



CROSSING THE LINE IN THE SAND:
FRANCIS DRAKE IMITATING FERDINAND
MAGELLAN IN JUAN DE MIRAMONTES'S
ARMAS ANTÁRTICAS

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ABSTRACT This article examines the third canto of Juan de Miramontes's colonial Latin American epic, *Armas antárticas* (1608–1609), in which Francis Drake narrates the voyage of Ferdinand Magellan to Elizabeth I of England. The study begins by analyzing how *Armas antárticas* portrays Magellan as an epic hero and defuses certain long-standing controversies surrounding him by appealing to classical epic models and judiciously drawing from historiographic texts. Despite the general effectiveness of this portrayal, however, *Armas antárticas* creates entirely new problems for the perception of Magellan by presenting him as a precursor of Drake. In fact, the text poetically and ironically suggests that Magellan transgressed the antimeridian of the Line of Tordesillas, and in doing so preceded Drake in his piratical activities in the Pacific. In this way *Armas antárticas* evinces unexpected parallels with ideas about piracy and international law expressed by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius in *Mare liberum* (1609).

Amidst the complicated political and commercial competition in the Age of Exploration, the national origins and the individual conduct of many of the most noted navigators who sailed for early modern Spain posed considerable challenges for writers interested in depicting these mariners as heroes.¹

1. An early draft of this article was presented at the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference in 2009, and I thank the participants for their fruitful discussion and feedback.

Elise Bartosik-Vélez has recently examined this in the case of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera's portrayal of Christopher Columbus in the *Decades de Orbe Novo*. The "difficulties" that she notes include the Italian extraction of both Martyr and Columbus "at a time when non-Spaniards were often distrusted, sometimes especially by highly educated Spaniards in the upper echelons of society" (577). According to Bartosik-Vélez, this, together with Columbus's failures in leadership in Hispaniola, eventually forced Martyr to abandon his original heroic characterization of the mariner based on Virgil's Aeneas. And as hard as it was for Martyr, depicting Columbus as a hero in Italian epic poetry a century later may have been even more difficult. As demonstrated by Nathalie Hester, his voyages were bound to highlight the intense political tensions between Spain and Italy.² Similarly, writing about Ferdinand Magellan, whose image suffered from many of the same problems as that of his Italian precursor, proved to be just as problematic and divisive. James Nicolopulos has shown, for example, how the descriptions of Magellan's voyage constitutes one of the basic points of rivalry between Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* and Luis de Camões's *Os Lusíadas* (246–49; 261–64). Thus, when the Spanish poet Juan de Miramontes Zuázola sets out to portray Magellan as a heroic explorer in the third canto of the epic *Armas antárticas*, he is assuming a daunting undertaking. Complicating matters further for himself, Miramontes makes Francis Drake the narrator of the story of Magellan's epic journey, which the pirate relates to Queen Elizabeth I of England.

This essay analyzes the challenges faced by Miramontes that stem from issues long associated with Magellan, as well as the problems that are largely of the poet's own making. I begin by studying the portrayal of Magellan in light of both the historiographical representation of the Portuguese captain and the classical epic tradition. Then, drawing on Barbara Fuchs's work on mimesis, I examine the implications of portraying Drake as an imitator of Magellan. In my reading, the Portuguese mariner sailing for Spain proves to be a proto-Drake figure who follows the lead of previous historical and mythological explorers and opens the way for corsairs to plunder the Pacific coasts of colonial Spanish America. Furthermore, I argue that the poem ironically implies that Magellan crossed the contested antimeridian of the Line

2. Hester observes that "the task of representing Columbus as the hero of an Italian epic was a thorny one" (202–03), because "writing about Columbus in literary Tuscan automatically, inevitably raised the troublesome question of Italian proto-nationalism" (203).

of Tordesillas, upon which Spain staked its legal claim to the Spice Islands. This approach to the canto helps to situate *Armas antárticas* in discussions about early modern piracy and the place of the Pacific and the Moluccan Islands in the imperial agenda of Spain and other European nations.³ Although the poem speaks to the intense interest in and importance of these outlying regions of Spanish possessions, it also problematizes strategies to incorporate them rhetorically and legally as part the empire.

It is well known that the epic genre flourished in Spain in the decades following Magellan's expedition. As Elizabeth Davis recalls, the so-called *verista* epics of the day "are seemingly imbued with the conviction that Spanish military commanders were living during intrinsically epic times, so all that was necessary was to narrate historical events" (4). Certainly the location of the strait that bears Magellan's name and the completion of the first European circumnavigation of the globe in 1519–1522 qualifies as historical epic material, and Miramontes takes advantage of this potential.⁴ Not only does the story of the Portuguese mariner receive its own canto in *Armas antárticas*, but the narrative of his voyage displays certain formal trappings of a self-contained epic in miniature form, or epyllion. For example, the narrator invokes a muse in the first stanza, calling upon Erato (197a), a goddess of heroic poetry, for divine inspiration.⁵ Then there is a conventional epic question, "¿quién perturbó al Pirú de paz el trato, / quién guerras incitó y Marte sangriento?" (197c–d) that serves as the point of departure for the narrative.⁶ Additionally, the subject matter of the canto, divided between Magellan's travel over seas and military conflict on land, parallels the breakdown of Aeneas's adventures in the two halves of the *Aeneid*. However, as mentioned

3. This article responds, in part, to Fuchs's suggestion that her framework could be applied to "the competition among European powers and their efforts to construct their own racial and national difference in the Spice Islands" (165). Other recent studies by Ricardo Padrón ("A Sea of Denial") and Carmen Nocentelli attest to the increasing interest in Spanish claims to the Pacific and the Moluccas.

