

Second Paper Assignment: Historical Analysis of Early Modern Spanish Fiction

Your second paper assignment, like the first, requires you to analyze primary source documents to answer an historical question. This time, the task is longer and more difficult: an 8-9 page historical analysis of the early modern Spanish fiction that was part of the required reading for our course on medieval and early modern Spain. That reading was the short novel of unknown authorship, *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), and some of Miguel de Cervantes's *Exemplary Stories* (1613), namely *Rinconete and Cortadillo*, *The Power of Blood*, *The Deceitful Marriage* and *Dialogue of the Dogs*.

Choose one of the historical themes listed below, and answer its companion essay question in the form of a formal paper of 8-9 printed, doubled-spaced pages. Your essay should use *Lazarillo de Tormes* and at least two stories from Cervantes as primary source material. You are not expected to use any secondary sources other than your notes, H. Kamen, *Spain 1469-1714*, and T. Ruiz, *Spanish Society*. Of these, the most helpful will likely be Ruiz.

Additional hand-outs listing rules for formatting, citations, etc., will be distributed shortly.

The themes:

1. **Poverty.** Poverty was profound and pervasive in Early Modern Spanish society. How do Cervantes and the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* represent the poverty of their times, and what did it mean to them? How does poverty as represented by the two authors reflect the realities of Spanish society in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries?

2. **Nobility, honor, purity.** Spanish culture was obsessed with notions of nobility, personal honor, and purity from the time of the Catholic Monarchs through the time of Cervantes. How are concerns about nobility, honor, and purity represented in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the stories of Cervantes? What do Cervantes and the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* think about popular notions of nobility, honor, and purity? How does their portrayal of concern for these things reflect early modern Spanish culture as described by historians like Kamen and Ruiz?

3. **Marginal people.** People at the margins of early Spanish society – the disabled, the destitute, the criminal, the deviant, ethnic minorities, and the like – fill the pages of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the stories of Cervantes. What social concerns do Cervantes and the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* express through the marginal people that populate their fiction? How do these fictional marginal people reflect the social realities of Early Modern Spain?

4. **Religion.** The clergy of the Roman Catholic church in Spain, popular religious practices, and Christian morality are prominent themes in *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the stories of Cervantes. How does the author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* regard the Spanish Church and Spanish religion in his time? How does Cervantes regard the same things in his period? How do their attitudes toward Spanish clergy and Spanish religious practice reflect the realities of religious life in early modern Spain? How do they reflect popular attitudes toward religion as described by historians like Kamen and Ruiz?