

UNFULFILLED PROMISES: EPIC AND HAGIOGRAPHY IN HERNANDO DOMÍNGUEZ CAMARGO'S *POEMA HEROICO*

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Torquato Tasso's ideas about the role of epic poetry in his *Discorsi del poema eroico* (1594) could have been all but an unequivocal statement of the strong relationship between the epic, the State, and the Catholic Church: "I will restate here what I have said elsewhere, that the most excellent poem belongs exclusively to the most excellent form of government. This is monarchy, but monarchy cannot be best governed under a false religion" (37). This blind defense, outrageous as it seems to us today, does not succeed in freeing him from paranoia, triggered by the same institutions he defended, which would haunt him for the rest of his life. For if on the one hand his apology for monarchy contributed to some sort of favoritism received from the Italian nobility and the Church, on the other hand "the pressures of the Counter-Reformation, complicated by growing strains in his relations with the court, encouraged his imbalance."¹ In the case of Tasso, one might well have expected a more dialectical approach to the relationship between the Arts and the State, for instance, than the one he wove in the *Discorsi*. After all, his defense of the religious marvelous indicates that the author of *Gerusalemme Liberata* had to make excessive use of rhetorical as well as dialectical devices to prove his point. But no, he meant exactly what he said: that the most accomplished poem reflects its author's ideology, which in turn reflects that of the monarchy. In addition, his words imply that only a "true religion" (Catholicism) can inform a genuine monarchy in its dealing with matters of the State. "A good poem must distill religiosity," he seems to be saying to us. Tasso's declaration alludes also to the ability that the epic has to propagate the ideology of the monarchy, and his very same words cannot help but establish a direct connection with the notion of religious propaganda being at the heart of his poem. It is not accidental that *propagare* is a common linguistic root both for dissemination and inculcation of ideology at the same time.

This essay on the Colombian poet Hernando Domínguez Camargo begins with a quotation from Tasso not to discuss the power dynamics articulated by the government in Italy during the late 1500s². To do so would involve a historical expertise well beyond the limits of this analy-

sis. Rather, my intention is to show a similar dynamics controlled by the Catholic Church in the heyday of the Counter-Reformation, when the Society of Jesus not only monopolized religious power relations within the Church worldwide, but also strived very successfully to exert its influence upon the business of the State. To be sure, by the time *Poema Heroico* was published in Madrid (1666), the Jesuit Order had already acquired so much power that an entire body of literature was being produced under its sponsorship (Pierce). It is significant, nonetheless, that in that same literature heroic poetry stands out among other literary forms. Colonial Latin American drama did not have a Calderonian genius, despite Juan de Alarcón's brilliant mind. Nor did religious lyrical accomplishments always live up to their audience's expectation, even when resting in the hands of such gifted poets as the remarkable Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Canonical literary taste in those years had been almost entirely shaped by heroic deeds and religious matters. There were many justifications for readers to think that they were experiencing a truly heroic era, especially in view of the territorial expansion aggressively carried out by Spain and Portugal, and the assiduous reading of chivalry books and hagiography (Leonard).

But there is, indeed, a stronger reason for the ostensible presence of religious heroic poetry as a genre and its overshadowing of other poetic discourses, and that reason should be none other than the urgency of fighting Lutheranism. While investigating how Domínguez Camargo takes on the task of espousing this combative attitude, we will also look into the many poetic transformations *Poema Heroico* underwent to be adjusted to its time. It would be a mistake to think that the poem's content does it all, without a fierce defense or justification of its own being. On the contrary, by virtue of their very existence as texts, which can be considered neither as disinterested art nor as disinterested critical theory, prologues such as the one by Antonio Navarro Navarrete for the 1666 edition come to exemplify the need to spell out clearly the poem's goal ("celebrar la Compañía en S. Ignacio su padre") and to defend it literarily on the basis of previously written poetics and similar poems. It becomes evident that, if anything, the defense here is made only on poetic grounds, anticipating doubts about compositional aspects of a poem that looked "different," to assure that, once published, the poem would be less vulnerable to political or religious scrutiny. I am not ignoring the fact that prior to their publication poems were submitted to the censorship of the State or the Church authorities, or to vicious examinations by the Inquisition.

