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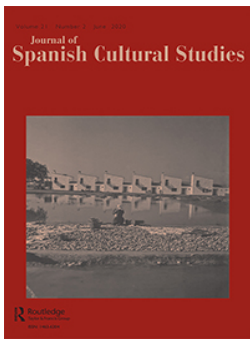


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Cosmographical warfare: secrecy and heroism in Juan de Miramontes's *Armas antárticas*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the historical and cultural significance of cosmography in the early modern Spanish Empire, as seen in Juan de Miramontes Zuázola's seventeenth-century epic poem, *Armas antárticas* (2006). It takes the description of a pilot in the harbor of Callao, Peru, on the eve of Francis Drake's arrival at the port as its point of departure. The essay examines the portrayal of cosmography as a "secret science", to use the words of María M. Portuondo (2009). The poem suggests that Drake's surprise attack was made possible by cosmographical knowledge. It also depicts cosmography as a countermeasure to combat future pirate incursions by sending the cosmographer Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa on a data-collecting expedition to the Strait of Magellan. Consistent with the important role accorded to cosmography in matters of the state, *Armas antárticas* also makes out the practitioners of cosmography to be heroic in their own right. This departs markedly from the conventional notions of epic heroism, whether it be of the traditional, chivalric sort or of the early modern, gunpowder sort. Such a perspective is in line with the new kind of epic heroism pioneered by Luis Camões in his sixteenth-century epic, *Os Lusíadas* (1973), as analyzed by Ayesha Ramachandran (2015), but it also carries with it negative connotations that blur the distinction between seafarers like Ferdinand Magellan and Francis Drake. It was sailors like Drake, moreover, who foiled attempts to keep cosmography secret, prompting a reorientation of its strategic use away from secrecy and toward controlled dissemination.

KEYWORDS

Cosmography; Spanish empire; epic poetry; Francis Drake; Ferdinand Magellan

Introduction

In his epic *Armas antárticas* (2006), Juan de Miramontes Zuázola describes Francis Drake's arrival at the Peruvian port of Callao in 1579 as an interruption of the cosmographical observations being conducted by a pilot from the stern of his anchored ship.

Puesto en su popa estaba contemplando
el curso del zodiaco y planetas
un plástico piloto, astrologando
sobre sus líneas oblicas o retas;

pero sobresaltóle el rumor cuando
 sintió de los britanos las saetas
 que tiran a la nave más vecina
 por do en su barca vino a la marina. (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 639a–h)

The episode resembles examples of a poetic trope that can be seen in many texts before and after Miramontes's epic.¹ In Juan Boscán's sixteenth-century poem, *Leandro* (1999), for example, the forlorn Hero looks out from her tower on the Hellespont and contemplates the stars while waiting for Leander to swim across the strait. Likewise, in the seventeenth century, John Milton writes in his "Il Penseroso" (1998) of a meditative thinker with a lantern in a tower late at night. And even much later in the nineteenth century, the poetic voice in Charles Baudelaire's poem, "Landscape" (1993), surveys the skyline of Paris from his mansard, comparing himself to an astrologer and the spires of the city to the masts of ships. These portrayals of the solitary contemplation of the sky from an elevated position counterpose the perceived celestial order and predictability traditionally associated with the heavens to the disorder and arbitrariness of human affairs. They contrast what the poets consider to be spiritual matters of enduring significance symbolized by the heavens with the earthly issues of fleeting importance, and they position the observer as a mediator between the two planes. Miramontes's depiction of the pilot participates in this tradition, as he observes the stars and planets from the highest deck of the ship, while, unbeknownst to him, the English pirate Francis Drake stealthily approaches. The whizzing of the English arrows interrupts the pilot in his contemplation, and he rushes to warn the viceroy, Francisco de Toledo, in Lima. In Miramontes's text, the mediating role of the pilot takes on special political urgency, as he is the one who must inform the highest Spanish authority of the realm that interlopers have arrived on his shores. His liminal position symbolizes, in fact, the ambivalent power to undermine or strengthen the Spanish Empire that *Armas antárticas* attributes to cosmography throughout its narrative. In this article, the pilot and the pirate provide perspectives from which to examine the historical, cultural and theoretical significance of cosmography in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish Empire, as seen through epic poetry. The pilot's stargazing constitutes a brief instance of what Ayesha Ramachandran calls a "cosmographic meditation" (2015, 109), and though not quite representative of the katasopic perspective of which she writes, it does clearly demonstrate the "kinship between epic poetry and cosmography" (108) in the early modern period.

