



**ANGER AND RELIGION:
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROTO-
SPANISH IDENTITY IN SALDUEÑA'S
*EL PELAYO***

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Epic poetry is fundamentally about identity: who are “we,” and who are “they”? In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Spains had suffered a series of reversals and cultural transformations that very likely influenced Alonso de Solís Folch de Cardona Rodríguez de las Varillas, the Count of Salduña (1708-1780), as he penned the epic poem, *El Pelayo* (1754). In his epic, Salduña invented a pure Spanish bloodline and an orthodox Catholic past, and tied that imagined origin to the “discovery” of the New World. Purity of religion—and to some degree purity of blood— meant that God permitted the Spanish *nación* to discover fabulous new lands, new converts, and renewed glory.¹ Salduña linked his hero’s performance of Christian duty to the future success of the Spains. The actions of four characters embody Salduña’s judgment of their faiths: while Munuza, Bishop Oppas, Pelayo (King Pelagius), and Alonso all exhibit anger, only those who intermingle Christian and Muslim sympathies truly rage out of control. Christian faith, as measured by correct, righteous anger, is linked to a future of Spanish world power. It was the foundation stone of Salduña’s newly imagined *longue durée*.

To examine how Salduña shapes this image of proto-Spanishness, I will first review the two periods of history that undergird his epic poem: the author’s *milieu* and the eponymous character’s literal and literary history. This will allow me then to consider how the characters in *El Pelayo* were shaped by Salduña in specific ways to identify who was “us” and who was “them.” Finally, I will suggest why this represents a pan-Spanish identity in his work.

Salduña’s Time and Place

El Pelayo was written during a time of loss and uncertainty. The death of Charles II without heir led to the War of Succession, and the threat of a

¹ I will use the terms ‘Spanish *nación*’ or ‘*Nación*’ to refer to the pan-Spanish people group prior to the age of nations, and ‘proto-Spanish’ or ‘proto-national’ to refer to the process of identity-making. One cannot speak of nationality at all until much later in Spain’s history, although even today describing Spain as a nation is problematic. See Kamen’s *Imagining Spain* for an articulation of why a cohesive national myth did not develop.

king who could unify the two powerhouses of France and Spain increased tensions across Europe. While Spain did eventually negotiate the regime change from the Hapsburgs to the Bourbons, it came at a cost: an adopted French king, the loss of prestigious European territories, and more than a decade of war in Europe. The Bourbon dynasty over the next few generations embarked on a centralization of ruling power in the Peninsula, one that would more directly rule all of the Spains.² The shift in power became more pronounced under later kings (Carlos III and Charles IV), but one can trace the seeds of change to Saldueña's day. He chose a hero from Galicia who acts within the Iberian Peninsula, and who is from an area that was more isolated from the shared Moorish history of the Conquest and Reconquest. Also critical to Saldueña's choice of hero were the wars and treaties that resulted in the Spains losing significant holdings in Europe, but simultaneously ratifying their right to one critical territory: the Americas. His poem echoes the new center by relying on an exclusively peninsular hero instead of an ancient one or a conquistador whose heroic acts were performed in the Americas.

Pelayo's Literal and Literary History

Saldueña appropriated Pelayo as his epic hero, a figure who became known for his military acumen during the initial year of the Reconquest (722), when inhabitants of northern Spain began making small steps to regain territory from the Moors. Historically, we understand that Pelayo ruled a small region in Asturias, and his small-scale predations on the Moors likely were successful because the Arabs were occupied with an attempt to expand their conquest across the Pyrenees into France.³ In literature and folklore, however, Pelayo is considered to be the key figure who launched the Reconquest of Spain: myth credits him with having sparked the 800-year conquest,⁴ a *telos* applied retrospectively to his actions.

² This eventual shift can be illustrated by examining the changing nature of the advisors to the Crown. In the early eighteenth century, the monarch invited foreign advisors and welcomed influences from the English, French and Italians—but it also had often fought against these sometimes allies, in addition to warring with other European polities (for additional details, see Bergamini 49-74). During this period, we see that government officials begin to be from the Iberian Peninsula instead of from other European territories, pulling political power into a new center.

³ For the Arabic perspective on el Pelayo, see Arbesú.

⁴ Russell P. Sebold lists some of the iterations of the Pelayo tale in his book, *La perduración de la modalidad clásica*. The best known works are an anonymous poem, Alonso López Pinciano's 1605 *El Pelayo*, Moratín Padre's *Munuza*, and works by Jovellanos and Quintana titled *Pelayo* (242).

Pelayo was a potent symbol for a different kind of Spain from that which Saldueña himself experienced, harkening back to a Gothic Spain before the Moors. In an epoch where foreign influences struggled to either attain or control the Crown, and in which Dominique Dufour de Pradt's dictum that "L'Afrique commence aux Pyrénées" (168) began to circulate, it is understandable why the Moors, as the archenemies of Spain's past, would have appealed to Saldueña and his audience. The enemy in this epic embodied the contemporary "anger felt against intruders who had so long exercised political control over Spain" (van Horne 316), including perhaps both Arabs and peoples from the far side of the Pyrenees. Saldueña traced the roots of Spain to a time before the Moors significantly added to the culture or the bloodlines⁵ in order to forge a proto-Spanish identity.⁶

Saldueña's poem frames the Pelayo myth around two marriages and a military campaign. It begins with the first, coerced relationship when the Arabic governor, Munuza, lusts after Pelayo's sister, rapes her, and forces her to marry him while Pelayo is absent. Pelayo hears of the assault and marriage, but does not act immediately because of a prophecy: if he waits, he will conquer the Moors *and* free Spain. In the second marriage, Pelayo shows restraint with his bride-to-be: he meets Gaudiosa, asks her father for permission to marry her, and is engaged to this northern-Spanish maid, but chooses not to marry her until after he finishes his military campaign. The poem's action then turns to a series of skirmishes and pitched battles with the Moors, at the end of which Pelayo triumphs and kills Munuza in combat. His heroic leadership assures the future of a 'pure' Spain, Catholic and peninsular.

