Writing, Religion, Relativism, and Sin in the Renaissance works *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Le Grand testament* of François Villon

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is an analysis of two Western-European literary works that come from the late Medieval to early Renaissance period: the anonymous Spanish novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the poetic work *Le Grand testament* by François Villon. The purpose of this thesis is to give an insight into the period in which they fall and show how they exemplify four distinctive characteristics of this period's history. The four features are: the nature of writing, critiques of religion, moral relativism and blame, and a focus on death. After demonstrating this, I give a short conclusion about the value of these works and what we can take away from them.

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Introduction

Spain and France for the length of history have been and remain today two of the most popular countries in the world, be it for tourism, culture, language, or overall value. Some of that value lies in a deep literary heritage, one that affects and is affected by history, the environment, and the events of their times. What, however, defines a certain period or time? It is possible to categorize the periods of literary history into various stages. While it may be hard to precisely specify the certain dates of when a period ends and begins, the general characteristics of a period adhere to a less rigorous standard, taking the approach of Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart on discussing pornography when he said that "I know it when I see it." One such period is the Middle Ages. When people hear this term multiple images immediately come to mind: vast kingdoms and tales of valiant knights, and values of honor, glory, and obedience. For others it can evoke feelings of conformity, disgust, repression, and outrage towards the standards of a different time, which some deem "backwards." There are some that look down upon works of the past from their summit of modernity, ignorantly making the claim that nothing of value can be found within them, at least for the modern man or woman. How can one relate to something written five hundred years ago, to someone who lived in a completely different time and place than we do? How can one relate to someone that lived in a time when the greatest concern was if one would lose their family to the plague or in their city's next skirmish? These sentiments concerning the period, about both its most hallmarks as well as its defects, are not just felt by the people of today looking back on the past, but by those who lived in the time itself. The Medieval writer could be reacting to calamities and social issues of the time, something of which this age was certainly not bereft, or simply expressing raw personal emotion.

While ages come and go and one can look ever so different from the time immediate preceding it, what factors cause this shift between ages? When does one period of time start and another end? Historians do not typically make the distinction between two periods of time by delineating one year or decade from another. The change between ages will typically happen over multiple decades and years, and have a plethora of root causes that span those decades. For example, the Middle Ages are typically characterized by adherence to religion, the virtues of chivalry, respect, and love; but, despite this, some Medieval works are drastically profane.

The period which followed the Middle Ages was the Renaissance; which was characterized by a new focus on nature, beauty, and the inherent good of humanity. The terminology itself behind the word *renaissance* is an issue of contention in academics.[1] It has no clear, agreed upon beginning or end, and some claim that it did not even happen, as well as the Eurocentrism that is often found in Renaissance studies.[2] No matter what, however, a few things are clear. The Renaissance was an overall cultural, theological, philosophical, and scientific revolution, during which people gradually became more individualistic and originated a spark in human consciousness, an all encompassing period, not limited to one discipline. The scientific discoveries of explorers and thinkers like Columbus, Copernicus, and Galileo went hand in hand with more philosophical definitions of individuality that Michelet identified in the writings of Rabelais, Montaigne, and Shakespeare (Brotton 21). Europe's entire field of knowledge received an intellectual advancement; in all fields the European knows more than he did before, making

[1] G.R. Elton's definition of the Renaissance, a "self-conscious recovery of the achievements of the ancient world produced new intellectual and artistic attitudes and results" offers a concise definition, as it states that while the Renaissance was focused on the past, this impacts the future of humanity as well (39).

[2] One person who contests this is Étienne Gilson, who says: "What was new at the times of the Renaissance still appears as having then been new, but we see it rooted in a Medieval past by which alone it can be explained" (94).

the Renaissance both a rediscovery and an advancement. Individually, one is no longer identified as a "member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation" (Brotton 22). As opposed to the Middle Ages, now one has a sense of individual identity in accordance to one's mind and environment, due to, as Brotton says, "renewed scientific collaboration in the pursuit of practical problem solving, exchanges of ideas between cultures, and the impact of new technologies (80).

To understand the Renaissance, we must first understand the Medieval world, especially in education, in which the major subjects of teaching were the *quadrivium* (astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, and music) and the *trivum* (logic, rhetoric, and grammar). With the rediscovery of the Classical texts, Europe would attain a renewed understanding of life and how to teach. These texts would form the foundation of humanism, a philosophy and way of thought centered on human interests and worth, something that is specifically individualistic. This started with the rediscovery of Classical texts on the *studia humanitatis*, grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and ethics. Another aspect of humanism was the attempt to reconcile religious faith, which at the time disdained humanity and counted us as sinful and damaged, with the idea of personal dignity and optimism. At the time, philosophers had a faith that focused on humanity's darker sides, but how does that faith correspond with the physical beauty of the world that they observed with the eye? One way this was resolved was through the badge of humanism: individual importance, self-determination, and the love of the earth and her beauty. In the realm of thought, humanism gave us three new things: "methods, new information and new doubts" (Copenhaver and Schmitt 196). Now the road to achieving wisdom and philosophy was wider, which was not seen as such a good thing by the established order, especially in religion.

Without a doubt, one of the largest contributing factors to the Renaissance was the printing press. Created around 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg, the overall result of the printing press was the spread of knowledge and changing the way we think about learning and writing itself. Before, books were hand-copied and texts were only found in manuscripts, which were rare. Within two decades of Gutenberg, there was a plethora of presses to be found across the continent, and by 1500, “more books than had been produced since the fall of the Roman Empire” were published (Brotton 47). With the press, books were printed at an exceedingly higher rate, making them cheaper, as well as eliminating the inaccuracies in copying. Since anyone could own and operate a press, the Renaissance is also a birth of new ideas, which would “also provoke instability, uncertainty, and anxiety, leading artists and thinkers to further question who they were and how they lived in a rapidly expanding world. This relationship between achievement and the anxiety it creates is one of the characteristic features of the Renaissance” (Brotton 18). The printing press was used for new texts in all realms of life as people began to wake up to its power, as well as giving the individual more power: from philosophy, to literature, to drama, to theology, to the satire of Desiderius Erasmus, an important Catholic reformer, and the “perfect expression of the 14th century reaction against both scholastic philosophy and scholastic theology” (Gilson 91).[3] Erasmus would satirize the people in the Roman Catholic Church while staying faithful to it teachings, claiming to embrace the origins of the Roman Catholic Church and Christianity, rejecting the ideas of philosophy and

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[3] For example, according to Copenhaver and Schmitt, by 1470 there were about 700 printed books on Aristotle. Despite this fact manuscripts were still produced, but books by far reigned supreme (22).

theology for a simple, God-centered life.[4] Within decades of Erasmus's peak we will see works such as *The Prince* and *Utopia*, both world-shattering works about politics and society, all without traditional values such as virtue and honesty in politics.

The Catholic Church also played a diminished role during the Renaissance. In 1435, Lorenzo Valla exposed an important Catholic document, "The Donation of Constantine," as a forgery. This article had given a great amount of power to the Pope and solidified Papal authority worldwide. The Church, from which the Orthodox Church had already split in 1054, was just waiting for the next crack. As new Bibles were being printed (in vernacular languages, just like other forms of literature) and distributed, especially a version by Erasmus of the New Testament, the idea of the Bible was no longer the same. It was no longer a secret text cared for and only read by a priest, it became a common household feature. As it became more accessible, certain people, like Martin Luther, started to comb through Scripture and identified Catholic doctrine they found as contradictory. One famous Lutheran doctrine was on faith and works; since faith was all that believers really had, and to him works did nothing, Papal authority and confessions were no longer necessary to serve as a mediator between man and God. In the Medieval period humans were regarded as lowly creatures in need of a mediator to even reach God, but to Luther, man is so despicable that mediators have no power to help. Not only does Luther reject the idea of faith *and* works, he does not hold man as being worthy of salvation. This is somewhat freeing, as there is nothing that we have to do to earn salvation, and it also rejects the humanist view of dignity and human goodness at the same time. Despite this, not everyone who disagreed with the

[4] For example, one biographer calls him the champion of "Sermon on the Mount" Christianity, living a practical, simple life of a strict moral duty based on the Gospel and spirituality instead of Catholic doctrine, practices and ecclesiasticism (Augustijn 4; 75).

Catholic Church agreed with each other. For example, Luther and Erasmus disagreed greatly on free will, showing that the enemy of my enemy is not always my friend.

In theology, the majority of work during the Medieval Period is the reinterpretation of pagan philosophy, so as to reconcile it with the Christian worldview, and there were typically two types of thinkers. The first were the spiritualists, who like Tertulian, declared that "we want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus" and only accepted Revelation and God's word as the highest form of thought (Gilson 10). The second group were those like Augustine, Aquinas, and Anselm, who would use their God-given inquisitive powers to dive into thought, but starting from faith, not using reason to find faith, but basing reason in faith. However, things are not so good for unbelievers. Contrary to popular belief, not everyone was religious, and those who were not found themselves caught between a rock and a hard place. The theology and logic of the Christian philosophers was airtight. Therefore, the unbelievers and the skeptics turned to philosophy to find a world without belief. For example, William of Ockham made the claim that faith was not verifiable in a foolproof way, miracles and objects of faith were probably real, but could only every be seen as a probability. That being said, the modern era of skepticism and relativism begins during the early Renaissance with the influx of new ideas due to the printing press.

Along with this newfound individual consciousness, the Renaissance was the first time that Europe opened up both to other cultures and to other ideas. For example, in the early 16th century we have the discovery of the Americas, and Europe starts to see that its ideas do not exactly fit within the rest of the world. While during the Medieval era the main philosophical contention was resolving Plato and Aristotle with Christianity, scientists such as Copernicus

would put theology, and the aforementioned philosophers into question. We see this in the battleground over the newly discovered natives. Are they human? Do they have souls? Do their dead go to heaven, as they surely do not know the Gospel? Spain, having discovered these new worlds, played the role of the center for these intellectual debates. Spain, the country ruled by Catholicism for centuries, begins to take into mind Christ's eternal mandate from Matthew 7.[5] One writer would deepen this idea, Michel de Montaigne, who in his essay *Des Cannibales* said concerning the brutality of Europe versus the brutality of the Brazilian natives, "Here we see how we need to guard ourselves from getting attached to vulgar opinions, how we must judge them by the voice of reason rather than the common voice." (Morris and Rivers 137).[6] Europe at this time was on fire with mysterious and horrifying accounts from this New World, and it was opening up to the "Other."

The two texts analyzed in this thesis are the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Le Grand testament* by François Villon. The former is a Spanish novella written in 1544, the first of the picaresque genre, meaning that it centers around a rogue character who is not a hero, and lives by his skill in a depressing, unjust society instead of recounting the exploits of godlike heroes.[7] The 16th century novel focuses around a series of seven chapters, in which the titular character moves from one master to the rest, highlighting the hypocrisy of the Medieval world and certain character archetypes, mostly connected to the Roman Catholic Church. Villon's

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[5] "Do not judge, so that you will not be judged." (Matthew 7:1) All Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

[6] The original French: "Voilà comment il faut se garder de s'attacher aux opinions vulgaires, comment il faut les juger par la voie de la raison, non par la voix commune." All translations are mine unless noted.

[7] Peter Dunn describes the picaresque as "the prose autobiography of a person, real, or imaginary, who strives, by fair means and foul, to make a living, and in relating his experiences in various classes of society, points out the evils which come under his observation" (6).

Testament, on the other hand, is a 2,023 line poem in the form of a mock will. In it, Villon expresses sentiments about the Church, religion, the life of the rogue, the shortness of life, and the inevitability of death, all within the humorous style of Villon's witty and expressive French.

The texts are clearly Medieval in that they were written during the correct period and are about the societies they lived in, but something is different. The shockingly bare writing of both works is distinctly lacking in any sort of censuring filter that frequently resulted in authors encoding their works out of fear of repercussions. The protagonists are not the intrepid knights and glorious heroes of the feudal world, but rather the textbook definition of the word rogue. They do not praise the Medieval life, but instead assault the world, the ideas, and the people that live within it through their writing. One facet extremely scrutinized by both works is religion, and more specifically the Catholic Church. Both texts do not shy away from the gloomy subject of death, but as opposed to the pious man who wanted to die audaciously on the battlefield and feared no death due to the security of heaven, these works revile death and flee from it at every opportunity. Furthermore, both the anonymous author of the *Lazarillo* and François Villon express the themes of blame, guilt, sin, and glory, doing so through framing their works within these topics. In this thesis, I shall demonstrate that both *Lazarillo de Tormes* and *Le Grand testament* act as humanistic literary viaducts between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as well as showing that these texts hold values and ideas that can be related to today, and that we cannot simply regard as archaic.

Chapter 1 - *Lazarillo de Tormes* and writing

“The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say” - Anäis Nin

The first thing that one must know about *Lazarillo de Tormes* is that it has no known author. Spain during the time of its writing was on a high. The *Reconquista* had been over for years, and the Spanish Empire was just beginning with the discovery of the Americas. In the homeland, things were good as well, as long as you were a pious Catholic who did not incur the wrath of the Inquisition, a brutal judicial institution that persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and killed many throughout Spain, either due to their not converting or for their being heretics. Lasting from 1478 to 1834, this institution mostly followed Jews and Arabs who were hesitant to convert, and would function as a court, using mostly fear and the collaboration of the community to elicit confessions.[8] When a person was called in front of a tribunal for whatever accusation or matter (in that one could be called forth not only for their own case, but to testify in the cases of another, just like a civil court), they were required to give an account of their lives, their relation with the person in question, and to testify to their faith.[9] The psychological effect that this had on people was profound. First, they had to train their minds and their memory. Every little thing was to be remembered, every minute detail, as the smallest thing could have been used against one, and had to be firmly planted in one's mind. If not, forgetting the smallest thing, such as deviations from one’s daily route, the last time someone went to church, how a person acted and spoke, or a nonchalant attitude towards doctrine such as the seven sacraments, could result in

[8] Despite this, some regions such as Catalonia did not cede the mental ground necessary for the Inquisition to hold power.

[9] “The Inquisition itself was not the cleanest structure either, as it was susceptible to corruption since Inquisitors were paid from the proceeds of what was confiscated” (Atkinson 85).

grave repercussions. This practice, as Gitlitz says, makes “every living soul a potential autobiographer.” (59). Conversely, although a person would do their best to completely remember their entire life, this did not mean that one would reveal everything to the Inquisition tribunal.

Due to the fact that the most minute detail could lose someone their head, people would omit what they thought would kill them. For example, if one skipped mass one Sunday, were a bit skeptical about the power of indulgences, or did not think that a certain piece of bread was God incarnate, that was the end of whoever incurred the Inquisitorial wrath.[10] Some would also incur their wrath for things such as smiling upon hearing the mention of Mary, eating meat on a holy day, or invoking the name of God during a card game (Kamen 176). Out of fear, one would confess; if not, the consequence was at times torture. While statistically the number of tortures was infrequent, by the late 17th century, almost three fourths of all accused in the country of judaizing were tortured, and in one year the Inquisitors of Seville actually complained that they did not have enough time to carry out all the tortures (Kamen 188). Also, while some Inquisitors would carry out their job of investigation and inquiry, others “did their duties contrary to the Christian ideal….contemporary writers tell us that when heretics appeared before his [Conrad of Marburg] tribunal, he granted them no delay, but at once required them to answer yes or no to the accusations against them. If they confessed their guilt, they were granted their lives, and thrown in prison; if they refused to confess, they were at once condemned and sent to the stake" (Vacandard 133). That being said, people would mask themselves to be honest Christians

[10] That being said, one who refused to conform to the religious beliefs of the country was more than just a heretic, they were a social outcast, a blot on society, a “miscreant, of a dangerously insidious type, and the common weal demanded his extirpation” (Atkinson 88).

while at the same time lying and conforming to what the court wanted to hear, similar to famous incidents such as the Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trials. The goal was simple: to make oneself look good, having no contradiction or fault, to shift the blame for that which mades one look bad, and to get oneself out of the situation. In these terms, the person being questioned was both agitated and given power, frequently being under stress to remember everything yet having the ability to selectively address the Inquisition tribunal and either condemn or save another person, or condemn or save themselves.