4. On the importance of the strait explored by Magellan, Padrón writes that "[f]or Spain, the strait held particular significance. Its discovery seemed to promise that Spanish commercial interests would finally be able to reach the East by sailing west" (*The Spacious Word* 190). Paul Firbas calls the story of Magellan "una fábula muy propicia para la narración épica" (Miramontes 83).

5. Although Calliope would be the more conventional choice of muse for epic poetry, Sebastián de Covarrubias asserts that Erato "[p]reside a los que cantan las hazañas de los héroes e invictos varones" (800) in addition to those who compose amatory poetry.

6. All citations of *Armas antárticas* come from Firbas's edition and refer to stanza by number and to line by letter. Citations of Firbas's footnotes refer to page number, stanza, and verse.

above, for Magellan to come across successfully as an epic hero, a variety of long-standing controversies surrounding the Portuguese navigator had to be addressed.

In Spain, serious questions about Magellan's political allegiance, his stern style of commanding an expedition and the motives for setting sail all dominated the perception of the mariner and his voyage. Paradoxically, he was held in suspicion for being too loyal to Portugal and simultaneously disrespected for being a traitor to his country of birth. Doubts over his patriotic sympathies created tensions before the armada ever left Seville, and these eventually led to a mutiny in a bay they named Port San Julián, on the southeastern coast of South America. Magellan forcefully suppressed the rebellion, and when the altercation concluded, the Spanish captains Luis de Mendoza and Gaspar de Quesada were dead, while the former captain, Juan de Cartagena, and a priest were left marooned on shore.⁷ Magellan's dealings at Port San Julián were seen by certain sixteenth-century historians writing for Spain, such as Maximilian of Transylvania and Francisco López de Gómara, to be excessive and to exemplify his ruthlessness.⁸ Internal tensions did not subside after the revolt, however, and once the armada had successfully found the strait, the Portuguese pilot of the *San Antonio*, Esteban Gómez, seized control of his ship, abandoned the remainder of the fleet, and returned to Spain. His version of the mutiny, disseminated upon his arrival back in Seville, made the captain general out to be an unreasonable, petty and vindictive tyrant, who ignored his royal orders and refused to admit he was lost.⁹ Magellan, meanwhile, had crossed the vast Pacific Ocean and landed at what became the Philippines, where he later died in a skirmish with locals on the island of Mactan. In his account, Peter Martyr seized on Magellan's demise as one final opportunity to criticize him, sneering that Magellan met his end because of his greed for spices (431). Thus Magellan did not finish the expedition he proposed and directed through the most dire straits, and it fell to Juan Sebastián Elcano, a Basque captain and one of

7. For more on the mutiny, see Theodore Cachey's notes to the incident (Pigafetta 143–44, n. 91) and Samuel Morison (369–74).

8. See López de Gómara (172) and the account of Maximilian of Transylvania (Navarrete 239). For Antonio Pigafetta, by contrast, the actions of the mutineers were unambiguously treasonous against Spain (17).

9. See the letter from Juan López de Recalde to the Bishop of Burgos, written upon the return of Esteban Gómez in the *San Antonio* (Navarrete 185–91).

the mutineers, to complete the circumnavigation. Magellan had impressively found the interoceanic passage, and even his critics praised this exploit, but Miramontes would have to treat this complicated mariner and his voyage carefully to avoid rekindling old suspicions and raising new ones about his own poem. With this in mind, I review the third canto and analyze how effectively the text defuses the issues outlined above. As with other Hispanic epics of this period, much of the account is rooted in *imitatio*, and thus understanding the portrayal of Magellan requires not only an analysis of what the text asserts, denies, includes, and omits about his behavior and character, but especially an examination of how his depiction relates to the poetic subtexts upon which it is based.¹⁰

From the outset of his speech to Queen Elizabeth, Drake pitches his plan as an imitation of Magellan's foiled circumnavigation of the globe. In grandiloquent language, Drake declares to his monarch:

“Yo, por hacer algún notable caso
 que mi nombre levante, estoy de intento
 de ver y descubrir lo que al ocaso
 alumbra el sol luciente y baña el viento.
 Esto ha de ser por el angosto paso
 que aquel varón de heroico pensamiento,
 Hernando Magallanes, lusitano,
 abrió hasta el Mar del Sur de Oceano [sic].” (210a–h)

After referencing his desire to win praise for Elizabeth in the stanza that precedes these lines, Drake makes it clear that he is also out to win himself recognition for imitating Magellan. He hails Magellan in epic parlance as a “varón” (210f) for his “heroic thought,” and significantly, at the beginning of his narration he refers openly to him as a “lusitano” (210g), a Portuguese man. This potentially provocative assertion of his nationality is reiterated toward the end of the story too (254b). Drake then proceeds to relate Magellan's journey southward past the Canary Islands toward South America (213e–216d). Next, Drake moves to focus on Magellan's greatest exploit—the

10. This canto is rich in poetic imitation, but here I only consider those instances that are most directly germane to the problematic perceptions of Magellan outlined above. I am currently working on another project that considers the full extent of Miramontes's imitation in this canto.

discovery and passage through his eponymous strait (221a–h)—and conveniently bypasses any mention of mutiny. Once he tells of the fleet crossing into the South Sea, Drake reveals his original twist on his intended imitation of Magellan. Contrary to the Portuguese mariner, who steered into the open ocean, Drake would follow the Pacific coast, sacking his way from Chile to Panama, en route to rendezvous with his fellow pirate, John Oxenham.

