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Hagiographic Reformulation, *Distinction* and *Symbolic Capital* in Francisco de Quevedo: the
Epítome of Saint Thomas of Villanova

ABSTRACT

In 1620 Francisco de Quevedo wrote a brief hagiography called *Epítome de la historia de la vida ejemplar y religiosa muerte del bienaventurado Fray Tomás de Villanueva* (Epítome of the story of the exemplary life and religious death of the blessed friar Tomás de Villanueva). This work was supposed to summarize the life of the Augustinian friar Tomás García Martínez (1488-1555), who was renamed Tomás de Villanueva after Villanueva de los Infantes. Villanueva or Villanova is a town in La Mancha where he grew up and where his parents had been born. Saint Thomas of Villanova was beatified by Pope Paul V in 1618, and sanctified by Pope Alexander VII in 1658. The *Epítome* is inscribed 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 and after whom Villanova University was named. Consequently, this text has a defined pragmatic intention with persuasive goals, in an attempt to divulge the good reputation that this friar had earned during his lifetime. However, in Quevedo's hands the text becomes 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 use of the *discurso grave del arrepentimiento religioso público* (serious public discourse in opposition to his burlesque texts) initiated with *Heráclito cristiano* is here reinforced and smoothes the path for him towards his future role in the national Government. After analyzing several elements (political connections between Quevedo and Tomás, reformulation of pagan classical topics into new Christian ones, mythical structure and social questions that arise under the hagiographic re-writing) I intend to propose that, in the light of theoretical models of Cultural Sociology derived from the works of Pierre Bourdieu, these features act as a display of *distinction* and ostentation of his Symbolic Capital within the field of political power.