

On *The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes*

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"The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes" is a classic of the Spanish golden age, published anonymously around 1554. It is considered by many to be the first picaresque novel, and some have gone so far as to call it the first novel.

On its face the *Lazarillo* seems to be merely a humorous tale making fun of the trials and tribulations of an insignificant *pícaro*. But hidden within is a bitter parody of the principal institutions of Spanish society. My paper focuses on the parody of all seven sacraments of the Catholic religion. I argue that the author quite deliberately designed the book with seven chapters (*tractados*) so that each one contains a parody of one of the seven sacraments. To the best of my knowledge, this apparent design has not previously been noted or commented upon in the literature.

I conclude by speculating that the author's satire of the seven sacraments reveals him to be a *converso* who is bitterly disillusioned with the Christian faith as well as the situation of all *conversos* in Spain. *Lazarillo's* story can be seen as an allegory for their plight.