One clear way to see the proto-Spanish identity in *El Pelayo* is to focus on anger in the eponymous character and those who surround him versus the rage in their opponents. Both the enemies (Munuza and Bishop Oppas) and the allies (Pelayo and Alfonso) evidence pervasive anger; there are well over 600 uses of these terms in an epic of just over 1000 octaves.⁷ Saldueña

⁵ Initially, the differences between the Peninsula's Arabic invaders and its contemporary denizens would have been more sharply defined than they were after 800 years of *convivencia*. Saldueña establishes proto-Spanish roots that exclude any Arabic culture, religion, and blood, though he does allow for the Americas to be grafted into the *Nación*.

⁶ For additional information on the image of Spain as a Catholic nation, united and powerful, see Henry Kamen's *Imagining Spain: Historical Myth and National Identity*

⁷ *Furor* appears 125 times if one includes *furia* and *furioso* in the count; *ira* (99 times), *rabia* (with *rabioso*, a total of 61 times), *saña* (with *sañado* and *sañudamente*, 55 times), appear in addition to abundant examples of *enojo*, *rencor* and *airado*. The hundreds of angry words often appear in clusters and with metaphoric language that multiplies the sense of rage: for example, *fuego*, *abrasar*, *incendio*, *llama*, and *ardor*.

illustrated an “us versus them” code: it is based on who gets angry, why, and how their rage is regarded by others. Not all anger is equal: his text censors the rage of the foreign and domestic enemies of Spain, and characterizes the Iberian anger as righteous.

Scholarship on Anger

Some rage is to be expected in epic poetry.⁸ Elaine Fantham lists the loci of rules for controlling or releasing anger in politics, civics, and the home (254). Outside of these locations, epic poetry offers a different — though not completely unrelated — schema for wielding anger well on the battlefield. Epic poetic tradition advocates the middle ground of *praotēs*, a fitting or right-sized anger. In the *Aeneid*, for example, Virgil balanced Aeneas’s anger in war with his piety, limiting the expression of his rage and its damage. With his rage sometimes ameliorated by religious duty and other times animated by it, Aeneas experiences appropriate anger. Fantham makes a persuasive case that a hand-to-hand combatant must be angry enough to be brave: *virtus* combined with *ira* forms the “backbone of the warrior” (263). A healthy measure of *praotēs* thus accompanies war in its poetic portrayals.

However, epic condemns any extreme of anger. Out-of-control rage, *orgilos*, invites punishment and retaliation. No longer the healthy anger that fuels a warrior, it can become “crazed,” wrecking both the berserker and his or her victims.⁹ In the *Iliad*, for example, Homer created a hero who was too angry for his own good or that of his nation-state. Achilles’s rage at his mistreatment by Agamemnon leads to massive battlefield losses and the death of Patroclus. At the other extreme, too little anger, or *aorgēsia*, creates a deficient warrior like Latinus in the *Aeneid*, who steps down from his throne, away from his people and their battle. Neither *orgilos* nor *aorgēsia* constitutes an appropriate attitude for the epic hero, and these extremes are censured by the genre.

Given these careful treatments of rage in epic, how is anger unleashed *El Pelayo*? Salduña re-crafts rage in his poem by marrying it with a Judeo-

⁸ For example, *Restraining Rage* by William Harris is an excellent overview. Harris’s review of Aristotle’s terminology reiterates a useful taxonomy of anger in Chapter 6, “Philosophies of Restraining Rage” (88-126). I borrow his definitions of *praotēs*, *orgilos* and *aorgēsia*. Karl Galinsky, Michael West, Elaine Fantham and Maggie Kilgour analyze anger within epic poetry, selecting examples among them from Homer to Milton.

⁹ While the term ‘berserker’ has its origins in Old Norse literature, it has now become a term used by those who write about the Vietnam war, and more generally to describe uncontrolled, raging warriors. I initially encountered this use in Jonathan Shay’s *Achilles in Vietnam*. Shay describes soldiers who raged out of control and blindly attacked in battle without regard to their own safety or that of their peers. It is an apt term for the men controlled by *orgilos* in *El Pelayo*.

Christian validation or condemnation. His heuristic imitation reinterpreted epic tradition by interweaving it with the three religions of the Spains: Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism.¹⁰ Saldueña's depiction of unrighteous and righteous anger condemned the Moorish other and exalted the Catholic Spains. Pelayo's faith rests on examples from Hebrew history. An imagined hero, he becomes the proto-national founder of Spain: his religion and anger validate a machinery of privilege for the Spanish composite monarchy.

William Harris's *Restraining Anger* suggests that the Bible is equivocal about anger and when it is acceptable, but Saldueña nevertheless differentiates between *praotēs* and *orgilos* based on Biblical precepts. The third option, *aorgēsia*, does not appear in the text. The bimodal valences of rage in *El Pelayo* can be summed up using Andrew Lincoln's description of violence and the sacred in English panegyric poetry: violence is "normal both in the human and the divine spheres, [. . .] as an aspect of fallen human nature, rooted in the lusts of the body, and also as typical of divine retribution" (464). Saldueña's epic poem on one hand associates anger with lust and ambition on the part of the Moors, while on the other hand links it to holy zeal for God by Catholics. My analysis considers Saldueña's implicit schema for anger, which bifurcates into two categories: chthonic anger that rages beyond boundaries to taint what it touches, and righteous anger employed appropriately against an enemy. The characters of *El Pelayo* fall into these two categories largely—but not exclusively—along religious divisions. The new, Catholic hero is the prescriptive model for the statesmen, a remedy perhaps for the Spains' multicultural reality in Saldueña's day.¹¹

Chthonic anger: Munuza, and Bishop Oppas

The demonic, foreign, and domestic enemies of Spain are judged by religious standards for anger. Satan and two human figures from the poem embody Saldueña's category of unrighteous, destructive anger: Munuza and Bishop Oppas are unapologetically condemned for their anger and criticized for specific sins because they are the religious enemies of the

¹⁰ To clarify, see Jaime Nicolopulos on Harold Greene: "Heuristic imitations come to us advertising their derivation from the subtexts they carry with them, but having done that, they proceed to distance themselves from the subtexts and force us to recognize the poetic distance traversed" (Light 40)" (57).