Cosmography as secret science

In the dedication of his 1538 *Libro de cosmographía* to Charles V, Pedro de Medina promotes cosmography as a tool useful for understanding God's creation and humans' place in it as depicted in the scriptures, natural history and poetry (1972, 159–160). He defines cosmography as: "the description of the world: that is, of the *cosmos*, the Greek for world, and *grapho*, for description. Cosmography is thus a description of the world. And in this description are included geography and hydrography" (1972, 165). This "description of the world" relied on many kinds of observations, both qualitative and quantitative, but the pilot's contemplation of the heavens reflects the particular role that astronomical observations played in cosmography. His stargazing ("astrologando" [Miramontes

Zuázola 2006, v. 639c]) recalls the kinds of basic astronomical principles expounded in cosmographical texts like Medina's and in Sacrobosco's influential *Sphere* (1949).² In Sacrobosco's text, and in many others based on it, the dome of the sky is described as crisscrossed by imaginary lines, two of which, the declination and right ascension, correspond to the degrees of latitude and longitude on the globe. Another, known as the ecliptic, traces the apparent path that the sun, moon and planets traverse through the constellations of the zodiac (López Piñero 1979, 43–48). In the passage from *Armas antárticas* above, the ecliptic ("el curso del zodiaco y planetas" [Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 639b]) and right ascension are referenced in the allusion to the oblique and perpendicular lines ("linias oblicas y retas" [2006, v. 639d]) to which the pilot is so attentive from the stern of his ship. He is observing the sky through the celestial coordinate system, and, in that regard, his description evokes Theodor De Bry's famous depiction of Magellan as a cosmographer (Figure 1). In De Bry's engraving, Magellan is portrayed in armor and surrounded by artillery as he contemplates those same oblique and perpendicular lines as modeled in an armillary sphere. As discussed later, this image fuses the traditional and emerging conceptions of the hero that are also evoked in Miramontes's epic. Most important for now, however, is how the depiction of the pilot casts him as part of the cosmographical enterprise of the Spanish Empire, and how it thrusts cosmography into the spotlight just as Drake arrives in Callao.



Figure 1. *Inventio Maris Magallanici* by Theodor de Bry. Courtesy of Rare Books & Manuscripts, Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Penn State University Libraries.

At this crucial juncture in the poem, readers are reminded that cosmography was at the center of the struggle between states for control of territory, resources and people in the sixteenth century. As María M. Portuondo asserts, Spanish cosmography served a decidedly political purpose: “The work of Spanish royal cosmographers was science with a mission, deployed solely for the benefit of the state, meaning specifically the Habsburg monarchy” (2009, 3). It was for this reason that authorities cautioned that it needed to be handled with great care, and Portuondo writes that by the middle of the sixteenth century:

the threats posed by foreign and internal enemies moved the monarchy to consider cosmographical work the equivalent of today’s state secret. . . . The Spanish monarchy took the defensive posture of censoring and prohibiting the circulation of maps, geographic descriptions, and historical account[s] about the Indies for strategic military and political reasons. The rationale behind the secrecy policy was very straightforward. If documents that revealed the geodesic coordinates, geographical features, coastal outlines, hydrography, and natural resources of the New World were produced and circulated publicly, these, in the hands of enemies, could be used to reach the New World and inflict harm on the crown’s patrimony and the peoples the state had the obligation to protect. (2009, 6–7)

Miramontes’s portrayal of Drake’s entry into the coastal waters of Spanish America exemplifies this thinking. Accounts of his circumnavigation were commonplace in Hispanic epic poems of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.³ Most of them record the shock and disbelief of both the colonists and authorities that someone could threaten such an ostensibly remote and inaccessible locale as the Spanish American coasts of the South Sea, as the Pacific Ocean was then known. It seemed more likely that the invaders were insurrectionists based in the New World than someone from Europe. For this reason, the pilot makes no claim as to their origins, telling the viceroy, “no sé si deste reino naturales / o por el mar piratas extranjeros” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 641c–d). It was almost inconceivable that a foreigner could have found his way to Lima because the trip was thought to presuppose a passage through the Strait of Magellan. The geography of this strait was, indeed, a secret. At the time of Drake’s traversing it, the waterway was poorly known to Spanish cosmographers, and consequently to the rest of Europe as well (Portuondo 2009, 195). In *La Araucana*, Alonso de Ercilla famously notes the apparent closure of the strait he calls the “secreta senda” (Ercilla 2005, v. I.9.3) after Magellan had first passed through it in 1520. He attributes the ignorance regarding the strait to several possible causes, including human error in measuring its latitude, the lack of competent pilots and a geological upheaval that blocked its entrance. Such speculations were possible in 1569, the year in which the first part of *La Araucana* was published, but Ercilla’s musings about a closed strait would have appeared as mere wishful thinking only ten years later when Drake showed up on the doorstep of Lima.⁴

