



# Loyola's Acts: The Rhetoric of the Self (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics)

*Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle*

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This revisionist view of Ignatius Loyola argues that his "autobiography"—until now taken to be a literal, documentary account—is in reality a work of rhetoric, a moral narrative that exploits the techniques of fiction. In radically reinterpreting this canonical text, our main source of information about the founder of the largest and most powerful religious order in Roman Catholicism, Boyle paints a vivid picture of Loyola's world. She surveys rhetorical and artistic theory, religious iconography, everyday custom, and an astonishing array of scenes and subjects: from curiosity, to codes of honor, to the holy places of Spain, to the significance of apparitions and flying serpents.

Written in the tradition of Renaissance studies on individualism, *Loyola's Acts* engages current interest in autobiography and in the history of private life. The book also provides a powerful heuristic for interpreting a wide range of texts of the Christian tradition. Finally, this secular treatment of a canonized saint provides revealing insights into how a prestigious sixteenth-century figure like Loyola understood himself.

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