Hagiographic Reformulation, Distinction and Symbolic Capital in Francisco de Quevedo's *Epitome* of Saint Thomas of Villanova

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Abstract: In 1620 Francisco de Quevedo wrote a hagiography called *Epitome of St. Thomas of Villanova*. This work was supposed to summarize the life of the Augustinian friar Tomás de Villanueva (†1555), beatified in 1618 and canonized in 1658. The *Epitome* 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 and after whom Villanova University was named. Yet in Quevedo's hands the text might have become a tool to attack his enemies, to display symbolic capital and to stand out in political terms showing off his independence and his agenda for an ethical regeneration of the government. In light of theoretical models of Cultural Sociology derived from the works of Pierre Bourdieu, the *Epitome*, like other Quevedo's works, may have acted as a display of *distinction* and ostentation of symbolic capital within the fields of literature and political power.

Keywords: Quevedo, hagiography, Thomas of Villanova, symbolic capital

After seven years serving as Secretary of the Spanish Viceroy in Italy, Francisco de Quevedo returned to Spain in 1620. Because his prestige as a politician had now been added to his reputation as a writer, the Augustinians asked him to write a brief hagiography: the *Epitome* of Tomás de Villanueva. This work was intended to summarize the life of Tomás García Martínez (†1555), who had been renamed Tomás de Villanueva after the town in La Mancha where he grew up, Villanueva de los Infantes. Santo Tomás de Villanueva or Saint Thomas of Villanova was beatified in 1618 and canonized in 1658. The *Epitome* 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 also been archbishop of Valencia. Yet in Quevedo's hands the text might have become a tool to attack his enemies, to display symbolic capital and to stand out in political terms by showing his independence and his

[1] The essence of this work was presented at the *2011 University of Kentucky Foreign Languages Conference*. All translations from Spanish are my own.

agenda for an ethical regeneration of the government. His serious public discourse in opposition to his burlesque texts, which had begun with *Heráclito cristiano* (1613) and would open the path for him towards his future role in the national government, is here reinforced. In light of theoretical models of Cultural Sociology derived from the works of Pierre Bourdieu, the *Epitome*, like other Quevedo's works, may have acted as a display of *distinction* and ostentation of symbolic capital within the fields of literature and political power.[2]

This essay articulates several small pieces: a brief context of the textual reception of the *Epitome* and the political connections between Quevedo and Tomás; a reformulation of pagan classical topics into new Christian ones that serve to display symbolic capital within the literary field; and Quevedo's *distinction* as a way of flaunting his symbolic independence within the political field —with the treatment of *alumbrados* and especially the assistance to the poor. The first element discloses some links between the hagiographer and the saint; the second defines the rhetorical updating of classical content as humanistic reformulation; and the third displays his obsession for showing off political independence —hence he dares to offer his own Spanish translations of the Bible (forbidden by the Inquisition in 1559), and he deploys a strong attack against the ruling classes. My goal is to demonstrate that the social and political issues that lie beneath the *Epitome* emphasize how those characteristics of *distinction* that were already present in *Heráclito cristiano* survive and are enhanced in this later work.

Although today Saint Thomas of Villanova is not very well-known, between 1550 and 1900 he was a very popular saint. In Colombia a town was named in his honor, and the *Universidad de Santo Tomás de Villanueva* was founded in Havana, Cuba — which later became the University of Saint Thomas in Florida. Churches were built in his name in Castellón and Ávila, and the Church of *Santo Thomas de Vallaneuva* [*sic*] in the Philippines ranks today as a World Heritage site. His most significant contribution in the Americas was that he sent the first Spanish teachers to the New World, and he inspired the birth of Villanova University in Pennsylvania. Villanova was the Latin spelling of Villanueva, and that is how he signed his letters: Fray Thomas de Villanova. Therefore, in spite of his current invisibility, he was a very influential character for more than three centuries. It seems significant that Quevedo was willing to celebrate this saint, for there were several characteristics of Tomás that might have deeply appealed to him and that he would have happily been associated with: his "apostolic freedom" (Quevedo's ironic phrasing for independence), his political responsibilities under the Emperor Charles, his attacks against the *alumbrados*, and his courage when dealing with the powerful.

If we look at Quevedo's work from a commercial perspective, the *Epitome* enjoyed great success. Initially 1,200 copies were printed; a second printing followed in

[2] The use of these concepts is here employed as stated in several of Pierre Bourdieu's works such as *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. For a general study on Quevedo and Symbolic Capital, see Carlos Gutiérrez, *La espada, el rayo y la pluma*.