Some forty years after the first installment of Ercilla’s epic, Juan de Miramontes (1567–1610) completed *Armas antárticas* in Lima, but it was not published until the twentieth century. After arriving in the Indies at the age of nineteen, Miramontes spent much of his life in the Armada del Mar del Sur pursuing English pirates and protecting treasure shipments on the Pacific coast of Spanish America before finally settling down in Lima toward the end of his life. Inspired by these experiences, he also found time to write his poem, which features attacks by English pirates such as John Oxenham, Thomas

Cavendish and Francis Drake (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, 15–32). His account of Drake stresses the importance of cosmographical information in Drake's initial conception of his raids. From the start, when Drake approaches Queen Elizabeth I of England in the epic, he presents her with cosmographical maps: "Que como el arte de la mar profeso, / y en ella en tu servicio real milito, / en cartas cosmografias tengo espreso / todo el viaje, el derrotero escrito. / Esto me incita a un próspero suceso, / por esto a que me des favor te incito" (2006, vv. 211a–f). His "cartas cosmografias" are those maps, which, under the influence of Ptolemy's *Geography* recovered in the fifteenth century, depicted selected portions of the land and sea within a grid of latitude and longitude. The coordinates for such maps were supplied by astronomical observations of the sort made by the Spanish pilot in the port of Callao (Portuondo 2009, 24). The "derrotero" (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 211d) to which Drake alludes could refer to a line drawn on his maps that traces the course he plans to follow. However, the participle "escrito" (2006, v. 211d) suggests that the "derrotero" more likely refers to a rutter, or verbal description of his proposed route and the topographical features that would appear along the way.⁵ Following this interpretation, Drake presents to his queen two distinct sources of evidence to persuade her, a mathematically based map and a verbal description, and this bimodal approach to geography was typical of Renaissance cosmography (Portuondo 2009, 20–38). It reflects the fact that, despite the perceived certainty that mathematics and astronomy were thought to confer on navigation, a traditional written description of a course continued to be important to seafaring in the sixteenth century.⁶

After presenting her with his cosmographical information, Drake then relates to his queen Magellan's voyage, the inspiration for his project. His subsequent account (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 212a–273h) of the complete circumnavigation of the *Victoria* constitutes one of the few, if not the only, detailed narratives of Magellan's expedition in early modern Hispanic epic poetry. The only part of his account that diverges from Magellan's course is his description of the Pacific coast of Spanish America, from Patagonia to California (2006, vv. 222a–232h). Magellan never saw these places for himself because he "[g]obernó al noroeste" (2006, v. 222a) after passing through the strait. Drake not only planned to see these places but also to sack them on his way north before rendezvousing with John Oxenham in Panama.⁷ This detour was the essence of Drake's plan, and his exhaustive description of the coast includes numerous toponyms, relative distances, climatic conditions, geological features and ethnographic characterizations of the inhabitants. Miramontes was intimately familiar with the Pacific coast, and his own personal experience likely provided details for his description of it, but within the fiction of the poem, how are readers to account for Drake's extensive information about the area? The suggestion is, of course, that he acquired his knowledge from Spanish cosmographical sources, and the portrayal of his plan thus implicitly reinforces the perceived need to keep all such knowledge from political and economic rivals. Drake's exploitation of cosmographical information exemplifies the fears expressed by Martín Enriquez, the viceroy of Mexico, in a letter to Philip II of Spain. Portuondo writes that the viceroy "wrote to the king expressing concern that the descriptions of the Caribbean coasts and the Sea of Campeche had such 'precision and clarity' that it could cause 'inconveniences' if published since the coast was frequented by pirates" (2009, 201).