Having described this coastal geography (223a–32h) slated for plundering, Drake then rejoins Magellan’s voyage across the Pacific to what would later become the Philippine Islands. The grueling trip across the ocean is condensed into a solitary stanza, after which the armada finally spots the island of “Cybú” (235d) and the crew rejoices at the sight of dry land. It is here that Drake’s account of the sailors as they run contentedly about the island creates a scene reminiscent of the landing of the Trojans near Carthage in the *Aeneid*.¹¹ Most striking is how Magellan, similarly to Aeneas, feels overcome by doubts; but unlike the Trojan leader, who feigns composure and urges his shipmates to be courageous and “live for a happier day” (1.207), the Portuguese captain general internalizes all his worries and directs a harangue to himself. He remembers:

“Dije al Emperador descubriría
nueva navegación de viaje breve,
por donde la fragante especería
de su isla aromática se lleve;
porque dentro en los términos cabía
de la demarcación que el sacro breve
del Papa concedió para la silla
de los invictos reyes de Castilla’[.]” (241a–h)

This and the preceding stanza are crucial to the characterization of Magellan, because they are the only ones in which direct speech is attributed to him, although he speaks only to himself. Tellingly, Magellan reminds himself of his promise to the Emperor Charles V, and he explicitly recalls the legal justification for the Spanish Empire’s claim to the spices he seeks, the papal bulls of 1493, which theoretically gave Spain the right to any new lands discovered (Miramontes 232 n. 241f). Instead of the inner peace and tranquility

11. Compare *Aeneid* 1.170–74 and 1.210–15 with *Armas antárticas* 236a–38h.

that Aeneas longs for and promises to his companions, Magellan speaks of the commercial motives that drive his voyage. Aeneas's reference to the favorable future assured by the fates becomes Magellan's allusion to the religious decree rendered in cartographic discourse that was handed down by the Pope. Like Aeneas, Magellan feels a deep sense of obligation, but the Trojan's sanguine prediction of better times ahead contrasts with the Portuguese's underlying unease over the legitimacy of Spain in the Moluccas.

As it turns out, Magellan's doubts foreshadow his approaching demise, and what transpires on the island echoes another Latin epic. Drake claims that the inhabitants of Cebu have an old belief that one day "una gente ilustre" (249g) will rule over them. Furthermore, the *cebuanos* observe a tradition of collecting a tribute from visitors who arrive on the island in peace, and in return they offer the travelers food, stipulating that they not pass a line drawn on the beach:

"Sólo acercarse al límite conceden
que señaló el cacique, a quien acatan,
do sin pena llegar cargados pueden
de las comidas y armas que rescatan;
pero si de la raya un paso exceden,
como a los que sus leyes desbaratan,
tienen por enemigos y en venganza
flechan el arco corvo y vibran lanza." (246a–g)

Yet Magellan and his men do, indeed, overstep the line, and the islanders prepare for battle (248a–d). No historiographical account of the Magellan expedition of which I am aware mentions their tracing a line in the sand, not to mention the fateful consequences of crossing it, but the circumstances of these events do recall one of the most infamous exploits of Julius Caesar, which is described in Lucan's *Pharsalia*.¹² This epic, written by a proto-Spaniard born in Cordoba during the first century CE, was popular in Habsburg Spain, and would certainly have been known to, and likely admired by, Miramontes, just as the Roman poet was respected by Alonso de Ercilla.¹³

12. Pigafetta does say that the native Filipinos expect a tribute (41–43). See Firbas's discussion of the unique portrayal of Magellan's death (Miramontes 238 n. 261h).

13. For more on the perception of Lucan as a Spaniard and on his influence on Ercilla, see chapter three of Nicolopoulos's study, and especially page 127.

In the first book of the *Pharsalia*, which tells of the beginnings of the Roman civil war, Caesar leaves Gaul and arrives at the edge of the Rubicon River, where he has a vision of the figure of Rome. This distraught phantasm questions his motives and warns him that he cannot legally cross the river with his troops. Caesar reacts first in fear, but after pleading with the spirit, he fords the swollen waters:

En poniendo Cesar los pies en la otra parte de la ribera: Aqui (dixo) aqui dexo la paz, y los derechos y leyes violados. y a ti fortuna tomo por guia. Nadie nos hable ya en confederaciones, que yo dexo este hecho en manos de los hados, y quiero tomar por juez a la guerra.¹⁴

Like Caesar in Lucan's poem, Magellan comes up against a boundary that imposes a legal limit to his passage, and like the Roman leader, the Portuguese captain general violates the law, an irrevocable decision that leads to war. Both passages depict the infringement of norms established by nations that allow for the distinction between territories and between friendly and hostile movements across the boundaries of those territories. Caesar is portrayed as a willing criminal who commits an act of aggression that unavoidably provokes an armed response, which he accepts and even welcomes. Magellan, by contrast, is portrayed as innocently crossing the line of unknown legal authority, an important point to which I will return later. Even if Miramontes did not intentionally model his distinctive version of Magellan's actions in the islands on this episode from *Pharsalia*, the similarities would have been suggestive to readers familiar with the classical epic.

Nevertheless, due to the prediction that they would be conquered one day by immortal foreigners, the *cebuanos* refrain from attacking until they confirm that Magellan and his men are not the fated invaders. To this end, the chief proposes that they sacrifice a prisoner to Apollo, who can then speak through the dead body and disclose the identity of the strangers. This solution recalls one of the most popular episodes in the *Pharsalia* in which the witch Erictho uses necromancy to reveal the future to Sextus, the son of Pompey (Lucan, *The Civil War* 6.506–69). As Nicolopulos shows (119–73),

14. This quote comes from page 8 of Martín Lasso de Oropesa's translation of the *Pharsalia*, published in Burgos in 1578.

