

Germán De Patricio. Dissertation proposal in English (October 2009)

Title: “Public Image, Religion and Politics: Symbolic Capital and Anti-Semitism in Quevedo”.

Francisco de Quevedo represents, together with Cervantes, the peak of Spain’s literary Golden Age in the seventeenth century. His serious works are marked by crisis, in its very etymological sense. In Greek, crisis meant to separate, distinguish, or differentiate. The public vindication of separating stages of life is an obsession for Quevedo. He devotes great effort to separating his young self from his mature self, the playful from the serious, jokes from grave subjects. His mature works proclaim intimate projects of self-transformation, especially the negation of former stages of his life. I intend to prove that this obsession generates texts that have specific social functions. Through his writing Quevedo seeks to display his cultural capital—his knowledge, prestige, and competence—to powerful figures in the court of Philip IV and to distance himself from the scurrilous reputation of his youth.

My plan is to analyze key religious and political works by Quevedo in the light of theoretical models of interauthoriality and sociocultural hermeneutics derived from the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. These theories are especially fruitful in the case of Quevedo, an author whose texts show a dense interaction between the political and the literary fields. Interauthoriality is the social, intrahistorical, and textual interaction of a group of writers around specific social and literary practices and institutions. Cultural capital is the complex of knowledge, experience, and connections that allows an agent to succeed over the other agents of his habitus. Even though Bourdieu modified concepts throughout 1980s and 1990s, for him capital always functions as a social relation within a system of exchanges, where all material and symbolic goods that are produced as exceptional or rare are worth achieving in a specific social formation. Thus, cultural capital functions as status-granting knowledge and serves as a tool for acquiring power in both the literary and political fields. A fundamental concept for Bourdieu is distinction, the exchange or ostentation of symbolic goods, especially those considered attributes of excellence. This excellence is the ideal weapon in the strategies of distinction.

Chapter 1: “The Religious Text and the Voice of Repentance in *Heráclito cristiano*.” This is Quevedo’s first effort to neutralize his young image as an obscene, satirical wit. That he was promoted to an important political office immediately after making this work public indicates that his strategy was successful.

Chapter 2: “Hagiography, Distinction, and Symbolic Capital.” The *Epítome*, a hagiographic narrative of the life of Saint Tomas Vilanova, is used as a weapon to attack the political power of the king and his prime minister. The risks that he takes when boasting about his political independence is also part of his ostentation

Chapter 3: “Distinction and Political Theory.” This chapter analyzes the relation of intellectuals and power in *Cómo ha de ser el privado*, and examines how Quevedo uses a play as a handbook for developing his political theories on the correct behavior for a prime minister.

Chapter 4: “Religion, Political Theory, and Symbolic Violence in Antisemitic works, especially satires and *Execración de los judíos*.” All three agendas are combined in this text, written for the king, where Quevedo proposes violent measures against Jews in Spain.

Chapter 5: “Quevedo’s Public Image.” This chapter analyzes Quevedo’s reception in the literary canon and the manipulation of Quevedo as historical character.

**Conclusion.** Quevedo is a fascinating, controversial writer. He gave many of his works an eminently instrumental nature, and later he and his works were manipulated, too. He created a public image and then tried to neutralize it, but it outlived him. I would like my project to be a contribution, using the theory of cultural sociology, to the study of Quevedo’s instrumentalization and public image, and to the study of political manipulation of art and religion in general.