The proposed solution to this intelligence leak in *Armas antárticas* is also cosmography. Francisco de Toledo turns to the cosmographer Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa: “para que el sitio, el rumbo y el altura / en cartas cosmografias demarcado, / reconocido el paso y angostura, / fuese de fuerza urgente reparado, / medio (según discurso) que asegura / no sea de piratas infestado / el Sur, apresidiando la garganta / que ha dado de inquietud materia tanta” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 1512a–h). The viceroy reasoned that if they were going to prevent further pirate attacks, they simply needed more information about this crucial waterway so that they could control the passage of ships through it. Sarmiento de Gamboa thus creates “cartas cosmografias” (2006, v. 1512b) to counter Drake’s own “cartas cosmografias” (2006, v. 211c) that could be used eventually to settle the strait and to fortify the entrance. He is portrayed as diligently carrying out his cosmographical mission, and his observations draw on mathematics, geography and cartography: “Con gran curiosidad, cuanto visita / señala, sonda, arrumba, derrotea, / gradúa, estampa, pinta y facilita / la cierta relación que dar desea; / y, de quien la intratable tierra habita, / seis bárbaros tomó, para que vea / nuestro invicto Philipe, rey segundo, / la gente que produce el fin del mundo” (2006, vv. 1520a–h). Sarmiento de Gamboa’s work records the contours of the shore, his route, the water depth and the latitude, and he draws (“pinta” [2006, v. 1520c]) a map in an effort to produce a true cosmographical description (“la cierta relación” [2006, v. 1520d]) of the strait. The ancient theory of geographical determinism is also invoked to justify Sarmiento de Gamboa’s taking of six captives so that Philip II can see what kind of people the region produced. His task is to offset nearly sixty years during which information about the Strait of Magellan was patchy and obscure (Portuondo 2009, 195), a cosmographical ignorance that made the vital passage vulnerable to piratical exploitation. The poem goes on to recount the disastrous attempt made to settle the strait and subsequent loss of nearly every colonist to hunger and exposure. It was, in fact, the English pirate, Thomas Cavendish, who rescued the only Spanish survivor from the shores of the strait as he followed Drake’s example. Cavendish’s action stands out all the more when readers consider that, from one perspective, the Spanish acted as a band of robbers in their abduction of the inhabitants of the strait.⁸ Their captive taking also reminds readers how cosmography was used as a tool to legitimate and perpetrate violence in places previously unknown to Europeans. And despite Francisco de Toledo’s convictions, the poem exposes how decidedly ineffective cosmography could be as a countermeasure to English piracy. Good cosmographical information clearly could not guarantee the success of a settlement, and in a bitter turn of events for the Spanish, the same kind of pirate whose passage the colony was meant to prevent ended up rescuing its only survivor.

Cosmography as heroic science

In a conflict portrayed as being waged through cosmography, *Armas antárticas* symbolically presents those who wield that science as a new kind of hero in a war of information.⁹ The description of the pilot evokes a venerable and highly influential episode from book eight of the *Aeneid*, in which the battle of Actium is described as it appears on Aeneas’s shield. Vulcan, the divine blacksmith commissioned to fabricate an engraved shield for the Trojan hero, prophetically depicts in metal this decisive battle of the Roman civil war. The narrator opens the description of this portion of the shield:

Haec inter tumidi late maris ibat imago
 aurea, sed fluctu spumabant caerulea cano,
 et circum argento clari delphines in orbem
 aequora verrebant caudis aestumque secabant.
 in medio classis aeratas, Actia bella,
 cernere erta, totumque instructo Marte videres
 fervere Leucaten auroque effulgere fluctus.
 hinc Augustus agens Italos in proelia Caesar
 cum patribus populoque, penatibus et magnis dis,
stans celsa in puppi, geminas cui tempora flammam
 laeta vomunt patriumque aperitur vertice sidus. (Virgil 2000, vv. 8.671–681; emphasis added)

Among these scenes flowed wide the likeness of the swelling sea, all gold, but the blue water foamed with white billows, and round about dolphins, shining in silver, swept the seas with their tails in circles, and cleft the tide. In the centre could be seen bronze ships – the battle of Actium; you could see all Leucate aglow with War's array, and the waves ablaze with gold. *On the one side Augustus Caesar stands on the lofty stern*, leading Italians to strife, with Senate and People, the Penates of the state, and all the mighty gods; his auspicious brows shoot forth a double flame, and on his head dawns his father's star. (Virgil 2000, vv. 8.671–681; emphasis added)

The poem depicts Caesar Augustus as standing on the stern of his war galley, overseeing his soldiers as they prepare to launch into battle. For David Quint, this ekphrastic episode effectively encapsulates Augustus's imperial ideology, and it is crucial to understanding the legacy that Virgil's poem had on the ensuing poetic tradition. According to Quint, instead of a civil war battle, the scene presents the victorious Augustus as leader of a unified, homogenous force of Italians over Marc Antony and his motley bands of foreign usurpers (1993, 23, 26–27). The poem ascribes to these foes the negative traits conventionally imputed to Easterners; thus, they appear as disordered and barbaric, and they are subordinated to the rule of Cleopatra, described as fickle (Quint 1993, 28–29). The portrayal of her flight from the battle scene becomes a model for subsequent depictions of the defeated, and the romance genre, with its aimless episodic plot, becomes its principal narrative form. By contrast, the epic genre becomes the narrative form of choice for the imperial victors, like Augustus, who are portrayed as part of an ordered, patriarchal and inevitable history (Quint 1993, 31–41). As Quint argues, this tendency, “[i]s best seen in the epic tradition that followed Virgil and that would repeatedly invoke, imitate and rewrite the central scene on Aeneas's shield” (1993, 31). He cites a passage from *Os Lusíadas* that prophesies the imminent expansion of Portugal's commercial empire (Camões 1973, vv. 2.53–54) as an example of this rewriting. Another Iberian epic that he does not discuss, Juan Latino's *Austrias Carmen* (2014), provides further evidence of the widespread influence of Virgil's depiction of Actium and accompanying ideology. In this neo-Latin text published in 1573, Juan de Austria, the commander of the Holy League, leads the Christian forces against their Ottoman counterparts at the Battle of Lepanto, and he is described: “*Stans celsa in puppi* classem deducere felix, / ausus qui Turcas Parthosque lacescere Marte, / despiciens nomen magni dominique Selini” (“he stands joyfully on the lofty stern and guides the fleet. He defies the Turks and Parthians to take him on in battle, scorning the name of their mighty ruler Selim” [Latino 2014, vv. 141–143]). Here Latino quotes Virgil's description of Augustus (“*stans celsa in puppi*” [2000, v. 8.680]) verbatim, and applies it to Juan de Austria, as he, like the Roman emperor,