this episode decisively influences Ercilla's creation of the Fitón character in *La Araucana*, and echoes of it here reinforce the appearance that Lucan's poem influenced the portrayal of Magellan's crossing of the line. In the end, though, a much more practical proposal wins out over necromancy. Only mortals need to eat, suggests an elder, and the *cebuanos* wait to see if the Europeans consume the fruit left on the beach. When they do, the islanders swiftly attack, and Magellan, the "animoso capitán" (260a), dies from a wound caused by a poisoned arrow. Drake eulogizes him as "[s]u esperanza, su guía, su consejo / su alivio, su consuelo, padre, amparo, / su sapiente piloto, experto, viejo, / su insigne capitán, su amigo caro" (264a–d; emphasis mine). This elegy bears a close resemblance to the characterization of Magellan by the Italian Antonio Pigafetta, an eyewitness chronicler of the voyage and most ardent supporter of the captain general. In his death he calls him, "our mirror, our light, our *comfort*, and our true *guide*" (58; emphasis mine). Like Pigafetta's account, this version in *Armas antárticas* celebrates the navigator as a singular hero who defined the expedition, but the use of possessive adjectives in a long list also downplays his individuality and emphasizes his selfless belonging to his crew. Moreover, like Pigafetta, Drake gives no credit to Elcano, the skilled Basque captain who ultimately brought the *Victoria* back to Spain loaded with spices. Instead, after Magellan's death, Drake rushes to the conclusion of the expedition, following the only remaining ship on a largely fictional course through Southeast Asia and then past the Cape of Good Hope, the Cape Verde Islands, and finally back to Seville.

As this summary of the narrative shows, Miramontes does successfully remove many of the obstacles to the heroic image of Magellan, but it leaves others intact. Imitation of the *Aeneid* and *Pharsalia* would have been indispensable to the creation of a true epic hero. Modeling Magellan on Virgil's most loyal of leaders counters the impression of his untrustworthiness, and, like Aeneas, it portrays him as fully committed to the imperial cause—in this case of Habsburg Spain, to whose king he has pledged allegiance. Magellan's resemblance to Aeneas, the altruistic leader who acts in the best interest of his people, also forestalls any charges of greedy, selfish motives for setting sail.¹⁵ The echoes of Lucan's Caesar in Magellan's violation of the island

15. This enhanced perception of loyalty is precisely the effect that Bartosik-Vélez sees in Martyr's depiction of Columbus as Aeneas (568, 578).

boundary could be seen as having a complementary effect. Following the manner in which Nicolopolos suggests that the *Pharsalia* was read in sixteenth-century Spain (27), Drake's narration likens Magellan to the legitimate ruler of the Roman Empire, Julius Caesar, who was deemed a descendant of Aeneas. In this way, Magellan's crossing of the *cebuano* line could be seen as the bold step required to advance larger imperial aspirations. Yet, from the perspective explicated by David Quint, the *Pharsalia* depicts the Roman general as betraying his Republic and instigating a bloody civil war, which is epitomized in his traversing of the Rubicon.¹⁶ As such, the parallels with Caesar could serve to perpetuate the negative image expressed by figures like Martyr that Magellan was a traitor to his homeland. Likewise, the two references to Magellan's nationality (210g, 254b) seem destined to revive the quandary over his political allegiance.¹⁷ From one point of view, the allusions to his being Portuguese could imply to readers that he disloyally abandoned his country of birth only to serve its fiercest rival. Alternatively, the references could just as easily serve to reawaken the general suspicion that he was never faithful to Spain and that instead, he was really an impostor covertly working for Portugal. In Magellan's favor, however, all traces of tensions that culminate in the mutiny at Port San Julián are conspicuously omitted. Furthermore, the Pigafetta-like adoption of a celebratory tone at the moment of his death, clearly and effectively makes the crew out to be unanimous in their devotion to and respect for their heroic captain general, and this is the final vision with which readers are left. In sum, the narrative does successfully diminish the appearance of Magellan's authoritarianism and make him more sympathetic and even at times altruistic, but it potentially reinforces the

16. Quint writes that "[f]or Lucan, Virgil was the apologetic spokesman for the institution of the emperor, of the tyrannical one-man rule of the Caesars. The *Pharsalia* is the epic of the lost Roman republic; it takes the side of the senatorial forces of Pompey and Cato, defeated by Julius Caesar in the civil war" (133). From this perspective, the evocations of both Virgil's hero and Lucan's hero in Miramontes's portrayal of Magellan results in ideological contradictions of the type Quint identifies in *La Araucana* (157–85).

17. As Nicolopolos shows, Magellan's nationality constituted one of the major points of contention between Alonso de Ercilla's *La Araucana* and Luis de Camões's *Os Lusíadas*. Ercilla does not dare mention Magellan's country of origin in the crucial *mapamundi* episode of *La Araucana*, thus largely avoiding the predicament created by Miramontes. Instead, he "allows his silence on the question to point to Magellan as an Iberian and a servant of the Emperor, the glory of whose deeds accrues naturally to the dynasty and crown that sponsored them" (Nicolopolos 262). For his part, Camões insinuates that Magellan betrays Portugal: "no feito, com verdade, / Português, porém não na lealdade" (10.140g–h).

doubts over his national allegiance by evoking Caesar and explicitly (and unnecessarily) calling him Portuguese. Based on this examination, Miramontes comes close to converting Magellan fully into an epic hero, but he does not completely rehabilitate his image. Nevertheless, as much as these problems traditionally associated with Magellan needed to be—and are—addressed, other peripheral issues created by Miramontes himself threaten to undermine this relative success. These new questions arise from Miramontes's problematic framing of the narrative and the extent to which the account of Magellan suits the purposes of Francis Drake.