Within this context lies *Lazarillo de Tormes,* split into seven chapters, or *tratados*. The titular character, Lazarillo, is a young boy from Salamanca who serves under the tutelage of multiple masters, after being sold by his mother due to poverty. The first is a blind man, who teaches Lazarillo wit and the skills necessary to survive. After a rough relationship filled with mutual tricks and immoral actions, Lazarillo deeply wounds him, and it is implied that the master dies from the wounds. The second master is a priest, but unlike the typical conception of a priest, this one is the most greedy person that Lazarillo has every encountered. After being almost starved for weeks on end, Lazarillo is dismissed by the priest after being caught stealing bread. The third master is a squire, who lives in a broken down, barren house, with little food. This master flees the owners of the house and bed on which he lay in fear of having to pay rent, so Lazarillo, abandoned, finds another master, a friar, whom the rogue promptly leaves. The fifth master is the most shocking and exemplary illustration of ecclesiastical hypocrisy and sin, a *buldero*, one who sells indulgences, and for reasons unknown and after a fairly well relationship,

Lazarillo leaves.[11] This chapter sticks out, for unlike the first three, this *tratado* does not focus on Lazarillo's struggle to find food, but rather on the *buldero* himself. For once Lazarillo is not the center of attention. He then finds a peddler, to whom the anonymous author only devotes one line, saying that with him he suffered a "thousand evils" ["mil males"], and then finds a chaplain.[12] This is where the story goes well for our protagonist, arguably for the first time, as he gets a job and begins to save up money. His last two masters are a bailiff, whom he leaves after experiencing the danger of the job, and an archpriest. This priest treats Lazarillo, now Lázaro, well, except for the fact that the priest is having relations with Lázaro's wife, and the book ends with Lázaro reflecting on the goods and prosperity that he has attained. First published in 1554, the peak of the Inquisition, the novel is addressed to "*Vuestra Merced*," an unnamed figure of authority to whom Lázaro is relating his case, and for whom he also works. The position of authority is denoted by the use of formal language and the word "*Merced*," denoting that whoever "*vuestra*" is, has the power to grant said mercy. By using this name, the unnamed author is lowering himself and at the same time raising his addressee. By giving *Vuestra Merced,* the English equivalent of *Your Grace*, this minimal identity, he is just about as anonymous as the author is -- we know nothing about him or his exact role and authority in the case.[13]

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[11] The importance of indulgences cannot be underestimated, as these pieces of paper held a remarkable spiritual value for the people, as it dealt with salvation, as well as an economic gold mine for the Church and State.

[12] There are various interpretations of this passage: perhaps the "*mil males"* were so horrendous that Lazarillo could not mention them, or that there were so many that noting them would have taken up too much time, or that they were not relative to the plot, and that Lazarillo wanted to arrive at the central point of his story.

[13] Peter Dunn asks a few interesting questions that it would be useful to keep in mind: "Has Vuestra Merced issued a request, or is it a command? Whose conduct does he seek to investigate, Lázaro's or the archpriest's? Is this a serious investigation?… Could Lázaro be deprived of his post as town crier?… What has he not said?" (43). This last question is pertinent, because as was seen in *tratado* four, what the author does not say can be just as important as what he does say.

Who an author's intended audience is affects how he or she writes and what he or she says (Gitlitz 63). Lázaro in a sense has multiple Lazarillos and multiple audiences. At the very core, we have the anonymous author, and us, the people in the real world who are reading the novel. Then, at the first sub-level, we have the narrative voice of the *Lazarillo,* which is speaking to *Vuestra Merced*; and to whom Lazarillo wants to relate the case "very extensively" ["muy por extenso"], and who in a way is also us, the readers. On a secondary level he also writes to the rest of the Inquisition tribunal and the public, which hears the retelling of the witness statement. There are two more audiences, arguably more judgmental and important than the rest: history, and God, the divine judge who knows the hearts and minds of all according to Medieval Spanish society. This fourfold transmission of the writing from the questioned party to the Inquisition to the public, to history, and to God is activated not only within the novel, but within the non-fictional world. For example, the writer of the *Lazarillo* writes his novel to the public society of the Spain of 1544, mostly literate clerics. Apart from that, his audience is also God, and those who read it after the author's time, which is something that he most likely recognizes in the prologue when talking about glory. We have the author, then Lazarillo the boy, Lázaro the man, and Lázaro the narrator. In this literary Russian nesting doll, *Lazarillo de Tormes* is a novel, written by someone, with the narrative voice of someone who relates the story of his younger self to a higher authority.

But does this novel fit the bill for an Inquisition confession statement?[14] First, there are four elements: a case, which means that there is an accusation (of what, we do not know), a

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[14] If that is so, this would classify the *Lazarillo* as a piece of fictional legal literature, which according to Torrico, "… determine and permeate both the context in which the novel is produced, as well as the story in itself, as the laws of any state would do as well" ["… determinan y permean tanto el contexto en que se produce la novela como el de la historia en sí, como determinarían las leyes de cualquier estado"] (423).

deciding party (*Vuestra Merced*), a defending party, and the witness (Lazarillo). Is Lazarillo the defending party, or is he simply a witness? One can argue that Lazarillo is the witness. The reasoning behind this is that Lazarillo does not want to hide either his personality, or the events that have transpired relating to the case. One point of ironic contrast is that the narrative voice, wishes that *Vuestra Merced* "take into account the entirety of his person" ["se tenga entera noticia de mi persona"], that we can only understand the man if we learn about the boy (559). *Vuestra Merced* most likely only really cares about the present case and has no interest in hearing the entire life story of Lazarillo, but according to Lazarillo, hearing just the case is not enough. Why is the implied *ménage à trois* between the archpriest, Lázaro, and his wife as it is? Why does Lázaro allow his cuckolding? We have to go back to the start. What this does is permit the author to connect things from across chapters, such as the horn motif. There are multiple places throughout the book where horns play a role. In the first chapter Lazarillo is slammed against a statue of a bull and the blind man insinuates that Lazarillo will be plagued by horns [cuernos], a Spanish euphemism for being cheated on. This literary trick shows that there are nuances in life, that things can be cyclical, and that things from the past may appear in the future. Yet the fourth through the seventh chapters are significantly shorter and less detailed than those that precede them. The language in these chapters is rather blunt and does not give a full account of Lazarillo’s time with whatever master he falls in with, nor do the chapters give us as much introspection from Lazarillo as the previous ones. The interpretation of this bluntness is unclear; Were the events really so bad that Lazarillo could not bring himself to relate them as an adult? Did the events not relate to the case, or is he downplaying his own actions by omitting something that he did that would incur judgement upon him by recounting it? It can seem that our

sympathies after hearing of Lazarillo's woes may be misguided, since we fail to take into account "entire notice of his person" ["entera noticia de mi persona"]. In each chapter we see Lazarillo's present, and as we progress we look at his past, although not all of it, since unless we know every single thing about his past it may not be possible to take entire notice of his person. We know everything the author wants us to know, so that according to him, we have everything we need to know at the end and the story is done. What we do not know or take into account is the future, and by the end of the last *tratado*, he is laughing at us, as we know all we need to, but only under the control of the author. Since we do not know exactly what happened to Lázaro to arrive at this point in his life, we are left wondering about the truth of the situation and no longer sympathize with him. The power dichotomy is similar to the Inquisition confession in terms of the selective telling.[15] However, unlike those who would plead for their lives in front of the Inquisition, Lázaro does not shy away from his picaresque actions, nor his own vileness: "I am not confessing that I am more holy than my neighbors … " ["… confesando yo no ser más santo que mis vecinos … "] (559)[16]. He openly admits to possibly killing the blind man and stealing. Is Lázaro shifting the blame by admitting to these crimes, since the case of the prologue is overshadows whatever he did? Or could it be that he does not care about the possible punishment? Or maybe Lázaro refuses to see his crimes as his own fault, but rather as the result of the world that created him and his actions.

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[15] What this means is that a person will base what they say off of who they are talking to. In the Inquisition, a person will add or omit certain details that would affect the judgement they receive. "The reporter's assumptions about the expectations of the second reader per force govern the choices about what material to include, and what rhetorical slant to give it" (Gitlitz 63).

[16] All quotes from the *Lazarillo* come from *Literatura Española: una antología* by David William Foster. Garland Publishing, Inc. 1995. pp. 558 - 614.

The true depth and genius of *Lazarillo de Tormes* lies within its characters, their psychology, and the relationships between them. This is also the arena in which the anonymous author both adheres to and separates from the Medieval ideal. The first way that the author does in fact follow the Medieval path is by the use of nameless characters. All characters except Lazarillo, his parents Tomé and Antona, and his stepfather Zaide go unnamed.[17] Instead, we have archetypes, "*topoi,"* characters who represent the entire concept of the character as opposed to the character themselves. The blind man, the priest, the squire, the *buldero*, the archpriest, Lázaro's wife, and the women that are his neighbors all serve as character types, representing not who they are, but what they are. We also see the seeds of the Renaissance through the changing dynamic between Lazarillo and his masters throughout the novel: "His situations become more obviously contractual, his relations less coercive and adversarial, a matter of cooperation and finally of complicity" (Dunn 35). For example, Lazarillo starts off with a symbiotic relationship with the *ciego*, as they both mutually aid each other for their survival. By the end of the novel, Lazarillo only enters into a relationship with the archpriest, because the priest has given him a job.

While there are potential authors, there is not one to whom we can definitively attribute the work. The author "must have been an independent, critical spirit" (Dunn 18). That being said, from the writing it is clear that there are some things that can be inferred about the author. He, or she, was witty, educated, and clever enough to see through the Church's hypocrisy. It seems that the author got his or her ideas from areas of life and culture, meaning that the *Lazarillo* is a collection of non-literary incidents and ideas blended together into the narrative of the book. For

[17] It may be no coincidence that Lázaro gives a name to the only person of color; one who has noble attributes and motives.

example, according to some manuscripts from the 14th century, a boy stealing from his master and drinking from his jug of wine with a straw (things that Lazarillo does) were already known concepts, meaning that the author of the *Lazarillo* did not think of those things, and the same idea applies for the pardoner's "miracle" in the fifth *tratado* (Dunn 20).[18] Learning this concept gives a new level of humor and irony to the very first line of the book: "I hold it well that things so famous and by luck have never been heard nor seen should arrive to the notice of many … " ["Yo por bien tengo que cosas tan señaladas y por ventura nunca oídas ni vistas vengan a noticia de muchos … "] (558). According to Sieber, the author of the *Lazarillo* was not "… obsessed with the public honor and glory produced by his narrative. He was obviously content to enjoy in secret the praise of his immediate audience as they read the book," and while this overlooks the fact that the author could have chosen to remain anonymous simply to avoid the repercussions of the Inquisition, anonymity provides a unique irony considering the content of the book and the theme of glory (Sieber 97). There is a certain desire in writing that one's work may be read, and while some may truly have the motives of the aforementioned Michel de Montaigne, most works will be impacted by the fact that they will be read.[19] The narrator in his prologue, at least until we first hear about a case, seems to be writing for glory. Nobody bats an eye when a soldier rushes to the front of the line to be the first in battle, or the "first on the staircase" ["primero del escala"], and not out of a death wish either, but for "the desire of

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[18] For example, in some parts of Europe we can see that the blind man with a guide boy who frequently tricks him was a familiar image (Dunn 33).

[19] Montaigne claims: "It is warned to you from the start that I have no other end but a domestic and private one; I have not had any consideration of your service, nor of my glory" ["Il t'avertit dès l'entrée que je ne m'y suis proposé aucune fin que domestique et privée; je n'y ai eu nulle considération de ton service, ni de ma gloire"] (Montaigne 136).

praise" ["el deseo de alabanza"] (558).[20] As the soldier voluntarily puts himself in danger for glory, so does the artist, hinting at the troubles of writing, especially something so controversial for the time of the *Lazarillo*. The soldier risks his life to gain honor for self and country, and the author can at times risk his life (especially during the time of a certain Inquisition) to reveal what he feels he needs to say. This risk is annulled by the fact of its being anonymous, but also turns the situation into the tragic ending. The author of the *Lazarillo* has gained the glory of history and the contempt of the Renaissance Spanish Church, but at the cost of the world knowing who even wrote the book in the first place. After coming to this conclusion, the author has elicited some sympathy out of us for himself or herself, just as he or she elicits from us sympathy for Lazarillo. He does this through the oratorical device of *captatio benevolentiae,* the taking of the good-will, or in simple terms, trying to get the reader on one's side. Our anonymous author does this by first admitting that not everything in this book is pretty. It is different, and confessing that the aim of this book is "not to be more holy than my neighbors, with this foolishness, which in this rude style I write" ["… no ser más santo que mis vecinos, de esta nonada, que en este grosero estilo escribo…] (558). We are warned beforehand that there are going to be some ugly things in this book, and there certainly are. Our main character experiences harsh tragedies, both physical and emotional. He is sold by his own mother, is frequently abused by the blind man (such as in the scenes with the bull, the wine jug, and the sausage), starved to the point of near

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[20] This again has roots in the real world, as Montaigne claims, although writing around twenty to thirty years after the *Lazarillo*, that when asking a Brazilian native about the greatest honor a soldier could face, he received the answer "to march first to war" ["marcher le premier à la guerre"] (144).

death and beaten by the priest, and emotionally betrayed by the squire.[21] By playing to the idea of situational ethics, we tend to sympathize more with Lazarillo. No one looks at what the masters do to Lazarillo and then blame him for his actions against them, especially since just when we think things are getting better for him, they do not. But for the author, it is fine, as "there is no book, for however evil it may be, that does not hold something good" ["… no hay libro, por malo que sea, que no tenga alguna cosa buena"], expressing the age-old adage that one man's trash is another man's treasure (558). The author is thinking as a utilitarian; in that there is in everything some sort of lesson or something pleasing that can be extracted, and is also thinking humanistically, that just as every work can hold something good, so can every person. While this message is indeed positive, it seems that the message of the ending is really up to the reader. Does *Lazarillo de Tormes* end in a positive or negative fashion? It may of course seem positive and happy, since Lázaro claims to be at "my prosperity and the height of all good fortune" ["mi prosperidad y en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna"], but in reality he is not only the laughingstock of his city but a cuckold as well, stuck in denial and cognitive dissonance. This ending can be seen as even more sad if one follows the belief that Lázaro does in fact recognize this, but as he would be in ruin and right back to the utter poverty he once faced, he is just trying to hold on to what he has despite losing his dignity (614). With such a depressing interpretation as this, one can only assume that the author's intent was for the reader to learn something from his book to try to avoid in their own life.

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[21] It is notable that the comic situations, while being funny, also evoke feelings of harshness and unease, as Maier remarks: "The peculiar dynamic of the comic in *Lazarillo* is that unlike traditional comedy, which consistently erects a barrier between comic protagonist (set off from the world by his mishaps or ridiculous character) and audience (who exalts in a sense of superiority), *Lazarillo*'s comedy is part of a broad rhetorical strategy to win over the reader to the protagonist" (682). The *Lazarillo* does in fact have this interesting duality between the humor on the surface and the deeper implications of everything.

In the realm of glory, the very first thing Lázaro wants from *Vuestra Merced* is that he know his name. This could be because Lázaro does not think that *Vuestra Merced* knows his name at all, and is relegating it to the utility of the case, or it could be that Lázaro wants to be remembered, and the fastest, most effective way to remember someone is by their name, as it is the first thing that we frequently ask a person upon meeting them. Later on, Lazarillo begins to attain his glory and his fame, but only at the end of the book, and this is based on a subjective view of prosperity.[22] By the time the story ends, our lovable *picaro* has indeed reached in his own way a form of respectability and fame. Everyone in the town knows him; business cannot be done in the square without him hearing about it. He also has a wife and a living, and more interestingly, he somehow knows how to read and write. Later on we will see the true cost that this comfortable lifestyle has on those who seem to attain it and the price they pay. By the end of the story, he claims to be at his highest point, which can serve as either a good thing, as we have a "happy" ending, or the realization that everything goes downhill from here. Despite this, Lázaro's fellow townspeople are all laughing at him behind his back, and the audience is left no longer feeling the sympathy it once had, quite possibly an intentional reversing of *captatio benevolentiae*. Our author, like the Renaissance artists who would expose the full beauty of the human body, does not wish to hide anything about him or herself, no matter how "dirty" he or she and his or her work may be.[23]

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[22] "This was the first step I took to come to reach the good life." ["Este fue primer escalón que yo subí para venir a alcanzar buena vida"] (611).

[23] Again Montaigne, as his work personifies this idea almost as well as those which are analyzed here, says: "I want to be seen in my simple fashion, natural and ordinary, without study or skill: because it is myself who I paint. My faults are read lively, my imperfections and naïve form, as much as public reverence has permitted me." ["Je veux qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans étude et artifice: car c'est moi que je peins. Mes défauts s'y liront au vif, mes imperfections et ma forme naïve, autant que la révérence publique me l'a permis"] (136).