prepares to engage in naval battle with his foes not far from the site of Actium. As in the *Aeneid*, Latino presents the conflict as one that pits Western forces (Christians from the Holy League) against Eastern ones (Turks and Parthians), and like Augustus, Juan de Austria comes out of the battle victorious.

The examples from *Os Lusíadas* and *Austrias Carmen* attest to extensive familiarity not only with the episode from the *Aeneid* but also with the political significance of its representation for early modern empire and epic. Given this, and Miramontes's imitation of the *Aeneid* in other passages of his poem, the subtle evocation of Augustus at Actium in the description of the pilot at Callao calls for further scrutiny. Like Virgil's Augustus, the pilot is stationed on the stern of his ship ("stans celsa in puppi" [Virgil 2000, v. 8.680]; "puesto en su popa" [Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 639a]) over whom stars appear ("patriumque aperitur vertice sidus" [Virgil 2000, v. 681]; "contemplando / el curso del zodiaco y planetas" [Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 639a–b]) while enemies attack by sea ("hinc ope barbarica variisque Antonius armis" [Virgil 2000, v. 8.685]; "sintió de los britanos las saetas" [Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 639f]). From the opposing side, Drake sacks a ship at bay, but promptly flees, giving his sails to the wind ("larga a su navío / las velas y prosigue su viaje" [Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 681e–f]), much like Cleopatra ("ipsa videbatur ventis regina vocatis / vela dare et laxos iam iamque immittere funis" [Virgil 2000, vv. 8.707–708]). Thus in his resemblance to Cleopatra, the portrayal of Drake fits into the mold of those defeated victims of empire, even though he manages to sack the Spanish galleon, *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, and easily elude the pursuit of a feeble, improvised fleet of ships. Where *Armas antárticas* significantly diverges from Virgil's scene of Actium, however, is the exalted place accorded to an ordinary pilot, elevated to the position corresponding to that of the Roman emperor and general.

Unlike Augustus, who leads his forces into conflict ("agens..." [Virgil 2000, v. 8.678]) and later is celebrated as a war hero, the pilot contemplates the stars and is unable to mount a counterattack. The poem thus replaces an active general with a passive cosmographer, and the symbolism of this substitution is important for what the poem has to say about the historical changes to empire building. From one perspective, cosmography constitutes a distraction that allows the pirates to launch their attack before the pilot is aware of them. Readers could conclude that Miramontes is using the situation of the pilot symbolically to criticize Spanish American authorities for being too distracted and unprepared to defend their territories. This is, after all, the kind of critique leveled by Juan de Castellanos in his *Discurso del capitán Francisco Drake* (1921), which narrates the attacks of Francis Drake in Spanish America. As Emiro Martínez-Osorio explains, "Castellanos viewed piracy ... primarily as a side effect of the Spanish Crown's policy of appointing favorites, nobles, or university-trained bureaucrats to the most coveted posts in the administration of the New World" (2016, 63). Martínez-Osorio goes on to argue that Castellanos "espouses the restoration of martial values and the bravery of conquistadores as antidotes to the mounting threat of English maritime aggressions and the emasculating effects of commerce and bureaucracy" (2016, 41). Similarly, would not a military officer have prevented or at least responded more effectively to the English pirates than a pilot-cosmographer distracted by his stargazing? While it is true that, like Castellanos, Miramontes refers to the unpreparedness of the Spanish American authorities on many occasions, his poem also suggests that the openness of the sea makes piracy nearly impossible to contain.¹⁰ The officers of the fleet dispatched to capture Drake repeatedly allude to the basic problem of not

knowing where to direct their search, a quandary expressed in terms of cosmographical ignorance.¹¹ As discussed above, the poem later depicts better cosmographical knowledge as a potential response to piracy. Thus, whereas Castellanos supports a traditional view that regarded the military as the most effective instrument for building and maintaining empire, Miramontes sees things differently. He continues to value preparedness to use force against adversaries, but he also acknowledges the limited effectiveness of military tactics against piracy. His poem suggests that cosmography could be weaponized against threats to the Spanish Empire and, even more unconventionally, that its cosmographer-pilots could be considered heroic in their own right.