Although Magellan is the ostensible protagonist of his epyllion, he cannot escape the long shadow of Francis Drake, with whom he must vie for attention over the course of the canto.¹⁸ After all, Drake, and not the Portuguese mariner, is the first to be introduced, and he is showered with the kind of praise reserved for an epic hero.¹⁹ It is Drake, moreover, as the principle narrator of the canto, who bookends the entire narrative of Magellan with a description of his plans to plunder the Pacific coasts of the Americas. And the epic question “¿quién perturbó al Pirú de paz el trato, / quién guerras incitó y Marte sangriento?” (197c–d) only leads to more uncertainties. For if Magellan provided a tailor-made model for Drake, is the English pirate responsible for disturbing the peace in Peru, or did Magellan commit this violation first? Who, indeed, was to blame? What is the difference between a pirate like Drake and a figure like Magellan? These are the very kinds of questions adroitly addressed by Barbara Fuchs, and Drake's express imitation of Magellan exemplifies what she shows to be the destabilizing effects of mimesis on the construction of national differences:

[T]he deliberate imitation of both colonial and metropolitan practices and discourses threatens state legitimacy by negating its singularity. Ideology pirated or ventriloquized becomes surprisingly vulnerable—instead of reproducing it, purposeful mimesis undermines imperial claims to originary authority. . . . Imitation compromises the narratives of national distinction by emphasizing inconvenient similarities and shared heritages. (3–4)

18. This is not the first time the putative protagonist must compete with Drake, who threatens to elbow the leading role-players out of the poetic spotlight. See Fuchs 139–51.

19. Drake is introduced in unambiguously admirable terms: “Era Francisco Draque audaz, valiente, / considerado, pródigo, ingenioso, / sagaz, astuto, plático, prudente, / diestro, arriscado, fuerte, venturoso, / grato, discreto, afable, continente, / sufrido, vigilante, receloso, / de ánimo y pensamiento levantado, / gran marinerero y singular soldado” (202).

Drake certainly does propose to “pirate” the Spanish approach to economic expansion as modeled by Magellan, and in so doing, he reveals just how similar the English and the Spanish missions are. What works for Spain works for England, too. These parallels are decidedly inopportune to the portrayal of Drake as a schismatic heretic contrary to all that Spain’s religious orthodoxy represents.²⁰ The Englishman not only negates the “singularity” of Spain and the nation’s presence in the New World, but he also negates the secure geographical insularity of the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, in adopting the course of Magellan and crossing through the Patagonian Strait, Drake stuns the populace of the Spanish American coasts. Furthermore, as I will discuss below, the pirate effectively challenges the “originary authority” of Spanish claims of possession based on papal partitions of the globe.

Drake’s actions also remind readers of Spain’s own practice of imperial mimesis. For example, Magellan himself was clearly inspired by Columbus’s cosmographical ideas; as Manuel Lucena puts it, “Magallanes no fue sino un duplicado de Colón con la misma pretensión de llegar a la especiería navegando hacia Occidente” (21). But Magellan’s ideas, and indeed many aspects of Spanish exploration in general, were also an emulation of Portuguese practices. Magellan’s familiarity with the Indian Ocean came from his experience as a Portuguese captain, and he participated in the conquest of Malacca in 1511 with his friend Francisco Serrão, who eventually made his way to the Moluccas. Serrão appears to have played some role in Magellan’s interest in the Moluccas through letters he sent to his friend from the islands (Spate 35–36; Thomas 495–96). When Bartolomé de Las Casas famously asked Magellan in the meeting with the king in Valladolid what he would do if he could not locate a strait through South America, the reply was that he would follow the route via the Cape of Good Hope that Vasco da Gama had pioneered (Spate 43; Thomas 496). This context illustrates the potential hazard that Fuchs identifies in imitation: “mimesis can operate both as a weapon of the state, encouraged and promoted in the emulation of its rivals, and as a weapon against that same state, forced by imitators to relinquish its original preeminence” (6). By employing an “insider” with such extensive experience sailing for Portugal, Charles V found a way to cleave as closely as possible to and surpass his successful rival. And in *Armas antárticas*, Drake is presented

20. See Nina Gerassi-Navarro, who has studied how the poem fabricates and emphasizes religious and moral differences between the English and the adventurers working for Spain (47–54).

as a continuation of the chain of imitation as he copies the route of Magellan's armada and adjusts it to suit the purposes of his own English monarch.²¹

And yet *Armas antárticas* portrays Drake's imitation of Magellan as only an unspecified middle point in a long succession of maritime expeditions. The poem reflects on the far-reaching ramifications of Drake's voyage, and the narrator relates that Lucifer:

tomó por instrumento aquella empresa
del Draque, sus disinios *imitando*,
que en Londres con la grande y rica presa
que hubo en el Mar del Sur entró triumphando,
para que con noticia más espresa
del arte, modo, tiempo, cómo y cuándo,
salgan piratas mil, naves sin cuento,
imitando del Draque el pensamiento. (1593a–h; emphasis mine)

This stanza repeats the participle “imitando” to underscore the imperial mimesis that is initiated by the triumphant return of Drake, laden with riches and, perhaps even more importantly, a reconnaissance report. As the poem presents it, thousands of pirates take to the waters in imitation of Drake, creating the image of countless fleets of corsairs heading westward through the Strait of Magellan en route to attaining boundless wealth for England. Pirates like Thomas Cavendish, whose passage through the Strait is also recounted in *Armas antárticas*, follow the lead of Drake, who for his part, was copying the feat of Magellan. And this mariner found a model in Columbus, but where does this pattern originate? The text suggests an endless Deridian line of maritime voyages that continues backward toward an obscure point in the distant past.

Readers today might regard the possibility of pinpointing the original maritime expedition as impossible, but poets of the sixteenth century had a ready answer: Jason and the Argonauts.²² In classical poetry, these Greeks were considered the very first mariners, pioneering sea travel in the original ship, the *Argo*. And indeed, following a topos of the Magellan narrative, Drake

21. This represents, in effect, the maritime counterpart to the chain of imitation involving famous military generals discussed by Quint (5–6).

