. The author of *Lazarillo Z* readapts the condemnation to its contemporaneity and, through a scene with a zombified in the sixteenth century, he makes the reader recognise the rewriting of the critique by comparison to the extratextual circumstances.

These ironic, acid and sarcastic denunciations also function in other works of the genre. That is the case of the *Rec* saga (specially the second and third films), very critical with the ecclesiastic ideology, or *Cabanyal Z*, an independent series filmed in Valencia that uses zombie to allegorically show the consequences of the political measures of the local and autonomous governments, as well as the passivity of the people towards them.

The third master is the knight don Diego de Valdés y Barrera. Unlike the original squire—"que iba por la calle con razonable vestido, bien peinado, su paso y compás en orden" (Anónimo, 1987: 70)—, don Diego combines "la firmeza del señor con la amabilidad de un amigo" (2010: 65), "no ordenaba, sugería; no se enojaba ante los errores sino que parecía abatido por ellos" (2010: 65), "rezaba con seriedad y durante mucho tiempo como si estuviera absorto en una conversación privada con el Altísimo" (2010: 65), "a ratos su cuerpo se tensaba y su mente parecía azotada por tempestades desconocidas" (2010: 66) and always "mantenía una gran austeridad en todas sus costumbres: comía lo justo para subsistir y dormía sobre una estera de cañas tendida en unas tablas" (2010: 66). We will discover the cause of such penance a little later. Lázaro sees Miguel, a Moorish who accompanied them, going out of a dark corner of the house where he had been fondling with someone: "Si la curiosidad convirtió a la esposa de Lot en estatua de sal, a mí por poco no me mata del susto: quien se levantó y salió huyendo como alma que lleva el diablo no era otro que mi amo y señor, don Diego de Valdés" (2010: 72).

The description is a cliché ( even a reactionary one): a well-dressed man that cares for how he looks is a homosexual. Although, at first, it may seem that this description does not regard homosexuality highly, everything changes if it is read from the point of view of a criticism of the interpretation of faith offered by the Catholic Church. As a homosexual, don Diego de Valdés is a victim of a theocentric social system, where the clergy had a huge power to influence legislators, and thus, due to this repression, he hides from people's views. To have an idea of what being a homosexual meant in the 15th and early 16th century, we just have to read the following law, approved by the Catholic Monarchs in 1497, entitled "Pena del delito nefando; y modo de proceder a su averiguación y castigo":

Porque entre los otros pecados y delitos que ofenden a Dios nuestro Señor, e infaman la tierra, especialmente es el crimen cometido contra orden natural [...] mandamos, que cualquier persona, de cualquier estado, condicion, preeminencia o dignidad que sea, que cometiere el delito nefando contra naturam seyendo en el convencido por aquella manera de prueba, que segun Derecho es bastante para probar el delito de heregia o crimen laesae Majestatis, que sea quemado en llamas de fuego en el lugar, y por la Justicia a quien pertenesciere el conocimiento y punicion del tal delito [...] y sin otra declaracion alguna, todos sus bienes asi muebles como raices; los cuales desde agora confiscamos, y habemos por confiscados y aplicados a nuestra Camara y Fisco. (Felipe IV, 1640: 348)<sup>13</sup>

From this point of view, the psychology of don Diego de Valdés acquires new meanings. The knight, as profoundly religious as all society in the 16th century, considers himself as a sinner who constantly needs to ask God for forgiveness, and therefore he does a penance based on austerity and praying. In this light, and read from our context of reception, it can be understood as a new denunciation of the Catholic Church. All in all, don Diego de Valdés is a person who suffers several repressions. The first one, of an individual aspect, as his beliefs consider his sexual option a sin. The second one, of a social kind, as homosexuality was not accepted at all by the people. And the third, of a legal kind, as it was punished with death by burning. At the same time, the relevance of religion and the power of the Church is cross-sectional to all of them, as its ideology was (and still is in many cases, therefore the transfer of the criticism to the present) the foundation for the development of relationships between individuals and political organizations.