It seems clear that the anonymity of *Lazarillo de Tormes* was planned due to the multiplicity of functions that it performs. It keeps the author out of real-world repercussions, it allows him or her to write ironically for glory (repressing the desire for fame and attention), and moreover, allows the focus to be placed upon the work alone. There is about as much work on Dante as there is on the *Divine Comedy*, and about as much work on Cervantes as there is on *Don Quixote.* But with the *Lazarillo* being anonymous, all of the attention of scholarly study and popular attention is on the work itself. It does not matter who wrote it, it does not have to be by a priest, a king, a scholar, a monk, or a poor boy; it does not matter what his name is, his or her name in itself should have no bearing on the work and play no role in the mind of his or her reader. The work is just there, left open for the reading, and anyone could have written this, especially when some images are already drawn from prior cultural knowledge.

Chapter 2 François Villon, his background, and *Le Testament*

The year is 1443 in Paris. The Hundred Year's War, which ravaged and took so many lives, is in its final stages, and feudal power is now consolidated into the monarchy.[24] The protection that the system once gave to people has failed in the war, and people now look to the king. This war was so vital that it "broke the ancient framework of society" and in the literary field, impact was so great that "we may say there were two definite periods in French Medieval literature" the period before, and the period after the beginning of the Hundred Year's War (Tilley 276). The city at this point had survived a plague five years earlier and a terrible winter in which wolves stalked the outskirts of the city, snatching up unsuspecting Parisians. While in the city, as in any post-apocalyptic scenario, gangs of murderers and thieves roamed the streets. Intellectually, the fires of the preceding century, under which the *Summa* and the Gothic cathedrals flowered together, had faded into a twilight of lethargy and indifference (Wyndham Lewis 22). The Italian Renaissance, which was underway and flourishing, had not yet bloomed in France. The Paris in that age and the Paris of today, the city of lights and love, were in effect two different things, but the Medieval Paris did have one thing to distinguish itself from other cities of the time: a university. All of this, and the city being a "town bled dry, ravaged by misery, hunger and disease," is the perfect stage for the thirteen or fourteen-year-old François Villon, born Montcorbier as he enters into the University of Paris (Wyndham Lewis 36). In the Medieval Age, university started at fourteen, and a bachelor would attend lectures, be involved in debates, and receive a degree after approximately six years, after conducting a debate with a master. From

[24] The nobility still existed, but feudalism was dead. The royal army took the place of the feudal army. The authority of the king increased daily and tended towards absolutism with the consent of the nation itself (Tilley 321).

there he would keep disputing and lecturing until about five or six years later, when he would apply for his master's degree, undergoing rigorous examinations. Afterwards, if he wanted to, he could go on for a theological degree, which would take almost another ten years. Villon, instead of that path, chose the life of crime, sex, alcohol, partying, and jokes, in a Paris dominated by the end of war, famine, high prices, and the plague. Nonetheless, he still achieved fame and glory, things that may have slipped by him had he stayed in the field of higher education, but Villon chose to be a poet.

Three years after getting his master's in 1452, Villon fled after killing a priest in a fight, and was pardoned six months later. He then released his *Little Testament*, or the *Lais*, a precursor to the larger work which will be discussed, a mock will in the form of poetry.[25] As we see in Villon, the mock will genre is at times interjected with "violent outpourings of feelings or by musings based on entirely personal experience" (Anacker 63). In 1456 Villon again fled Paris as a suspect in a robbery at the Collège de Navarre, and was arrested for it in 1461, and was sent to the prison of Meung-Sur-Loire. Villon claims that this is not due to his own actions, but due to the bishop, Thibault d'Aussigny.[26] It is upon his release by the king that he writes his magnum opus, *Le Testament*, the word "testament" coming from the Latin *testamentum* meaning a "last will disposing of property." While misconceptions may lead some to believe that it was written in the jail itself, the fact that it was not changes the context behind the content. If the *Testament* were written while Villon was rotting in a cell awaiting the gallows, it would be no surprise to read his poetic musings and fears of death, but one can take *Le Testament* in a lighter, more

[25] According to Robert Anacker, this is not a brand new idea; some graduating classes have and will still at times read out a class will (37).

[26] Whether this fact is true or not, we do not really know, since if the bishop hated Villon that much, he would have been able to hide him from the king when he came to pardon the prisoners.

mocking tone. A year later Villon was found in jail again, and sentenced to die for involvement in a fight in which he did not kill. In 1463 he was sentenced to exile instead and never heard from again. Since all that we know about Villon comes from his legal records, no one knows what else happened along the course of his life: the countless crimes and deeds apart from his two death sentences, murders, burglary, and banishment. Villon, far from being the first or the last criminal, was not the first or the last prisoner to write poetry in jail. This unique genre, which started in Villon's century, was a reaction to the gloom and cruelty of the time, with the author reducing himself to a Job-like character from the filth of his cell. Boutet and Strubel call Villon, the first "cursed poet" ["poète maudit"], as "He does not innovate, and bows voluntarily to the rules of versification of the time. But he gives by his sincerity a new breath" ["Il n'innove pas, et se plie volontiers aux règles de la versification de l'époque. Mais il leur donne un souffle nouveau, par sa sincérité"] (113).

The poetry of Villon itself is very distinct from that which came before. In a world in which the troubadours are still singing of the romantic courtly ideal, people are dealing with losing loved ones to incessant war and plague, and Villon sets himself apart as a poetic outcast, rejecting the world and its ideals, especially academics. In Medieval poetry the literary world was dominated by stock characters, like Lazarillo, and by other *topoi*. Villon, however, is one of the first to write about himself, and especially about all of the troubles and negative emotions that he bears. He says that he was spurred to write due to these pains and hardships:

"Now, it is true that after groans

and tears and anguished lamenting

after sorrows and misfortunes

ordeals and footsore wandering,

hardship has honed my murky mind

about as sharp as a leather ball

more than all the commentaries

of Averroës on Aristotle." (Villon 32, 34)[27]

In an age when most poetry had to do with love or one's religion, Villon serves as a striking exception. While writing about love he writes about the horrors and terrors of heartbreak, and about sex, poverty, drinking, and crime; in essence, his life, which was "poor and stung by strong passions, and his miserable life alternated between the tavern, the brothel and the prison" (Wyndham Lewis 221). The poetic voice of Villon is about as complex as the dichotomy of the person of Villon himself, the drunkard and criminal who also was a master, who was fearful of the gallows. He loved his parents and friends greatly, but also allowed himself to be absorbed by the degeneracy of his time. His *Testament* is a collection of 173 stanzas with sixteen inter-placed ballades, "a poem in which the same alternative rhymes go through three stanzas and a shorter stanza called *envoi,"* meaning a "send-off" (Wyndham Lewis 36). The main focus of his work lies in the structure of the will itself, the giving away of one's possessions. In Villon's case, being poor, and also making the work a mockery, he makes many requests of things that he does not have, from the serious to the funny. He gives his soul to God, his body to the Earth, a purse to one person, poems to multiple people, a garden, fourteen gallons of wine, a sword, a

[27] "Or est vrai qu'après plaints et pleurs / Et angoisseux gémissements, après tristesses et douleurs, / Labeurs et griefs cheminements, / Travail mes lubres sentements, / Aiguisés comme une pelote, / M'ouvrit plus que tous les comments / D'Averroÿs sur Aristote."

Translation taken from *Poems* by François Villon, edited by David Georgi. Northwestern University Press. Illinois. 2013. All French quotes from Villon come from *Poésies* by François Villon. Edited by Jean DuFourney. Gallimard. 1973

cheese tart, a puppy, six wolves heads, a noose, the Tower of Billy, to one person nothing, a block of ice to his barber, and glasses to a school for the blind.[28] Villon even goes as far to say that if anyone cannot receive what they are granted, to go to his true inheritors, the owners of bars where he accumulated debts. This way, we see that Villon extensively uses humor, wordplay, and inside jokes. His work can certainly be funny to those on the outside of his circle, but only to a point. To fully understand it would require being a member of Villon's inner circle during the time of its writing. The *Lazarillo* is somewhat different, as one can understand the work's more intricate humor and irony without having lived in the time.

Also, in comparison, the simple fact of genre draws a distinction between the two works, although they accomplish similar roles. They both have a presenter and an audience, but the way the works are established is different, with Villon arguably having a more difficult experience, having to establish and tell a convincing "story" through the medium of the eight-line, eight-syllable stanzas, as well as having to convey his view through not the typical story form, but by telling his story via the will. This is done by directly linking the "character" or the receiver of the particular item with whatever Villon is giving them. Villon also plays a similar role to the anonymous author of the *Lazarillo* in that he seeks glory while also using *captatio benevolentiae*, albeit he is more heavy on the theme of drawing sympathy than he does to enlarge himself. The two ways in which he does seek his claim to glory are at the end of the *Ballade de la grosse Margot* where he anagrams his name in the last stanza, and then by requesting at the very end of his work, that in homage to himself, "ring for me at greatest volume / that steeple bell that's cast in glass, / so loud that every heart will tremble / while its ringing mauls the air" ["on sonne à

[28] At the same time we have no idea whether or not the people mentioned are real, as some people mentioned in *Le Testament* fail to appear in any records whatsoever.

branle / le gros beffroi qui est de verre, / combien qu'il n'est cœur qui ne tremble, / quand de sonner est à son erre"] (Villon 154).[29] He wants the bell ringers at Notre Dame to ring the bells for him after his death, wanting himself to be remembered, believing himself to be important enough to deserve this honor.

Drawing back to Villon's will, it seems is that he has a carefree attitude towards physical things, not having "stored up treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, where thieves break in and steal," and at the same time claiming possessions that are not his.[30] This is another place where we see the interesting dichotomy of Villon's work, the contrasting shift and ying-yang of emotions, that demonstrate how complex both Villon and the human psyche are. As DuFourney said, "The world is at the same time friendship and hate, laughing and seriousness, profound love and sleazy adventure. Only the interlacing and the mix of the jester and the grave, of irony and the pathetic are able to translate this vision of opacity and of universal uncertainty" ["Le monde est à la fois amitié et haine, rire et sérieux, amour profond et louche aventure. Seul l'entrelacement et le mélange du bouffon et du grave, de l'ironie et du pathétique sont à même de traduire cette vision de l'opacité et de l'incertitude universelles"] (DuFourney 32). We see the sharp contrast between Villon's fear of death and losing his soul, and the *joie de vivre* which would go on to define the following period of French Renaissance literature, in a way that Villon can be called the harbinger of the end of the Middle Ages, "… in reacting against the romantic love of the troubadours, which had become conventional, and the religious formalism without contact with the reality of his time, announces the end of the Middle

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[29] Translation taken from *Poems* by François Villon, edited by David Georgi. Northwestern University Press. Illinois. 2013

[30] Matthew 6:19

Ages" ["… en réagissant contre l'amour romantique des troubadours, devenu conventionnel, et le formalisme religieux sans contact avec la réalité de son temps, annonce la fin du Moyen Age"] (DuFourney 11). On the contrary he starts his self-groaning and despising early on, as from when referring to his youth he says "gone it is, and I remain / poor of sense and knowledge / sad, pale, blacker than the blackberry" ["Allé s'en est, et je demeure, / pauvre de sens et de savoir, / trist, pâli, plus noir que meure"] (Villon 62). He also describes himself as poor, and "of everyone I am the most imperfect" ["de tous suis le plus imparfait"] (Villon 66). In fact, from the very first line of the work, where Villon looks upon the errors and shames of his past, he laments that "all of my shames I have drunk, not all of them foolish, not all of them wise" ["toutes mes hontes j'eus bues, / ne du tout fol, ne du tout sage"] (Villon 55). In this line, Villon, sounding like an old man on his deathbed at the ripe old age of thirty, which even for the time was still young, is practically saying that his life of mischief and roguery has ended, as he has already drunk all of his shames.[31] As we read on, we find that his shames have not ended because Villon decides to renounce his old ways; rather, it is because, according to him, death is knocking at the door. In preparation for his coming death, Villon is respectable enough to make his preparations on earth, and after giving his " poor soul" ["pauvre âme"] to the Virgin Mary, Villon gives the next most important thing, his body, to the Earth. But instead of being a proto-environmentalist, seeking to compost his body to renew the earth, he says that it is in vain: "The worms will not find a lot of fat / hunger has waged him too harsh a war" ["Les vers n'y trouveront grand graisse, / trop lui a fait faim dure guerre"] (Villon 95). He is so stained by the poverty that has left him hungry night

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[31] In stanza LXXII Villon adds in the same realm, "May Jeanneton / no longer take me for a young man / but for an old, used, plucked bird / carrying the voice and tone of the old / and I am but a young simpleton" ["Que Jeanneton / plus ne me tient pour valeton, / Mais pour un vieil usé roquard / de vieil porte voix et le ton, / et ne suis qu'un jeune coquard"] (Villon 90).

after night that even the worms will not find a decent meal from his corpse.[32] Villon, like Lazarillo, has no aspirations to be perfect, nor claims to be. He seeks his soul's redemption and place with God desperately, unlike Lazarillo, while at the same time loving the free life of crime, sex, and the bar. But this "wasting away" of his life has left him anxious, with the only recourse remaining for him being to pray for his soul, and warn others not to follow in his path.[33] Even at the end, when Villon requests the words for his epitaph, he wants people to remember not his poetic glory or his masters degree, something that goes unmentioned throughout the poem. Rather, he wants the words "love struck him with its arrow / a poor little schoolboy" ["amour occit de son raillon / un pauvre petit écolier"] and "He gave all, everyone knows it" ["Il donna tout, chacun le sait"] to be inscribed across his tombstone (Villon 152). He enters this world with nothing, not even a father, and he leaves this world with nothing, again giving away not only all that he has, but what he does not have. And in one last cry of pity from the second to last poem, he cries for the mercy of everyone that he can think of, even his enemies, showing his regard for Christ's command, but doing so using his classic vulgar language and sexual imagery.[34]

Where does Villon separate himself from the poets of the past? While he does write about feelings like the classical lyrical poets, some of Villon's work touches upon extremely depressing

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[32] Just as Genesis says, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

[33] Apart from giving his body to the earth, Villon is a pioneer of the modern-day motif of telling children to stay in school, as he says, "I know it well, that if I had studied / in the times of my folly / and to good customs dedicated myself / I would have had a house and a soft bed" ["Bien sais, se j'eusse étudié / ou temps de ma jeunesse folle, / et à Bonne mœurs dédié, / j'eusse maison et couche molle"] (Villon 62). Although this is rather ironic, as Villon studied for almost a decade of his thirty-year life. He was well studied, but it seems that all of the coursework did not teach him how to "avoid the broad gate, which leads to destruction" (Matthew 7:13).

[34] It should be kept in mind that the end of the *Grand Testament* is not the end of Villon, as he lives for at least a year after its writing.

subjects, such as death and the loss of loved ones, especially during times of plague.[35] In terms of form, Villon does in fact follow the Medieval poets who had come before, but only in this way. His innovations lie in his interlacing of sixteen ballads into a mock will, which turns from depressing and mortal to funny and welcoming of life, something that is entirely new. Villon, moreover, is the subject of his own work; we get a deep and clear picture of his inner workings, and there are few authors from before his time, maybe ever since, that were as personal. As Anacker says, "one of the most characteristic phenomena of the Renaissance is the powerful self-assertion of the artist, and in that respect Villon is indeed a man of that age" (18). Through his stanzas we hear his deep musings on his suffering, poverty, and the anguishes of his soul — practically his entire life. We are permitted to walk with Villon, his friends, and the inhabitants of his picaresque life on his poetic journey through near-death reflection upon life, a journey that takes place mostly in Paris. Unlike the *Lazarillo*, which spans multiple cities and locations throughout Renaissance Spain, *Le Testament* takes place, if one could use that phrase, entirely in Paris. Villon in a way is the new Dante, being the exiled from his native village, banished from one of his greatest loves. One could say for Villon that Paris, his native city, is his main theme. Having "… breathed in his infancy and youth the air of Paris, he is above all from Paris: by his education, his studies, his years of formation … Villon is still affectively from Paris, sentimentally, by his loves, his friendships, and as well, on occasion, his intimacies, by his enjoyments and his follies." ["… espiré dans son enfance et sa jeunesse l'air de Paris: il est surtout de Paris par là, par son éducation, ses études, ses années de formation…Villon est encore

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[35] Despite this, themes such as "*memento mori*, the *danse macabre* and the rhetorical question 'where are they' [U*bi sunt*?]" were prominent and frequently repeated motifs, not surprising for an age marred by plague and war (Georgi XVI).

de Paris affectivement, sentimentalement, par ses amours, ses amitiés, et aussi, à l'occasion, ses intimités, par ses divertissements et ses folies"] (Frappier 397). Villon's entire life revolved around where he lived, and if it were not Paris, he would not be Villon. This Paris, however, is the Paris of the exile, of one who has spent a great amount of time away from it, like the lover who goes off to war, fighting for something greater than himself; and this also makes Paris a Paris of Villon's memory, remembering the good times and people as he writes his *Grand Testament* upon release from Meung-sur-Loire.