We are ready now to return to Domínguez Camargo. The prologue to *Poema Heroico* is curiously clear about one of its main sources (Góngora), but interestingly elusive with respect to the poetic norms governing its composition. By the time Domínguez Camargo wrote his poem, Tasso's

ideas and the *Gerusalemme* had been so widely disseminated in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America that any serious poem was expected to imitate them. Although the name of the Italian author does not appear in Navarro Navarrete's discussion in the prologue to the poem, it becomes difficult to deny Tasso's presence. Note that presence here can only be detected in the unavoidable absence of his ideas, a rejection easily noticeable by any reasonably experienced reader of epic poetry. We all recall, but it is worth repeating, how forcefully Navarro Navarrete attempts to argue in Aristotelian terms the notion of verisimilitude versus truth:

Extrañará el curioso cómo nuestro poeta, a la vida que escribe del glorioso patriarca san Ignacio de Loyola, la intitula poema, cuando éste sólo consiste en una ingeniosa ficción . . . Y Petronio Arbitro, por faltarle aquesta [la imitación fabulosa], le niega el nombre de poeta a Lucano; porque en la *Farsalia* que compuso, refiere los sucesos verdaderos que pasaron entre César y Pompeyo, tocando esto solamente al historiador, como al poeta las cosas verosímiles, pero no verdaderas. (31)³

Navarro Navarrete concludes his argument by adding:

Mas Escalígero le defiende de este apasionado censor [Petronio Arbitro], y saca en limpio de tan maliciosa calumnia. No niega que la fábula sea parte esencial del poeta; antes, prueba que la *Farsalia* de Lucano tiene muchas ficciones, con que está ilustrado su poema. Porque aunque [la Historia] sirva de argumento a los poetas épicos, de tal suerte ha de estar envuelta en las fábulas, que parezca, a la primera vista, otra de lo que es en la sustancia. (31)

By drawing an identical parallel Tasso takes Lucan's side by saying that

if [he does] not think Lucan a poet it is not for the reason that persuades others, that he has lost this name because he narrated things that actually happened. . . . But if Lucan is not a poet, it is because he binds himself to the truth of particulars with little regard to the universal: as Quintilian says, he is closer to the orator than to the poet. (61)

Here and elsewhere in his polemic against Lucan, Tasso became more interested in matters related to the *dispositio* of the *Pharsalia* than he was in the appropriateness of inserting historical accounts into the poem. And Navarro Navarrete's comments are no less devious in that, if he begins discussing optimal solutions for history and invention to be combined in the poem, in the final analysis his arguments hinge on the validity of specifically utilizing Loyola's *vita*, supposedly true, in the composition of a poem that is presumably fictional. By contrast, Navarro Navarrete's discussion, centered around a question of decorum—specifically that of

mixing characters from Greek mythology with Christian ones—makes Tasso's presence less insidious if, in Book II of the *Discorsi*, we are reminded of his disapproval of fusing the two divine parties together:

Por esta parte, no se puede negar cuán ajustado anduvo el poeta en el título que puso de poema a la vida de este gran patriarca. Pues, al principio, introduce a Marte, profetizando los varios sucesos y dichas de su vida; a los siete planetas, que festejan su bautismo, y después, que lamentan su muerte; a los monstruos infernales, que suspendieron sus penas a la voz de Ignacio; a Neptuno, que puso entredicho a los vientos, sosegó las aguas. (31)

Epic

It has now been fifty years since Emilio Carilla's reading of *Poema Heroico* led him to affirm that "por encima de imprecisas y vagas distinciones de géneros literarios, su valor es más lírico que épico: no es la narración de la vida del santo lo más remarcable en ella, sino los comentarios, la ornamentación, la visión estilizada de la naturaleza" (11). I will not debate the validity of these assertions, but rather allow a perspicuous critic, Giovanni Meo Zilio, to do so by noting that the poem "debe colocarse dentro de la épica *sensu stricto* no sólo porque su objeto principal es cantar la epopeya del héroe de la Iglesia y sus admirables hazañas espirituales, sino también por su estructura, su tono, su lenguaje general, su técnica y la misma poética que lo sustenta" (in Sabat de Rivers 10). I will return to the point I have just made on Loyola's *vita* when I discuss the role hagiography plays in the *Poema Heroico*, as one of Domínguez Camargo's main motivations in writing his epic. In what follows, I will continue to explore the initial stanzas of the poem in light of Meo Zilio's remarks.

