Relics, Jesuit Masculinity, and the Performance of Martyrdom in *Triumpho de los Sanctos*

Stephanie Kirk

In 1578, a collection of relics that had been carefully removed from various churches and other holy places across Europe was prepared for shipment from Seville to Mexico City. Pope Gregory XIII, desirous of cementing the orthodoxy of the Old World in the New, authorized their transatlantic transport in the following terms: "Roma está enriquecida como campo fértil y fecundo de invencibles mártires, confesores y vírgenes purísimas para que con el amparo de su protección fuese cada día amada la fe y religión Cristiana nuevamente plantada en esta tierra" (qtd. in Sánchez Baquero 114). As we can see from this quotation, reproduced in the Jesuit Juan Sánchez Baquero's account of the relics' arrival in New Spain, the Pope privileges the importance of the relics of the martyrs amongst the bodily fragments of holy personages and other objects to be sent to the Americas. Sánchez Baquero, for his part, explains why the relics are so important to the founding of the New World Church:

> Como las sagradas reliquias de los santos hayan sido siempre un testimonio y sigilo auténtico de la verdadera fe y religión Cristiana y en aquellos venerables huesos que, juntos con sus venerables espíritus dieron con sus vidas testimonio de la verdad, quedó cierto espíritu y viveza en ellas para nuestra protección y amparo, como cosa de que la divina Providencia la tiene tan particular, porque con ellos ha de resplandecer la soberana Jerusalén, como en las estrellas del cielo. (114)

The relics, then, would bring the material, embodied manifestation of the true faith to the New World. Furthermore, through the worship of these holy examples, what Sánchez Baquero terms a "nueva cristiandad" would "cobrase estima" (114).

To mark this momentous occasion, the Jesuits organized a festival that would take place in 1578 on the *octava*—the eight-day period—following All Saints Day (November 1st). A year later, the Jesuit Pedro Morales, who had witnessed the events in question, published an account of them under the title *Carta del Padre Pedro Morales*. In the account, he describes the reliquaries made to house the newly arrived sacred objects and their procession through the city, reproduces the text of the Latin convocation of the poetry competition or *certamen* and some of the winning poems, and offers details of the triumphal arches erected, the different groups who made up the celebrants, and the songs and dances performed during the procession.[1] Finally, he includes the full text of the play written and produced by the Society of Jesus to inaugurate the *octava*: *Triumpho de los Sanctos.* The play tells of four of the martyrs of the early Church—San Dorotheo, San Gorgonio, San Pedro, and San Juan—whose relics were among those that arrived in the shipment from Rome. The four saints succeed in angering the emperor Diocleciano for their refusal to abandon their Christian faith. These men died with enthusiasm and bravery and converts to Christianity multiplied as a result. Frustrated with this inability to curb the Christians' passion and weakened by illness, Diocleciano abdicates and a new emperor takes power. Later, this emperor's son succeeds him, and we witness the beginning of the era of Constantino. Although he faces challenges, Constantino has a vision of the True Cross that leads him to win a victorious battle and to become a protector of the Christians. He is subsequently miraculously cured of leprosy and honors the four men martyred under Diocleciano, excavating their bodies and affording them a Christian burial.

Sánchez Baquero not only made written reference to the events described in Morales's *Carta* but he was also intimately involved in creating the play that forms the centerpiece of this study. Although Morales does not identify the author, the play is believed to be the result of a collaboration between Sánchez Baquero and another Jesuit, Vincent Lanuchi, who were Latin and Rhetoric masters at the Colegio de San Pedro y Pablo.[2] *Triumpho de los Sanctos* owes its status as one of the most significant New Spanish Jesuit plays to the fact that it actually made it to print and was not lost, as were so many others, to the "efímera vida de la representación dramática de ocasión" (Mariscal Hay xxxiii). The *Carta* itself also possesses significance as one of the first two books to be printed in the Western Hemisphere (García Izcabaleta qtd. in Rodríguez-Buckingham 228). Nonetheless, studies of the festival, such as that of Leo Cabranes-Grant, have focused not on the play, but rather on the