Later, in a breach against the undead, the whole company is attacked. Pedro dies and Lucrecia and Brígida are imprisoned by the Holy Inquisition, charged with witchcraft. Lázaro then joins a pardoner with the aim of entering into the prisons and liberating his partners, and they do so by impersonating inquisitors. Therefore this pardoner has nothing to do with Lázaro's original master, besides his profession,

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13 | Both here and in the bibliography, I cite by the name of the king that ordered the compilation of laws.

and the stories they live are also different. Here the remake takes a completely different turn from the original, which is even greater in the following chapters.

In the sixth, Inés turns Lázaro into a vampire and afterwards, all the members of the company but the protagonist are killed due to a trick by don Diego. In the seventh, Lázaro gets back to his old master's house to take revenge. Don Diego comes back, deeply resentful and all he wants is to die, but angry Lázaro turns prefers to turn him into a vampire and give him eternal life. In retribution, don Diego de Valdés writes the version of *Lazarillo* that survived until today: "él se dedicó a convertir a Lázaro de Tormes en un mozo ridículo y pícaro, que acababa su relato cornudo y contento. Nada hay de heroico en el lazarrillo, un pobre desgraciado que sobrevive gracias a sus trapicheos y que carece de la menor noción de honor..." (2010: 134). This way, all doubts about the *Lazarillo's* authorship are cleared: it came out of a vampire's pen, don Diego's, to reach the pantheon of Spanish literature. And that allows us, from irony, to review literary tradition(s).

Coming back to the initial theoretical propositions, in a sabotaging reading of the original *Lazarillo*, Manuel Asensi argues in *Crítica y sabotaje* that Lázaro is able to know the truth of the different social classes "no porque fuera especialmente inteligente, sino por el lugar subalterno que ocupa" (2001: 328):

El Lazarillo provoca una cuádruple exclusión: en relación con la clase (por ser extremadamente pobre), en relación con la ley (su padre era ladrón y él mismo será mendigo, actividad prohibida en ciertas fases del siglo XVI), en relación con la raza (su padrastra era negro) y en relación con el sexo (su madre era prostituta y él es lo suficientemente pasivo como para ser objeto de una sodomía real o simbólica). Esa cuádruple exclusión convierte al Lazarillo en un subalterno riguroso, incapaz de hablar (ahora en el sentido de Spivak), e incapaz de actuar (meramente reactivo). Esta es la razón por la que el *Lazarillo de Tormes* supone un análisis político del problema de la subalternidad en el siglo XVI y más allá. (Asensi, 2011: 331-332)

In *Lazarillo Z*, during his time living with the three first masters, all of his acts are directed by them, and he only becomes an active character when he contacts the pardoner to free his partners from prison and, later, once he becomes a vampire. But, at the same time, this transformation prolongs his subalternity, as it excludes him from the social order, as it happened to Lázaro. As him, regarding class, he is poor; regarding the law, he is on the margins, because he has committed crimes;<sup>14</sup> regarding race, he is from a different species; and, finally, regarding sex, his mother is still a prostitute. However, this social position allows him to witness events as the death of the blind man, the discovering of the only completely zombified town,

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14 | In this sense, it is closely linked to bare life, as Stratton puts it: "lack of legal protection by the state" (2011: 278).

or the attempt of rape by the priest, among others. Lázaro's body is transformed and thus he becomes displaced, in the sense given by Stratton (2011) by linking it to Agamben's bare life. And with him, in the same category, the rest of the people from the clan:

—Míranos -empezó-, los desechos de la Corona. Te presento a Brígida, es la puta vieja y la dueña de esta casa, así que trátala bien o te echará a la calle; a su lado está Lucrecia: sus tetas han amamantado a la mayoría de los hombres de Castilla, y no precisamente durante su infancia... En sus rodillas está Rómulo, al que echaron de un grupo de cómicos por aburrido: al parecer creían que los enanos tienen que ser graciosos, pero el pobre Rómulo no haría reír ni a una hiena, ¿verdad, chiquitín? (2010: 59)

Although they eliminate zombie plagues, that is, although they seem to have an active role, the murder of all of them due to don Diego Valdés' fault (the only one that is in a higher social category) shows their real subaltern position: "Los desechos de la Corona, usados a conveniencia y eliminados cuando ya no son útiles, cuando saben demasiado. Habría sentido odio por don Diego de haber podido sentir algo" (2010: 123). Only by biting don Diego and turning him into a vampire, he seems to have a voice and stand against an oppressive system. However, it is still a private act in which context he is momentarily allowed to position over the knight. Nonetheless, he later loses his voice and don Diego is the one to take it and narrate the history we all know: in the end, only those who are in a privileged position can talk.

