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“Hagiographic Reformulation, *Distinction* and *Symbolic Capital* in Francisco de Quevedo: the *Epítome* of Saint Thomas of Villanova”. Dr. Germán de Patricio. Towson University.

After 7 years working as Secretary of the Spanish Viceroy in Italy, Francisco de Quevedo returned to Spain in 1620. Because his prestige as a politician was added now to his reputation as a writer, Augustines asked him to write a brief hagiography (*Epítome* of Tomás de Villanueva). This work was supposed to summarize the life of Tomás García Martínez (†1555), who was renamed Tomás de Villanueva after the town in La Mancha where he grew up. Saint Thomas of Villanova was beatified in 1618, and sanctified in 1658. The *Epítome* is printed between these two dates as part of the effort to convince the Roman Catholic Church of the holiness of a man who had been archbishop of Valencia.

However, this is only the theory. In practice, the text becomes in Quevedo’s hands a tool to attack his enemies, to display Symbolic Capital and to stand out in political terms showing his independence and his agenda for an ethical regeneration of the Government. His serious public discourse in opposition to his burlesque texts initiated with *Heráclito cristiano* 7 years before is here reinforced and smoothes the path for him towards his future role in the national Government. I intend to propose that, in the light of theoretical models of Cultural Sociology derived from the works of Pierre Bourdieu, they act as a display of *distinction* and ostentation of his Symbolic Capital within the fields of literature and political power.

The three elements of this essay are: a context of textual reception that reveals political connections between Quevedo and Tomás; a reformulation of pagan classical topics into new Christian ones that serve as ostentation of symbolic capital within the literary field; and Quevedo’s *distinction* as an ostentation of symbolic independence within the political field. The first element may disclose the link between the author and his character; the second one may define the rethorical updating of classical contents as humanistic reformulation; and the third one may display his obsession for showing off political independence (he dares to offer his own Spanish translations of the Bible –which was absolutely forbidden by Inquisition in 1559, and a devastating attack against the ruling classes). My goal is to expose that the social and political questions from this work emphasize how those characteristics of *distinction* that were already present in *Heráclito Cristiano* not only survive here, but even increase.

The context of the reception of our text and its symbolic content has drastically changed from the 17th century because today S Thomas of Villanova is not a well-known saint for the general public. He really was very popular between 1550 and 1900, though. In Colombia a town was founded in his honor, and in Havana existed the Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva, which later became the University of Saint Thomas in Florida. Churches under his name were built in Castellón and Ávila, and the Church of Santo Thomas de Vallaneuva in the Philipines is today declared as World Heritage. His best contribution in the Americas is that he sent the first Spanish teachers to the New World, and he inspired the birth of Villanova University in Pennsylvania. Villanova was Villanueva in Latin, and that is also the way he used to sign his letters: Fray Thomas de Villanova. Therefore, in spite of his current invisibility, he was a very influential character for 3 centuries. It seems significant then that Quevedo choses to show himself by his side, for there were several characteristics of Tomás that might have deeply appealed to him and that he would have happily been identified with: his “apostolic freedom” (Q’s ironic phrasing for independence, similar to Teresa of Ávila’s “holy disobedience”), his political responsibilities under the Emperor Charles, his attacks against the *alumbrados*, and his courage when dealing with the powerful. From a comercial perspective, the *Epítome* enjoyed great success. They printed 1200 copies and had to print it again in 1627. It competed in the editorial market with the *Libro de Santo Tomás* by converso theologian Miguel Salón [living-room, Salom or Shalom]. Later on, Salón’s work became the biographical text of reference for Augustines [also significant, after they had asked Quevedo to write it, which means they were not happy], was reprinted four times in the 17th and 18th centuries, and in 1925 for the last time. Then Salón dissapears and Quevedo wins again, edited in 1955 and in 2005 by Rafael Lazcano. In 2007 Villanova U paid homage to this hagiography of their patron and announced it with these words: “Our Library celebrated Hispanic Cultural Heritage with presentations on the *Epítome*, a short biography of St. Thomas written by the 17th century humanist F de Quevedo. Quevedo was well-known in the humanist circles of Europe, thanks to his widely circulated works. Printed in octavo format, the *Epítome*, pocket-sized and relatively inexpensive, became a favorite of contemporary readers. Of the 1200 printed copies only 3 survive to

