

The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes (Nyrb Classics)



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Spain has produced two books that changed world literature: *Don Quixote* and *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the first picaresque novel ever written and the inspired precursor to works as various as *Vanity Fair* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Banned by the Spanish Inquisition after publication in 1554, Lazarillo was soon translated throughout Europe, where it was widely copied. The book is a favorite to this day for its vigorous colloquial style and the earthy realism with which it exposes human hypocrisy.

The bastard son of a prostitute, Lazarillo goes to work for a blind beggar, who beats and starves him, while teaching him some very useful dirty tricks. The boy then drifts in and out of the service of a succession of masters, each vividly sketched and together revealing the corrupt world of imperial Spain. Its miseries are made all the more apparent by the candor and surprising good cheer with which young Lazarillo recounts his ever more curious fate.

This version of Lazarillo, by the prizewinning poet and translator W.S. Merwin, brings out the wonderful vitality and humor of this universal masterwork.

The author of Lazarillo de Tormes is unknown.

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