Chapter 3 - The Religious and Ecclesiastical Aspects of *Lazarillo de Tormes*

"Religion is never the problem; it's the people who use it to gain power" - Julian Casablancas

The second way that these works set themselves apart from what came before is how they deal with the religious world at the time. While not being the first to criticize the Roman Catholic Church, they do so by going outside of it. Famous authors such as Erasmus and Dante, whose picture of hell is filled with more clergymen and Popes than one would expect, criticize the Roman Catholic Church and remain both faithful Catholics and Christians: nobody would doubt their devotion and sincerity. The author of *Lazarillo de Tormes* constructs his criticisms of the earthly Roman Catholic Church while having a complex, love-hate relationship with the personal, spiritual side of with God, and at the same time making various biblical allusions. François Villon, on the other hand, focuses less on outright rebuke and more on the relational side of one's religious life, and mostly on his relationship with God, his soul, and his past sins.

Even before starting to talk about the *Lazarillo*, it is interesting to note that at the time of its writing, the only works to contain the title "The life of" were books about the lives of the saints (Dunn 41). Therefore, from the start we see the author making a mockery of the Roman Catholic Church and its tradition, as Lazarillo clearly is not a saint, and the pious reader who was used to these works would be in for a shock upon opening this book. Even the protagonist's name, which comes from the Hebrew "God has helped," is a reference to two Biblical characters.[36] The first is the man brought back to life by Jesus in the Gospel of John, a man entombed for a few days before being raised from the dead on the fourth, a precursor to Christ.

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[36] The name itself also signifies poverty, as the old Castilian verb "*lazar,"* or "*lacerar"* both meant "to suffer poverty" (Dunn 33).

The second comes from Luke 16:19-31, in which Jesus relates a parable about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man is opulent in his earthly life while the Lazarus was the opposite: poor, hungry, and covered with sores. Both men die, and Lazarus attains heavenly splendor while the rich man is condemned to flames. The point of the parable is that those who are the "first" here on Earth will be the last, and the "last" will be the first.

We can see clearly that Lazarillo and the characters from the Bible that share his name are in fact similar, and yet different. While Lazarillo is not exactly raised from literal death, he is practically physically dead by the end of the third *tratado*. Lazarillo's fortunes begin to turn in his favor during the fourth *tratado*, as the first biblical Lazarus is raised on the fourth day, reborn in a sense, and now on the climb up on the mountain of life (Perry 146). He also recovers from the blows of the priest in *tratado* two within three days, making a further biblical reference that he spent said days "in the stomach of the whale" ["en el vientre de la ballena"], being kicked out on the fourth, a less joyous revival than that of the raised Lazarus (584).[37] While Lazarillo is indeed a poor beggar like the one of Luke, he does not die, is not covered with sores, and does not receive the security and comfort of heaven. He is rather the opposite, having the financial security of Earth at the price of his honor and soul. The biblical references extend throughout the book as well, especially in the first chapter. At the beginning of the first *tratado*, Lazarillo's father, upon being caught, "… confessed, and did not deny, and suffered persecution for the cause of justice" ["confesó, y no negó, y padeció persecución por justicia"], something which the astute reader would associate with John 1:20 when the Baptist says ".. and this is what he

[37] This is also a larger scheme by the author as Lazarillo spends the first three *tratado*s in a form of physical death but a spiritual rise. As he suffers physically his soul strengthens and he partakes in the suffering of Christ, a path that is reversed with the rest of the chapters. Lazarillo, now Lázaro is prospering physically and financially, but morally bankrupt.

confessed: 'I am not the Christ'" (559). Later on when Lazarillo begins his commission with the blind man, he is told that "Neither gold nor silver can I give you, but many warnings on how to live I shall show you." ["Yo oro ni plata no te lo puedo dar; mas avisos para vivir muchos te mostraré"], reminding readers of Peter's words to the lame man in the temple: "I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!"(563).[38] Finally, Lazarillo's eyes are opened when he starts his journey with the blind man, saying, "I woke of the simpleness in which, as a child, I was asleep" ["desperté de la simpleza en que, como niño, dormido estaba"], reminiscent of how Adam and Eve's eyes were opened upon eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (563). Lazarillo here begins his fall from paradise, gaining knowledge of how the world really is (Perry 142).

The writing itself is devoid of spirituality, with no specific mention of the spiritual or supernatural beyond a few mentions of God. The author does not even mention Jesus or the Virgen Mary in a country in which phrases involving their invocation were so widespread; their names, along with the Spanish word for "soul" ["alma"] do not appear (Hanrahan 337). There is a clear rejection of Catholicism, making the book a proto-Protestant work. There is an interestingly strange relationship with the sacraments, no mention of the saints, a clear proclivity towards both faith and grace alone, and an obvious condemnation and negative connotation of the clergy. With regard to the sacraments, Lazarillo becomes addicted to wine, the blood of Christ. It is this longing for wine (in the literal sense of its intoxicating sweetness, not its religious significance) that results in Lazarillo's face being splintered with glass, and gives cause for the blind man to laughingly say, "What do you think Lázaro? That which made you sick

[38] Acts 3:6

heals you and gives you health" ["¿Qué te parece Lázaro? Lo que te enfermó te sana y da salud"] (567). Wine, despite its duality, serving as only a brief respite from the pains of poverty, also serves Lazarillo economically. Whereas Lazarillo's father, according to the *ciego* only "fathered you once, but wine has given you life a thousand times" ["una vez te engendró, mas el vino mil te ha dado la vida"]. This is something that comes true, as in the last *tratado* Lázaro makes his living off of advertising the wines to be sold in the streets of Toledo (572). Although some may earnestly seek wine as the blood of Christ, this does not occur in *Lazarillo de Tormes*: wine only serves in function of its physical qualities. The bread of the Eucharist does not make an appearance in its transubstantiated form, but bread in fact does, reinforcing the idea of the book's lack of spirituality, as the protagonist does not pine after bread to receive its spiritual graces of being the body of Christ, especially since the bread in *tratado* two is a *bodigo*, made of flour and milk which was offered during the mass.[39] Like wine, Lazarillo only looks for bread in order to quench his physical hunger.

In terms of baptism there is no expressed scene in which our hero gets baptized, so we as readers must take the only equivalent, which comes through his birth. Lazarillo says that he was truly "born in the river" ["nacido en el río"], and while the situations are a bit different, the first thought that readers in that age would have had is of Moses, who was drawn from the river; but Lazarillo is no great leader, no pharaoh's daughter finds him, but rather just the blind man (559). But this is not Lazarillo's baptism, and since as far as this story goes he remains unbaptized

[39] Despite this he draws close to doing so, as when he finally opens the priest's chest he says "I, to console myself, I open the chest, and as I saw the bread, I began to adore it, not daring to receive it." ["Yo, por consolarme, abro el arca, y como vi el pan, comencélo de adorar, no osando recibirlo"] (579).

(something that one would definitely recount to the Inquisition to let them know how good a Christian one is), he could not be saved, nor partake in the other sacraments, although he does get married at the end of the book. Since he does not and cannot complete any of the sacraments, and since he frequently acts immorally and commits crimes throughout the book, Lazarillo can only rely on faith and grace alone instead of following the Catholic idea of good works helping to earn one's salvation. Lazarillo does in fact believe in God; however, he even says, "I hope in God who is in glory" ["Espero en Dios que está en la gloria"] (559). Despite this, he does hold a troubled, unstable relationship with God, mentioning his name multiple times and even mockingly getting mad at God in the middle of chapter three when he realizes the squire's hypocrisy. Yet in the *Lazarillo*, God is absent, apart from things that happen outside of Lazarillo's span of control. Other than from Lazarillo's deprivation of the sacraments, he is further cursed by being compared to a mouse and a snake, the ancient enemies of the good, pious Christian. The rat, according to the Jewish law, is an unclean animal, and cannot be eaten (Leviticus 11:29-38). Canon Law, as well, commands that the Eucharist be kept away from rats and other animals (Torrico 432). The priest compares Lazarillo to a rat when giving him bread that has been supposedly eaten by one: "Eat this, for the rats it is clean." ["Cómete eso, que el ratón cosa limpia es"] (580). If the already somewhat eaten bread is good enough for a rat, it is good enough for Lazarillo. The snake has always been seen as a threat and enemy of humanity: "with all of the diabolic symbolic connotations derived from Genesis or the Revelation and which extend through all of the Medieval Christian iconographic tradition" ["… con todas las connotaciones de simbolismo diabólico derivadas del Génesis o el Apocalipsis y que se extienden por toda la tradición iconográfica cristiana Medieval"] (Torrico 431). The

identification of these animals with Lazarillo, a protagonist with whom we actually sympathize, is a controversial move, making him both unclean and immoral, due to both his actions and his identification with the snake.

The most obvious criticism of the Roman Catholic Church and of organized religion comes through the various clerical masters that Lazarillo encounters. Before even coming into contact with a priest in the story, the narrator adds that, "We should not marvel at a cleric or friar because one steals from the poor, and the other from the house of God for his devout women and to help someone else, when a poor slave was moved by love to do as such." ["No nos maravillemos de un clérigo ni fraile porque el uno hurta de los pobres, y el otro de casa para sus devotas y para ayuda de otro tanto, cuando a un pobre esclavo el amor le animaba a esto"] (561). Here Lazarillo is pointing out that clergy are not perfect, they do in fact steal too, and it is because these people of so high a stature steal, that we should not judge when a poor slave does it, especially when the slave is motivated to provide for those he loves.[40] After most likely killing his first master, Lazarillo falls in with a priest; but unlike one's expectations of a priest (Lazarillo's failed expectations of his masters are a hallmark of the first three *tratados*), this priest is the exact opposite of one's preconceived notions. First, he only accepts Lazarillo into his care because he can help with the mass, something that shows the shift of Medieval society into one in which one's value is based upon knowledge and usefulness instead of charity. He is just as

[40] This begins a theme which will recur later on in the *Lazarillo*, which is based on a famous passage from the Sermon on the Mount: "Do not judge, so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and look, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!" (Matthew 7:1-5).

greedy as the blind man, but the author goes as far as to say that, "all of the wickedness of the world was enclosed in this one" ["…toda la laceria del mundo estaba encerrada en éste"] (574). This priest practically starves Lazarillo and leaves him inches from death, both due to hunger and due to the unintentional beating at the end of the chapter.

The next encounter with the Roman Catholic Church comes in the fourth chapter and the Mercedarian friar. This experience is an eye-opening one, as this friar is similar to the priest of chapter two, in that he does not really fulfill his duties, yet he is not cruel to Lazarillo nor starves him. He says of the friar, that he was: "A great enemy of the choir and of eating in the convent, lost by walking outside, a great friend of secular businesses and visiting them. So much, that I think he broke more shoes than the entire convent." ["Gran enemigo del coro y de comer en el convento, perdido por andar fuera, amicísimo de negocios seglares y visitar. Tanto, que pienso que rompía él más zapatos que todo el convento"] (603). This is anything but an accurate depiction of what a monk is supposed to be. He does not sing, he does not eat with his brothers, and, just like the chaplain of the sixth *tratado* and Lazarillo's ultimate master, the archpriest, he engages in business, something forbidden to clergy (Hanrahan 334). The friar is like Villon, who although not a clergyman, has something of the same dualistic nature. The friar is a split person, holy, or supposed to be, but also a lover of the world.[41] With such a short chapter, it does not seem like the anonymous author is devoting much time or thought to this master; he himself even says that "for other things I will not recount I left him" ["… por otras cosillas que no digo salí de

[41] This runs contrary to what the friar's Scripture says he should do: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God continues to live forever." (1 John 2:15-17)

él"] (603). But this chapter is just as much about what Lazarillo omits as what he does say. What could these things be? It would not be physical abuse, we have already seen that with the blind man. Starvation? Already seen with the priest. Hypocrisy and a lack of honor? The squire did not fail to provide for those things. If an old expression in the French language is any indication, the unspoken deeds and passings are sexual in nature. According to Sieber, "breaking shoes" was a popular expression that meant to lose ones virginity (52). Within this lens, it is possible that Lazarillo had his first sexual experience either due to or with this master, and since this master had the habit of breaking shoes, it would seem that sexual experiences are commonplace for this friar, a further criticism of those who fail to uphold their vows.

Afterwords, and "by chance" ["por ventura"], Lazarillo finds himself with a *buldero*, someone who sells indulgences, yet another immoral master. This time the master's immorality is found in being, "… the most self-assured and shameless, the best issuer of them [indulgences] that I have ever seen or hope to see, or do I think anyone has ever seen. Because he had and looked for ways and very subtle inventions" ["… el más desenvuelto y desvergonzado, y el mayor echador de ellas que jamás yo vi ni ver espero, ni pienso nadie vio. Porque tenía y buscaba modos y maneras y muy sutiles invenciones"] (603). Just like the blind man, the *buldero* knows a million ways to get people to buy his indulgences, which makes him possibly the most crooked of Lazarillo's masters to date. He is not just ordinarily evil, but he puts on the guise of being honest and misuses the trust of the people, abusing his office to effectively steal money from the unsuspecting in return for the promise of heaven, and even going so far as to say, "What do you think, how is it that these villagers, by only 'calling ourselves old Christians,' without doing any works of charity, think themselves to be saved, without investing anything of their

livelihood" ["Que os parece, cómo a estos villanos, que con sólo decir cristianos viejos somos, sin hacer obras de caridad, se piensan salvar, sin poner nada de su hacienda"] (609). The anonymous author is not the first person to do this either. One of Martin Luther's biggest qualms and focal points of his Ninety-Five Theses was indulgences, and many practices that Lazarillo's *buldero* utilizes, such as the falsely burning crucifix, the false piety, and the long vocal prayers directed more towards the congregation than towards God were commonly pointed out and picked apart by Reformers, Illuminists, and Erasmists (Hanrahan 337).[42] This story of the indulgence seller is not guided towards the criticism of any particular person, as this one goes unnamed, but it is aimed towards the entire practice of selling indulgences itself, and in consequence, the Church which sells them. Finally, Lazarillo ends up with the archpriest, who gives him a job selling his [the archpriest's] wines, and who arranges the marriage between Lázaro and the female servant. Of course, in a true priestly fashion, at least for the world of Lázaro, there is a dark side in that the servant and the priest are having an illicit affair. Furthermore, he somehow convinces Lázaro to blind himself to what is going on right before his eyes, completing the book's criticism of the clergy and the Roman Catholic Church, in a work which does not feel as spiritual as other literary works of the time.

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[42] One command from Christ that is used to reject this practice is: "And when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5).