this day”. There are 3 models of reception and production in our theoretical approach: one is directed towards patronage and sponsorship; another towards entertainment and editorial markets; the last one is based on *distinction* and is designed to increase the author’s symbolic status within the internal hierarchy of his field. Quevedo’s work combines several models: he uses the text as a political weapon to attack the Government and other powerful rulers of his time; it increases his symbolic status as Christian updater of classical heritage or as Biblical translator with serious and moralist voice (this way stabilizing the shift of his public image that he started with HC) and at the same time he starts an operation of editorial market strategy that reaffirms the consolidation of the literary field and the unstoppable process of profesionalization of writers in Spain. Q was very fond of Tomás; he praises him and quotes him in many works, suggesting intersections in their lives, actions and opinions (he called him “santo español y buen español”). S F Mosquera believes that Q “makes use of his sermons, and agrees with them ideologically”. Many critics have commented upon the biographic reflection between Q and his works on lives of heroes or saints. Riandiere La Roche defined this as “effet d’autobiographie”. Ettinghausen says Q looked “infected” by the virtues of the saints and heroes he wrote about.

This characteristic is common to the rest of Quevedo’s religious works. It is plainly evident that *Job’s Patience* includes many deliberate parallels between the situation of the Biblical Job and that of Quevedo, who was imprisoned while he wrote it. The invasion from his own personal interests modifies the nature of both the hagiographic text and the genre. F. Mosquera calls this “a skillful and biased mix of comments on the saint and references to his own personal situation”. It is hard to oppose this opinion when we read Quevedo’s words on Job (remember he was in prison): “the unlucky man who visits a friend in jail is not afraid of that prison where his friend is, but of the obligation he has to get him out of there”. With the *life of Paul the Apostle* Quevedo makes his own personal use, too. The Italian editor of this work, Valentina Nider, reproaches Quevedo to use this material for “propaganda politica”. Self-biographic invasión is especially significant when Quevedo says to Paul: “since you are enjoying in aethernal glory the reward to your divine merits, turn your eyes to me, your worshipper, who after four years in prison and in chains, I wrote about your own chains and martyrdom”. His last hagiography on *father Mastrili* was never finished. He started to write it in jail for the jesuits who had educated him as a child, looking for their support with many letters in such a desperate moment of his life. According to F. Mosquera, “whenever he can, Quevedo links his serious voice to characters of great moral honesty or proven, undeniable exemplary nature. And *this* is one of the essential modifications that Quevedo inflicts to the hagiographic genre: the personal use of the exemplary life he’s talking about”. Since Quevedo seems to identify himself with (or take advantage of) the exemplary life of saints, it’s legitimate to suspect that he choses to write on Tomás because he feels some kind of affinity with him that he wants to show us. That invites us to find out what exactly was Tomás associated with, back in 1620, for the general public of that time. First, Tomás was a well-known enemy of *alumbrados*. *Alumbrados* were not an organized group, but articulated the religious insatisfaction that erupted all across Europe in the 1500s and gave birth to the Protestant Reform. Many *alumbrados* came from converso families, were inclined to less liturgy and more Bible and mental prayer rather than external Church practices. The double was danger for the Inquisition: the attempt to diminish the power of the Church and the jewish-converso-protestant element. They became manipulated by the most fanatic; as Alastair Hamilton says, “it was an ideal means of attacking men of converso origin, used as an accusation against courtiers and scholars who declared their admiration for Erasmus, and against Catholic reformers”.