This vision of heroism is most clearly demonstrated in the portrayal of Magellan and how it contrasts with that of his sponsoring monarch, Charles V. In describing the commissioning of Magellan, Drake alludes to Charles V as a conquering knight: “Siendo el que dio a la fama maravilla, / con una y otra heroica y alta hazaña, / Rey de la invicta, armígera Castilla / y emperador agosto de Alemaña, / Carlos Quinto, mandó que de Sevilla, / ... / Magallanes saliese” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 212a–e, g). Drake presents Charles V as famous for his many “heroic and high feats” as king of the “invincible, arm-bearing Castile”. One such deed was his leadership in the Battle of Mühlberg, which the Italian painter Titian captured in his famous *Portrait of Charles V on Horseback* (1548) (Figure 2). In this painting, “Charles is portrayed both as the ideal Christian knight and military Defender of the Catholic faith” and he “appears as a latter-day St George, or King Arthur, or some other hero of chivalric romance, riding out to do battle with the forces of evil” (Humphrey 2007, 158). Drake’s description of Charles V as the victorious nobleman on the battlefield evokes the same traditional martial trappings of Titian’s painting, but this was, of course, an obsolete vision of sixteenth-century warfare. While some Spanish poets continued to use such antiquated chivalric models for their depictions of war in epics, a different class of soldier-poets adopted a more realistic approach in their “gunpowder epics” that reflected the “plebeianization” of warfare waged by common soldiers with firearms.¹² Having served as a soldier in the Armada del Mar del Sur after arriving in the Indies from Spain, Miramontes would have belonged to the same social group that took this new approach to writing epics, and readers might expect him to adopt a similar attitude regarding the reality of war. And although Miramontes does acknowledge the use of firearms in the conflict with the inhabitants of Cebu, the basis for his portrayal of Magellan as heroic conforms neither to the traditional nor to the modern mode of martial combat. Instead, Drake regards him as heroic for his thinking, referring to him as “aquel varón de heroico pensamiento” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 210f), which sharply contrasts with the “una y otra heroica y alta hazaña” (2006, v. 212b) attributed to Charles V only two stanzas later. Magellan did not make a name for himself with his martial prowess, and, in fact, when he did engage in armed conflict on Cebu, he was summarily killed by a poisoned arrow shot by an anonymous islander. Rather, his thinking is supposedly what makes him heroic, by which Drake means Magellan’s bold plan to locate the still unknown passage from the Atlantic to the South Sea. This idea, moreover, is portrayed as inextricably tied to his knowledge of cosmography and depends on taking measurements and making astronomical observations. Like the Spanish pilot at Callao, Magellan, the “gran piloto lusitano” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, v. 222b), “iba por su discurso astrologando” (2006, v. 233c), finding his way by reference to the stars, as he sailed westward into the South Sea. Along the way, he recorded the contours of the South American



Figure 2. *Carlos V at the Battle of Mühlberg* by Titian. Courtesy of Museo del Prado/Art Resource, NYC.

coast on charts (2006, vv. 216c–d) and in the strait, “[c]incuenta y dos y medio son los grados / en que la demarcó por cierta altura” (2006, vv. 218a–b). Of course, the history of his death precludes a heroic portrait of Magellan triumphant on the battlefield, but what is interesting is that, despite this, Miramontes still insists on remarking on his heroism. In his portrait of Magellan, then, Miramontes is acknowledging a kind of heroism that is also attested in *Os Lusíadas*, another epic similarly dedicated to the construction of overseas empire. As Ramachandran writes:

Camões introduces the root verb that will characterize his protagonists – *atrever-se*

(to dare, to venture) – which associates their brand of heroism with boldness, audacity, and insolence (later linked to the *atreuimento* of crossing from the Atlantic into the Indian Ocean). These epithets, associated since antiquity with the female quality of *mêtis* (cunning) rather than the male *bie* (strength), foreground intellectual capabilities rather than physical might and foreshadow the poem's feminization of the epic mission. (2015, 122)

In *Os Lusíadas*, this intellectual heroism crystalizes in the portrayal of Vasco da Gama's cosmographical knowledge and practice, as when he lands in Africa and hauls out his astrolabe to determine his location (1973, vv. 5.25–26). This passage was, in fact, likely a source of inspiration for Miramontes's depiction of Magellan passing through the strait. Following Camões's example, then, Miramontes carves out a heroic role for those involved in the cosmographical construction of a new kind of empire that does not rely exclusively on military conquest.¹³ As Ramachandran observes of the Portuguese: "This new, modern *imperium* is based not on territorial expansion but on knowledge of the natural world – not solely on the subjection of foreign peoples, but on a mastery of the elements" (2015, 116). This should not obscure the fundamental role that navigation and cosmography played in facilitating the violence of overseas colonial expansion, but the poem does suggest that, in the new conception of empire as described by Ramachandran, the European perception of heroism is no longer strictly a function of military triumph alone.¹⁴