¹¹ Barbara Fuchs analyzes how "an emerging Spain repeatedly attempted to come to terms with its own Moorishness, both by repressing Muslim and Morisco subjects and by negotiating the rich cultural heritage of al-Andalus" (1). While works like *El Pelayo* attempted to erase the Moor, Fuchs illustrates that Morrish influences filled the material world of the Spains.

Spanish Christians. Saldueña condemned these three figures because of their affiliation with the Moors; he demonstrates that condemnation through their uncontrolled *orgilos*.

Before I analyze the two human characters, I would like to address briefly Satan's role in leading the Moors astray. Ambition and anger dominate his character and generate his rage. He directly inspires some of the Moors who represent the Spains' foreign enemies: "Contaminan rabiosas sus querellas / En los pechos que encienden en la ira..." (4.78.1-4).¹² In Canto 6, during the war council in Hell, Satan boils over with rage as he describes his war against God: "Guerra publiqué contra Dios eterno, / La saña ardiente de mi furia impía, [. . .] La rabiosa Soberbia del Infierno / Aliste su milicia a la voz mía" (6.20.1-2, 5-6). Saldueña's implicit accusations against Satan, embedded here in Lucifer's own voice, include pride and impiety, two sins typically applied to the Moors within literary works (van Horne 315). As Satan's legions, the Moors are pressed into service to maintain the "banderas / del Mauritano honor" (6.14.2-3). Lucifer himself defends the Muslim faith by inciting the Moor's rage against the Christians. Saldueña painted Satan as a creature of rage who is categorically incapable of repentance, and who contaminates the Arabs with that rage through demonic assistants.

Anger has a special place in Satan's plans. Satan ensures that his demons attack Christians, but he reserves the demon Ire for himself, to be able to better inflame the Moors. During the war council, he delegates various fiends to deploy envy, lust, pride, greed, and gluttony against the Christians, but "De la Ira solo en tan glorioso hecho / Me reservo el dominio, pues milita / Siempre conmigo, puesto que es mi pecho / El centro propio en que su horror habita [...]" (6.23.1-4). Satan's special attachment to Ire contaminates his own spirit as well as his demons, and eventually the Moors. Saldueña links Satan, anger, and the Moors, and condemns them all.

We can now examine the two primary human characters among those inspired by Satan: Munuza and Bishop Oppas. Munuza appears early on, an evident example of unrighteous anger: Saldueña designs him—and by extension, the Moors—to be judged by his readers. Governor of Gijón, he is quickly labeled as both "lascivo" (1.20.6) and as pridefully ambitious, reaching beyond his station in life: "Soberbio el Bárbaro inhumano / Olvidando defectos de la cuna, / Giraba altivo su atrevido vuelo / A estrellar sus errores en el Cielo" (1.21.5-8).

¹² For convenience, I refer to quotes from *El Pelayo* using this format for the numbers: Canto.stanza.lines. Thus, 4.78.1-4 is Canto 4, stanza 78, lines 1-4. A citation like 7.4-7 would refer to a longer section of four stanzas. Readers should be able to easily locate the lines in any edition of the poem.

The description of Munuza in the poem's first Canto presents him as an ambitious barbarian who strives for more prestige and authority than his birth deserves.

Because Munuza's sins of ambition and lust leave him open to Satan's manipulation, his exceptional anger poisons his relationship with Pelayo's sister, Hormesinda. These dual transgressions allow for an almost instantaneous corruption of Munuza's love. While Cupid initially prompts Munuza's infatuation, Satan quickly assumes control of the relationship and leads Munuza to rape Hormesinda. From the start, anger corrupts passion:

Amante incendio el corazón le aflige,
Que causando en su pecho confusiones,
Infierno era de amor, en donde elige
Por tormento el furor de las pasiones;
En Plutón, transformando, el cetro rige
Cupido, llamas son las perfecciones
En los horrores de este abismo ciego,
Donde se abraza el fuego en otro fuego. (1.22)

The fires of Munuza's love become a fire of Hell. Fury and anger become the primary descriptors for Munuza both in the domestic realm and in war; he suffers an *orgilos* more severe than almost any other character except Satan himself. This is quite evidently *not praotēs*.

Saldueña used a horrifically apt metaphor to foreshadow Munuza's rage-driven violation of Hormesinda. Readers of epic will recall numerous examples of characters whose anger undoes them, and who are typically characterized as animals in that moment.¹³ When Pelayo dreams of hunters and prey, the reader casts Munuza in the role of the hawk that angrily (*sañudamente*) desires to kill the dove (2.44). In Spanish literary tradition, texts like *Los siete Infantes de Lara* link hawk and phallus: a man bathing with his hawk in his hand refers to more than merely a falconer's customary avian care. These verses anthropomorphize the hawk as *angry* instead of merely hungry: what is an unnatural attribution for a bird of prey perfectly describes Munuza's assault on Hormesinda.¹⁴ His attacks embody *orgilos*.

¹³ Fantham notes that in epic poetry, similes and metaphors highlight where anger is unacceptable or dishonorable. For example, the *Aeneid's* Turnus is like a wolf among lambs, not a like a lion versus a bull, or a lion against hunters (257-63).

¹⁴ Saldueña includes other appeals to *pathos* in the Moorish attacks on women. They assault Spanish nuns in their cloister, mistreating women while simultaneously profaning the convent (1.15-16). Also, the Moorish leader Alcamán later plots his revenge on the Spanish women: "Mueran también las hembras, solamente / El indulto a las vírgenes remito, / Para que sirvan hoy a nuestra gente, / De apagar el ardor del apetito [...]" (10.42.1-4).