1627. It competed in the publishing market with the *Libro de Santo Tomás* by the *converso* theologian Miguel Salón. Later on, Salón's work became the biographical text of reference for the Augustinian. The *Libro* was reprinted four times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in 1925 for the last time. After that, Salón completely disappeared from the market and Quevedo triumphed again; his work was published in 1955 and in 2006, in a commented edition by Rafael Lazcano.[3] In the last years a critical edition has been finally published by Carmen Peraita.[4] In 2007 Villanova University paid homage to this hagiography of their patron and announced it with these words:

> Our Library celebrated Hispanic Cultural Heritage with presentations on the *Epitome*, a short biography of St. Thomas written by the seventeenth century humanist Francisco de Quevedo. Quevedo was well-known in the humanist circles of Europe, thanks to his widely circulated works. Printed in octavo format, the *Epitome*, pocket-sized and relatively inexpensive, became a favorite of contemporary readers. Of the 1,200 printed copies only three survive to this day.[5]

Quevedo's affinity for Tomás is undeniable. He praised him and quoted him in many works, suggesting intersections in their lives, actions and opinions: he called him *santo español y buen español*. Santiago Fernández Mosquera believes that Quevedo "utiliza sus sermones, con los que coincide ideológicamente" (25). Many critics have commented upon the biographic reflection between Quevedo and his works on the lives of heroes or saints. Riandiere La Roche defined this as "effet d'autobiographie" (78). Henry Ettinghausen says that Quevedo was "infected" by the virtues of the saints and heroes he wrote about (234). This characteristic is common to the rest of Quevedo's religious works. It is plainly evident that *La constancia y paciencia del Santo Job* includes many deliberate parallels between the situation of the Biblical Job and that of Quevedo, who was imprisoned while he wrote it. This shows that his personal interests modify the nature of both the hagiographic text and the genre. Similarly, he makes his own personal use of his hagiography on Paul the Apostle, *La caída para levantarse*. The Italian editor of this work, Valentina Nider, reproaches Quevedo for using this material for "propaganda politica" (62). This auto-biographical insinuation is especially significant when Quevedo directly addresses Paul:

> Since you are enjoying the reward for your divine merits in heaven, turn your eyes back to me, your devotee, who four years ago, in prison and

[3] This edition by Rafael Lazcano is the one quoted through this article. For a comparison between Quevedo's and Salón's works, see Carmen Peraita, "Reescrituras hagiográficas".

[4] See Peraita, *Gobernar la república interior*. It is the first edition with an organized study on historical context.

[5] *News from Falvey Memorial Library, Villanova University*. Winter 2007.

> chains, began to write of your imprisonment and martyrdom, for your glory and consolation. (*O.C.* 1533)

Quevedo's last hagiography, *Father Mastrili,* was never finished. While imprisoned, he started to write it for the Jesuits who had educated him as a child, and to whom he looked for support in the most desperate moment of his life. In all these religious works, according to Fernández Mosquera,

> Quevedo equipara siempre que puede su voz con personajes de gran nobleza moral o de probada e indiscutible ejemplaridad. Y ésta es una de las modificaciones esenciales que Quevedo inflige al género hagiográfico: el aprovechamiento personalizador de la vida ejemplar que relata. (32)

Since Quevedo identifies himself with (or takes advantage of) the exemplary life of saints, it seems legitimate to suspect that he accepts to write on Tomás because he feels some kind of affinity with him; it is important then to uncover what Tomás was associated with, for the general public around 1620. First, Tomás was a well-known enemy of *alumbrados*. Although recent scholarship has shown that the men and women called *alumbrados* were far from a homogeneous group in religious beliefs and practices, the skewed notion that they were frauds, sexual perverts, or hysterics, propagated in Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo's *History of the Spanish Heterodox* (1880), still persists.[6] The extent and nature of the early *alumbrados'* contacts with specific Protestants remains a topic of debate. However, it is increasingly clear that they articulated the religious dissatisfaction that erupted all across Europe in the 1500s and gave birth to the Protestant Reformation. Despite differences among various groups, they shared a desire for a more affective, interior religiosity and a disregard for external rites and ceremonies. Some advocated access to the Bible in the vernacular translation and many practiced mental prayer. The danger these early sixteenth-century groups represented for the Spanish Inquisition was double: their apparent disregard for the meditation of the clergy and for the institutional church, and the fact that many of the *alumbrado* leaders were from Jewish-*converso* families. For some ecclesiastical authorities *alumbradismo* became a catch-all category for a variety of perceived dangers to the church.[7] In the 1570s and again in the early seventeenth century, there were new outbreaks of *alumbradismo*, which were characterized by thaumaturgical enthusiasm and, in some cases, sexual libertinism. The common denominator between the early and later groups was the practice of