Tomás wrote and preached very aggressively against them, especially in *Meditación y contemplación*, where he warns the *contemplativo* about the errors he may fall in by hand of the devil, errors that may lead him to heresy: “[meditation] has knocked many Catholics down, who have become perverts and heretics”. Quevedo was disgusted by the strongly popular, enthusiastic, lecherous and miracle-worker character of the last *alumbrados*. This repugnance may well reflect the anti-popular religiousness of a low-class aristocrat who desperately tries to hold public office. Tomás’ sermons and *conciones* are considered to be perfect examples of neo-platonic preaching art, which connects with Quevedo’s philosophical grounds of neo-platonic, neo-stoic and anti-heretical orthodoxy. Secondly, Tomás was very efficient. Salón explains that when Tomás arrived in Valencia, the city was a mess: many public divorces and adulteries, priests who lived with prostitutes, social riots, and

moriscos acting openly as muslims –and openly supporting the constant attacks of muslim pirates in the coast. Tomás reestablished order with efficiency, energy and eloquence, three virtues admired by Quevedo. Both shared the love for books, for the language (Tomás sent the first missionaries to America to teach Spanish). And in the third place, Tomás had guts. Quevedo praises his “apostolic freedom”: his capacity for rebellion, disguised under fear of God and certainty of doing the right thing. That’s why Tomás did dare to offend the Emperor, Phillip II, the Viceroy of Naples and others. After the English devastated the Balearic Islands, the Viceroy of Naples asked Tomás 20,000 ducados from his church. Quevedo says “our saint answered with *apostolic freedom* that God had made him responsible of Valencia, not the islands”. The Viceroy is angry and threatens him with telling the Emperor, and according to Quevedo, this is what Tomás answered: “I must warn His Excellency that I am still carrying with me the key of my cell in the monastery (and he showed him the key), and every day I am more and more willing to return”. His ability to challenge authority reminds us of Teresa of Avila and her “holy disobedience”. Alison Weber says Teresa was “a woman marked by a profound ambivalence to authority”. Ironically, the woman whose patronage Quevedo opposed with so much effort, shared with him and with Tomás many things. Weber says this about Teresa but could well apply to the three of them: she was good in “interpreting ambiguous situations in her favor and in seeking out an authority whose will coincided with her own”.

My second point is how Quevedo carries out here a Christian reformulation of rhetorical topics from classical philosophy and literature on three main subjects: human vanity, the inexorable passage of time, and the purpose of liberal arts. Vanity was a recurrent topic for Greeks and Romans, who considered it a foolish desire that death was to finish. Here is how Quevedo writes in the *Epitome*: “those who try to extend their lives beyond their graves with statues, buildings and stories, or try to fool death with these witty works, will be twice as unfortunate, for they will face a second death, which quickly and secretly the diligence of days and the revenge of time will bring for them”. This idea is corresponded in the Christian tradition with several reformulations, among which stands out the *Ecclesiastes*, a book of the Old Testament ascribed to King Salomon, who at the end of his days pronounced his famous sentence “vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Quevedo quotes the Holy Bible adding his own translation: “*Ecclesiastes* uses these words: “There are no memories of the first ones, and there will be no memories of those still to come at the end of times; oblivion is the night of vanity, end and punishment of the human madness”. Time had been considered merciless by classical authors. Q points out that time wipes all empires away and their memory is weak: if they are very recent, passion blurs objectivity; if they are very old, legitimate doubts arise about their authenticity. The Christian translation of this topic lies, according to Quevedo, in the New Testament: “the only memory that allows holy ambition is that one which the Book of Life gives to those who write their names on it.” This is a reference to the *Apocalypse* or Book of Revelation: “He that shall overcome shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (Apoc., 3:5). The third topic is the purpose of human writing. Quevedo says pretentious men hope that everything that has been written down achieves eternal memory. This connects with one of the conventions that Pragmatics assumes on literary texts: their atemporality or timelessness, which modifies the reception of all deictic references. An obvious example can be found in the verses of the sonnet “Retirado en la paz de estos desiertos” (“Withdrawn to the peace of this deserted place”), when he refers to his books by using this synesthesia: “I live in conversation with the dead / and I listen to the dead with my eyes” (vivo en conversación con los difuntos / y escucho con mis ojos a los muertos). Quevedo offers his Christian updating of this topic by affirming that the purpose of human writings must be moral exemplarity. This is a declaration of principles for the good hagiographer: “The intention of those who write lives of saints must be only the love to people who are alive, showing us, as a guide, habits and actions that can lead us on the right path. That way we help the saints to do good works even from their graves.”