Those accustomed to reading epic poetry cannot overlook in the general economy of *Poema Heroico*'s first stanza the applicability of a set of rules prescribed by the heroic poetic tradition. The tripartite structure of the exordium (*invocatio, propositio, narratio*) condensed in the first octave demonstrates the poet's conscious desire to adhere to the norms of epic discourse. These initial lines also announce that the subject matter, contrary to what Domínguez Camargo had done before, will be heroic this time. Despite the poet's switch from lyrical to epic verses, there is no complete negation *yet* of a possible connection between lyrical poetry and romance, as Alonso de Ercilla's first stanza of *La Araucana* also suggests. By initially declaring his intention to banish romance love-plots from his poem, Ercilla is only establishing a *desideratum* to be quickly compromised in Canto 22. Tasso was right when he said, suspending his own moral, religious, and poetic convictions, that "romance achieves its

end better than epic . . . for the end of poetry is delight, and experience shows that we get greater delight from poems with more than one fable" (68-69).⁴ It is in his defense of *Orlando Furioso*, however, that he expands on the successful achievement of Ariosto's poem. According to him, this poem is a great work of art because it embraces love, chivalry, adventures and enchantments (76-77).

The initial lines of *Poema Heroico*, albeit defining the object of representation—Loyola as a great warrior ("vizcaíno Marte")—do not specify which type of heroism he embodies. Is Loyola a warrior against enemy soldiers or evil forces? Should he be recognized as a warrior excelling in military as well as religious matters? Although this last question leads us to the best answer, it does not fully respond to the matter. It is indeed Domínguez Camargo's desire to present his saint as a well-rounded, Renaissance-like figure, excelling as a man of arms and letters. And the use of *letters* here comes readily to signify that Loyola, through study and meditation, also dedicated himself to intellectual and religious activities. While there is no ambivalence in the poet's mind about the dual nature of his hero (I.2:cxii), because it conforms to the ideal models of Renaissance and Baroque nobility, *Poema Heroico* is inclined to depict Loyola more as a spiritual fighter. This becomes obvious when one measures, as I shall do, his religious and his military stature against the backdrop of hagiography.

I mentioned before that in the first octave of his poem Domínguez Camargo was not yet ready to dispel completely lyrical forms that could have replaced the heroic model chosen for this particular poem. I underlined the word *yet* because in Book II the reader finds compelling evidence to equate Domínguez Camargo's disdain for romance with Ercilla's. The line "libro vano de caballerías" (II.1:ix) actually is as much an emblematic image of a reality that the poem tries to abolish as the words "no las damas, amor, no gentilezas/de caballeros canto enamorados" in *La Araucana* (I.1:1). But what does "the fantástico libro" (II.1:x) have to do with lyricism in *Poema Heroico*? To respond to this question we must again go back to Tasso. After "consider[ing] how the lyrical and heroic poets use different concepts for the same matters" (166), the Italian writer concludes that excess and gracefulness belong to the former, solemnity and containment to the latter. Unfortunately, these concepts have also proved problematic as we are about to see.

If we follow him correctly, for Tasso embellishing a poem is synonymous with twisting or deviating from the customary meaning of words. Like Tasso's Renaissance readers, we are also quick to notice the difficulty with which he seeks to balance his argument, for example, in a choice between lyrical and epic poems. Needless to say, this dramatic ambivalence is to be seen not only in him, but also in other writers and philosophers, from Plato to Derrida. Both the fascination and distrust with regard to language cannot be felt more sharply than in Scholasti-

cism. Roland Barthes underscores how "the Jesuits stubbornly deny to their founder's book," the *Exercises* (a major source of *Poema Heroico*), "[the] literary prestige they have helped to establish" (39)⁵. "[D]iscrediting the form—Barthes continues—serves to exalt the importance of the content: to say: *I write badly* means: *I think well*" (39). Ironically, despite the Scholastic foundation that supports *Poema Heroico*, Barthes's theory does not apply to Domínguez Camargo, who takes every opportunity to display his remarkable and luxurious language (Gimbernat, "Subversión" 10-11).