[6] In this History of heterodox groups in Spain, Menéndez Pelayo called them "gavilla de facinerosos", "brutos animales", "ignorantes salvajes", "de sórdido cinismo" (190).

[7] For a study on how *alumbradismo* was used to attack *conversos*, Erasmus' admirers and reformers, see Alastair Hamilton, *Heresy and Mysticism in 16th century Spain. The Alumbrados*.

mental prayer, which in turn was perceived by some church authorities as a presumptuous democratization of spirituality.

Tomás wrote and preached aggressively against *alumbrados*, especially in his work *Meditación y contemplación*, where he warns those who practice meditative or contemplative prayer about the errors they may fall into by the hand of the devil: "meditation has knocked many Catholics down, who have become perverts and heretics" (526). Quevedo was disgusted by the strongly popular, enthusiastic, lecherous, and miracle-worker character of the later *alumbrados*. This repugnance may well reflect the anti-popular religious sentiments of a lesser aristocrat like Quevedo, who desperately wanted to hold public office. Tomás' sermons and *conciones* were considered to be perfect examples of neo-platonic homiletic art, which also were congenial to Quevedo's philosophical affinity for neo-platonic, neo-stoic and anti-heretical orthodoxy.

Tomás was also very efficient in his responsibilities. Salón explains that when Tomás arrived in Valencia, the city was in turmoil: there were many divorces and widespread adultery, priests who lived with prostitutes, social riots, and *moriscos* acting openly as Muslims. Tomás reestablished order with efficiency, energy and eloquence, three virtues admired by Quevedo. Both men shared a love for books and a love for language. Both shouldered several political responsibilities: Tomás was prior in Burgos and Valladolid, General *Visitador*, prior of Andalusia, prior of Castile, confessor to the Emperor Charles, and educational authority to send the first Augustinian missionaries to the Americas, to teach Spanish and doctrine. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* calls him "Councilor of State", especially for his role in advising both the Emperor and Prince Phillip on *moriscos,* problems with mass conversions, moral principles of society, legal jurisdictions of the Inquisition, and the pirates' attacks against the coast of Valencia (696).

This love for language and eloquence made Tomás famous for convincing the Emperor to commute a death penalty ("the well-known case of Lord Lasso" (*Vida* 49) —Quevedo refers here to Pedro Laso de la Vega and the Revolt of the *Comuneros* of Castile against the Emperor Charles in 1521), as well as opposing obligatory religious conversions and preaching to large groups of *moriscos* in the recently occupied territories (mainly Granada, Almería and Southern Valencia) to accept voluntary Christian baptism. It is legitimate to cast doubt on the degree of the voluntary nature of the *morisco* conversions in an age where dialogue and tolerance were not common in the political landscape nor in the mental universe of the social agents, yet it is a fact that Tomás opposed violence and favored dialogue. It was usual to say that Tomás could even convince the stones (*hasta las piedras,* said the Emperor).

Finally, Tomás had moral courage. Quevedo praised his "apostolic freedom": his capacity for rebellion, disguised under fear of God and the certainty of doing the right thing. That is why Tomás dared to offend many authorities, including the Emperor Charles, Phillip II, the Viceroy of Naples and several others. A good example of this freedom occurred after the English devastated the Balearic Islands, and the Viceroy of

Naples asked Tomás for 20,000 ducats from his church. Quevedo says: "our saint answered with *apostolic freedom* that God Our Lord had made him responsible for Valencia, not the islands" (62). The Viceroy became quite angry and threatened Tomás with telling the Emperor; according to Quevedo, this is what Tomás said to him: "I must warn His Excellency that I am still carrying with me the key of my cell in the monastery (he showed him the key), and every day I am more willing to return" (62).