It can be argued that Lázaro speaks out in the narration of "La vida de Lázaro de Tormes y de sus luchas y transformaciones". And it is true, at least in part, as his version of the events does not reach the readers because he has managed to get over some social barriers, but because the journalist Juan Diego Barrera publishes it as a personal investigation, adding his own paratexts. The closing of "La vida de Lázaro de Tormes y de sus luchas y transformaciones" leaves no room for doubt: "No hay lugar en la versión oficial para el pueblo anónimo. Para los desechos de la Corona" (2010: 134).

The zombie does not only infect the fictional world of the original Lazarillo, but it exceeds those limits and proposes a viral expansion on the paths of literature and history. In this playing field, several references to historical names and facts are inserted in the work to be reread and reinterpreted, most of the time from ironic points of view.

The zombie virus was brought from America by sailors coming back in boats full of gold and wealth: "Por lo que nos ha explicado don Diego, el primer enfermo de esta condenada peste fue un

marinero que regresaba de ese gran continente, hace ya varios años” (2010: 82). During the Conquest of America, the invading peoples transmitted tens of endemic illnesses unknown by the native peoples, such as the measles, the typhus, the bubonic plague or the flu: “En toda América, las enfermedades introducidas con los europeos se propagaron de una tribu a otra mucho antes que los propios europeos, causando la muerte de aproximadamente del 95 por 100 de la población indígena americana” (Diamond, 2006: 90).

Another fact to take into account is that the zombie appears in the West from the 1920s thanks to some travel books to the Caribbean where it was presented as a real being linked to the voodoo practised by shamans since pre-Columbian times. In Haiti, even the penal code punishes certain practices since the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1864:

Art. 246. Est aussi qualifié attentat à la vie d'une personne, par empoisonnement, l'emploi qui sera fait contre elle de substances qui sans donner la mort, auront produit un état léthargique plus ou moins prolongé, de quelque manière que ces substances aient été employées et quelles qu'en aient été les suites. Si, par suite de cet état léthargique, la personne a été inhumée, l'attentat sera qualifié assassinat. (Haiti, C.P.)

Therefore, the conjunction of the two previous historical facts is a most likely reason for stating in the fiction that the zombie epidemics came to the Spanish territory from America.

In other occasions, real historical characters are infected. Garcilaso de la Vega does not write his poetry while fighting against the French in the infantry corps, but while hunting the undead. Teresa de Cepeda, best known as Saint Teresa of Jesus, was a child who lived in one of the zombified towns and for some unknown reason was immune to the infection. After being rescued by the zombie hunters, among which is Lázaro, she was adopted by a family. The events that took place during her childhood in that mystery town and her miraculous power marked her for the rest of her life and got her closer to the mystical path:

Los Cepeda cuidaron de la niña Teresa como si fuera su hija, y nada dijeron nunca de su origen, pero no pudieron evitar las pesadillas y las convulsiones, las visiones y los sueños. ¿Por qué Teresa había resultado inmune al contagio? Tal vez tuvieran razón quienes luego, años después, la calificaron de santa. (2010: 128)

Philip the Handsome was infected too. Soon after his alleged death, the nominal Queen Joanna “empezó a proclamar a voz en grito que su marido, que en vida le había sido infiel con las damas de media corte y las putas de medio país, la visitaba a ratos por las noches, metía el cuerpo frío entre sus sábanas y el miembro gélido en su interior” (2010: 127). Hence the explanation of her madness.