Munuza's hyperbolic fury when Hormesinda escapes after his rape tellingly illustrates the chaotic rage that controls him. Abenabed, an Arabic king in Seville, further encourages and inflames that anger:

[. . .] su pecho Mongibelo advierte
 Munuza, que exhaló llamas atroces:
 El corazón le muerde sierpe ardiente,
 Venenos derramando en él feroces,
 Y herido del contagio de su llama,
 No tierno gime, sí soberbio brama.
 [.]
 Como el Tirano en furias encendido,
 Airado vibra en rabias los enojos,
 Y de cólera injusta poseído,
 Sílabas del dolor vieren los ojos:
 Ciego, sin Norte, como embravecido
 Furioso Noto [.] (4.57.3-8, 59.1-6)

Adjectives heap up in this extended passage to characterize Munuza's anger even as it mixes with expressions of his pain. Munuza's uncontrolled volcano of emotion frightens even his own men: "Todos callan, que temen la insaciable / Saña cruel de tanta tiranía" (4.60.5-6). His *orgilos* has no place in the domestic sphere with Hormesinda, nor within the military arena with his troops. Saldueña condemned the Moor as sexually perverse and as a damaging leader, and thus authorizes Pelayo's final attack on the Arab.¹⁵

The second demonically-inspired and furious character is Bishop Oppas, who stands out as the most egregious example of *orgilos*: he is a Christian leader who supports the Moors, experiences great rage, and therefore merits greater condemnation than even the Arabic enemy. His treason and his lack of Catholic values, as evidenced by the sins he shares with the Moors, worsen his ultimate punishment. Oppas arrives at Covadonga with an attitude of pride and temerity, the same two sins seen in

¹⁵ By the end of *El Pelayo*, Munuza's rage provokes his ruin. As Maggie Kilgour notes about the *Aeneid*'s self-destructive characters, Munuza's devastating energy rebounds on himself (656-67). His hand-to-hand combat with Pelayo imitates the final climatic battle of the *Aeneid*, but includes a twist: "Así el Turno Africano con valiente / Rabia al Contrario se arrojaba osado; / Mas detienen sus bélicos furoros / Del Español Eneas los primores" (12.28.5-8). Readers will recall that in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas fights and then kills the surrendered Turnus. Some scholars suggest that the moment immediately prior to the killing stroke conflates *pietas* and *ira*. Aeneas pauses to consider Turnus's request for clemency, but is ultimately driven by his righteous rage over Pallas's death to avenge the murder by killing him. Saldueña's new Aeneas, Pelayo, has no such challenge in deciding to kill the enraged Munuza. The Moor's lust, ambition, and his religion all made him a foreign enemy beyond any hope of redemption or forgiveness.

Satan and Munuza: “Soberbiamente su rencor se fía, / Y la seguridad del mensajero / Bárbaramente alienta su osadía” (10.2.2-4). When Pelayo not only refuses to surrender, but also promises Oppas that “[...] ha de ser la primera tu garganta, / Que huelle altiva mi triunfante planta” (10.13.7-8), the Bishop reacts with furor: “Vuelto su pecho en infernal Mégara, / Que con horrendas llamas de la ira, / Enciende al corazón vivaz hoguera” (10.25.2-4). The Bishop is filled with the Fury Megara, a far cry from the Christian filling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This unquestionably extreme comparison relies on a pagan representation of unbridled anger, whereby Saldueña strongly condemns the Bishop’s actions. Being born in the Iberian Peninsula is not enough to dictate acceptance as a role model for proto-Spaniards: one has to be a faithful Catholic as well.

The poem ultimately judges Oppas most harshly of all the human agents: he is a poor excuse for a bishop, a rage-filled man, and a Moorish sympathizer. Oppas betrays Pelayo, the Church, and the nascent *Nación*, so the author assigned him to the ninth ring of Hell next to Judas (11.49-50). He put Oppas (and with him the enemies of Spain) into the heart of the Catholic tradition, on par with the arch-traitor of Christ. Like Satan, the Bishop’s rage deepens when the Christians finally conquer the Moors:

Blasfema su infernal precito labio
 Contra Dios, y su Sacra Providencia;
 No hay loca furia, ni injusto agravio,
 Que no pronuncie en bárbara insolencia [...]. (11.65.1-4)

Ultimately, Oppas’s rage turns against God himself. Saldueña made an example of the Bishop: he was a Christian leader who sympathized with the Moors, a Catholic who betrayed his *Nación*.¹⁶

Saldueña painted Munuza and Bishop Oppas with the same brush as he did Satan. Both human agents stand in sharp relief with the ‘pure’ Catholics in *El Pelayo*. The poem re-inscribes the epic trope of anger, adroitly associating its unrighteous expression with ambition and lust in these men. They are enemies of Spain, and merit death in the literary cleansing and purification of the Spanish line and lands.

¹⁶ It could be that Bishop Oppas symbolized the interfering Roman church. Spain had broken with the Pope during the War of Succession, expelling the papal representative from Spanish territory in 1709. By 1753, Spain was in a position of relative strength compared to the Pope, and was granted a Concordat that allowed the King the right to nominate all clergy for benefices in Spain. The agreement gave the Crown control over some 50,000 church offices (Payne 63), and allowed a high degree of control over the Catholic hierarchy in Spain. Thus, while Oppas may represent an unknown traitor to the Spanish, Catholic cause, it is also possible that he might represent a critique of the Catholic Church’s administration in Spain.

Righteous Anger: God, Pelayo, and Alfonso

Not all anger in the epic poem, however, is demonically inspired and embodied by enemies. The reader also finds righteous anger modeled by God's treatment of the Spains, a model that follows his previous covenant with the nation of Israel. A second duo of characters embodies this righteous anger: Pelayo, and the heroic Alonso—a leading warrior for the Spanish and future king of Spain. Salduña justified anger in the allies of the Spains by comparing it to specific events in the Bible. God's Biblical *praoiēs* and the treatment of His chosen tribe in the Old Testament undergird this portrayal of anger. The Spains' experience with the Moors parallels Biblical events. God supports the *Nación* even while He chastises it, but its people can trust God to bless them after their trials end.