22. See Antonio Sánchez Jiménez 290–92.

compares the Portuguese sailor to Jason in a stanza in which he also likens him to another famous mythological mariner, Odysseus (Miramontes 215a–g).²³ Drake's evocation of Jason and Odysseus thus reasserts the mythical lineage of heroic sailors and reminds readers that the precedents of Magellan's voyage reach back to antiquity. Drake knows this genealogy well because, as I will discuss, in his identity as a pirate, he and others like Cavendish can also rightly claim these same mythological ancestors.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the voyages completed by Jason and Odysseus are seen, at least in part, as commercial endeavors. By the time Miramontes was writing, Jason especially had come to be viewed as the classical prototype of sailors moved by acquisitiveness.²⁴ Yet aspects of their expeditions go beyond this and verge on piracy as well. In the influential accounts of the myth by Gaius Valerius Flaccus and Ovid, Jason is openly referred to as a pirate, and in both cases it is meant as a reproach for his insolence and audacity.²⁵ And although no one outright calls Odysseus a pirate in Homer's epic, the Cyclops Polyphemus famously asks the seafarer if he is one.²⁶ The giant's inquiry leads Daniel Heller-Roazen to remark, "There can be no doubt that the question put to him was comprehensible. The actions of the great Achaeans during war bore more than a passing resemblance to those of robbers, and in the Homeric world it was no easy thing to distinguish between the varieties of armed men traveling by ship" (77). It is in his confrontation with the Cyclops that Odysseus perhaps most resembles a pirate.²⁷ Importantly, these invocations of piracy come from the victims of what they consider to be the predations of seafaring thieves. After all, Aëtes, the king of Colchos from whom the Argonauts take possession of the Golden Fleece, and Medea, the enchanting lover eventually abandoned by their captain, are the ones who call Jason a pirate. Similarly, Polyphemus represents the exemplary victim of Odysseus's trickery. In the absence of any

23. For more on the widespread comparison of Jason and Magellan, see Antonello Gerbi 269–71.

24. See Sánchez Jiménez's study for more on Jason and the perception that covetousness drove maritime voyages of the sixteenth century. Quint emphasizes the acknowledgement in the sixteenth century of the commercial motives of both the Argonauts and Odysseus (259).

25. See Valerius Flaccus 7.43–50 and Ovid's account of the myth in the *Heroides* (12.111–12). See Jason McCloskey for more on piracy and the role of the myth of the Argonauts in cantos XVIII–XIX of *Armas antárticas*. For more on the influence of Valerius Flaccus, see Andrew Zissos.

26. See Homer 9.252–55. Odysseus calls himself a pirate (17.424 et ff.) when he, appropriately enough for someone claiming to be an outlaw, is lying about his identity.

27. Mark Buchan argues, for example, that in his interaction with Polyphemus, Odysseus operates under a code, which "itself is a form of piracy" (147).

universal definition of piracy, their experiences suggest that pirates might best be recognized by those who fall prey to their plundering.²⁸ The myths of Odysseus and the Argonauts show that classical thought linked—at times—piracy, commerce, and exploration into one unified venture, and this continued into the early modern period.²⁹

As an implicit poetic successor of the activity initiated by Jason, Magellan might be expected to continue this tradition. Such is the case of the Portuguese explorers and especially of da Gama, who “came seeking trade but acted like pirates against their competitors, the Arab Muslims of the Indian Ocean” (Murrin 155). And repeating the pattern seen in classical poetry, it is da Gama’s adversaries who suggest that he is a pirate in Luís de Camões’s *Os Lusíadas*.³⁰ Yet, by contrast, the *cebuanos* do not call Magellan a pirate in *Armas antárticas*, and in this way Miramontes appears more cautious and protective of the image of Magellan than Camões does of da Gama. Furthermore, Miramontes does not mention any of the piratical actions of Magellan’s own fleet following his death, and it is Magellan, and not the *cebuanos*, who is presented as the victim in *Armas antárticas*.³¹

Nevertheless, Magellan cannot disavow entirely the piratical inheritance of his mythological forebears, as the portrayal of his actions on the island subtly raises other questions about the legality of his expedition with respect to the line of demarcation. As seen above, the same stanza in which Magellan recalls

28. In his discussion of piracy in antiquity, Philip de Souza comments that “[p]iracy is an evil business from the victims’ point of view, yet for the heroic practitioner it brings high status and prestige, largely because of the fighting involved and the booty that is obtained” (21). As Anne Pérotin-Dumon puts it, “the dispute about whether someone should be called a pirate or not is really about who has the power” (204). She also clarifies, “there is not, and never has been, an authoritative definition of piracy in international law” (198). One of the most influential formulations is Cicero’s characterization of pirates as enemies of all the world, a description analyzed by Heller-Roazen.

29. See Carol Dougherty (43–50) for more on the ambiguities of trade and piracy in the Ancient world as presented in the *Odyssey*. See also Pérotin-Dumon, who argues, “In sixteenth-century Europe, war and commerce went together . . . For a long time, only those prepared to defend themselves could undertake any long-distance voyage. If they were also ready to go over to the attack, they were suited to a form of trade that could require the use of force, or the threat to do so, at any point” (201). For Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, it was the Spanish conquistador who modeled the union of war and commerce, which was later imitated by English pirates (55–56).

30. See Michael Murrin 146–57, and especially 153. Bacchus describes the Portuguese as consummate robbers of the seas (1.78–79), and the Zamorin from Malabar asks da Gama if he is a pirate (8.61–63).