The Colombian writer appears to be aware of every single structural element of his poem, as a result of a calculated effort that is only possible with a profound knowledge of epic rules. Renaissance and Baroque epics insist on the inclusion of the marvelous, which here draws from the religious marvelous as typified by Tasso's works. Domínguez Camargo aptly organizes the marvelous universe of the poem around the Virgin Mary's appearance to Loyola, Lucifer's (*Luzbel*'s) monologue and divine voices, resurrection and miracles. Unlike other Baroque epic writers, the Homeric entrance to Hades, later exemplified by the epic hero's descent to abysmal regions or his entering into a grotto, finds in Domínguez Camargo's poem a perfect biographical correspondence in Loyola's retreat to the cave of Manresa as narrated in his *vita*. Therefore, the poet updates an old gesture of seclusion used in medieval hagiography and romance that became desacralized during the Renaissance, later recovering its religious status in the Baroque era. Surprisingly, the poet's debt to romance is larger than a superficial reading of the poem would indicate. In *Poema Heroico*, the epic prophecy, differing from that of the secular or necromantic prediction, also acquires a distinctive dimension, after being redefined by the poet as Christian messages from the heavens.

In such an age of pictorial sensitivity and visual illusion as the Baroque, ecphrasis acquires great importance for the development of the epic. *Poema Heroico* is no exception to this rule, and thus it assimilates that technique by reiterating the Horatian adage *ut pictura poesis*. Two excellent essays have been written on the subject, one showing that the description of the crucifix in *Poema Heroico* (II.4:cxviii-cxxviii) replaces that of the warrior's shield, as we find it in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*; the other demonstrating that the description of Our Lady was done in full observance of Renaissance rules for the portrait (II.2:xxxv-xlvi; Gimbernat "Apeles"; Sabat de Rivers).

Epic poets always took pride in following the principles of *imitatio*; such is the case from Virgil to Domínguez Camargo. Voyages of the kind Ulysses takes in the *Odyssey* inevitably translate into journeys taken by Virgil's hero in the *Aeneid*. The natural impulse of the epic to expand its broad range of events leads to distant lands where adventures, changes of fortune and perils (*peripetiae*) seem to subdue that sense of an ending.

In *Poema Heroico* things are no less different, where voyages are converted into pilgrimages or are endowed with a certain feeling of religious duty or mission. Controlled by the same logic of expansion is a series of embedded stories in the poem, digressions that serve—so we are taught by poetic rules—as distractions from boredom or tiredness. Expansion, however, is a double sword in the heroic universe of the epic, for even if it is desirable in order to accommodate large number of events (as explained above), it can also be inconvenient. Unlike other poets of his day, or after, Ercilla was obsessed with brevity to the extent that he himself could no longer control it in *La Araucana*. He was so conscious of brevity that his allusions to it become commonplace in the poem. Equally, almost all of Ercilla's cantos contain a defense of brevity and an attack on prolixity. Tasso's rule of thumb with respect to excess, as seen before, once again applies here. To that end, Domínguez Camargo's intent is precariously achieved by an unavoidable inconsistency between his actions and words. There appear no self-referential instances in the poem where, like Ercilla, he openly rejects prolixity; but there is one passage in which, as Gimbernat de González perceptively notes, Domínguez Camargo appreciates the brevity and concision of the *Exercises* ("en poca plana mucha luz araba," II.4:cliv; "Breve selló volumen que intitula" *Ejercicios* II.4:clv; Gimbernat "Subversión" 10). Again, the discrepancy between the poet's words and actions cannot be overstated.