Chapter 4: The Spirituality of François Villon

François Villon takes his criticism of religion in another direction, mostly in that he barely focuses upon the Roman Catholic Church and its people apart from a few instances, preferring to focus his religious aspect on the relationship between him and God, and his sins, reducing things to the very basis of what Christianity claims to be. As opposed to the *Lazarillo*, in which the narrator believes in God while not having any apparent care for his soul in a world that is seemingly devoid of God, Villon recognizes the lack of God in his life and is earnestly seeking both God and His mercy. He starts his *Grand Testament* with a rebuke of the bishop, Thibaut d'Aussigny, a man of God, a person who was reputed to be good, but who in reality caused Villon a great deal of his pain, going so far as to wish that what was done to Villon be divinely repaid to the bishop: "May God treat him how he has been to me" ["Tel lui soit Dieu qu'il m'a été"] (Villon 55). Villon, or at least the poetic voice, then takes this back, following what the Roman Catholic Church says, which is to love one's enemy, and thus admitting his error, which in a way justifies him. Villon even goes so far as to thank the bishop for his sufferings, claiming to "think him no wrong" ["n'y pense mal"] (Villon 91). Villon also rejects the idea of authority, especially when it comes to needing to be an authority in order to write:

> Now, some might say, 'Just who are you
>
> To be free with your pronouncements?
>
> You're no doctor of theology
>
> And this is mad presumption!'
>
> But it's straight from Jesus; the parable
>
> Of the rich man who reclines

In a bed of fire — no soft couch —

And the leper, up there looking down. (Villon 81)[43]

One does not have to have any special qualifications in order to write; one is free to do what one wants. What is the parable from Jesus in question? The very same one from Luke about the poor Lazarus. This time, Villon is the poor Lazarus, in reality poor, but not as pious, and those who reject his desire to write are the rich men enveloped in flames. Along with Lazarillo we see a stressed relationship with wine as well, in which Villon says, "Wine causes the loss of many a good home" ["Vin perd mainte Bonne Maison"] (Villon 106). He as well devotes an entire *ballade* to the wiliness of wine. He mentions how Noah and Lot were both overtaken by it and led to do immoral actions because of it, and while the focus of said *ballade* is not wine itself, it is directed towards Jean Cotart. The scent of alcohol pervades the entirety of the poem's verses, showing its deadliness, and at the same time being written by one who partook of it countless times.[44] Villon throughout his work does not cease to make subtle references to impious individuals who are supposed to be pious, which do not really serve as attacks, but rather just pointing out truths. For example, in stanza 146, Villon mentions Montmertre, an abbey where the nuns had to sell wine (and other things too), to get by, as: "Many a good Christian will go there / where no man enters" ["Si ira maint bon chrétïen / en l'abbaye où il n'entre homme"] (Villon 134). Later on in stanza 167 he wishes one friend, who was a priest, only the best of luck in his romantic endeavors, obviously something forbidden for priests, but Villon says this more

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[43] "Qui me diroit: «Qui vous fait mettre / Si très avant cette parole, / Qui n'êtes en théologie maître? / A vous est présomption folle!», / C'est de Jésus la parabole / Touchant le Riche enseveli / En feu, non pas en couche molle, / Et du Ladre de dessus li." Translation taken from *Poems* by François Villon, edited by David Georgi. Northwestern University Press. Illinois. 2013

[44] Genesis 9:20-23 and Genesis 19:30-38

jokingly than accusatively, because who is Villon to judge, as he frequented prostitutes and lovers as well. In terms of attacks, it seems like Villon does not really attack the Roman Catholic Church, nor its doctrine. If he attacks a person, it is only the person that is the victim. That being said, the majority of his theology lies in himself, his past, and his preoccupation over his own soul. He says early on:

> "I am a sinner, I know it well
>
> However God does not want my death,
>
> But rather that I convert and live well
>
> As all others who are bitten by sin.
>
> Either by true will or boredom
>
> God sees [one's sin] and his mercy
>
> My conscious reproaches me
>
> By his grace he gives me pardon." (Villon 59)[45]

He makes no claim whatsoever to be perfect, but rather the opposite, while fully embracing the idea that God forgives and even works to bring him back to the light. Villon is acting perfectly in accordance with Medieval theological doctrine, seeing himself as a prodigal son, the lost sheep among the other ninety-nine. Villon also embraces the Pauline idea of believing himself to be the worst sinner of all. The poet claims, "… of all I am the most imperfect / May the sweet Jesus Christ be praised / That by me it be satisfied / What I have written is written" ["… de tous suis le plus imparfait. / Loué soit le doux Jésus-Christ! / Que par moi leur soit satisfait; / Ce que j'ai

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[45] "Je suis pécheur, je le sais bien; / Pourtant ne veut pas Dieu ma mort, / Mais convertisse et vive en bien, / Et tout autre que péché mord. / Soit vraie volonté ou ennort, / Dieu voit, et sa miséricorde, / Se conscience me remord, / Par sa grâce pardon m'accorde."

écrit est écrit"] (Villon 66). This is just as Paul says: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost" (1 Timothy 1:15). He also does not shy away from embracing his poverty, when in stanza thirty-five he claims, "I am poor from my childhood / of a poor and small parentage. / My father had no grand riches / Nor his ancestor named Orace / Poverty follows and tracks us all" ["Pauvre je suis de ma Jeunesse, / de pauvre et de petite extrace. / Mon père n'ot onc grand richesse, / Ne son aïeul nommé Orace. / Pauvreté tous nous suit et trace"] (Villon 66). Villon claims to have been surrounded, and followed by poverty his entire life, but he pretends to have told himself at times, "It is better to live under a large desk / poor, than to have had been a lord / and rot inside a rich tomb" ["Mieux vaut vivre sous gros bureau / pauvre, qu'avoir été seigneur / et pourrir sous riche tombeau"] (Villon 67). At first glance this does not make any sense, why is it better to live in poverty? The first reason, which will be further discussed later, is because none of it matters, death comes for all. The second comes from Christian theology, in which the suffering of the poor on Earth will be recompensed with a place in heaven. The key to getting there is for one to "go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). Christians and Jews are likewise charged with helping and defending the poor, and for Christians, doing so is doing the same for Christ.[46] Villon's earthly poverty and suffering puts him in league with the disciples and those to whom the earth will serve as an inheritance, but Villon is a sinner and a criminal, even going so far as to condemn poverty and dispute with those who embrace and tout the life of poverty. Sounding like Lazarillo, Villon makes the claim that "There is no treasure but to live at ease" ["Il n'est trésor que de vivre à son aise"] (Villon 129).

[46] "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me" (Matthew 25:40).

His belief is that the best life lived is a comfortable one in which one is not struggling. While this may seem contrary to the message of the Gospel, Villon himself is not really sure if the struggle is all worth it. He asks a prince as well, most likely Christ, to be the judge of this, but if this judge is in fact Christ, Villon would be in the wrong. While living at ease on this earth may be the highest treasure to strive for, this goes against the message of the Gospel, in which it is the heavenly, after-death life that we focus on. While on the subject, Villon himself neither truly knows with one hundred percent certainty what lies after death: “And moreover, I give up / it is not my job / I remit it to the theologians / because it is the office of sinners” [“Et du surplus, je m’en démets : / Il n’appartient à moi, pécheur; / aux théologiens le remets, / car c’est office de prêcheur”] (Villon 67). Like everyone, François Villon holds his doubts about the faith in which he was raised, but unlike many, he holds on to hope, and if his faith turns out to be true, his only option is to pray for forgiveness and mercy. This is due to Villon’s past as a sinner, not having carried out the good works required by Catholic doctrine. Villon’s first request when he begins his will is that his soul be commended to the Virgin Mary:

> First, I give my poor soul
>
> to the glorious Trinity,
>
> and commend it to Our Lady
>
> the chamber of Divinity
>
> Praying all the charity
>
> of the Nine Orders of the Heavens
>
> that by them this gift be brought

in front of the precious Throne. (Villon 94)[47]

The most important thing, the one thing that truly belongs to him and makes him what he is, he gives away, so that it can truly be said that he "gave all, everyone knows it" ["donna tout, chacun le sait"] (Villon 152). Giving his soul to Mary, instead of to Christ is no matter of small importance either, as this is where Villon stays within the Medieval, Catholic worldview instead of preceding the Reformation that started almost sixty years after his disappearance from history. Despite any and all reservations that he may have with the Roman Catholic Church, certain people within it, or the idea of faith in general, it seems that Villon, or at least the poetic voice, holds fast in the end, almost like a deathbed convert who has spent a life away from God, yet turns back to Him at the very last opportunity. The result of this is that Villon requests his burial to be in the chapel of Saint Avoie, "and nowhere else" ["et non ailleurs"], and requesting that the following sad, funny, and yet vulgar prayer be written on an already filled tombstone:

Grant eternal rest to him,

Lord, and perpetual light

He who being worth nor a plate

and never had a sprig of parsley.

He was shaven, head, beard and eyebrows

Like a turnip that one shaves or peels.

Grant eternal rest to him.

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[47] "Premier, je dou de ma pauvre âme / La glorieuse Trinité, / Et la commande à Notre Dame, / Chambre de la divinité, / Priant toute la charité / Des dignes neuf Ordres des Cieux / Que par eux soit ce don porté / Devant le Trône précieux."

Rigor drives him into exile

And hits him in the ass with a shovel

However one may say: ‘I appeal!’

Which is not such a subtle term.

Grant eternal rest to him.[48] (Villon 151-152)

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[48] “Repos éternel donne a cil, / Sire, et clarté perpétuelle, / Qui vaillant plat ni écuelle / N’eut Oncques, N’un brin de Persil. / Il fut rasé, chef, barbe et sourcils, / Comme un navet qu’on ret ou pèle. / Repos éternel donne a cil. / Rigueur le transmit en exil /Et lui frappa au cul la pelle / Nonobstant qu’il dit: «J’en appelle!» / Qui n’est pas terme trop subtil. / Repos éternel donne a cil.”

Chapter 5 - Relativism and Blame

"Everyone calls barbaric that which one is not accustomed to." ["Chacun appelle barbarie ce à quoi il n'est pas accoutumé."] - Michel de Montaigne

Another thing seen within these two works is the tendency for things to be out of the control of the protagonists, and a tendency for actions not to be the faults of the characters who commit them. We see this in the beginning of the *Lazarillo*, when both his father and Zaide are caught stealing, and the author says: "We do not marvel at a cleric or friar because one steals from the poor, and the other from the house of God for his devout women and to help someone else, when a poor slave was encouraged by love to do as such." ["No nos maravillemos de un clérigo ni fraile, porque el uno hurta de los pobres y el otro de casa para sus devotas y para ayuda de otro tanto, cuando a un pobre esclavo el amor le animaba a esto"] (561). Both characters had greater motives to steal than people usually do, so the author implies that since they were moved by love, and not by greed, the fault does not lie with them. Interestingly enough, in the case of Zaide, his theft is only discovered because "Our fortune wanted that Zaide's conversation, as he was called, arrived at the ears of the sheriff, and inquired upon" ["Quiso nuestra fortuna que la conversación del Zaide, que así se llamaba, llegó a oídos del mayordomo, y hecha pesquisa"] (561). Of course, it is not anything that Zaide has done to reveal himself, it was his fate to be discovered, a predestined act of a force outside of Zaide that has willed that he be discovered.

As for the protagonist himself, he seems to have inherited his bad luck, fortunes, and misfortunes from his family. Lazarillo could not help it that when the blind man teaches him how to live, that it would be by begging, stealing, lying, and being dishonest. According to the author,

how could it be his fault when he commits these immoral actions, such as stealing from the priest, and fleeing from the criminals of *tratado* seven if that is just how he has been taught? The narrator is revealing almost his entire life to us and saying, "Here it is, everything is open, and after seeing all that I went through and all that has been done, can you really blame me?" After seeing how the blind man verbally and physically abused him, can the reader really blame Lazarillo for becoming fed up?[49] Some may in fact say that one can, since there is always a choice in the end, but the author would likely say, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Lazarillo even claims all of his bad actions to be the fault of someone else. In *tratado* one when he substitutes the blind man's sausage for a turnip, he says that, "The demon pushed me" ["Púsome el demonio"], claiming that he was not acting of his own accord, but rather that it was a demon (570). He says as well at the end of the first *tratado* when plotting to kill the blind man that, "God blinded him in that moment in his understanding (it was to grant me revenge)" ["Dios le cegó aquella hora el entendimiento (fue por darme dél venganza)"] (573). Lazarillo had such a great opportunity in that moment that he could only attribute it to an act of God.

Nonetheless, Lazarillo receives retribution for said attempted murder later on, as according to him he did not fall upon the priest, but "my sins had me run into a cleric" ["me toparon mis pecados con un clérigo"]. Despite this, he claims that God is working through his

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[49] Lazarillo makes no attempt to hide what he has done, even going so far as to admit things such as the stealing and the probable murder of the blind man, but as we see the story play out, his actions have consequences that are not always so evident. Sabat de Rivers comments in a similar way that, "It is not a matter of justification, and certainly, very logically, the way with which Lázaro defends himself against the abuses of his masters. It is about accepting that the mark of his birth and the incidents in his life lead him to the elaboration of a particular idiosyncrasy, and therefore to a distinct, particular moral" ["No se trata ya de justificar y, cierto, muy lógicamente, el modo con que Lázaro se defiende contra los abusos de sus amos: se trata de aceptar que la marca de su nacimiento y los incidentes de su vida lo llevaron a la elaboración de una idiosincrasia particular, única, y por tanto a una moral distinta, peculiar"] (237).

starvation, since when he opens up the chest and gets the bread, he says that "God wanted that even this go well for me" ["quiso Dios que aun en esto me fue bien"] (574; 580). Lazarillo overall sees himself as passive: things just happen to occur to him. The only exception to this would have to be *tratado* five, in which Lazarillo is on the sidelines for its entirety. We do not know why or how he came to be with and left the *buldero*, that is not so important for the story: what is important is highlighting how terrible a person the *buldero* is. In the second *tratado*, there is one place in which Lazarillo does blame himself for his actions, when he and the priest eat at funerals. Lazarillo starts to see himself as the murderer of the people who died because he benefits from their deaths: "Because in all of the time that I was with him, which would add up to six months, only twenty people died, and I believe that I myself killed them, or better said, they died on my request" ["Porque en todo el tiempo que allí estuve, que sería cuasi seis meses, solas veinte personas fallecieron, y éstas bien creo que las maté yo, o, por mejor decir, murieron a mi recuesta"] (577). This results in a strangely inverse relationship with death, by which Lazarillo is restored to life through the death of another person, and in which he literally feeds off of a tragic situation for others.

Fortune strikes back, however, and Lazarillo receives his retribution once again in *tratado* three, and at the end of the book. His hopes are raised upon meeting a squire who is "reasonably dressed, well combed, his walk and compass in order" ["razonable vestido, bien peinado, su paso y compás en orden"] (586). Everything seems to be working out for him this time, and the squire even says that fate has dealt Lazarillo a favorable card for once, as "God has done you a mercy in running into me; some good prayer you've prayed today" ["Dios te ha hecho merced en topar comigo; alguna buena oración rezaste hoy"] (586). He then realizes that

this squire is just as poor as he is. They have no food, little furniture, and not even enough to pay the rent on the house in which they are staying. And the greatest injustice of all is that the squire is the ultimate hypocrite, appearing to chain himself to the ideals of duty and honor, while being willing to betray said honor in a second. By the end of the chapter, instead of Lazarillo abandoning the squire as he had done to the first two masters, he is the one abandoned as the squire flees from having to pay rent. Lazarillo even finds himself accused of being in on the plot with his now-former master to steal, and sees the situation as history repeating itself. Like his father and stepfather, Lazarillo is now suffering "persecution in the name of justice" ["persecución por justicia"] (559).

By the time the last chapter occurs, Lazarillo has risen, in a sense, from his near death poverty to a "civil office, seeing as nobody matters, except those that have one" ["oficio real, viendo que no hay nadie que medre, sino los que le tienen"] (612). Neither this job, nor the desire for it, came from himself, but he acquires the realization from God, as "God wanted to enlighten me and put me on the profitable road and way" ["quiso Dios alumbrarme y ponerme en camino y manera provechosa"] (612). After seeing the squire make a mockery of all notions of honor, and seeing the *buldero* discredit the supernatural and the religious by the demon-possession hoax, what is left for Lazarillo? Only the notion of security and comfort in his earthly life: to make money, and to enjoy life. Although we might laugh at him and the fact that he has reached the lofty position of town crier, when we look back at what he has gone through, can we really judge Lázaro for being content?[50] According to his perspective, he has reached a relative

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[50] Sabat de Rivers corroborates this idea, saying that, "Certainly, for however looked down upon his office of crier was, he had taken a great leap" ["Ciertamente, por muy desprestigiado que fuera su oficio de pregonero, había dado un gran salto"] (242).

fortune in comparison to what he had had before, which was practically nothing. He is not one of those who “inherit noble statuses” ["heredaron nobles estados"], but the opposite, one who having nothing “with strength and skill comes out well in the end” [“con fuerza y maña remando salieron a buen Puerto”]. He makes the distinction between those who receive the blessings of life and those who must earn them, something which the author implies blinds the former from seeing the struggles that Lazarillo had to go through just to become a town crier. What really matters, and what is more impressive than just inheriting a life, is making one for oneself on their own, and acting according to the hand they are dealt in life (Sabat de Rivers 235). Therefore, judging is futile, useless, and immoral.