31. For the piracy committed by the armada, see Pigafetta 71, 76–77, 78, 80. See also Lucena 152–55.

his promise to Charles V (Miramontes 241a–h), he also refers to the purported legal right given to Spain by Alexander VI in the bulls of 1493, which divided Spanish and Portuguese claims of discovery by a line of demarcation drawn from north to south in the Atlantic. Although the meaning of these bulls was altered by subsequent treaties such as that of Tordesillas in 1494, and originally the line did not theoretically extend around the world, the notion of the line continuing around the other side of the globe—the anti-meridian—was accepted by the time Magellan set sail.³² In fact, an important part of Magellan’s proposal rested on the premise that the Moluccan Islands were tucked within the Spanish boundary, and his allusion to the “demarcación” (Miramontes 241f) clearly reflects this interpretation.³³ The return of the *Victoria* made the question of pinpointing the antimeridian a practical, pressing matter, and attention turned toward what became an increasingly intense dispute over boundary lines. O. H. K. Spate writes that “[t]he most immediate result of the voyage was a new Luso-Castilian diplomatic crisis. João III demanded that the *Victoria*’s spices should be handed over to him, and the circumnavigators punished, since they had clearly trespassed within his dominion” (53–55). In 1525, representatives from both nations met in Badajoz, Spain, and Elvas, Portugal, to try to resolve the territorial dispute, but coming to a consensus concerning on which side of the demarcation the Moluccas fell was doubtful given that no one in the sixteenth century could accurately measure longitude and so much was thought to be at stake. The futility of the meeting was captured in the story told by López de Gómara about a boy who recommended the cosmographers trace the line of demarcation along the crack of his behind.³⁴ Four years after the meeting at Badajoz and Elvas, Charles V and João III agreed to the Treaty of Zaragoza, which drew a new line of demarcation inscribing the Moluccas within Portuguese territory. Charles then set his sights on what became the Philippine Islands, which as it turns out, also fell within the Portuguese boundary (Spate 95).

A suggestive evocation of boundary lines and border disputes appears in Drake’s account of Magellan. To appreciate the subtle, but significant, parallels between the line of demarcation to which Magellan’s speech alludes

32. For a complete overview of the development of the notion of the antimeridian and its relevance to the Magellan expedition, see Ramón Ezquerro Abadía. See also Nicolopulos 247–49.

33. See Ezquerro Abadía 17 and Firbas’s note (Miramontes 232 n. 241f).

34. See Gómara 188–89 and Padrón (*The Spacious Word* 181–84).

(Miramontes 241e–h) and the portrayal of his arrival on the island of Cebu, it is first necessary to note the language used in reference to the shifting line of demarcation. In Spanish, the word “*raya*” is commonly invoked in addition to the “*línea de demarcación*,” as in the Treaty of Tordesillas, which states: “*se haga e señale por el dicho mar oçeano una rraya o linea derecha de polo a polo, conviene a saber, del polo Artico al polo Antartico, que es de norte a sul*” (Davenport 88).³⁵ I have discussed above Drake’s portrayal of the arrival of Magellan on the Philippine island of Cebu and the unprecedented line drawn in the sand. Now it bears mentioning that this boundary line on the other side of the world is also called a “*raya*”:

“Tienen establecido un estatuto
con la indiana gente forastera
que los ha de pagar cierto tributo
si de paz toma puerto en su ribera;
y en gratificación la dan del fruto,
según el tiempo, otoño o primavera,
haciendo la señal con una raya
ado llegar permiten en la playa.” (245a–h)

Of course, Magellan makes a fatal mistake crossing the line demarcating the limit that foreigners are permitted to approach and taking fruits that did not belong to them from the islands. Strong echoes of the dispute between Spain and Portugal over other “*fruto*”—spices—and another “*raya*”—the anti-meridian—give this trespassing a significant figurative dimension. Drake’s narrative poetically converts the theoretical line of demarcation, which was nearly impossible to locate in practice, into a material reality on the beach in the Philippines. The pirate’s unique version of Magellan figuratively suggests that the Portuguese mariner illicitly crossed the line of demarcation in the East Indies, much like João III had protested. And Magellan did this over fifty years before the Englishman passed through the same waters. Furthermore, the placement of the line in Cebu recalls the continued violation of the boundary hammered out in the Treaty of Zaragoza by the presence of Spain in the Philippines. In the end, Drake’s narrative suggests that although

35. López de Gómara makes the same lexical choice (168–69). See Firbas’s note (Miramontes n. 241f, 232).

he may be guilty of trespassing and robbery, it only marks another instance in which Magellan's armada served as his model.³⁶ Unlike Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in the *Pharsalia*, however, Magellan is said to be unaware of the meaning of his actions, and he could therefore appear less culpable for his offense. This might hold true if the line were taken literally to represent exclusively a boundary of *cebuano* sovereignty, but not if interpreted as a figurative crossing of the antimeridian. Any defense of violating the antimeridian based on ignorance would have been dismissed by Portugal as a deliberate disregard for the law disguised as naivety. In fact, the parallels with Caesar poetically suggest that Magellan was indeed aware of what he was doing, and that it was an act of war against Portugal. That this offensive was led by Magellan—Portuguese by birth—makes the echoes of the civil war instigated by Caesar in his crossing of a boundary line all the more appropriate. It also decisively reinforces the perception of Magellan as a traitor to Portugal.