After Dante's monumental poem, a true epic can only be considered such if it displays a panoramic view of the world. Ercilla gives us a magnificent one (2.27), but before him there were others like Juan de Mena's *orbis pictus*, whose influence upon *Poema Heroico* becomes visible as soon as we reach the anaphoric series of phrases where that repetitive *vio* appears (2.5:cxcvi-ccvi). As a derivative of that all-encompassing attitude toward a global vision—and the best way to do it is from above—Domínguez Camargo also engages himself in cataloguing and enumeration in a gesture reminiscent of Aristotle, whose system of classification or *articulation*, became the hallmark of Scholasticism and, according to Barthes, was readily embraced by the Jesuits (52-53). As far as I know, there is no direct epic model in Book II, Canto 5 of *Poema Heroico*, in which a banquet is offered to Loyola after a long period of fasting. The cornucopia described by the poet as part of the dinner is unmistakably and exuberantly baroque.⁶ The absence of an immediate epic model, however, should not lead us to think that Domínguez Camargo's catalogue of vegetables and fruits, among other foods, is completely original. Enumerating these, if the practice began with Virgil, it was later revived by Renaissance poets, historians and chroniclers of the New World. In keeping with the tradition of pastoral or Utopian representations (Virgil's *Georgics* II) and a scientific curiosity, it is also worthwhile to compare those stanzas from *Poema Heroico* (1.1:li-lxviii; 2.5:clxxvi-clxxxiii) to Domingo Pereira

Bracamonte's *Banquete que Apolo hizo a los embaxadores del rey de Portugal, don Juan IV* (1642).

Hunting, or more specifically, hunting of mammals, is another commonplace within the heroic poetry tradition. Boars or wild pigs, bulls and deer are linked to the potential menace they represent to human beings, especially women; but also when the animal is large and aquatic, as is the case of the whale, it stands for an exotic and grandiose victory of man over nature. In Francisco de Terrazas's *Nuevo Mundo y Conquista* (sixteenth century) as well as in Manuel de Itaparica's *Descrição da Ilha de Itaparica* (c.1769) the hunting of the whale serves a double purpose: to perpetuate heroic poetry as a genre, and to embellish and exalt Latin American landscape. Domínguez Camargo might well have thought of this venatorial model when he reworked the tradition by presenting a piscatorial result: the fishing for tuna.⁷ The difference, however, between Domínguez Camargo's and Itaparica's treatment of this topic, along with the Colombian poet's enumerations, is that, as Gimbernat de González suggests, "no informan, no tienen acceso al poema como parte de la biografía, no están allí por una utilidad, más bien son la saturación de un espacio, el artificio pretender de un juego que lleva en sí mismo su finalidad. Su placer de ser exceso, de ser ruptura, se manifiesta en su propia función" ("Subversión" 17).

Hagiography

Two central ideas that have just been alluded to, biography and excess, will now bring us back to the subject of whether or not it is suitable to consider *Poema Heroico* an epic.⁸ I believe I have already given compelling reasons for accepting this poem within the tradition of the Renaissance and Baroque epic. However, now I would like to further explore Domínguez Camargo's fictionalizing of Ignatius of Loyola's biography in the poem.

If we are to have a clear understanding of how Loyola's *vita* fits into the general structure of *Poema Heroico*, first we must review both the tradition of hagiography in its highest moments in the Middle Ages and its significance during the Counter-Reformation. As André Jolles lucidly points out:

One can even tell at which moment the Legend [Hagiography] lost its universal vitality; this moment coincided with the end of the Middle Ages. The Legend lost its power in all phenomena called Reformation (or Reformations) at the same time one or another form was being affirmed. In his Schmalkaldic articles, Luther includes the saints under the item of the "anti-Christian abuses"; for him, the true Christian is already a saint and there does not exist any special category for virtu-

ous heroes. Virtue for Luther does not become objectified in the same manner in which it did before; it ceased to be corroborated by miracles, and the individual power of celestial beings is no longer recognized. (45)⁹

Perhaps the most important aspect of Jolles's definition of the Western Catholic Legend as a discursive type (*vita*), is the need that it has, as a model, to be imitated. As every legend does, the *vita* fragments "historical" reality into elements that carry a weight of imitativeness. The legend ignores "historical" reality only to know and to recognize virtue and miracle (31).