events that led up to it, dubbing *Triumpho de los Sanctos* "not a memorable piece" (67). In her edition of the *Carta del Padre Pedro Morales*, Beatriz Mariscal Hay declares that the play "se apega a los rígidos cánones fijados por los jesuitas para la elaboración de obras dramáticas" (xxxiii). Moreover, she judges it to be simply a means to an end "que sirve como música de fondo, como una pista sobre la que se monta el espectáculo que, en su conjunto, establece una relación entre las reliquias; el don de Dios; sus depositarios: los jesuitas y el público" (xl). While the play may indeed appear formulaic judged within the parameters of modern-day theatre, it offers a significant glimpse into how the Society envisioned the role of martyrdom in their New World mission. Obviously, and as Mariscal Hay points out in her edition of the play, the work's theme was chosen to highlight the arrival of the relics by dramatising the life of four of the martyrs whose bones had travelled to the New World. The play presents spectators with a representation of the martyr as a masculine embodiment of heroic suffering, an idea that was mobilized in text and image both in New Spain and on a global level to promote the Society's salvation project.[3] Morales' text offers an example of another genre at which the Jesuits excelled, the plays specifically written to be performed in Jesuit schools and colleges by the students themselves. These works provided the perfect vehicle for glorifying the ideal of future New World martyrdom.

In her analysis of these plays performed in Spain and Mexico, Brandon Grayson rejects the common belief that the "religious intentionality of Jesuit works resulted in plays characterized by an uninteresting, dogmatic message that conveyed straightforward Biblical principles" (4). Instead, she describes plays that interrogated "the cultural context of the distinct communities and historical moments for which they were produced" (4). Within these various contexts, Grayson argues, one of the central questions that these plays addressed was masculinity. The use of the image of the ancient martyr to represent idealized Jesuit manhood displays the nimbleness Grayson has identified in early modern Jesuit theatre in responding to the exigencies of its cultural and historical moment.[4] She views these plays as part of a societal movement in Spain that included the writing of treatises that addressed "the proper performance of male behavior, and in so doing they sought to construct a masculine paradigm that they hoped would reverse Spain's economic and military decline" (7). Viewing this question of proscriptive masculinity in its New World context, we can see an extension of this will to regulate masculine behavior in the uncharted and fraught territory of the Americas and to provide models for young men to admire and, in some cases, emulate. Through their

knowledge production, their education of creole youth, and their activities in the missionary areas of the empire, the Jesuits developed a brand of hegemonic masculinity based on erudition and forbearance and infused with the Ignatian ideals of "self-sacrifice, human brotherhood, and a love of God" (Fitzpatrick 24). In New Spain, young missionaries keenly embraced service that could lead to death as they undertook the reconversion of heretics and the evangelization of heathens; the textual representations of their experiences conceptualize the violence and potential for death in missionary work. For the Jesuits, martyrdom brought together Catholicism, empire, and masculinity and facilitated their success in gaining souls for God. Martyrdom came to represent the highest expression of manly virtue and heroic masculinity in a Catholic realm and helped globalize the Jesuits' sacred vision. Intersecting these discourses of religion, sovereignty, and masculinity, the figure of the martyr permits a re-construction and a de-construction of religious masculinity that attains victory over all enemies by infusing death with power. Following the European social imaginary of the time, as Todd Reeser has pointed out, manly virtue was often expressed in terms of moderation. The martyr is the consummate moderate man, withstanding all persecution, resolute even under the most excruciating of bodily suffering, while his torturer represents the excess of the uncivilized other.

My focus in this article will not be the wider Baroque festival that was organized to celebrate the relics and that has so captivated recent critics such as Cabranes-Grant but rather the play that, at the time, formed the centerpiece of the celebration. I will offer a new look at the work to examine how the Jesuits fashioned it to advance an idealized representation of martyrdom and masculinity with the New World as its most perfect backdrop.

Holy Relics and the Embodiment of Martyrdom

The affirmations made by Sánchez Baquero and the Pope of the relics' importance echo the decrees made at the Council of Trent (1545-1563) regarding the centrality of the worship of these sacred fragments and of the holy bodies from which they came, particularly those of the martyrs.[5] In a decree promulgated at Session 25 in 1563, the bishops were commanded to instruct the faithful to venerate the "holy bodies of holy martyrs," through whom God would bestow many favors on the Christian community. While the Council encouraged the veneration of these manifestations of holiness, they also took care to issue strict guidelines as to how this should be carried out:

> The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching (...) they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; the honour (paid) to relics; and the legitimate use of images: teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men.