In the poem, Salduña sees Spain's situation through an Old Testament lens. God's *praoiēs* judges Spain for King Rodrigo's sin, just as He had judged Israel for ignoring His law about Sabbath rest for the land. Salduña reminded the reader that the Spanish merited divine wrath when the Gothic King Rodrigo sinned against La Cava, the basis for the well-known myth of the Arabic conquest of Spain:¹⁷ "Después que fiero profano Rodrigo / La beldad de Florinda, cuyo arrojó / Abrió paso al sacrilego Enemigo, / irritando de Dios el justo enojo [...]" (1.9.1-4). The punishment for this "error loco, con que Sacras Leyes / Violaron los descuidos de los Reyes" (1.9.7-8) is the Moors' conquest of the peninsular territories, which God allows. Just as God punished the Hebrews by sending various pagan nations to conquer Israel and Judah for their sin of neglecting the Sabbath (Ezekiel 20), the Iberian Peninsula had to suffer foreign occupation because of the sins of its early kings. In Salduña's worldview, God orchestrated the Moorish invasion to punish the Spanish because of His righteous anger against the transgression of their king.

However, as in the Biblical examples of God's anger against the Jews, the punishment is finite because God terminates His anger and His correction at the right time. In Canto 2 Pelayo prays for the end of the Moorish rule in Spain by referring to God's mercy towards Israel during its times of captivity under the yoke of pagan tribes. In one such example, he mentions Israel's exodus out of Egyptian slavery and into the Promised Land. Just as the Israelites suffered under Pharaoh, Spain suffers religious and cultural oppression under the Moors until God determines that they have endured enough and raises up a leader to rescue them:

Si de Jacob el Pueblo desdichado,
Sin Aras en que inmole religioso,

¹⁷ The mythic tale involves Gothic King Rodrigo's rape of a Spanish nobleman's daughter. Her dishonored father retaliated by allowing the Moors into Spain, beginning their swift conquest of most of the Iberian Peninsula.

De Faraón padece atormentado,
 En cruel cautividad, yugo afrentoso
 (Dice) tu corazón miró trocado,
 Dispensando indulgente, y poderoso,
 Para que en gozo trueque el tierno llanto,
 El Caudillo feliz de Moisés Santo. (2.58)

The blessing of the Exodus follows God's expression of *praotēs* against Israel.¹⁸ Saldueña updates the story of Israel's experience by mapping it onto Spain's Reconquest, suggesting that in spite of the past sins of Rodrigo, Pelayo's faith merits God's blessing as he begins to wrest control of northern Spain from the Moors.

One of the Biblical blessings during times of divine punishment is the presence of strong leaders: God positions leaders to save His people from complete ruin. Moses, for example, comes from the ranks of the Jews to lead them during the Exodus; Joshua takes over during the conquest of the Promised Land. Pelayo is the new Moses who will guide the Spanish people under both the blessings and *praotēs* of God. Pelayo cites the heroic "Moisés Santo" in his prayer for freedom because Moses helped recuperate religious holiness for people who lived in what they considered to be a polluted, oppressive environment. Pelayo prays that Spain will escape from under the Moors, with an implied expectation of a subsequent renaissance like the one Israel experienced under Moses and the Maccabees.¹⁹ Saldueña employs Biblical examples to provide hope that God's punishment of Spain is over, and his blessings have begun.

Saldueña positions Spain as the new Israel, erasing any contemporary Jewish population in favor of the ancient Hebrew tribe led by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Reaching into a Biblical past allows Saldueña to emphasize the "continuity of persistent elements of national myth-building" (Smith 25). He re-fashions an ethnic past to form a contemporary religious identity. By eliding contemporary Jews in favor of the Old Testament Jews, Saldueña appropriated their historic, special status and invented a new tradition for

¹⁸ Saldueña further applies this model as he depicts God's continuing mercy even as He exercises righteous anger. In the Biblical account, once the Israelites arrive to the Promised Land they must conquer the new territory gradually and by force of arms. But even in this, God blesses them exceedingly. For example, God promises to send hornets to clear some areas (Exodus 23:28) and plans the Hebrew's battles frequently (see Joshua 6, 8, and 10-11 for examples). The parallel suggests that even if Spanish sins merit conquest by the Moors, God's blessing may be discernible among the hardships as the Spanish fight their way out, and He will shower blessings on them after the conquest.

¹⁹ See Maccabbes 2.60.

the Nación.²⁰ As with the Jewish nation, God's *praotēs* demands that He punish the Spains, but it also follows that there would be eventual end to the fitting anger.²¹

We can now turn to the poem's two main exemplars of righteous anger, Pelayo and Alonso. While the poem orchestrates God's approval of the Nación, its greatness is guaranteed by the promise of Pelayo's heroic Catholic faith; in Salduña's logic, Pelayo can begin the process that will undo the influence of Arab Muslims in the Peninsula because he tightly controls his anger. By relying on faith to control his *orgilos*, Pelayo allies himself with the blessings of God.²²

The reader first encounters Pelayo's control over his anger when he hears of the murder of Egilona, the Christian queen who married Arabic Prince Abdalasis. His faith moderates his rage. Upon receiving the news, "De lo interior suspiro se desprende, / Que dirige rendido al Cielo Santo, / Pidiendo con devotas humildades / Revoque los rigores en piedades" (2.33.5-8). Pelayo resists his anger, defending himself through prayer. His inclination is towards automatic self-control, using the feeling of rage as a spur to piety. In contrast with the Moors, Pelayo's religious devotion restrains his negative emotions. The new hero for Spain is a model of constancy and piety, able to stand against the challenge. He is the perfect Christian conqueror.

A few pages later, the narrator describes Pelayo's proper reaction to the news of his sister's rape, that of a right-sized anger given the offense to his

²⁰ For the genesis of the concepts of invented communities and traditions see Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.