My third point is how Quevedo shows off political independence in the *Epitome*. It must be noted that for him miracles don’t seem to be a priority. The little attention he pays to miracles connects this hagiography with the new models of sanctity that the Catholic Church in Rome was trying to achieve. Quevedo had just arrived from Italy after 7 years as a very dynamic politician and even as an ambassador at the Holy See. Giulio Sodano says that Trent broke with the medieval model of Christian saints because the Church wanted to substitute the *vox*

populi, vox Dei for one, exclusive official voice. It was a way to fight the critics of Protestants and reformers who considered that such abundance of local patrons and saints was a trace of polytheism. Protestant iconoclast made Rome more careful in terms of saints. Trent affirms that Jesus is the only possible redeemer, and that saints are simple intermediaries. What Rome wanted now was a virtuous behavior that the faithful could imitate, or in Sodano's words: "practice of heroic virtue became the condition for canonization". Miracles were especially dear for low classes, and Quevedo was not fond of either of the two; he shows more respect for Tomás' superhuman capacity for austerity, which is a model of sanctity dear for the jesuits who educated him. One highlight in the *Epitome* happens when a subordinate of Tomás commits some sins and, instead of punishing him, our saint decides to whip himself in front of the sinner, as having failed to guide him to the right path. Jodi Bilinkoff affirms that in this time the concept of male sanctity is modified this way, and Quevedo's view seems to join a new model of masculinity whose main features are self-control, ataraxia and neo-stoic austerity. Stressing Tomás' heroic virtues in spite of his miracles means referring to the most updated trends in Rome, so Quevedo is showing that his political knowledge is state of the art.

Readers and critics often admire Quevedo's courage when dealing with the rulers. It is then no wonder that he admired Tomás, who said things like this in his sermons: "people in trouble turn to spiritual advisers, but Oh my dear holy Church, *your guards are like locusts*: those who should feed the people are the ones who plunder them with taxes". Tomás' self-criticism could be harsh: "no wise pastors are appointed today, instead of teaching God's people; they prefer someone who subjugates them". And he knew no limits when bishops were to blame: "the devil spoke to bad bishops: 'Let's make a deal, why should we fight?' The bishops answered: 'Good, we have a deal; what do you want?' The devil says: 'I want the souls'. The bishop answers: 'I want no soul, I want the money'. Show me priests who are not interested in money and I'll stop talking this way". Quevedo shows admiration for the way Tomás refuses vanity and is indifferent to the powerful and the rich. In spite of that indifference (or maybe just *because* of that indifference) the powerful can't stop looking for him. He offends the Emperor twice, and in both cases not only goes he unpunished, but also increases the admiration of the most powerful man on Earth. The first time, the Emperor travels to Valladolid to hear him preach, but Tomás refuses to leave his room. Everybody is furious, but the Emperor says: "What shocks you all, teaches me a lesson, and I wish all priests were as free of vanity as fray Tomás is". The second time happens when he rejects the Emperor's offer to become archbishop of Granada. After Charles dies, they offer him to become archbishop of Valencia; he rejects the offer again, and only accepts when Phillip II orders his superiors to threaten him with excommunication. Both the Emperor and Phillip II insisted he had to attend the Council of Trent, yet he refused in clever letters that seem to manipulate both kings. And we have already seen how little respect he showed for the Viceroy in Italy: "I am still carrying with me the key of my cell in the monastery (and he showed him the key)". Only the poor deserved that respect. Tomás was known as "father of the poor." He created boarding schools for poor young men. For girls he provided dowries enabling them to be married with dignity. For the hungry, he created a soup kitchen in the bishop's palace, and for the homeless he provided a place to sleep. In official pictures he is traditionally portrayed as "el obispo limosnero"(the beggar-bishop), with a bag in his hand, begging for alms for the poor.