Quevedo carries out 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 human writing.[8] Vanity was a recurrent topic for the Greeks and Romans, who considered it a foolish desire to which death would put an end. Here is Quevedo's description in the *Epitome*:

> Those who try to extend their lives beyond their graves with statues, buildings and writing histories, 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 (33).[9]

This idea appears throughout the Christian tradition with several reformulations, as far as *Ecclesiastes* ("vanity of vanities, all is vanity"). Quevedo quotes the Bible by adding his own personal and forbidden translation: "*Ecclesiastes* uses these words: There are no memories of the first people, 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 human madness" (33).

Moreover, time had been considered merciless by Classical authors. Quevedo points out that time wipes all empires away and that the memory of them is dim: 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" (34). 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" (Apocalypse 3:5).

On the purpose of human writing, Quevedo says that pretentious men hope everything which has been written down will achieve eternal memory. This relates to one of the conventions that, according to linguistic pragmatics, characterize literary

[8] For a study on Quevedo's engagement with classical rhetorical treatises, see Lia Schwartz-Lerner, "Re-creation of Satirical Patterns" (2010) on classical intertextuality, and Ariadna García-Bryce, *Trascending textuality* (2011), on politics as performance.

[9] Quevedo puns here on two meanings of "diligencia": effort (*diligencias ingeniosas*) and speed (*la diligencia de los días*).

texts: their atemporality or timelessness, which modifies the reception of all deictic references. An obvious example can be found in the verses of Quevedo's famous sonnet "Retired to the peace of this deserted place" (*Retirado en la paz de estos desiertos*), when he refers to his books by using this synesthesia: "I live in conversation with the deceased / and I listen with my eyes to the dead". Quevedo offers his Christian updating of this theme 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 for us 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" (35).

It must be noted that for Quevedo miracles do not seem to be a priority. The little attention he pays to miracles relates this hagiography to the new models of sanctity that the Catholic Church in Rome was trying to promote. Quevedo had just arrived from Italy after seven years as a dynamic politician in that land, where he even served as an ambassador to Pope Paul V at the Holy See. In the new model of sanctity, which Quevedo will not miss the opportunity to underscore, it was said that an excessive love of miracles was not only counterproductive, but also showed a very poor faith, since true and sincere faith never requires any proof from God. Moreover, miracles were especially dear to the lower classes, and Quevedo was not fond of either of the two. He shows more respect for Tomás' superhuman capacity for austerity. One highlight in the *Epitome* is 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 (62). Jodi Bilinkoff maintains that during this time the concept of male sanctity was modified, and Quevedo's view seems to join a new model of masculinity whose main features are self-control, ataraxia and neo-stoic austerity (172). By stressing Tomás' heroic virtues over his miracles, Quevedo makes references to the most recent trends emanating from Rome, and consequently he shows that his political and religious knowledge is *au courant*. Giulio Sodano says that the Council of Trent broke away from the medieval model of Christian saints because the Church wanted to replace the *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* with one, exclusive official voice (189). It was a way to fight Protestants and reformers, who considered the abundance of local patrons and saints a survival of polytheism. They prompted Rome to redefine canonization: the Council of Trent affirmed that Jesus was the only possible redeemer, and that saints were simple intermediaries. What Rome now wanted was a model of virtuous behavior that the faithful could imitate, or as Sodano affirms, the practice of heroic virtue became the condition for canonization (193). After Trent, the process of canonization became a more complex, bureaucratic legal operation, and the time this process took became much longer.

These changes in the new models of sanctity were known to Quevedo, as well as the new model of ideal bishops after Trent. Lutherans and Calvinists had shown extreme hostility against bishops, accusing them of being too worldly and unfit for their

pastoral duties. It is indeed a fact that for several centuries their duties had more to do with political and administrative responsibilities than with religious tasks. As Joseph Bergin states, "in the Holy Roman Empire the majority of bishops were also territorial princes, secular rather than religious" (30).

Reformists tried directly to suppress bishops in Trent, where the Spanish delegates, inspired especially by Tomás' insistence, applied pressure to have bishops considered legally superior to priests in jurisdictional as well as in sacramental terms. The new model for bishops defined their duties as those of teaching, sanctifying and governing; praised the virtue of patience and discouraged overzealousness. It was also demanded that bishops go to college, as Tomás did, and study Theology and Law. Aristocrats were reluctant to embrace this idea, since they still identified university degrees with lower classes. In Ignacio Tellechea's words, this new model was

> caracterizado por el *onus* más que por el *honor*, y por funciones pastorales más que por la percepción de rentas. Reciben el refrendo conciliar y adquieren valor de norma o de compromiso colectivo, y al mismo tiempo están convalidados por ejemplos vivos de obispos empeñados en encarnar tal idea en su vida: fray Hernando de Talavera, el cardenal Cisneros, Santo Tomás de Villanueva, Giberti, Barozzi, fray Bartolomé dos Mártires, fray Bartolomé de Carranza. (220)

It is particularly interesting that the name of Tomás is included in a list of the ideal bishops for the Council of Trent, especially since he never attended the Council, and he died before it was finished. This is clear evidence that Tomás represented the perfect New Bishop for both the Church and Quevedo.