The true moral that our author/narrator wants us to draw, whether it is logically sound or not, is this: “We do what we can to move up on the ladder in life. I, Lazarillo, have worked so hard for this, and I have done all that I can. So when people insult me for the meager job and condition that I am in, that which I hold so dear to me, I do not care.” They have not experienced what he has in order to reach where he is, so they should not judge. He has made peace with his past and has received retribution for what he has done. This sort of reasoning is very similar to what Michel de Montaigne talked about in *Des Cannibales* concerning the indigenous people of Brazil. Europe was quick to jump to judgment of the “savages” of the New World without realizing the virtues and similarities of that society to their own. For example, just like the Europeans, and possibly exceeding them, the indigenous tribe interviewed by Montaigne would rather die than admit defeat, embracing death as a welcoming honor. When three of the indigenous tribe approach Charles IX of France, they point out a few things that they find strange, one of them being “that they had seen men full and gorged of all commodities, and that

half of them begged at their doors, gaunt with hunger and poverty: they found it strange that the miserable half could suffer such an injustice" ["qu'ils avaient aperçu des hommes pleins et gorgés de toutes sortes de commodités, et que leurs moités mendiaient à leurs portes, décharnés de faim et de pauvreté: il trouvaient étrange que ces misérables moitiés pussent souffrir un telle injustice"] (Montaigne 144). A group of people regarded as cruel savages by a continent that leaves people in utter poverty to beg for food, while others live in comfort and that kill each other over being part of a different sect of the same religion, sounds a bit like seeing the speck in your brother's eye, but not noticing the one in your own.

François Villon is no exception to this idea of passivity and a lack of blame as well. The first place we see this is in stanza 13. When discussing his way back into the divine light, it is God, who as Matthew 5 states, "… showed me a good city, and provided the gift of hope" ["… me montra une bonne ville / Et pourvue de don d'espérance"] (Villon 59).[51] Three stanzas later he moves to the subject of innocence, claiming his own: "I make no problems to the young nor old, whether I be on foot or drinking: mountains do not move from their place for a poor one, neither ahead nor backwards" ["Griefs ne fais à jeunes ne Vieux, soie sur pieds ou soie en bière: les monts ne bougent de leurs lieux pour un pauvre, n'avant n'arrière"] (Villon 60). He denies that he has done any real wrong, his sins are not against nature, as they do not make the mountains move, so what does it matter? He even blames poverty for all of his ills in a multiple-stanza parable of a thief brought before Alexander the Great. When the emperor asks the thief his reasons for thieving he replies:

Why do you claim me a thief?

[51] "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14).

For that what one sees me steal

All in a little boat?

If like you I could arm myself,

Like you I would be an emperor.

But what do you want? Of my destiny

against which I cannot do a thing

That so falsely destines me,

All my ways of living come to me.

In no way excuse me,

And know that in grand poverty

As so it is said commonly,

Great loyalty does not lie." (Villon 61)[52]

Here we see the thief playing on the idea of perspectives. That an emperor, an inheritor of *nobles estados*, is only different from the thief in terms of ability and power. According to the thief, the emperor cannot judge him for doing the same thing that an emperor does, such as pillage and conquer. It is not even the actions of the thief himself, but his fortune that pushed him to theft, and he cannot push back against that fortune, which makes loyalty a privilege that only those of wealth can afford. Villon may have followed that thief by a few thousand years, but his message is the same: I was dealt the low hand in life, and this is what I have to do simply to survive. If

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[52] "Pourquoi larron me fait clamer? / Pour ce qu'on me voit écumer / En une petiote fuste? / Se comme toi me pusse armer, / Comme toi empereur je fusse. / Mais que veux-tu? De ma fortune / Contre qui ne puis bonnement, / Qui si faussement me fortune / Me vient tout ce gouvernement / Excusez-moi aucunement, / Et sachez qu'en grand pauvreté / Ce mot se dit communément / Ne gît pas grande loyauté."

God had given him his own Alexander (which, in a way, Villon did have in the form of higher education), he would have taken it. If he did not take advantage of the opportunity, he claims that, "I would be put through the ashes, and judged by my own voice" ["être ars et mis en cendre / jugé me fusse de ma voix"] (Villon 62). He himself would have handed down the sentence, willing to take responsibility for that action in the future, but excusing himself since "Necessity makes people go astray / and hunger makes the wolf leave his woods" ["Nécessité fait gens méprendre / et faim saillir le loup du bois"] (Villon 62). Just as hunger makes the wolf hunt and tear his prey apart, something seemingly vile that makes people cower with disgust, but which is only part of the wolf's nature, likewise, Villon steals in order to survive. He, as well as Lazarillo, has the moral of "not throwing the first stone" in mind when he admits his unrighteousness and does not judge. He does not claim to be in any position to do so, and is well aware of the speck in his own eye, not daring to take out his brother's before his own.

Continuing on the theme of poverty, he poetically claims that poverty has followed him for his entire life, that there is no history of royalty, and no crown in his ancestral tomb: "Poverty follows and tracks us all" ["Pauvreté tous nous suit et trace"] (Villon 66). Being poor is not his fault, he has inherited this state from his father and grandfather; poverty seems to be the demon that follows both him and his family for generation upon generation. Villon holds no blame for himself in his low state, or for prostitutes and women who take many lovers. He makes the claim that since he has finished his time in prison, he deserves an easy life from now on. He has suffered, and now believes that should evil befall him again, it would be the invisible hand of Fortune to blame. If so, he prays that God accept him into the heavenly abode, and that God should "Judge if she [Fortune] has misjudged!" ["Jugez s'elle fait méprison!"] (Villon 147).

Continuing his beliefs on blame, of women, he says, that in trying to decipher their reasons, “I imagine / without blaming the love of women / for it is the feminine nature / that wants to love all things completely” [“J’imagine, / Sans l’amour des dames blâmer, / Que c’est nature féminine / Qui tout uniement veut aimer”] (Villon 85). But despite this, he repeatedly admits to his sin and since the current state of Villon’s soul is very dire, the only way out is to warn others not to lie in debauchery and not to steal, because “No evil ever brings profit” [“Jamais mal acquît ne profite”] (Villon 141). For both of these works, this sense of irresponsibility and lack of accountability goes against the Medieval idea of taking responsibilities for one’s sin, especially within the religious context of doing good works as remission.

Chapter 6 - Death and Sin in *Lazarillo de Tormes*

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." - The Goliards

The final way in which the works depart from what has come before is how they deal with the subjects of sin and death. Neither strays away from dealing with the harsh, darker realities of life, and the fact that death is lurking at every turn. The way that *Lazarillo de Tormes* does this is through its characters. The book easily accepts the fact that humans are flawed and evil, barely showing redeemable characters, with the exception of Lazarillo's father and stepfather, who while both committed sins by stealing, did so in order to feed their families, a situation in which most would not blame them, especially in a society such as the one in which they lived. The rest are all immoral and commit great faults; the author is testing the idea that we all are evil; nobody is honest, everyone is unreliable, and things are all unstable. *Lazarillo de Tormes* is unrepentant in its showing of the harsh, grueling reality of poverty and what people do to climb out of it, especially without any moral hesitation. There is no conscience to guide these characters in their actions, especially in the worst sin that we see: hypocrisy. This was a very Medieval idea, but the author deviates from the principle of changing how we are, instead opting for embracing immorality as a means for advancement in life.

The first person of reproach is Lazarillo's mother since she has no qualm with never seeing her own son again and letting him walk off with the blind man. It is through the *ciego* and the other first masters that Lazarillo becomes who he is in the end. A mother abandoning her own child seems like one of the most heartless things that one can do, especially in an age in which death lurked around every corner, and it is unlikely that the mother of Lazarillo sent him away

out of love, but rather was relieved of a mouth to feed. Of the blind man, Lazarillo comments that, "From when God created the world, he never formed one more clever or wise" ["desde que Dios creó el mundo, ninguno formó más astuto ni sagaz"]. Moreover, he was so greedy and insensitive to Lazarillo's needs and his condition as a child that the narrator calls him a person who is *endiablada* (563). In a way, however, it seems that all of this ridicule works, as Lazarillo learns how to survive from this blind father figure, a stingy man who ends up breaking Lazarillo's worldview, morality, and his innocence, while also physically breaking his face. What is more, he is the snake in the Garden of Eden who gives Lazarillo the forbidden knowledge from the Tree of Good and Evil. The blind man delivers Lazarillo from the death that he would have had if he had stayed with his mother, one caused by his innocence, which would have deprived him of the skills necessary to live life.

The priest shows his sinful ways by disobeying the commands of Christ in almost every way, especially Matthew 18:6: "but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea." This signifies that at least for when he is young, Lazarillo is indeed one of the little ones of which Christ speaks, and the first four masters have a grave fate in store for them. The way in which Lazarillo does fall from grace due to this master is by stealing and lying in order to get the *bodigo* from the chest. But this fate, at least for the masters, is never really touched upon, and the author never comments upon the idea that Lazarillo's masters are condemned to a harsh fate. Any focus on death throughout the novel is mostly on Lazarillo's death. Lazarillo languishes in a near-death state of starvation since the priest shares no food with him and gives him "one ration for four days" ["de ración una para cada cuatro días"], letting him

even then only eat from the already rat-eaten bread (575).[53] We see Lazarillo's lack of hope, but while "all the wickedness in the world was closed up inside this one" ["toda la laceria del mundo estaba encerrada en éste"] he still refuses to leave, reasoning that he has already had two masters (574). One of them "brought me to starvation" ["traíame muerto de hambre"] and the other "already has me in the grave" ["me tiene ya con ella en la sepultura"] (577). Were he to find another, what would be left but actual death? And to all of Lazarillo's suffering and to his acts of circumventing the priest's attempts to keep the chest closed and untouched, the priest is apparently blind. Although he has the power of vision and literally sees everything, he does not see that Lazarillo "could not stand due to pure hunger" ["No me podía tener las piernas de pura hambre"], and fails to see that Lazarillo is actually the snake and the rat that would steal from his chest (576).[54] The priest breaks down and at the same time strengthens Lazarillo's persistence and will, although unknowingly, while distorting the views that Lazarillo may have had on religion. This at the surface can seem illogical, as this is only one priest and cannot be the scapegoat of all, but putting ourselves in Lazarillo's skin, he may be hesitant to trust the priest, the moral integrity of religion or anyone ever again. This is because the world of Lazarillo is a world contrary to the classical Hebrew belief in which the good would live a comfortable life blessed by God and the evil would perish, but it seems that this is a world in which the immoral prosper and the good are left in the dust.[55] At the same time, he does go back to clerical masters,

[53] "So that I found rest in nothing, except in death" ["De manera que en nada hallaba descanso, salvo en la muerte"] (577).

[54] "To see that would be to see himself as the cause of the boy's hunger. It is made clear that the priest who, by his vocation, should be both provider and mentor, is neither" (Dunn 25).

[55] "Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright destroyed? According to what I have seen, those who plow wrongdoing and those who sow trouble harvest it. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger they come to an end" (Job 4:7-9).

but this time not as trusting, or at all trusting. When we reach the archpriest the relationship is capitalistic and mutual, and Lazarillo holds on to what the archpriest represents rather than the person himself. The world of *Lazarillo de Tormes* itself is increasingly capitalistic as time goes by, with relationships being based on what one person can do for the other. We see this when Lazarillo commissions himself to the priest, but is only accepted because he knows how to help with the mass. Clergymen such as the chaplain and the friar engage in business, showing that some people cannot be stopped from violating their holy orders. This is another subtle social commentary by the author, as what is the use of the clerical vow, and how much power does it really have if one just disobeys it without repercussion?

Having been kicked out by the priest, despite Lazarillo's actions in reality being the fault of his master, Lazarillo's fortunes seemingly smile upon him and grant him the squire. Everything seems to be going well with this master: he dresses well and seems kind until the matter turns to food, and Lazarillo realizes that however regal the squire may look on the outside, inside both the squire and the home which he rents are devoid of any virtue or standing, just as poor as anyone else. In fact, the condition is so bad that upon encountering a funeral procession and hearing a widow say that they are bringing the body to "the sad and unhappy house, to the gloomy and dark house, where no one eats or drinks!" ["la casa triste y desdichada, a la casa lóbrega y oscura, a la casa donde nunca comen ni beben!"], Lazarillo rushes home and automatically thinks that the house in question is his own, dark and full of death (597). Despite nobody in the house being dead, the suffering Lazarillo might as well be, and for him, if things remained as such, he soon would be.

The squire's main sin comes in his hypocrisy and lack of morals, as well as what he does to Lazarillo. In this character, we see the theme of appearances play out, in which the initial aspect of something, or how something looks, is not how it is in reality. We also see the preference for one's appearance rather than the pursuit of interior improvement. The squire's main function is to establish himself as a high class man of honor, but he uses the concept of honor only as a social aid to obtain a better position for himself, rather than believing that honor is good in itself. According to the narrator, he has such a gait that, "he went up the street with such an elegant countenance and bearing, that anyone who did not know him would think him to be very close to a relative to the count of Arcos" ["súbese por la calle arriba con tan gentil semblante y continente, que quien no le conociera pensara ser muy cercano pariente al conde de Arcos"] (591). Internally, however, the squire is a ruin. Lazarillo often in this chapter feels forced to finish his food quickly, because if he does not, the squire would take it upon himself to help Lazarillo finish (588). As the squire does this, he recommends that Lazarillo eat little, as for some reason one lives longer in doing so, but Lazarillo sees right through this as he thinks that because of that rule he, "will never die, as I've always been forced to follow that rule" ["nunca yo moriré, que siempre he guardado esa regla por fuerza"] (590). He is as well such a strict person about his social status and appearances that it ruins his internal function: his soul. The squire charges Lazarillo to let nobody know where he stays, only because it "touches upon his honor" ["toca a mi honra"]. Since the squire was a foreigner to Toledo, something perceived by Lazarillo, that must mean that he had to leave his place of origin. During the Middle Ages this was no small matter, so leaving one's home must have warranted a valid reason.

While one would think this, the squire, “had left his land for no more than refusing to take off his hat for a knight, his neighbor” [“había dejado su tierra no más de por no quitar el bonete a un caballero, su vecino”] (590). Having taken his hat off first for his higher ranking neighbor so many times, the squire felt so dishonored by doing so that he left his home where he apparently had a great deal of land. Despite this, he claims that one day he was dishonored by a lower official that gave him the wrong greeting, when one day he, “wanted to put my hands on him, because every time I ran into him, he told me: ‘May God maintain Your Grace.’ ‘You, you villain — I told him —, Why are you not well raised? May God maintain Your Grace, you are to tell me, as if I were a nobody?' From then on he removed his hat and spoke to me as he should” [“quise poner en él las manos, porque cada vez que le topaba, me decía: «Mantenga Dios a Vuestra Merced». «Vos, don villano ruin —le dije yo—, ¿por qué no sois bien criado? ¿Manténgaos Dios, me habéis de decir, como si fuese quienquiera?». De allí adelante, de aquí acullá, me quitaba el bonete y hablaba como debía”] (599). Here we have a presumptuous person who wants to be greeted by his social inferiors as they “should,” but he himself does not adhere to doing so, showing the ridiculousness of the entire Medieval pyramid structure. If the people within the system have no integrity, then the system itself has no integrity either, as a chain is only as strong as the links are. But what is this system really? According to the squire, the world is not built upon the valiant, the pious, the loyal, or the honorable. He says that if given the slightest chance to fall in with a nobleman, he would, “do him a thousand deeds, because I would know how to lie to him as well as anyone else, and please him with a million marvels … never telling him anything that would weigh on him [“mil servicios le hiciese, porque yo sabría mentille tan bien como otro, y agradalle a mil maravillas….nunca decirle cosa con que le

pesase"] (600). He would end up entirely pleasing his lord through cruelty, deceit and flattery, because in the end, "they do not want to see virtuous men in their houses" ["no quieren ver en sus casas hombres virtuosos"] (600). And in the end, the squire once again flees, as if to leave any doubt about the status of his true honor and reputation.

The squire's main effect on Lazarillo is this: he drives the final nail into the coffin of Lazarillo's trust in the Medieval idea and period, and relegates the position of honor to solely to utility. He does this by raising Lazarillo's hopes via his appearance, but then shatters those expectations. In a way he can be seen as the worst of all of his masters. He gives him a false sense of security, respect, and closeness, but turns out to be the same as the rest of his masters (Mancing 429). He evokes Lazarillo's sympathies; for when talking about his first two masters, Lazarillo says, "to those it is right not to love, and for this one to have pity" ["aquéllos es justo desamar, y aquéste de haber mancilla"] (595). He is somebody that Lazarillo hates and for whom he has sympathy at the same time. The situation is not so black and white, nor has it ever really been for Lazarillo. For example, for all the hatred he may have felt for the blind man, Lazarillo still held some affection for him.