The fact that in 1620 Quevedo insists so much on this obsession for alms, showing this as an extraordinary virtue, means much more than what we would think today. Giving money to beggars was not a casual act of spontaneous compassion; it was the only substitute of our current systems of welfare and social programs. In Tomás' time, a controversial debate on models of assistance to low classes was taking place. Along the Middle Ages assistance had been acts of private charity, but a large part of Europe was starting to substitute that charity for public institutions. Actually the social assistance to the poor until then had reached a deep spiritual transcendence that gave coherence to the whole medieval theocratic model. The Church had been building up this coherence upon a crucial text from the Gospel that refers to the Judgement Day: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Mt 25:35-36). This gratitude ends with the divine reward: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" (Mt 25:40). The religious transcendence of the almsgiving lies in the fact that it was the most effective way to attain spiritual

salvation, and that's why wills made by dying people in Europe during these centuries are packed with meticulously formulated legacies and donations. Even Quevedo himself: his last will states to whom should each one of his shirts and personal items be donated, to an extent that provokes perplexity in a modern reader. Maureen Flynn calculates that Madrid had a constant amount of beggars of 30% of the total population that in periods of crisis were much more: the 50% of the inhabitants in 1625. These terrifying numbers were open to a transcendent treatment of the very existence of poverty, which for many faithful was not a problem that had to be solved, but an essential part of life itself, paradoxically beneficial: a providential help sent by God to mankind in order to attain salvation. According to Flynn, "Poverty provided opportunity to exercise the virtues of resignation and humility to those who suffered, and compassion and charity to those who responded. It was considered a permanent, even a useful aspect of the human condition. The poor served as a medium for the wealthy to gain salvation, almost as significant as Mary and the saints in facilitating their entry into heaven. God made the poor to aid the rich, rather than the rich to aid the poor". It can seem weird to believe that God made poverty as a tool to help the rich, but that is just the concept that arises when Tomás warns an assistant who was telling a beggar off because he tried to eat kitchen soup twice: "that beggar who you think is fooling you, might be an angel from heaven who has come here to provoke your charity and your patience". And that is not the only survival of the medieval spirit in Tomás and in Spain. After 1540 spontaneous charity was clearly not enough to mitigate poverty, and rural immigration to European cities made some of them centralize social assistance through secular authorities. Nuremberg and Strasbourg started in 1522, and 2 years later the Emperor passes the well-known bill that forbids beggars to beg away from their birthplaces, alluded to by Lazarillo de Tormes. In 1540 beggars are forbidden to beg without a license and municipal registers of beggars are created by priests and local authorities. The periods when beggar-controls are reinforced are the same periods when crime rates, plagues or epidemics go higher, so the reason is public order.