Furthermore, readers through the centuries have often admired Quevedo's courage when dealing with rulers. He dared to address the king with bold words: "you kings are workers. Being king is hard work. Thrones make men sweat more than plowing fields" (*O.C.* 704). It is then no wonder that he admired Tomás, who in his sermons said things such as: "oh holy Church, *your guards are like locusts*: those who should feed the people are the ones who plunder the people with taxes" (Herrera 428). Tomás' self-criticism could be very harsh indeed: "They do not seek out wise pastors today; they look for someone who can subjugate God's people with power, rather than edify them" (Villanueva 117). And he knew no limits when bishops were to blame: "The devil said: 'I want the souls'. The bishop answered: 'I want no soul, I want the money'… Show me priests who are not interested in money, and I'll stop talking this way" (118).

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 cannot but seek him out. He offends the Emperor twice, and in both cases not only goes he unpunished but increases the admiration that the most

powerful man on earth holds for him. As the Emperor travels to Valladolid to hear him preach, 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" (50).

Both the Emperor and Phillip II insisted Tomás attend the Council of Trent, yet he refused in clever letters that seem to manipulate both monarchs. Between March and June, 1545, Tomás wrote five letters to both the Emperor Charles and to his son Prince Phillip (later Phillip II) in which he politely procrastinated his travel to Trent by inventing excuses (paperwork, health, distance) until the monarchs gave up. Then a new thread of five more letters started between 1545 and 1551: Tomás asked the kings to protect him from the criticism of other bishops who attacked him for not attending such important Council. In these letters he writes cunning sentences: "Your Highness knows that I wanted to go, but since eventually you told me not to go, you must defend me now from those who are attacking me for doing your Royal will" (Villanueva 593). Tomás was a seasoned, astute negotiator, who never really considered traveling to Italy and who, in this matter as in many others, ended up doing whatever he pleased.

On the other hand, 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 and in the *Epitome* he is traditionally portrayed as *el obispo limosnero* ("the alms-giver bishop"), with a bag in his hand, begging for alms for the poor. This epithet reflects Tomás' humility, since bishops generally assigned to a servant (an almoner or *limosnero*) the task of soliciting and giving out alms.

The fact that in 1620 Quevedo insisted on the extraordinary virtue of Tomás' obsession with alms implies more than today's public would think. Giving money to beggars was not a random act of spontaneous compassion; it was the only substitute for our current systems of welfare and social programs. In Tomás' time, the debate on models of assistance to the poor was heated. Throughout the Middle Ages this assistance had been an act of private charity, but a large part of Europe was starting to substitute that charity with public institutions. The social assistance to the poor 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 Judgment Day: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" (Mathew 25:35). This gratitude ends with the divine reward: "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Mathew 25:40).

The religious transcendence of almsgiving lay in the fact that it was the most effective way to attain spiritual salvation, and that is why wills made by dying people in Europe during these centuries were packed with meticulously formulated legacies and donations. Even Quevedo himself states in his last will to whom each one of his shirts

and personal items should be donated, to an extreme that provokes perplexity in a modern reader. Maureen Flynn calculates that Madrid had a constant number of beggars at 30% of the total population, and many more in periods of crisis, such as in 1625 when the figure reached 50%. These terrifying numbers might have contributed to a transcendent view of the very existence of poverty, which for many of the faithful was not a problem that had to be solved but rather 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. (76)

It may seem odd to believe that God made poverty as a tool to help the rich, but that is just the concept that emerges when Tomás warns an assistant who was berating a beggar 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 test your charity and your patience" (Villanueva 71). 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 urban immigration from rural areas made many European cities centralize social assistance through secular authorities. The end of the Middle Ages marked the end of the integration of beggars into the normal order of things for many Europeans. Professional begging started 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 the wealth of nations. The idea was that healthy beggars had to start working.[10] Even Quevedo allows such critics to speak up in the *Epitome*: "Someone warned Tomás that most were professional beggars, who in this condition became defiant vagrants" (67). The topic of debate in 1550 was then: private charity or state assistance? The philosopher Luis Vives claimed that poverty was no accident, but a consequence of bad government. The theologian Juan de Medina thought that healthy beggars had to work for the common good. Yet another theologian from the School of Salamanca, Domingo de Soto, defended the notion that begging was a human right and that it was not legitimate to limit people's movements just because they were poor.