Nevertheless, this alternative form of heroism, with its perceived feminine quality, is traditionally regarded with suspicion and even contempt. Its negative connotations can be seen in other texts of the period, in which "heroico pensamiento" is associated with what are depicted as unruly and untrustworthy women. For example, in the sixteenth-century tragedy, *La gran Semíramis*, by Cristóbal de Virués, "heroico pensamiento" (2003, v. 152) is attributed to the queen early in the play for discerning a weakness in the enemy's fortification, which is later successfully exploited to capture the city. This clever thinking, however, is only an inherent part of what is portrayed as her conniving, duplicitous and lascivious character. The misogynous portrayal of Semíramis exemplifies the perceived feminine wiles sometimes associated with this form of heroism, as Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant explain in their classic study: "Certain aspects of *mêtis* tend to associate it with the disloyal trick, the perfidious lie, treachery – all of which are the despised weapons of women and cowards" (1978, 13). Magellan's "heroico pensamiento" is modernized, as it is couched in the sixteenth-century science of cosmography, but it still carries all the negative, misogynous connotations of *mêtis* displayed in characters from antiquity to Virués's queen. Moreover, the craftiness of Semíramis's thinking is a hallmark of traditional perceptions of pirates and representations of them in epic poems, and it further blurs the line between the discoverer sailing for Spain and corsair sailing for England. Drake's scheming and plotting, for example, leads to his formulation of a plan to seize the riches of Spanish America: "Máquinas revolviendo y fantasías / en su grande y maduro entendimiento, / anduvo vacilando algunos días / en cómo ejecutar pueda su intento" (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 204a–d). Drake's machinations in his "maduro entendimiento" (2006, 204b) evoke Magellan's own "heroico pensamiento" (2006, v. 210f), by which the Portuguese mariner found an entrepreneurial solution to the question of how best to extend the commercial interests of the Spanish Empire.¹⁵ Similarly, Drake's mocking attitude when he seized the Spanish galleon, *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, in 1579, had become an enduring part of his myth in Hispanic epic poetry. Miramontes describes him marking the stolen silver as accounted for in the ledger of the ship

(2006, 698a–d), recalling the perception of *mêtis* as “the result of cheating since the rules of the game have been disregarded” (Detienne and Vernant 1978, 13). This flouting of the “rules of the game”, which was also portrayed in Lope de Vega’s *La Dragontea*, earned the disapproval of the narrators, but it also seemed to reflect some begrudging admiration.¹⁶ Magellan, too, flouted the customary rules of trade in Cebu and boldly took what did not belong to him on the island, but unlike Drake, he paid for it with his life. At bottom, what both seafarers had in common was their contemplation of the relation between commerce, coercion, cosmography and empire.¹⁷

Conclusion

Throughout this article, the pilot at the port of Callao has served as a reference point for examining the portrayal of cosmography and its perceived significance in *Armas antárticas*. The pilot’s engagement in basic cosmographical activities just as Drake and his men arrive has been understood here as symbolic of the political importance of this science and its role in European rivalries for dominance over distant shores. Drake’s detailed description of the voyage of Magellan, and especially of the South American coastline that the Portuguese sailor did not follow, validates the policy of the Spanish crown for much of the sixteenth century that sought to keep cosmographical information secret. The poem suggests that the acquisition of this information facilitated and spurred Drake’s own voyage to plunder Spanish colonial possessions and the ships that plied their trade routes. Cosmographical information is also portrayed as a potential countermeasure to piracy, but its effectiveness remains in doubt. The Viceroy of Peru sends out the royal cosmographer, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, to collect more cosmographical data about the Strait of Magellan in an effort to shore up its defenses, but the settlement that results from his reconnaissance fails dramatically. For his part, the pilot’s knowledge of cosmography, evoked in the reference to his astronomical observations of the celestial spheres, demonstrates the assimilation of his practical knowledge into the formal science of cosmography. The poem also depicts the pilot as symbolic of a kind of heroism made possible by cosmographical knowledge and the power that this knowledge confers. This culminates in the portrayal of Magellan, the professed inspiration for Drake, whose thinking is described as heroic and contrasts starkly with the more traditional chivalric heroism ascribed to his royal sponsor, Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