To close the theoretical circle we started drawing in the first chapters of the article, we must go back to the theories of the fantastic to analyse how *Lazarillo Z* participates of them. David Roas says that “la literatura fantástica nació en un universo newtoniano, mecanicista, concebido como una máquina que obedecía leyes lógicas y que, por ello, era susceptible de explicación racional” (2011: 15). Until that moment, three explanations of the real had lived together without too many problems: science, religion and superstition: “Fantasmas, milagros, duendes y demás fenómenos sobrenaturales eran parte de la concepción de lo real. Eran extraordinarios, pero no imposibles” (Roas, 2011: 15).

*Lazarillo Z* is problematic, as some facts take place in the fifteen and sixteen century and others take place in a contemporary world similar at the one we live in.<sup>15</sup> We cannot forget that Lázaro writes from the present to narrate his past and that Juan Barreda compiles it in the book readers have in their hands and adds the story of the “Macabra cena de San Bartolomé”. That is, Lázaro points out the existence of the zombie throughout five centuries, generating a conflict between what we, readers of the twenty-first century, consider real and impossible:

Debo hacerlo, por mucho que me pese; debo dejar constancia de mi larga vida, y no puedo entretenerme en florituras ni adornos vacuos. Lo que leeréis os revolverá las tripas y desafiará a vuestra razón; lo que leeréis quebrará el mundo tal y como lo habéis entendido hasta ahora. No os gustará, pero tenéis derecho a saberlo: mi fracaso significa vuestra condena. (2010: 15)

In *Lazarillo Z*, the characters of the stories located in the 16th century, that is, the fourth diegetic level that corresponds to Lázaro’s history, understand the facts related to the zombie plague as possible, although strange: “Algunas noches las tumbas aparecen abiertas, hay huellas en la tierra... [...] Sois ciego, y como muchos de ellos tenéis la habilidad de saber sin ver: creedme, yo sé que mi hijo se acerca a mí en mitad del sueño y pide mi ayuda.” (2010: 26). However, at the Hospital of San Bartolomé, in front of the psychiatrist, it all acquires a new meaning, as he is part of a society that has undergone rationalism and Newtonian mechanicism, that is, that has established more or less (un)stable barriers between the possible and the impossible: “La puerta de la 1205 estaba entornada y el psiquiatra la empujó y entró en ella casi sin darse cuenta. Tardó unos segundos en reaccionar. Lo que veían sus ojos era demasiado sorprendente para que su cerebro lo procesara de inmediato” (2010: 140). That is, the zombie does question our idea of reality, but only when the time frame is the present.

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15 | In order to allow the fantastic effect, the fictional world built in genre stories must have the same characteristics as ours: “es siempre un reflejo de la realidad en la que habita el lector. La irrupción de lo imposible en ese marco familiar supone una transgresión del paradigma de lo real vigente en el mundo extratextual. Y, unido ello, un inevitable efecto de inquietud ante la incapacidad de concebir la coexistencia de lo posible y lo imposible” (Roas, 2011: 31).

#### 4. By way of conclusion

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Partly simulation (Jean Baudrillard), partly deconstructing mechanism (Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida), and partly sabotaging tool (Manuel Asensi), a Z remake allows to rethink history and literature from new points of view. The zombie, as a fictional being that allows the many political readings already mentioned (the masses, bare life, refugees, lost of free will, etc.), has become in the last few years a reference character in cultural manifestations. The remake, in turn, usually cinematographic, has become a very recurrent trend that allows to use the acknowledgement of a famous work to reelaborate it and sell it better. Taking advantage of the media demand of both, and the possibilities it offers (and, therefore, crossed by an economic logic), from 2009 a series of works have started rewriting the classics in a Z tone and have earned their authors substantial economic benefits while allowing them to revisit the past.

*Lazarillo Z*, from a superposition of diegetic levels that present Lázaro as an immortal vampire dedicated to the hunt of undead since the 16th century, criticizes the two main powers of the 16th century, nobility and ecclesiastical class, from the position of the subaltern and playing with our idea of reality thanks to a subtle coordination of fantastic effects. Readers transfer that socio-political criticism to their contemporaneity, as the zombie infects their current cultural codes and allows to rethink them from a new perspective. All in all, *Lazarillo Z. Matar zombies nunca fue pan comido* opens the possibility to reread history and literature, that is, it creates new spaces of debate where the dialogue with the tradition(s) is possible.

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