Until 1623-37, when canonization became regulated by Pope Urban VIII, the phenomenon of becoming a saint as it was in the Middle Ages had been spontaneous and original. Here, regulation of course means control, but it also means legitimation in the form of an ambitious collection of written biographies put together by Heribertus Rosweidus in what became known as the *Acta Sanctorum* (20). From this point on, the Catholic Church began to impose historical demands on hagiography that were previously unknown. Miracles now took on a status in the saint's *vita* not known during the Middle Ages. They also became the principal piece of evidence leading to sainthood. Similarly, the process of canonization became formal as well, starting to resemble the judicial process in its rigor and legality, both in the way the investigation of the saint's life was conducted and in how evidence was collected to corroborate reported miracles.

Thus, if the mental disposition (*Geistesbeschäftigung*) of *imitatio* had not been entirely eliminated, at least it had become secondary. In actuality, it only had its center of gravity shifted. After being debilitated by the Reformation, it continued to live on in other Catholic circles and again gained some strength during the seventeenth century. Imitativeness, according to Jolles, was shifted from the written text to visual media as part of a strategy to influence the eye that became extremely prevalent in the Baroque. How should we understand the fact that there were so many religious epic poems written in Latin America in a period of less than two hundred years? Besides Marco Girolamo Vida's *The Christiad* (1535) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme*, which inspired several poems, hagiographies too played a significant role. This desire to imitate a literary model leads to the emulation of an *exemplum*, the two becoming inextricably connected. The main differences, for instance, between Diego de Hojeda's *La Christiada* (1611) and Domínguez Camargo's *Poema Heroico* are formal and thematic, because both respond to the same appetite for exemplary behavior. It should not surprise us that Thomas À Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (1390-1440) for centuries had enjoyed such popularity, when precisely what it offers is a model to be followed.

Clearly, as Jolles intimates, exemplary models began to lose their efficacy in the sixteenth century. Therefore, a number of epic poems whose heroes are Christ, Mary or saints can be justified as an orchestrated effort by the Counter-Reformation to revive that lost tradition and to combat Protestant ideology. In the same spirit, the immediate occasion of *Poema Heroico* was the charge that Luther's precepts had to be attacked. Such ideological investment is so apparent in Book 5, Canto 1, that little doubt is left as to the poet's intentions. Along those lines, in Hojeda's *La Christiada* (VII:278) and in Itaparica's *Eustáquidos* (II:11) one also finds a similar tendency to defame Luther and equate him to Satan.

It has already been noted that many passages from Loyola's biographies have been distorted in *Poema Heroico*, an action that certainly affects the historical truth of Loyola's life (Gimbernat, "Subversión" 8). The Colombian poet wishes to make precisely the point that when biography, as a genre, is not perfectly delimited, and when it reconstructs the hero with traits that invite us to enter his life, then the saint's *vita* is no longer a biography but a *simple form* (*einfache Form*) (Jolles 37). How does Domínguez Camargo actualize the discursive form of hagiography or of the legend pertaining to Loyola's *vita*? He follows, of course, very closely the mental disposition of the saint's life accounts. For instance, a few days after being born, Loyola gives himself a Christian name (I.1:lvi). He travels tirelessly through the world converting pagans and writes a major piece of religious literature (*Exercises*). Miracles and supernatural visions are common in his life. In one word, Loyola fulfills all the requirements to become a saint. But how were his readers to be convinced of imitateness in Loyola's *vita*?

To be fully absorbed in the saint's examples in order to imitate them, says Jolles, the language of a *vita* must include *verbal gestures* (*sprachlichen Einzelgebärden*), "successes apprehended by concepts" (47) or elements such as an instrument of torture, celestial voices and supernatural appearances. These linguistic elaborations in *Poema Heroico* can be easily identified and are complemented by a second series of verbal gestures similar to the first: Mars's and Christ's appearances to Loyola to incite him to be the founder and the leader of the Jesuit Society (I.1:xxiv; 5.5:cxlviii, clxi-clxvi), Saint Peter's visit to bring the hero back to life (I.4:ccxxx-ccxxxviii), another visit, this time, by the Virgin Mary in Monserrate (2.2), a piece of one of his leg bones being severed (2.1), Loyola's vision of Christ's face (2.5:clxxxv-cxci), and Loyola's power to revive a young dead man with his prayers (4.1:xxx-xxxiii).