However, the perception of cosmography was changing while Miramontes was writing, and the new attitudes toward this science may also be brought to bear on interpretations of his poem. As Portuondo has shown, the secrecy policy of the Spanish crown was indicative of a view that regarded cosmography as a source of instrumental and sensitive information useful for political and economic purposes (2009, 260). This was characteristic of Philip II’s outlook, but his heir took a decidedly different approach. Portuondo writes, “For Philip III, geographical knowledge was most valuable if it could be deployed, albeit properly contextualized, to create a public image of Spanish domination and prestige” (2009, 260). Iberian epic poets had understood this long before Philip III came to power. In Camões’s *Os Lusíadas* and later in Ercilla’s *La Araucana*, poetic mappaemundi showcased the global reach of the Portuguese and Spanish Empires and the control their monarchies exerted on distant places and peoples.¹⁸ In *Armas antárticas*, Drake’s narration of Magellan’s expedition can be interpreted similarly as a celebration of the extension of the

Spanish Empire and the feats supported by its monarchs. By describing what Magellan did not see, Drake may be indicating where he intends to go and what happens when cosmographical information falls into the hands of pirates. But by the turn of the seventeenth century, that ship had sailed, and there was no going back to a time when only the Spanish possessed the cosmographical secrets of Spanish America. Again, as Portuondo puts it, “Spanish territories had been objects of repeated incursions by the English and French, a pattern that would soon be followed by the Dutch. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, keeping geographical information secret was becoming an increasingly futile exercise” (2009, 264). In this way, the poem attests both to the utility of cosmography to empire as well as the ultimate futility of keeping it secret from pirates like Francis Drake and many others that follow in his wake.

Notes

1. Following Firbas’s edition, quotes of Miramontes’s text refer to stanzas by number and lines by letter.
2. Portuondo writes that “[t]he *Sphere* taught generations of future cosmographers the principles of projecting celestial circles onto the earthly sphere. . . . Its language became the language of cosmography” (2009, 28).
3. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, descriptions of his expedition appear in Lope de Vega’s *La Dragontea* (2007), Martín del Barco Centenera’s *Argentina y conquista del Río de la Plata* (1998) and Juan de Castellanos’s *Discurso del capitán Draque* (1921).
4. See also Firbas’s comments in the introduction to the poem on the initial mistaken perception that Peru was immune from pirate attack due to its geographical isolation (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, 86–87). Below, quotes from his introduction appear with reference to Miramontes and the page number.
5. Among its various meanings, *derrotero* can refer to the “[d]irección que se da por escrito para un viaje de mar” or the “[l]ibro que contiene estos caminos o derrotas” (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* [2001], s.v. “derrotero”). Portuondo defines *rutter*, or *derrota* (2009, 51n82).
6. Portuondo discusses the “assurances” (2009, 57) that astronomy was thought to provide pilots, but she cautions that “[a]ny study that privileges the ‘grid’ and spatial thinking as a precondition of modernity needs also to take into account the prevalence and popularity of descriptive geographies as another way of describing space” (2009, 34).
7. Miramontes ahistorically portrays these two independent expeditions as part of a coordinated operation (2006, 84–85).
8. As Lane writes, “a literal interpretation of our current legal and dictionary definitions of piracy could cast much of the European conquest of the Americas as piracy” (1998, xv).
9. I am indebted to Elizabeth Wright for pointing out the similarities between the following passages from the *Aeneid* and Juan Latino’s *Austrias Carmen* and the pilot described in *Armas antárticas*.
10. See Miramontes Zuázola (2006, vv. 641h, 680a–h, 712a–d, 735h).
11. See Miramontes Zuázola (2006, vv. 718a–h, 721a–h, 728a–h).
12. See Martínez’s study, and especially chapter 2, in which he writes, “[t]he fraudulent weapon of lowly cowards, the arquebus was associated with the plebeianization and massification of the early modern army, and thus it shook the ground of the nobility’s most powerful legitimations as the exclusive practitioners of the noble art of war” (2016, 57).
13. This possible adoption and elaboration of Camões’s view of heroism appears all the more significant given Choi’s (2019) interpretation of the relation of *Armas antárticas* to *Os Lusíadas*. Choi argues that Miramontes takes a more critical view of war and imperial expansion than does Camões and that this is reflected in their contrasting portrayals of the symbolic ties binding love and conquest.

14. Barrera-Osorio notes that “[w]hile the conquest of the New World relied on force and violence as well as luck and determination, it also relied on knowledge, as the search for commodities and the writing of reports testified” (2006, 31).
15. On the only occasion in the poem when Magellan speaks, he recalls to himself his commercially based promise to Charles V: “Dije al Emperador descubriría / nueva navegación de viaje breve, / por donde la fragante especería / de su isla aromática se lleve” (Miramontes Zuázola 2006, vv. 241a–d).
16. See Miramontes Zuázola (2006, vv.202a–h).
17. See Pérotin-Dumon (1991), in which she writes about the mutual relation between commerce and piracy in the early modern period.
18. This, at least, is the view of scholars like Nicolopoulos (2000). There are other ways of reading the verbal map, as Padrón (2004) does in chapter 5 of his study.

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