²¹ The Catholic saints help to orchestrate the eventual end to God's *praotēs*. God heeds the pleadings of the Virgin Mary and Saint James to halt the Muslim control of the Spanish peninsula. They pray to God on behalf of Pelayo to lift Moorish oppression, casting their prayer in terms of stopping the righteous punishment of the Spaniards at the proper time. Saint James asks that God "Revoca de Jesús justos enojos, / Vuelve a mi ruego tus benignos ojos [...]" (7.44.7-8). When Mary transmits this plea to Christ, He wordlessly grants it. In Salduña's epic, Spain's case has been personally pleaded before God in the throne room of Heaven, and Christ grants his special attention and blessings. Within the story's narrative, after eleven years of unmitigated defeat and cultural mixing at the hands of Arab invaders, the Spanish have suffered enough and can begin the long process of reconquering the Iberian Peninsula. God's *praotēs* relents, and His promise to champion their cause in his sovereign power signals divine approval of the anticipated religious purity of the Spains.

²² Unlike other examples of *orgilos* in the epic, Pelayo does not sustain a completely unbalanced anger.

honor. His initial sorrow and weeping is followed by “la pasión irascible” (2.77.2), but it is a justified and honorable anger, “que la justa venganza se permite / En quien la sabe hace de honor empleo [...]” (2.77.3-4). Munuza’s death will appropriately satisfy Pelayo’s “furor” (2.77.7). If Pelayo were not angry, it would be evidence that he failed to regard his family’s honor highly enough. Pelayo shoulders the responsibility for his family’s reputation, making Munuza the target of his anger. *Praotēs* demands no less. The narrator cheers him on to an appropriate desire for revenge.²³

In this moment of crisis Saldueña inserts a Biblical example in the counsel from Fernando, Pelayo’s companion. Fernando encourages him with the example of Ammon and Absalom, from 2 Samuel. The reader will recall that Absalom kills Ammon a full two years after Ammon raped his half-sister Tamar. Absalom’s actions result from frustration with the *aorgēsia* of their father, King David, who did not act to censure his son. Absalom later makes the mistake of wanting to become king out of personal ambition, and he in turn meets his death, punished by God. Both brothers receive the death penalty for their sin: Ammon for lust, Absalom for pride. The Jewish historical account mirrors the sins of Munuza: it reminds Pelayo that Munuza *will* receive his due even as it warns him not to fall into the trap of ambition. It moderates his rage to an appropriate level: Pelayo accepts the Biblical admonition with grace.

Fernando further extends the lesson to illustrate how God can use sinful events to bring about His divine plan. He points out that the desires of these two half-brothers led to the coronation of Solomon as king. Without their sins and their anger, the history of Israel would have been different: “Y de su santo padre los laureles / Con flojedad su fama enmudecieran” (2.84.3-4). In this context, Fernando’s discourse reconstructs the attack on Hormesinda as an inverted parallel to Rodrigo’s attack on La Cava, a mythic rape that triggered the Conquest of Spain by the Moors. Munuza’s actions —albeit indirectly— trigger the beginning of the Reconquest and the Spanish recuperation of the Peninsula. In the ninth Canto, Saldueña makes explicit the idea that Pelayo’s religious fervor is the key to Spain’s future and especially to its future role in the Americas. He is the opposite of the sinful King Rodrigo: “[. . .] enciende en saña / Religiosa, que a Imperio sin segundo / Abra futura llave Nuevo Mundo” (9.16.6-8). In the end, Pelayo does avenge his sister’s rape, but only after he secures the future of the Spains and their New World territories. Because of his faith, his anger is both appropriate and controlled, and thus is *praotēs* by definition.

Pelayo’s perfection as a model leader and Christian conqueror breaks down in Canto 9 when the cowardly actions of Melendo, one of his men,

²³ Recall the parallels and differences between this text and that of the *Aeneid* outlined in note 12 above.

spur him into a spectacular rage. When Melendo suggests to the Spanish cohort that they should surrender Pelayo to the Moors, he sparks fear in the men and anger in Pelayo: "[...] arda hoy un ciego arrojado / Víctima de las iras de su antojo" (9.25.7-8). Melendo argues that Pelayo's pride motivates him and accuses the hero of avenging the rape of Hormesinda by Munuza, a crime that could have been erased by her marriage to her attacker. Melendo shapes his argument by using the Biblical example of Simeon and Levi from Genesis 34 (9.27-29). When the two brothers discover that Shechem raped their sister, they agree to marry her to her attacker, but insist that Shechem's tribe be circumcised. Three days later, when all of the males suffer incapacitation from the surgery, the two sons of Jacob attack and kill the entire tribe. In doing so they abuse a sacred religious right and anger their father by making permanent enemies. Melendo likens Pelayo's actions to those of the transgressive brothers: "La recibida afrenta de la hermana / En Simeón, y Levi la furia obstina, / Y de Sichima son los moradores / Sacrificio violento a sus rigores" (9.27.4-8). According to Melendo, Pelayo is about to turn the Spanish fighters into "sacrificio violento," and thus is advocating an unrighteous, raging attack where "obró en ellos la ira, y la injusticia" (9. 28.5). Melendo fears provoking the anger of the Moors by attacking them, and labels Pelayo's plan as both unjust and unwise. He accuses Pelayo of the sin of rage: the family's honor has been stained and Pelayo—like Simeon and Levi—refuses to let the stain be erased in marriage.

Pelayo's response to Melendo proposes a counter example from Jewish history. His self-defense shows that both he and the Spanish army are righteous in their fight because his rage is not engendered by offended honor or ambition, but by faith.²⁴ Pelayo's mention of Joshua is particularly telling in stanza 9.50. Salduña emphasizes the implicit parallel between Spain and Israel: Pelayo, who is about to begin conquering the land in the name of Christianity, is in the same position as Joshua was when he led the Israelites into Canaan, the land promised to them by God. Even in his anger towards Melendo, Pelayo makes clear that the real battle is over the future of the *Nación*. Pelayo will conquer a land that has been declared by divine fiat to be theirs, in spite of any fears men like Melendo may harbor. Spain can "ver la iglesia redimida" (9.51.2), "[...] si el zelo persevera, / se logrará feliz el vencimiento" (9.50.3-4). "[...] con el auxilio de María" (9.48.8), "conseguirá mayor, más celebrado / Milagro vuestra fe, que no el Hebreo" (9.46.5-6). Their courage in fighting will out-do even the most

²⁴ Pelayo cites several examples: the Israelites crossing the Red Sea: God "[s]acó su pueblo, y fue del Israelita / Puente el Mar, si al Egipcio sepultura" (9.45.3-4); the events in 2 Samuel 5.20 when David burst through the Philistine army like a flood (9.46); and compares the fearful soldiers to Ezekiel's desert of dry bones who were reanimated by God to fight in Ezekiel 37.1-14.

famous of Israelite battles, and the inhabitants of the Spains will replace the Jews as a favorite people of God.