By the end of the book, Lazarillo only cares about keeping the appearance of a noble person. He saves enough money to buy himself good clothes and a well-made sword, even leaving his job as a water seller, seeing himself to be too good for a job like that. On an interesting note, the squire is not the only person of reproach in his city of Toledo. While Lazarillo is healing from the accidental beating of *tratado* two, he is well cared for by his neighbors, but as soon as his wounds heals, they kick him to the curb and tell him to find a new master. The city of Toledo as well disobeys divine command in neglecting the poor and the

foreigner, mostly Jews, ordering that they leave the city in a time of food shortage.[56] This makes Lazarillo fearful of being banished himself, and results in his abstaining from going out to beg. We also see a duality in this chapter when it comes to femininity, as it was customary for the women of Toledo to go out and try to get food from men by flirting. There is one scene in this chapter in which two women are flirting with the squire, and these flirtations promptly end upon them finding him without money. At the same time, it is female neighbors that vouch for Lazarillo when the rent collectors come.

These three masters, the greedy blind man, the miserly and wicked priest, and the honor-less man of honor, are all recognizable cultural types, while at the same time representing their various factions at their lowest and most demonic points (Dunn 29). The blind man represents the common everyday person suffering in poverty, and while physically blind, Lazarillo's master is not blind to the brutal realism of poverty, and knows how to make his way. To him, despite being blind, it is everyone else who is blinded by the idea of morality, while the blind man has foregone any notions of it, being unable to reconcile the Church-taught morality with the way to escape poverty. Why bother with doing things the right way if one simply ends up where one began? The priest is obviously the representative of the clergy, blind to his hypocrisy and his failure to uphold his vows. One could say that in this world devoid of morality, the priest, and priests in general, are both smart and fools. He has achieved a comfortable life and security, but at the cost of his ability to marry and have sexual relations. Although this book is devoid of any

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[56] "You shall not oppress a stranger nor torment him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21).

explicit sexuality, it is still a force in late-Medieval life.[57] The squire is the figure of the nobility, on the surface elegant and proper, one who has inherited a "*noble estado,*" but internally is anything but this. He is without honor, and just as immoral as one would believe a commoner to be, further illustrating Lazarillo's moral attitude against judgment and like criticisms of the vain, which creates a meaningless distinction between noble and commoner.

The *buldero*, whom we already know to be corrupt and malevolent from the first thing that Lazarillo says about him, is another master who focuses only on appearance. He is a person who does his work not out of care for the salvation of souls, but for monetary gain, pleasing and fooling the crowd into giving him money in exchange for the promise of salvation. The stories that we hear from the narrator are only a few of many, as others are too long to recount. At this point in the narrator's statement, it can be assumed that he is tired of writing, since he would have had the space to write an extensive story about the *buldero*. He has already done that with the accounts of the first three masters, so it is possible that at this point the author knows that he is reaching the end of his writing and does not deem a longer story necessary, and focusing on his story communicating his desires effectively.[58] In the main story that we receive, the indulgence seller is found in a tavern playing cards with a bailiff. They argue, and the bailiff accuses the seller of selling worthless sheets of paper. The next day in church, the bailiff comes in while the *buldero* is selling and repeats his claim, when the seller, "… with his hands in the air and looking towards the sky, said this: Lord God, to whom nothing is hidden, but rather manifest,

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[57] This only appears to be on the surface, since the idea of the lustful priest, although not the priest of *tratado* two, was certainly not lacking in Medieval life and literature, such as we find with the priest of the last *tratado*.

[58] "I will tell a very subtle and skillful one [a story], by which I will prove its sufficiency" ["Diré uno muy sutil y donoso, con el cual probaré bien su suficiencia"] (603).

and to whom nothing is impossible, but rather possible: you know the truth and how unjustly I am affronted" ["puestas las manos y mirando al cielo, dijo así: Señor Dios, a quien ninguna cosa es escondida, antes todas manifiestas, y a quien nada es imposible, antes todo posible: tú sabes la verdad y cuán injustamente yo so afrentado"] (605). He then asks God to judge divinely between the two of them. If the seller is indeed wrong, then "may this pulpit sink along with me and put me seven leagues under the ground" ["este púlpito se hunda comigo y meta siete estados debajo de tierra"] (605). If the bailiff is wrong, let him be punished because he is obviously possessed. As soon as he says this, the bailiff falls and begins to exhibit symptoms of possession. He "began to roar and froth at the mouth and twist and to make grimaces with his movements, kicking and punching, rolling around from one side of the floor to the other" ["comenzó a bramar y echar espumajos por la boca y torcella y hacer visajes con el gesto, dando de pie y de mano, revolviéndose por aquel suelo a una parte a otra"] (606). While all of this is going on, Lazarillo's master is simply on his knees praying, paying no mind to the scene, and, as the narrator says, is engulfed in "the divine essence" ["la divina esencia"]. He then ejects the demon and they end up selling so many indulgences that nobody left the church without one. Lazarillo himself during this event is passive; he says and does nothing, but simply admits to being tricked for a second, along with everyone else, before realizing the truth later on. The point of interest with the *buldero* is that he is successful in his scheme. It appears that Lazarillo's worldview is correct: the one who does evil gains success and riches while the good struggle for nothing. Where is justice to be found? While some would say in the Divine, this event, and other prior experiences for Lazarillo, would make him doubt that idea.

From this moment until the end of the book, one might question, “Who is the greatest sinner of all?” While it boils down to a simple matter of opinion, maybe it is his mother, for abandoning Lazarillo in the first place. One could also say that the blind man is the greatest of them all. He was the first to corrupt Lazarillo and caused him to commit arguably his greatest physical sin: attempted murder. It could as well be the priest, who gave Lazarillo firsthand knowledge of greed and starvation, while destroying his ideal of the clergy. It could likewise be the squire, who broke his trust and honor. Or perhaps the friar, who could have shown Lazarillo the world of sexuality for the first time. Quite possibly it is the *buldero*, who showed Lazarillo that making money illegitimately is perfectly fine and easy to get away with. There is little to suggest that it could be the painter of tambourines of the sixth *tratado*, with whom Lazarillo suffers “a thousand evils” [“mil males”] (611). The greatest sinner could be the seemingly well-intentioned archpriest, who again, is not as he seems, not-so secretly having sexual relations with Lázaro's wife. When Lázaro brings up the rumors of such relations to his wife, she begins to cry, curse at him, and yell so much that Lázaro comically wishes that he were dead.[59] Finally, it could also be that the greatest sinner of all is our protagonist himself, Lázaro, who is built up by all of these people who have come and gone into his life before we reach the end of the novel.

By the end of our story, Lázaro feels like an entirely new character. We have seen him progress from the dredges of having nothing to now being the town crier of Toledo, but at the cost of his pride, his honor, and his morals. On the surface things seem perfect. No wine is sold in the town without Lázaro knowing it, and according to him, he is in “prosperity and in the height of every good fortune” ["prosperidad y en la cumbre de toda buena fortuna"]. He also

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[59] This is a sharp reminder of *tratado* three when he was so uncomfortable that “I requested death from God many times” [“Pedí a Dios muchas veces la muerte”] (590).

holds a civil service, which Lázaro see as the greatest of all jobs, as "there is no one who matters, but those who have it" ["no hay nada que medre, sino los que le tienen"] (614; 612). In reality, however, the town crier is one of the lowest jobs that one could have, which begs an important question: "Was it worth it for Lázaro to attain his relative fortune via losing his values?"[60] Just like his mother, Lazarillo has determined to "surround himself with good people" ["arrimarse a los buenos"] (560). He shows his first signs of reaching comfort when he buys his own clothes and a sword, just like the squire, already having refuted the idea of honor.[61] Previously, Lazarillo had thought himself better than the hypocrites, not knowing that that which he swore to have pity for, he became himself.[62] He has lost this honor by learning from the example of the squire, by leaving his job as a bailiff due to the danger, by consenting to the schemes of the *buldero*, by helping to hang a petty thief one day (no doubt reminding him of his fathers), and by accepting his role as a cuckold. Lázaro has become someone who puts in enough effort to look formal externally, but does not put in the internal effort to advance. He is thinking that he has reached the summit of all he can do, and that it is only the outside appearance that matters. Now, he is like the blind man, although not being blind in terms of physicality or his job, but rather by having used the tricks and skills to survive taught to him by the *ciego*, and being willfully and

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[60] "For what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world, but forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

[61] "O Lord, and how many of these must you have poured out for the world, who suffer for the blackness they call honor, what they will not suffer for you" ["Oh señor, y cuántos de estos debéis vos tener por el mundo derramados, que padecen por la negra que llaman honra, lo que por vos no sufrirán"] (591).

[62] "God is my witness today that, when I run into someone of his dress with that gait and pomp, I have pity on him with regret if he suffers that which I saw that one suffer" ["Dios es testigo que hoy día, cuando topo con alguno de su hábito con aquel paso y pompa, le he lástima con pesar si padece lo que aquél le vi sufrir"] (595).

knowingly blind to his wife's relationship with the archpriest.[63] Since he knows about the relationship and even gains from it, as Mancing says, this actually makes Lázaro a pimp rather than the deceived husband, especially since Lázaro married out of selfishness, for security, rather than for love (430). Despite this, he still recognizes the impact that these rumors have on his reputation, and it seems that he knows deep inside that they are true, as the foreshadowing once predicted to him by the *ciego* echoes in his mind. And here we actually see Lázaro have a moment of introspection. Frequently throughout the novel, Lazarillo does not seem to think twice about his actions. He says, "This is what I want or need. This is how I go and get it," with no regard for the consequences or for his soul. He just wants to rest, content in the little slice of prosperity that he owns. In the end, the question of "Who is the greatest sinner?" really does not matter. All of the masters, being corrupt in themselves, all work to slowly corrupt Lazarillo, and all of the characters, including Lazarillo himself, end up being, "blind guides of blind people" (Matthew 15:14).

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[63] "So much so that, in all the city, if anyone is offering wine to be sold, if Lázaro de Tormes has not heard of it, they recognize that they will not make a profit" ["Tanto que, en toda la ciudad, el que ha de echar vino a vender, si Lázaro de Tormes no entiende en ello, hacen cuenta de no sacar provecho"] (612).

Chapter 7 - Death and Sin in *Le Testament*

While François Villon does touch on the concept of sin multiple times, especially his own, he focuses more extensively on the topic of death. Unlike Lazarillo, who always seeks to outrun death, Villon knows that it is coming soon, that he is the first person on death's list, and therefore, he only seeks to set his things in order and seek forgiveness.[64] It seems to be no surprise that such a thing occurs, as by the time Villon is born, the Black Death has taken its toll, the Hundred Year's War is still raging, and famine still lingers all around Paris, so Villon was in a sense born into a world of death. Near the beginning of his work, he claims to be close to death; he feels weak and claims to have more goods than health, an ironic statement since in a literal sense, he has no goods. If he has less health than goods, and he has no goods, how sick is he? Most likely he is sick enough that he feels close to death. He makes no effort to hide his own sin, yet looks to the hope and mercy of God that he will be saved, and he does not fear death at first. It is not death itself that he fears because he regards death as just a natural process of life that we have to accept, yet he still laments it. He still wants to flee it, however, because it is what comes after death that he bemoans and worries about, because with the current state of his soul, he would be going to hell. He even remarks that should his death serve some sort of use, he would be the first to condemn himself: "If, by my death, the public good / by any chance would be worth more, by dying like a sinful man / I would judge myself, may God do so with me" ["Se, pour ma mort, le bien publique / D'aucunce chose vausît mieux, A mourir comme un homme iniqeue / Je me jugeasse, ainsi m'est Dieus"] (Villon 60).

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[64] Villon saw his earthly time as ending when he reached thirty, although it is unclear if he meant this as being due to natural causes, or that the practices of his life would finally catch up with him.

Villon then moves into what is most likely the most famous and recognized part of his poetry. Between stanzas 22 and 80, where he starts the actual will, Villon speaks at length about the subjects of death, time, love, and the fleeting attributes of life; these verses compose the majority of his work on the subject. Despite only being thirty at the time of its writing, Villon sounds like a man of eighty, as he cries over the fact that time has flown.[65] He does not know how he ended up where he is, nor where to go from here. It has all gone by in the blink of an eye, leaving Villon longing for the good and the bad of his past. How, exactly, has his youth gone? And how close to death is he really? Of this we cannot be too sure. It is possible that these are the thoughts he had while in prison and felt them too impactful to go unwritten for the rest of time. This seems more likely than being his thoughts when he left prison, since his complaints over the fleetingness of time and the fact that all of his friends have died seem like the last thoughts of a man awaiting execution, rather than one who has just been spared the gallows. This man, however, does not exactly fear death, as “Death finishes everything” [“la mort tout s’assouvit”], nor does he pretend to actually know what happens afterwards, not daring to touch the subject: “I remit it to the theologians” [aux théologiens le remets] (Villon 64; 67). In fact, Villon seems to welcome it at this point, because of the finality that appears in death, and that it brings an end to one’s earthly troubles. This, however, does not stop him from lamenting over the friends that he has lost on the road to get to where he is:

> Where are the gracious brave men
>
> Who I followed from olden days,
>
> So well singing, so well speaking,

[65] “Suddenly it is gone / and has not left me a gift” [“Soudainement s’ent est volé / Et ne m’a laissé quelque don”] (Villon 62).

So pleasant in deeds and in words?

The others are dead and stiff,

From them there is now nothing more

May they have rest in paradise,

And God save the rest! (Villon 64)[66]

Here Villon starts to utilize the classic Medieval motif of *Ubi sunt?* The question "Where are they?" in latin, is a theme used mostly in works written at the height of the plague, from which people would drop dead on left and on right. Where are all of Villon's friends? Most of them are dead, and like him, there is not enough left to feed the worms. Are they dead from plague, war, or simply the criminal life? This remains unknown. Most have made out better, however, as some are "grand lords and masters" ["grands seigneurs et maîtres"], and others, while being spared death, are either in the monastery, giving their lives over to God, or are left begging and naked.[67] And while the first option may be better, Villon rejects this idea: "To have been a lord! What do I say? / A lord, no! Is there nothing more?" ["Qu'avoir été seigneur! Que dis? / Seigneur, laisse! Ne l'est-il mais?"] (Villon 65; 67). What is the point of attaining greatness and having a kingdom, if it all passes beyond you when you die? What is the point if we lose everything that we work for? Villon, sounding like the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, is giving an insight into not only the purpose of life, but the shared human spirit. Many of Villon's friends and people in his life have ended up in different places: some were great, some were not

[66] "Où sont les gracieux galants / Que je suivoie ou temps jadis, / Si bien chantant, si bien parlant, / Si plaisants en faits et en dits? / Les aucuns sont morts et roidis, / D'eux n'est-il plus rien maintenant: / Répit ils aient en paradis, / Et Dieu sauve le remenant!"

[67] As to which of Villon's friends actually achieved moving into the noble class, we do not know, as it is unlikely that any of his closest actually did. While he could be referring to those to whom he was a colleague in the University, this line puts a shadow of doubt on the narrative voice of *Le Grand testament*.

so great, and some were even in the grave, and Villon has no clue whatsoever about how it happened.[68] He also shows the different ways in which people change over time and the different measures that people take to cope with and get through life. Villon's reflection is one that we all have when looking back on the past.

We all end up in the same place, whether we are "poor and rich / wise and fools, priests and laymen / nobles, villains… Death seizes without exception" ["pauvres et riches, / sages et fous, prêtres et lais, / nobles, vilains… Mort saisit sans exception"] (Villon 68). No matter what, no matter who you are, one day this life is going to end. Villon makes no attempt to hide this, and he recognizes that his father has died, his mother as well is on her way, and that one day he will die, too. At the end, when he sees the light come for him, and he thinks of everyone he knows piled up in a mass grave, he cannot notice any distinction between anybody. They are dead. There is no more rank or noble name in the land of the dead, and the only thing that Villon can do, as their bodies are rotting and their bones "fall to dust" ["déclinent en poudre"] is to pray for their absolution from Christ (Villon 145). What is even more grisly about this is that according to him, nobody wants to die: "Because no one has a child, brother or sister that would then want to be in their place" ["Car enfant n'a, frère ne sœur qui lors vousît être son pleige"] (Villon 68). This line stands out as he says that when the time comes, there is absolutely nobody that would rather take your place. While he says that no child or sibling would want to trade places with the dying, he does not mention parents or elders that would rather die for their child, so there seems

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[68] Dante starts off his magnum opus, *La Divina Commedia*, in a similar way, alone at an unknown place, in a midlife crisis, at the same age, unsure of the way he took to get here: "In the middle of our life / I found myself in a dark forest / that the right way was blocked / Ah to say how hard a thing it was / this wild rugged and strong forest / that the thought of which renews fear!" ["Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, / che la diritta via era smarrita. / Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura / esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte / che nel pensier rinova la paura!"] (1)

to be exceptions to his claim. And when death itself does strike, it is not pretty. It makes one tremble with fear, as one goes white and one's body decays. Even the feminine body, "tender, polite, soft, sweet, so precious" ["tendre, poli, souef, si précieux"] is no exception (Villon 68). And on the subject of woman, Villon reiterates *Ubi Sunt?* In arguably his most famous work, "the Ballad of the Ladies of Times Gone By" ["Ballade des dames du temps jadis"]:

> Tell me where, in which country
>
> Is Flora, the beautiful Roman;
>
> Archipiada, or Thaïs
>
> Who was her first cousin;
>
> Echo, speaking when one makes noise
>
> Over a river or on a pond,
>
> Who had a more than human beauty?
>
> Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear!
>
> Where is the very wise Héloïse,
>
> For whom was castrated, and then [made] a monk,
>
> Pierre Esbaillart in Saint-Denis?
>
> For his love he suffered this sentence.
>
> Similarly, where is the Queen
>
> Who ordered that Buridan
>
> Be thrown in a sack into the Seine?
>
> Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear!