Further implications of this portrayal of Magellan prove dire at a time when Spain was working to legitimize its claims to Southeast Asia and combat piracy. For instance, Drake's version of Magellan's voyage effectively belies the fanciful illusion promoted by cartographers of the Casa de Contratación that the East was actually the West of the ever-expanding Spanish Empire (Padrón, "A Sea of Denial" 15). Mapmakers like Diogo Ribeiro and Juan López de Velasco situated the Moluccas and the Philippines on the Spanish side of the antimeridian and shrank the Pacific on their planispheres (11). By contrast, Drake's narrative implies that these islands are essentially off the Spanish map and pertain rather to the East of imperial Portuguese cartography. His account of Magellan may, at first glance, reduce the perception of the immensity of the Pacific by limiting the crossing of the ocean to a single stanza (Miramontes 233a–h), but it also moves the antimeridian eastward with respect to those Spanish maps. Moreover, in the same stanza Drake drastically inflates the 98 days it actually took to traverse the ocean into an incredible one thousand days, thereby counteracting any impression of the Pacific as a small body of water. Finally, it is important to remember that the territorial dispute in Asia entered a new phase in 1580, when Portugal

36. This implicit justification of Drake contrasts with the much more direct self-defense of the pirate in Juan de Castellanos's *Discurso del Capitán Francisco Draque* (see Emiro F. Martínez-Osorio 18–19).

fell under Spanish rule, thus altering the stakes and terms of the conflict (Gellinek 98). Furthermore, by the time Miramontes completed his epic in the early seventeenth century, the controversy had extended beyond the competition strictly between Spain and Portugal to include other European nations such as England and the Netherlands.

England made inroads into the Asian spice trade during the historical voyage that Drake fictionally outlines to his queen in *Armas antárticas*, and the Dutch had broken into Southeast Asia by the end of the sixteenth century. The Iberians, however, still claiming dominion over the region based on the original papal bulls and subsequent treaties, considered traders from other nations to be pirates.³⁷ In 1603, the Dutch admiral Jacob van Heemskerck further confirmed this charge in the eyes of his critics when he captured the Portuguese ship *Santa Catarina*, full of exceedingly valuable merchandise, in the Singapore Straits. Back in Europe, the young Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius, famously came to the defense of the actions of his compatriots in his influential legal tract *Mare Liberum*, or *Freedom of the Seas*, in which he attacked the grounds of the Iberian monopoly, including the papal donation. He writes, for example, “The Donation of Pope Alexander, inasmuch as the title based on discovery is seen to be deficient, may next be invoked by the Portuguese to justify their exclusive appropriation of the sea and the right of navigation thereon. But from what has been said above, that Donation is clearly convicted of being an act of empty ostentation” (45). Coincidentally, this forceful argument from the *Mare Liberum* was published in 1609, about the time Miramontes finished his poem, and in their own ways both the Spanish and the Dutch texts problematize the legal bases to which the Iberians pinned their claims of dominion. Grotius questions not the location of the anti-meridian, but the very authority of the Pope to draw such a line granting half the world to Spain and half to Portugal. *Armas antárticas* ironically suggests that, even if the authority of the pope had been accepted, Spain did not adhere to the partition. Grotius defends the actions of Dutch traders by arguing that the sea is open to all and that commerce cannot, therefore, be restricted among nations (Gellinek 98). In *De Jure Praedae*, of which *Mare Liberum* constitutes only one chapter, Grotius also justifies the actions of Van Heemskerck against charges of piracy by maintaining that at times individuals are forced to take justice into their own hands (Van Ittersum 514). Furthermore, the jurist inverts the accusation and indicts the Portuguese as

37. See Heller-Roazen 120–21, Murrin 154, and Gellinek 98.

pirates according to his own unique definition (Kempe 385). Likewise, Miramontes's epic relativizes Drake's actions by shading the distinction between authorized Iberian explorers and unauthorized pirates. This is, ironically, exactly what Drake would have wanted to argue, but it is surely not what the Spanish Crown would want to admit.

Of all the accusations and suspicions swirling around Magellan, such damning questions regarding piracy were not ones commonly associated with him. Depicting him as an epic hero would have been challenging enough for any poet without this added burden. Miramontes manages to diminish the appearance of Magellan's authoritarianism and his perceived disloyalty to the King of Spain, but his imitation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* could be seen as perpetuating certain negative aspects of his image. Still more serious, by framing the story of Magellan as he does, Miramontes's portrayal of the mariner ultimately speaks to the weakening claims by Spain and Portugal to monopolies in Southeast Asia by which they could condemn all ships from other nations as piratical regardless of their actions and intents. Magellan's discovery of a maritime route to Asia was, in the early sixteenth century, understood in the context of the rivalry between Spain and Portugal, but *Armas antárticas* shows how the implications of Magellan's voyage continued to reverberate in the new political situation of the early seventeenth century. The influence of the Netherlands and England was in the East Indies to stay, but how did they—literally—get there? Rather than follow the harrowing voyage of Magellan through his strait and across the Pacific, merchants from these nations preferred the route to Southeast Asia established by da Gama via the Cape of Good Hope. Likewise, the Strait of Magellan was rendered effectively useless for Spain because attempts at colonizing its shores failed, and it did not provide a viable nexus between the Pacific and Atlantic. And yet, appropriately, when English and Dutch sailors did pass through the Strait, they often proceeded to pillage the western coast of Spanish America and harass Spanish shipping. The channel became, in effect, little more than a portal for piracy, and *Armas antárticas* portrays Magellan as the first of many such pirates that would pass through the frigid waters. Here, then, is the provocative answer to the epic question posed at the start of the canto. In the end it was Magellan, contracted by the Spanish Crown, who disturbed the peace of Peru, and ultimately his voyage inspired the bloody Mars of Francis Drake and the pirates that followed in his wake. *Armas antárticas* shows that even when a text suppresses or embellishes the polemical details of the voyage nearly a century after its completion, the story of Magellan has

a way of posing problems. In fact, the inclusion of Magellan in the epic might be considered as one more potential factor for the poem never being published in its time. Magellan's expedition is just another case from the Age of Exploration that would seem to lend itself to epic celebration, but political and ideological factors make such a commemoration nearly impossible.

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