Further evidence of God's blessing on Pelayo's leadership and battles comes from divine assistance in pitched battles. In Canto 9, while defending himself against accusations of waging war to revenge the rape of Hormesinda, Pelayo cites two of these divine interventions as evidence that his actions are holy ones. He briefly mentions how the Israelites conquer the walled city of Jericho by merely marching around it, blowing on trumpets (Joshua 6.1-10), and how nature fights on the Israelite side when the sun stands still to give them time to win a battle (Joshua 10.12-14). In Pelayo's opinion, the Spanish will prevail in battles that can only be won by the direct intervention of God on behalf of his chosen people: "Pues si nuestro discurso considera / La causa, que nos mueve a heroico intento, / Es cierto que si el celo persevera, / Se logrará feliz el vencimiento" (9.50.1-4). According to Saldueña's epic hero, God is on the Spanish side and they will "libertar la Religión perdida" (9.51.4). Pelayo's cause is righteous: he trusts in God, and his *praotēs* justified by the circumstances.

However, the flawless hero slips off his pedestal as his response to Melendo becomes progressively angrier. Any sense of logic, shared faith, or fraternity evaporates in the heat of his wrath. His attack becomes viciously personal when he insults Melendo as tainted by his Moorish religion and Arabic blood: "Sin duda de la secta Mahometana / Te manchó el ciego error de su locura," and "Tu purpura mezclaste a la Ismaelita [. . .] En sus venas la sangre infiel palpita" (9.53.1-2, 9.54.2, 4). Pelayo labels Melendo a coward and caustically insults his manhood: "Huye las glorias del guerrero Arte, [. . .] Escóndete en la más remota parte, [. . .] trueca / En el Uso el Arnés, la Espada en Rueda" (9.55.3, 5, 7-8). His calumny culminates with a death threat: "A la muerte mi enojo te condena: / A las ardientes iras de mi mano / Morirás" (9.56.4-6). Pelayo then draws his sword and begins pursuit, racing after the fleeing Melendo. Here for the first time the reader sees Pelayo slip into *orgilos*.

But Pelayo does not kill Melendo. Instead, his faith allows him to quickly regain control and to make peace with his subordinate. The two warriors race into an underground cavern, when a hermit steps forward to rebuke Pelayo for preparing to do violence in the Virgin Mary's sacred cave.²⁵ The holy man calls for the hero to repent: "Te humillas, que la

²⁵ For additional background information, see Goode's "Covadonga, Su Historia y su Leyenda," and Boyd's "The Second Battle of Covadonga: The Politics of Commemoration in Modern Spain." The tale is also recounted on many Catholic websites, and the Cave of Covadonga has its own website, found at <http://www.santuariodecovadonga.com/nuestrasenora.html>.

fuerza que conspira / Contra ti la cerviz de su garganta, / Haga desprecio indigno de tu planta" (9.67.6-8). Saldueña constructs the old man's gentle rebuke in two parts. First, he reminds Pelayo that he is in a temple, a site that "en ondas de paciencia apaga la ira" (9.67.4). Then the old man then promises that Pelayo will conquer the Moors if he can humble himself as a "cristiano ejemplo" (9.67.5). The hermit's words cause the pious hero to immediately drop his sword, repent, and ask his victim for forgiveness. Pelayo's control over his anger has the suddenness of a magician's trick. His rage vanishes:

Apenas le oye el Rey, cuando la Espada
Que airado empuña, humildemente arroja,
El alma siente de piedad bañada,
Que del rencor al punto se despoja:
De la ira fatal no ejecutada,
Con arrepentimiento se acongoja [. . .] (9.68.1-6)

Pelayo perfectly controls his rage at Melendo through his devotion to the Virgin Mary and models the correct Christian response to sin as he repents. Saldueña sharply differentiates Pelayo's experience with rage from that of Satan, the Moors, and the Bishop.

Not only does Pelayo control his *orgillos* through his devotion to Mary, but also his repentance becomes a unifying force when he reconciles with Melendo. Saldueña identifies Catholic religious practice as the core of the new Spanish unity. In a mutual fellowship of contrition, the two renew their fellowship: "Melendo al pie del Héroe ya rendido, / Humildemente la clemencia implora, / Y el perdón prontamente conseguido, / En alegría vuelve lo que llora" (9.74.1-4). They embrace and enter into Mary's cave to offer "justa veneración al Simulacro," the statue of Mary in the Cave of Covadonga (9.75.8). The restored fellowship between the two men leads to corporate worship: with their embrace, Saldueña heals over a potential rift caused by anger that might have disrupted perfect Christian unity within the *Nación*.

After his encounter with the hermit in the Cave of Covadonga, Pelayo's behavior returns to his previous pattern of rightly controlled anger, subsequently portrayed as contagion of religious furor. Saldueña heartily endorses righteous anger for God's cause, and specifically links it to the successful expansion of the Spains into the Americas. When Pelayo returns to the siege at Gijón, his righteous ire fills the Spanish soldiers with religious zeal:

Cada Soldado bebe en su semblante
Ardores de lo justo de su ira:

Anima a todos, para que constante
 El fuego de su pecho ya respira,
 Infundiendo su aliento respetable
 El religioso celo infatigable. (11.80.3-8)

Pelayo performs as a warrior for the Christian faith. He does not base his enmity with the Moor on a personal vendetta to revenge the dishonor that came from the rape of his sister.²⁶ What might have been a family feud has become a unifying religious experience.