The queen Blanche as a lily

Who sang with a Siren's voice;

Bertha of the Big Foot, Beatrix, Aelis;

Erembourge who ruled over the Maine,

And Joan, the good Lorraine

Whom the English burned in Rouen;

Where are they, sovereign Virgin?

Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear!

Prince, do not ask me this week

Where they are - or in this year,

Lest I bring you back to this refrain:

Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear! (Villon 69)[69]

Where are these famous figures, all women, historical and mythological, he asks the Virgin Mary. Where are they? Where have they gone? How have they died, especially when their memory is fresh in his mind? How has time flown by so quickly, that the snows of yesteryear have all gone? What does it matter that all of these woman were beautiful, or powerful, or legendary, when they are all gone and rendered unable to enjoy life any longer? It is not a question for Villon to answer, so the reader should not think except an answer from him, not in this year or the next. The only thing left is for him to look forward, not to ponder these deep

[69] For the original French, see Appendix 3.

questions about time, which flees like sand dropping from one's hand, and to not wonder where the snows of last year have gone.

This is not the last place in which Villon ponders the fate of the famous. His very next *ballade* is the lesser known version for famous males, mostly kings. Kings, Popes, famous lords, everyone who achieves high status, fame, and fortune end up in the same place that the poorest beggars do, since “as such the wind blows” ["autant en emport ly vens"] (Villon 73). And if the rich are not spared the cruel fate, if all the money in the world cannot stop one from dying, what does it mean for poor Villon? It means that he too cannot escape, and the worst part is that the path to death is just as cheerful and happy as death itself is. Old age robs a person, especially women, of the power of beauty, causing them to shrivel up and lose their hold over men. And because of this, and because of personal reasons,Villon says it is better not to have loved at all. Villon himself has been hurt by love, and ends up renouncing the entire idea of it whatsoever, in “fire and blood” ["à feu et à sang"] (Villon 89). According to him, it is the feminine nature to share a woman’s love, but for a man, love only ends up with “one hundred pains for one joy” ["pour une joie cent doulours"] (Villon 85).

While love may seem great, and is such a topic that Villon dedicates a double *ballade* to its dangerousness, nothing good comes from having loved. He cites figures like Solomon, Samson, Orpheus, and Sardana, all famous characters from religion and mythology, all men, just to show how dangerous he believes that women are. Even David, the legendary king who stayed ever pious and loyal to God, was led astray as soon as he saw a beautiful woman. His “… fear of God was forgotten, seeing well made breasts being washed” [“… crainte de Dieu en oublia, voyant laver cuisses bien faites”] (Villon 87). Villon puts himself as well in the standard of these

seemingly great men led astray and seduced by the feminine side; as if all these examples were not enough, he must add his own. This time he names his lover, Catherine de Vaucelles, giving a name to this concept of being cheated and ruined by a lover. While the reader may well understand the point that it is better not to have loved, that the way of steering clear is better, that "… well happy is he that has none" ["… bien heureux est qui rien n'y a!"], sometimes one only believes via a personal example (Villon 86). Villon has heard all of these examples before, and has learned the lesson, but he only really seems to put it in his heart when the same thing happens to him. And the result of this is that he utterly renounces love, not wanting for it to touch his fleeting life ever again, even going so far as to request that the fact be immortalized on his gravestone. He wants the world to know so badly that he has been tricked by love that it practically killed him: "That loved slayed him with its arrow" ["Qu'amour occit de son raillon"] (Villon 152). And if anyone questions his authority to think as such, he says that he is dying, and is therefore allowed to ramble on as he does, as "Whoever dies, he has the right to say all" ["Qui meurt, a ses lois de tout dire"] (Villon 90). Would anyone dare to deny a dying man the right to speak as he wishes on his deathbed? Villon here thinks not.

Is Villon on his deathbed? Not really, whether this came from prison or not, as the idea of a deathbed really applies more to one sick in their bed, not one awaiting a hanging. Therefore, unless Villon is starved and provision-deprived in his cell, it makes little sense for him to say "I feel my heart weakening / and I can no longer write down" ["Je sens mon cœur qui s'affaiblit / et plus je ne puis papier"], as well as claiming to be so weak that it is his lawyer who must write his will instead of him, copying down all that he says (Villon 92). The joys in his life have all gone. Love has been ripped from him and left him eternally mistrusting. For school, he is too far gone

to return; no school will ever accept him again. The ill-gotten gains that he and his friends acquired from crime and tricks have all gone “to taverns and to girls” [“aux tavernes et aux filles”], a waste, as what is the point of earning money, especially in an illegal and immoral way, if it ends up squandered? (Villon 142). Villon is telling us that we have to examine how we make our gains in life, and we must question our motives and our means of living, especially since the poem in which this refrain is found is directed to those of the “bad life” ["mauvaise vie"].

It can be here that the narrative voice and the real Villon separate, as he fantasizes writing his extensive will and giving out so many things to so many people, but in reality he is just a poor criminal, one who had potential, but then turned to the life of crime, booze, and sex. This is what Villon’s main sin is. It is not like Lazarillo, who gives up his morals for a decent life, with no regret. Villon’s sin is not recognizing the seriousness of life until the very end, taking life as a game. His incessant preoccupation with death and fear of its arrival is ever so prominent, yet at the same time his Paris of the taverns and the girls is one “bursting with vitality and enjoying unashamed gusto all the pleasures of the flesh” (Anacker 24). He sheds the ambition of the life of higher study for one of the “lower” things in life. He insults his enemies, and wishes that “… the dull tongues be fried” [“… soient frites ces langues ennuyeuses”] (Villon 126). Yet, at the same time, he recognizes at the end of *Le Grand testament*, that these things really have no meaning. All of our pleasures eventually end, so what is the good of them?: “All such pleasures fail / and blame still remains” [“Toutes faillent telles plaisances / et la coulpe si en demeure”] (Villon 144). Everyone, no matter what, ends up in the grave. And because of this, Villon writes to his earthly mother that his ultimate desire is the salvation of his soul, and the last request that he makes is directed towards everyone, asking for their mercy. The poetic voice, speaking in place of the

soul, gives itself up to Christ, and says that "I am his" ["je suis sienne"] (Villon 97). And here we see a recognition of one's downfalls and sins, and a regret that is not very well seen in the *Lazarillo*. Finally, with regard to Villon's poetry and the subject of death, there is one main lesson that he wants us to draw: it is inevitable; there is no escape: and since one day we are all going to die, we must find the right way to live.

Conclusion - Why Does It Matter? The Lessons to Take

It can be said that one of the most useful things to learn in life is that there can be a lesson taken from practically everything. Wisdom and discernment are virtues in almost every major world religion, and for many, that is acquired by taking what one sees throughout the day and applying it to their own lives in order to become a better person. So what do we take from these works? Life at times can be utterly ridiculous. Things either good or bad can fall upon us at any moment in our lives, and most things in reality are out of our control, so we must learn to cope with them. Lazarillo makes use of the skills that he has in order to survive and for better or for worse, does not try to look back. Villon wallows in his pain and suffering, yet finds the time to make it the butt of his jokes.

We see in these works shifts in thinking that can be seen throughout the history of the period into which they fall. In both we see the move from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church to the Reformation ideals of a personal spirituality centered around the individual. Writing itself becomes more individualistic; while writing in which an author not only names himself but talks about himself was indeed common before, these two works are following the same example and pushing the trend forward, resulting in the changes in thought that highlight the decades and centuries following. For better or for worse, we also see through these works and those of Montaigne the beginnings of relativistic thought. Furthermore, Villon is right, we all die. There is no way out of it, it may be the universal unifying fact of human life, that it ends, and by accepting the fact of death, we can better learn to focus on our lives.

In the movie *Midnight in Paris*, a writer is magically taken back in time to the City of Lights during the 1920s. He is asked by Ernest Hemingway, “Are you afraid of dying?” Of

course, responds the protagonist, to which Hemingway replies, “Why? Every man who came before you has done it and every man who comes after you is going to.” This is a hard lesson to learn. It is harsh. But at the same time, there is nothing we can do to change it. But once we accept this, we can look with appreciation on what we do have and learn to love the beauty and simplicity that life can hold. If life were permanent, it might be rather boring.

The centuries of Villon and the *Lazarillo* are so different than the ones that came before, and the world was truly different after them. These texts are rejections of the Old World, and there cannot be a new world without some sort of change and rejection of what came before. It is out of a desire for something new, and a dissatisfaction for what is right now, that propels the genius in humanity, and makes us strive for what should be, instead of complacency with what is. The darkness and depravity seen in the *Lazarillo* and Villon were essential in order to find and build up the beauty of the Renaissance. Some had to reach the lowest and darkest aspects of humanity in order to strive for its summit. And when we take the darkness of the past to see the light that followed, it is possible that we can identify the darkness in our own time, and look ahead to the light that will surely follow.

Appendix 1: Short Summary of *Lazarillo de Tormes*

Prologue: The author explains his motives, which is writing for fame and revealing the truth no matter how dirty it is, as well as the distinction between the poor and rich, how the rich fail to notice or care about the struggles the poor go through simply to survive.

Tratado (Treatise) 1: Lazarillo recounts his family life and childhood, the poverty they endured, and how his mother have him away to a blind man. Out of need, Lazarillo frequently steals from him, and is almost killed by him. Lazarillo ends us tricking, leaving, and most likely killing the blind man, leaving his fate unknown.

Tratado 2: Lazarillo comes across a priest, who takes him in, but practically starves him. After a while he starts to steal from the priest's chest, resulting in him being found out, beaten, and evicted.

Tratado 3: Lazarillo is taken in by a squire, and lives in an empty house with little furniture or food. The squire is just as desperate for food as Lazarillo, and Lazarillo is forced to beg. The squire holds honor and social rank in high esteem, wearing nice clothes and carrying an exquisite sword. By the end of the chapter, the owner of the house comes to collect rent and the squire flees leaving Lazarillo behind.

Tratado 4: The fourth master is a friar, who is anything but a good example of one. Lazarillo cannot put up with him for long, despite getting his first pair of shoes from him. This short chapter of four sentences abstains from giving too much detail, and Lazarillo is again left to find another master.

Tratado 5: Lazarillo's fifth master is a *buldero*, a person who sells indulgences. This man is as greedy as the priest and "… the greatest proponent of them that I have ever seen or hope to

see" (… el mayor echador de ellas que jamás yo vi ni ver espero). This chapter is less about Lazarillo's relationship with the master, and an isolated experience in which Lazarillo recounts an occurrence that demonstrates this greed. The indulgence seller argues with a constable one night over the legitimacy of his indulgences. The next day in church, the constable reiterates his belief of the seller's faulty indulgences, and ends up seemingly possessed by a demon. During this the *buldero* is calm, pious, and exorcises the demon, selling more indulgences than ever in the aftermath. Lazarillo later sees the two enemies laughing, realizing the con.

Tratado 6: Lazarillo works under a painter, but suffers again, only affording him one sentence. He then works for a chaplain for four years, and Lazarillo grows financially for the first time.

Tratado 7: In the last chapter Lazarillo starts by working with a constable, but flees one night after seeing the danger they face. He then works as a town crier, finding a wife, the marriage arranged by the archpriest of San Salvador. Despite the ending implying that his wife and the archpriest are having an affair, Lazarillo is content with the life and status that he has found.

Appendix 2: Timeline of Medieval History and the Life of François Villon

24 May 1337 - Beginning of the Hundred Year's War

c. November 1347 - The Black Death arrives in France ten years into the Hundred Years War, eventually killing almost half of Europe and claiming around 200 million lives, including 50% of the population of Paris.

6 January c. 1412 - Birth of Joan of Arc

25 October 1415 - Battle of Agincourt - Major loss for the French in the Hundred Year's War

c. 1430 - François Villon born as François de Montcorbier

30 May 1431 - Joan of Arc burned at the stake for charges of heresy, witchcraft, and cross-dressing. In November of the same year England's Henry VI declares himself king of France.

1436 - Paris is reclaimed by the armies of Charles VII, the English withdraw from France.

c. 1440 - Johannes Gutenberg invents the printing press, Lorenzo Valla uses textual criticism to expose the forgery of the *Donation of Constantine.*

c. 1443 - Villon enters the University of Paris Faculty of Arts.

1449 - Villon earns a bachelor's degree at the University of Paris.

1452 - Villon earns his master's degree.

19 October 1453 - End of the Hundred Year's War (116 years, 4 months, 3 weeks and 4 days), leading to greater economic prospects in both countries and establishing a greater demand for trade.

1453 - The Ottoman Empire conquers Constantinople, establishing itself as a major political and economic force in eastern Europe.

5 June 1455 - Villon kills a priest in a fight, and goes on the run, leaving Paris.

January 1456 - Villon petitions the king and receives a pardon, the same year releasing *Le Petit testament.*

1461 - Villon can be found in the prison of Meung-sur-Loire, writing *Le Grand testament* upon his release. Charles VII dies and is succeeded by his son Louis XI.

1462 - Villon returns to Paris and in November is jailed on charges of robbery, freed, then involved in a scuffle.

3 January 1463 - Villon's death sentence is commuted to 10 years banishment.

5 January 1463 - Villon banished and never heard from again, lost to history.

1469 - Marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella "Los Reyes Católicos."

1478 - Beginning of the Spanish Inquisition.

1488 - Bartolomeu Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope.

1492 - The end of the *Reconquista*, Columbus's first voyage, Antonio de Nebrija releases the first structured grammar book of the Spanish language. All Jews are expelled from Spain under threat of conversion.

1511 - *In Praise of Folly* - Erasmus.

1513 - *The Prince* - Niccolò Machiavelli

1516 - Ascension of Charles V in Spain, and Erasmus's release of the first modern version of the New Testament.

1517 - Martin Luther nails the 95 Theses to the door of Wittenberg Castle.

1530 - Charles V becomes Holy Roman Emperor.

1543 - *Revolutions of Celestial Orbits* - Nicolaus Copernicus.

1544 - *Lazarillo de Tormes* is released in Alcalá de Henares, Antwerp, and Burgos.

1545 - Beginning of the Council of Trent.

1580 - *Essais* - Michel de Montaigne

1605 - *Don Quixote* - Miguel de Cervantes

Appendix 3: “La Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis”

Dites-moi où, n’en quel pays

Est Flora la belle Romaine,

Archipiades ne Thaïs

Qui fut sa cousine germaine,

Écho, parlant quand bruit on mène

Dessus rivière ou sur étang,

Qui beauté ot trop plus qu’humaine?

Mais où sont les neiges d’antan?

Où est la très sage Héloïs,

Pour qui fut châtré et puis moine

Pierre Esbaillart à Saint-Denis?

Pour son amour ot cette essoine.

Semblablement, où est la roine

Qui commanda que Buridan

Fût jeté en un sac en Seine?

Mais où sont les neiges d’antan?

La reine Blanche comme un lis

Qui changoit, à voix de seraine,

Berthe au plat pied, Bietrix, Aliz,

Haramburgis qui tint le Maine,

Et Jeanne, la bonne Lorraine

Qu’Anglois brûlèrent à Rouen,

Où sont-ils, où Vierge souvraine?

Mais où sont les neiges d’antan?

Prince n’enquerrez de semaine

Où elles sont, ne de cet an,

Qu’à ce refrain ne vous remaine:

Mais où sont les neiges d’antan?

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