Mindful of the rejection of this worship by the Protestant Church, the Catholic Church instructed the bishops to punish those who rejected the importance of the cult of the saints and martyrs and their relics. But also aware of the Reformation critique of the fakery surrounding holy objects, the Council endeavored to carefully control the terms of this veneration lest it degenerate into inappropriate behavior:

> In the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; finally, all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust; nor the celebration of the saints, and the visitation of relics be by any perverted into revellings and drunkenness; as if festivals are celebrated to the honour of the saints by luxury and wantonness.

Significantly, the Council emphasizes the sanctity of the body of the martyr and its relics, identifying the importance of the veneration of "the holy bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ." The Council explains that through the relics of the martyr's body, God bestows many benefits upon the faithful and that those who chose not to believe this "are wholly to be condemned."

Relics of martyred saints and other venerated personages, both ancient and contemporary, functioned, moreover, as reminders of bodily sacrifice as well as exemplars of the spectacle of corporal pain and fragmentation and of the highest form of imitatio Christi. The relic possessed the power to re-embody the martyr for the faithful, "investing the abject corpse with sacred significance" (Sanger 201). Although seemingly only fragments, relics held the power to make the fragment whole and transform it into a synecdoche for the whole body (Sanger 201). Furthermore, this "abject corpse" became "imbued with sacred significance" (Sanger 201). According to Alice Sanger, this belief developed from the practices of the Early Church, when bodies had to be quickly spirited away and parts dispersed for safety in different places (200). As she explains, the faithful began to believe that each relic "contained the whole saint, that each part was as potent as the body itself,

as the Eucharistic Sacrament came to be perceived to contain within it the complete presence of Christ" (200-201). Moreover, it was maintained that the more relics accumulated in one place the holier the site. Consequently, the shipment of relics endowed Mexico City with an aura of increased sacredness, while their guardians, the Jesuits, basked in this holy light (Sanger 201).[6]

Carta del Padre Pedro Morales

The placement of the relics in the New World was not, however, sufficient for their true meaning to be understood. Their presence had to be felt by the faithful and their sacred power emphasized if that power was to have a lasting and meaningful effect. Thus, a lavish festival was organized to welcome them. This event had the further benefit of allowing the Jesuits to demonstrate their status as favored sons of the papacy and as the main contenders for spearheading the flourishing of the New World Church. The festivities took place during the aforementioned *octava* and the viceregal capital of Mexico City provided the backdrop for these festivities with native dancers among the many and varied groups that participated in the celebration. The festival showcased triumphal elements typical of this time, including triumphal arches and poetic tournaments or *certámenes*. The inaugural event on the Sunday of the *octava* was the performance of *Triumpho de los Sanctos*, which took place at the Jesuit Colegio Máximo de San Pedro y San Pablo which, at the time of the play's performance, was still under construction.[7] The actors, as Morales tells us, were all students of the Jesuit colleges, "muchos dellos graduados en artes" (108). Their performances, together with the extravagant costumes, brought forth a series of powerful emotions from the audience, which included such luminaries as the viceroy and members of the Real Audiencia. Not only did the play bring forth feelings of "ternura" (inspired by the figure of Yglesia) and "saña" (Diocleciano), but it also succeeded in the "conversión de muchas almas," including some "turcos" who happened to be present (108). Lasting four hours, the performance began with mass and included not only the play itself but also songs and *entremeses* (108).

The local community came together from all walks of life to welcome the relics. Alongside the natives, who offered their skills as dancers, wealthy white citizens lent their jewels, which were refashioned into reliquaries that bore the precious fragments as they were solemnly paraded through the streets of Mexico City. After a brief introduction to the festivities and the relics, Morales begins his text with a description of the reliquaries: "Relación de el modo, hechura, y riqueza de los Relicarios" (5). He explains that there