One additional figure illustrates Saldueña's image of righteous anger: that of the young fighter Alfonso. He is the future king who will solidify the gains against the Moors. Unlike the modern kings that Saldueña had seen since the War of Succession, Alfonso —crowned in the year 739— is a highly capable warrior who governs himself well. For example, after the Moorish berserker Muley attacks and demoralizes the Spanish army, Alfonso counters the Moor's *orgilos* with his own measured bravery. In fact, Saldueña emphasizes the point when he writes Alfonso's conversation with Muley. Not only is Alfonso overtly calm, but he also expects to use Muley's own "bárbaros enojos" against him (12.60.1). Alfonso is confident and in control, believing that he will conquer his enemy: "El leve triunfo de tu pobre vida / Es para mí valor corta victoria" (12.63.1-2). No matter how insulting Muley becomes, Alfonso carries on "[s]in alterar el plácido sosiego" (12.59.2).²⁷ Alfonso's courageous serenity exemplifies "an ability to remain composed in the presence of carnage" (Lincoln 461). He shows the mettle of a king in his bravery, marital ability, and in his presence of mind during a stressful battle and hand-to-hand combat: "Pero Alfonso, que siempre prevenido, / De sus Huestes es viva Centella, / Con militar ardor nunca dormido, [. . .] Opuesto de valor, ve detenido / Muley" (12.42.1-3, 5-6). He is an impassioned fighter, capable of controlling his own anger and holding back a berserker.

The confrontation between the two men ends with a surprisingly violent attack by Alfonso that has an uncomfortably high body count (at least for the modern reader): "Alfonso de cadáveres llenando / El prado, el alto Monte desaparece / De Átropos la tijera, que cortando / Vital estambre va, su ardor parece [. . .]" (12.47.1-4). Saldueña judges, however, that this is not *orgilos*. The poet compares Alfonso to various angry natural phenomena in a series of three powerful similes: he is like a forest fire, a

²⁶ While in the *Aeneid* Aeneas must surrender his love for the Carthaginian Dido to take up the role as founder of the new Trojan homeland, Pelayo is promised a future with his chaste bride, Gaudiosa. Implicit in their relationship is the founding a fictitious, homogenous, Spanish bloodline. Pelayo already has his homeland but must populate it with Spaniards.

²⁷ The stanza, found on page 344, is mislabeled as "LXIX" instead of "LIX."

volcano, and a hurricane (12.48-50). Alfonso's battle damage harkens back to Pelayo's assertion that God will use nature itself to fight for the Spaniards: "Si no impiden los vicios su infinita / Bondad, mayores triunfos asegura / Al Católico, obrando los portentos / De militar por él los elementos" (9.45.5-8). Alfonso is not an animal (lion, wolf, or bear) like previous epic or biblical heroes, but instead is like an act of God. Furthermore, Saldueña grants Alfonso this destructive power *only in battle*: it is evidence of his *praotēs*.

Saldueña excuses Alfonso's anger even as it borders on *orgilos*. He avoids attributing uncontrolled rage to the boy king by distancing his comparison using a simile. Alonso is unlike Satan who *is* a hurricane and volcano of anger, "Luzbel, que no le excusa obediente / La rebeldía furia de su ira: El aire encienden tan estrañamente / Los interiores [Et]nas que respira," (11.30.4-6); "[...] cual huracán furioso [...]; [t]odo el volcán horrendo de su saña arroja [...]" (11.38.1, 39.4). In Canto 12 Saldueña uses similes to paint Alonso's rage as *like* these forces of nature. The "como" appears as the first word in stanza 48 that establishes the fire and volcano comparisons. In stanza 49, "como" introduces the stanza's hurricane simile, and appears again at beginning of line 5 to introduce a tsunami image. Alonso is associated with nature's destruction, but those powers are not who he is; he merely borrows them during an appropriate moment of the battle. Combined with his cool demeanor, his powerful hand-to-hand combat illustrates a future Christian King's fitting *praotēs*.

The development of Alfonso as a secondary character in *El Pelayo* points to Saldueña's desire for a well-controlled king whose *praotēs* fuels a heart of valor. Spain in contemporary times had suffered a long line of weaker kings who were more experienced at administration than battle, and who were often controlled by strong foreign advisors. Alfonso is a prototype for a king who can stand without such support. Alfonso, like Pelayo, is a model Spanish king. Together they represent an ideally unified and Catholic Spanish past that Saldueña might have desired to make a contemporary reality for his own times.

Conclusion

The hero of the early Enlightenment Spanish epic was typically a philosopher-conqueror who sought to win new empires within science and knowledge. Saldueña instead elects "el primer héroe de nuestra Nación" (as he describes Pelayo in the Prologue to his poem) from a more overtly bloodthirsty epoch, but adapts his hero to fit his times by coding Pelayo's *praotēs* within a religious framework. The hero's anger is modeled on the righteous angry of the Old Testament Jews, is perfected by his Catholic faith, and stands in contrast to the *orgilos* of the Muslim Arabs. Saldueña writes Pelayo as a brave and capable warrior for the *Nación*, but one whose Catholic faith defines the boundaries for his anger. He re-inscribes faith onto the new tradition for the Spanish by highlighting its importance in the

largely imagined past of King Pelayo. By building a national myth that relies on Judeo-Christian standards for anger and labels the Moors and their Christian allies as unrighteously angry, Count Salduña's eighteenth-century epic uses *praotēs* to code proto-Spanishness. According to Salduña, those of 'us' who are on God's side can indeed be angry *and* righteous; 'we' control 'our' anger. But the enemies side with Satan and vice versa, and 'they' rage out of control, proving the excellence of 'pure' Catholic, Spanish bloodlines to the eighteenth-century readers of *El Pelayo*. The epic myth-making machinery deploys this newly refined *Nación* as an example for the contemporary Spains of Count Salduña. In the same way that the New World was discovered after the Moors were finally vanquished in Spain, Salduña can hope that the *Nación* of his day could regain its former prominence and reputation when it remembers its true, Catholic, unified identity.

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