Domínguez Camargo could not deny the extent to which his poem turned away from epic heroism to sainthood. Quite apart from the impulsive and passionate epic hero, whose valor is measured in battles and moral situations, we are faced with a pale image of the true epic warrior. Loyola's battles fought as a soldier are passed over as insignificant in the

poem in order to save room for accounts of his suffering and humiliation after he is wounded and becomes convalescent. Eric Auerbach argues very convincingly that Biblical characters, and by extension the ones from legend,

are bearers of the divine will, and yet they are fallible, subject to misfortune and humiliation. . . . There is hardly one of them who does not, like Adam, undergo the deepest humiliation. . . . Humiliation and elevation go far deeper and higher than in Homer, and they belong basically together. The poor beggar Odysseus is only masquerading, but Adam is really cast down, Jacob really a refugee, Joseph really in the pit and then a slave to be bought and sold. But their greatness, rising out of humiliation, is almost superhuman and an image of God's greatness. (18)

From this perspective, we barely start reading Book 2 of *Poema Heroico* when we commence to see the hero ending his career as a military soldier. The poet's initial promise to make him an authentic warrior, like Mars, then fails. However, at a religious level, Loyola's battles are fought on a different and successful ground, where his enemies are Satan, Luther, and himself (before his conversion). His losses and humiliation always work in his favor. If in the classical epic there is not much nobility in this type of war, in the religious one, it occurs with a sense of purpose, ideological mission and, above, all pragmatism. These principles were all too dear to the Jesuit Society, which reached its peak in power and prestige in the 1600s and early 1700s. The expulsion of the Jesuits from Latin America in the second half of the eighteenth century coincided with the deterioration of their pedagogical and political institutions. This sense of decadence is brilliantly captured in *O Uruguai* (1769), by the Brazilian poet Basílio da Gama. This anti-Jesuit epic, which explicitly attacks Loyola's Society, demonstrates that a reinvigorated neo-Classical epic based on Renaissance models (i.e., Tasso, Ercilla) could not tolerate religious propaganda; and that a successful offensive by da Gama, a former member of the Society himself, was only possible with a higher and more innovative form of literature such as *O Uruguai*. Finally, da Gama's poem indicates a deep understanding of the social and political role played by the Jesuit Society and of its policies toward intensifying religious propaganda in Latin America during the 1700s. As to Domínguez Camargo, two fundamental questions must yet be posed to his modern readers. How can we save his poem from its ideological missteps? And if we are indeed able to do so, is it possible to cancel an ideological reading of *Poema Heroico* and replace it with an aesthetic one?

Notes

¹Remarks by Cavalchini and Samuel in their edition of Tasso's *Discorsi* xx.

²See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

³All quotations from the poem and its preface come from Torres Quintero's edition.

⁴For a discussion on the relationship of epic and lyrics as "genres" see Gregory Nagy, *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*.

⁵The intertextual relationship between the *Exercises* and *Poema Heroico* has been examined by Gimbernat de González "Expresión."

⁶The tradition of the banquet and the ensuing discussion of food and other subjects dates from Plato's *Symposium*, and from Ateneo (200 AD), the Greek grammarian and author of *Deipnosophistai* ("The Gastronomers"). Góngora's *Soledad primera*, however, was also likely invoked in some lines of this passage, as the poet had done previously. Compare stanza lii of *Poema Heroico* to lines 858-64 of *Soledad primera*.

⁷See other examples on pp. 69, 275. This tradition, being so extensive, covers much ground, from the Bible (Jonah and the whale) to Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

⁸Observe four additional cases: the exhortation of his soldiers by Loyola (1.3:cxli-cxlii), the hero's epithets (1.3:clxv; 4.1:iii), his Renaissance education as a man of arms and letters (1.2:cxii), and his innate inclination to be a soldier (I.1:xviii).

⁹All translations of Jolles's passages are mine and are based on the German and Portuguese edition.

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um anônimo, natural da ilha de Itaparica, termo da cidade da Bahia . . . / Descrição da ilha de Itaparica, termo da cidade da Bahia, da qual se fez menção no canto quinto.
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