The end of the Middle Age is the end of the integration of beggars in the normal order of things for many Europeans. Begging starts to be seen as an undesirable activity due to a more positive attitude towards work, the loss of population due to the plagues, and the modern concept of increasing wealth of nations. The idea is that healthy beggars have to start working. The hot topic in 1550 was then, private charity or state assistance? Luis Vives claimed that poverty was no accident, but a consequence of bad government. Juan de Medina thought healthy beggars had to work for the common good. But Domingo de Soto defended that begging was a human right and it was not legal to limit someone's movements just for being poor. Northern Europe secularized social assistance without further discussion, because there was a powerful middle class that did not see the poor as spiritual tool but as marginal group attached to crime and violence that had to be moved apart from the population. In Spain, however, the opposite view survived, and people favored almsgiving. Maybe it was the Castilian repugnance for Government (Soto: "in the North people are more inclined to common good and respect the law more than we do"). Perhaps it was the idea that personal contact with the poor is necessary, or the wide social tolerance that we Spaniards show with the lazy. The most important factor could be though the absence of a real middle class: for Michael Foucault harshness with the poor marks the triumph of middle classes and their capitalist dream of a world with apparent normality where all potentially dangerous or unwanted individuals such as homeless, sick, lazy, retarded or handicapped people, are moved apart from contact with society. Certainly, promoting almsgiving instead of social assistance programs is an act of reinforcement of economic difference, and, at the same time, it stabilizes the social structure of the ruling classes. As Flynn says, "in the same ironic manner in which the church's incredibly high estimation of the ideal woman, the Virgin Mary, ignored the real status of women, the spiritual value attributed to the poor did not raise their position on earth. Ritual giving healed wounds in the social order, but in no way subverted that order". Few years after the *Epitome* was printed, Calderón de la Barca shows how the medieval idea survives in Spain with *El gran teatro del mundo*, where the poor are still seen as pieces of a natural social order settled by God. His allegory maintains the medieval sense of poverty and work, prior to the emergence of the middle classes: the Farmer offers the Poor a job, but he refuses because that is not his mission in society and at the end he is allowed directly into the *postmortem* gala in Heaven. Quevedo advocates the system of indiscriminate distribution, offering as example Tomás' austerity and charity in a clear contrast with the waste of kings and the wealthy.

Now, if poverty maintained its medieval sense in Spain for long, could a poor person become a saint? The social status of saints and their families was not a comfortable issue. Peter Burke said that most saints in the 16th and 17th centuries came from aristocratic families (“nobles had better chances of becoming saints than commoners”). Peraita compared Salón’s and Quevedo’s works –the first text by Salón says: “his parents were not noble by blood, but they were honest and clean farmers”; his second text years later changes to: “his parents and grandparents were all important and honest folks, old Christians, members of Military Orders and the Inquisition”; finally Quevedo says: “his parents were the most important *hidalgos* (noblemen of the lowest grade) of Villanueva, and were relatives of the highest noble families of the region”. These writers seem determined to prove that Burke is right (“nobles had better chances”). This rise in the social scale may be seen as another sign of Quevedo’s anti-populism, who attacked social mobility and commoners’ efforts for prosperity in many instances. The social origin of saints is important because while biographies show more individual development, hagiographies expect that vocation establishes the chosen ones by God. In general hagiographies since Early Modern period spread models of masculinity that are different from violent archetypes, and so they praise self-control instead of aggression, or chastity instead of sexual domination. But this self-control doesn’t mean no conflicts. A silent war takes place within the text between social classes, that’s why Salón and Quevedo are so concerned with Tomás’ social and economic origins. And although female hagiographies focus on concepts such as humility, simplicity, obedience and love, male hagiographies focus on charity. This is very accurate in our case, because even though in Tomás’ life there is austerity and love, his obedience and humility are highly unlikely, as we have seen with the Emperor and the Viceroy. Quevedo uses Tomás’ life to criticize kings and bishops with devastating, brutal sincerity. For example: “being superior is no position, authority, nor relief; but work and care of being such, that you give orders rather by setting a good example than by screaming words”. “Tomás, unlike others, was manager of money for the poor, not the owner”. “Tomás thought that God entrusted him with sheep, not with a palace”. “The church must support the poor, not the bishops”. “In his funeral there were many who had been helped by Tomás to leave poverty, while in the funerals of other bishops there are many who have been ruined by them to become homeless”. And, like if he had suddenly become aware of his own boldness, he writes: “I wonder how this will be read by those who use public money in a different way”.

This final ostentation of political independence may have proved to be fatal for him at the end. It is possible that right before his 60th birthday Quevedo found the answer to that question (how this will be read by the powerful?) when he was cruelly imprisoned in a cold, dark jail in León. And it was then, sick and isolated, when Quevedo began to sign his letters from prison as “brother Thomas of Villanova”/fray Thomas de Villanueva.