[10] For a classic work on Picaresque Novel and poverty, see Javier Herrero, "Renaissance Poverty and Lazarillo's family" (1979), where this change of perspective stems from an increased awareness of human misery, made visible by urban growth. Another relevant source can be found in Anne Cruz, *Discourses of Poverty* (1999), which examines the profound implications of poverty and social reform.

Northern Europe secularized social assistance without further discussion, probably because there was a powerful middle class that did not see the poor as a spiritual tool, but as a marginal group attached to crime and violence that had to be segregated from the population. In Spain, however, the opposite view survived, and people favored almsgiving. Maybe it was the Castilian repugnance for Government; as Soto said: "in the North, people are more inclined to common good, and respect the law more than we do" (120). The most important factor, though, could be the absence of a real middle class: for Michael Foucault, harshness toward the poor marked the triumph of the bourgeoisie 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 were removed from contact with society. Certainly, promoting almsgiving instead of social assistance programs was an act of reinforcement of economic differences, and, at the same time, it stabilized 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. (78)

Quevedo advocates the system of indiscriminate distribution, offering as an example Tomás' austerity and charity in a clear contrast to the squandering of kings and the wealthy. Yet the social status of saints and their families was not a comfortable issue. Peter Burke has said that most saints in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came from aristocratic families: "nobles had better chances of becoming saints than commoners" (49). Carmen Peraita, in her comparison of Salón's and Quevedo's works, points out that the first text by Salón says: "his parents were not of noble blood, but they were honest, clean farmers". Salón's second text, years later, changes this 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 they were relatives of the highest noble families of the region". Both Quevedo and Salón seem determined to prove that Burke was right ("nobles had better chances"). This rise in the social scale may be seen as another sign of Quevedo's anti-populism, for he always attacked social mobility and commoners' efforts to attain prosperity. The social origin of saints is relevant because while biographies show more individual development, hagiographies expect that vocation identifies those chosen by God. In general, hagiographies since the Early Modern period promote models of masculinity that are different from violent archetypes, and therefore praise self-control instead of aggression, or chastity instead of sexual domination. But this self-control does not mean

lack of conflicts. A silent war takes place within the text between social classes, and that is why Salón and Quevedo are so concerned with Tomás' social and economic origins.

On the other hand, while 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 although in Tomás' life there is austerity and love, his obedience and humility are highly questionable, as we have seen in his exchanges with the Emperor and the Viceroy. This fact would have delighted Quevedo, who then might have used Tomás' hagiography to criticize kings and bishops with devastating, brutal sincerity. The most recent biographer of Quevedo, Pablo Jauralde, maintains that our writer wanted to express his concerns about the ineptitude and corruption of both kings and prelates of the Church, and did so in very severe terms, using the passionate praise of Tomás' poverty as a justification (414). Jauralde, like many of us, wondered how the powerful of this time must have read Quevedo's harsh words. He speaks with devastating sincerity in the *Epitome*: "being superior should not imply dignity, authority, rest or haste; but work and care to act so that you command by good example rather than by words" (46). Quevedo also compared our archbishop to the rest of prelates: "Tomás, unlike others, was the treasurer of the wealth of the poor, not the owner" (57). And he went further: Tomás says that "God entrusts me with His sheep, not with a palace" (59). And even further: "The church must support the poor, not the bishops" (81). And further still, up to a point where bishops had to feel uncomfortable: "His funeral was attended by more than eight thousand poor people who had been helped by him; the funerals of other bishops are usually attended by people ruined by them" (75). And, as if he had suddenly become aware of his own boldness, Quevedo writes: "I wonder how this will be read by those who spend the church's money" (62).

This final flaunting of *distinction* and political independence may have proved fatal for the politician and writer in the end. It is possible that in 1639, a few months before his sixtieth birthday, Quevedo found the answer to that question ("how this will be read by the powerful?") when, under secret accusations of high treason and connivance with the French, 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 "Fray Thomas of Villanova".

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