were nineteen in all made from "perlas, joyas, sedas y otras cosas" (5). He repeatedly emphasizes the gratitude of the Jesuits that both they and their new evangelical project had been awarded this special favor. He then dedicates a long paragraph to the procession itself: "En la delantera yva la librea de la ciudad de colorado, con su música de atabales y trompetas en seguimiento, las y dichas quadrillas muy concertadas, y detras de ellas delante del Príncipe, yva un rey de armas en un gracioso cavallo" (9). Featured in the procession were the exemplary young male recipients of Jesuit educational training, those whom the Society sought to fashion in their own image: "Por remate de todo yva el Príncipe en la forma dicha, acompañado con dos collegiales de cada collegio, hombres graduados con sus becas y hábitos collegiales, en sus mulas honestamente aderecadas, que davan mucho ser y gravedad a todo lo que se hazía" (9). Morales follows the procession of the reliquaries with a description of the poetry competition or *certamen* and includes the Latin text in which the details of the competition were announced. He explains how "andamios" were erected next to the triumphal arches where the poets would declaim their works. Morales details the erection of the triumphal arches and the procession that went from one to another, including the natives who danced, richly dressed "con mucho ornato y plumería" (52).

New World Martyrs

Relics strengthened the religious orders' connections to the Primitive Church and their unveiling shortly after the Jesuits themselves had arrived in Mexico provided concrete proof of the faith that the Pope placed in the New World as a site for Catholic renewal and resurgence. The New Spanish Jesuits' focus on martyrdom was part of the Counter-Reformation Church's reactivation of the cult of the martyrs in service of this Catholic renewal and was stimulated in part by the 1578 discovery of the Catacombs where the remains of scores of Christian martyrs were buried (Burke 51). In "How to be a Counter-Reformation Saint," Peter Burke explains how martyrs made attractive saints and, while few were canonized during this period, those that attained this status were widely venerated (51). The cult of the martyrs drew not only young men who sought the same, but also multitudes of the faithful who would worship them. Moreover, new and tantalizing theatres of martyrdom appeared in lands both familiar and exotic to the Western mind: England, Japan, and of course, the Americas, particularly New Spain. The Pope's shipment of relics to the Jesuits signaled the importance of the

Americas as such a theatre of martyrdom and the role he was assigning the Society of Jesus in those lands.

All the orders were interested in possessing old world relics. The Franciscans, for example, received their own shipment at their Convento Grande in Mexico City in 1582. They also held some relics in Puebla, including a prized kneecap of the Franciscan novice Felipe de Jesús. The veneration of this relic of the first Mexican-born saint—martyred in Nagasaki in 1597 and beatified in 1627—spoke to the global power of relics to forge a Catholic commonwealth, with New Spain as one of its centers.[8] Both Franciscans and Jesuits fervently desired to be agents of this commonwealth. With a long tradition of desiring martyrdom, the Franciscans became the order whose members were to die most often in this way in the viceroyalty.[9] They produced two early martyrs: Fray Francisco López in 1582 (in 1615 his miracle-working relics were placed in the Church of Sandia in what is now New Mexico) and Fray Agustín Rodríguez in 1581. The largest number of Franciscan martyrs came in 1680, when twenty-one friars died during the revolt of the indigenous Pueblo people against Spanish rule in present-day New Mexico. The Jesuits were anxious to conduct the type of evangelical work that would allow them to make the ultimate sacrifice in service of the salvation of pagan souls and attaining personal union with God. In 1594, Gonzalo de Tapia, founder of the first permanent Jesuit mission on the Northern frontier, died at the hands of the indigenous *curandero*, Necabeba, in Taborapa, Sinaloa, thereby becoming the Society's New Spanish protomartyr. After Tapia's death, his head was recovered from the natives who, according to the seventeenth-century Jesuit chronicler Andrés Pérez de Ribas, had dyed it with red ocher (qtd. in Taylor, 376) and were using it as a drinking vessel. The remains were then transported to Mexico City and honored there among the Jesuits. In a demonstration of the transatlantic traffic in relics as well as the importance of the creation of New World objects of devotion, citizens from Tapia's hometown of León, Spain, requested one of his body parts to display in their Church and were finally sent his arm and fingers, which were welcomed, according to Pérez de Ribas, by throngs of the faithful (qtd. in Taylor, 376).

In their transhistorical theorizing of martyrdom, Michaela DeSoucey et al discuss the importance of embodiment for promoting martyrs as "reverential and referential models of a communicable past" (110). The martyr's body, they assert, is symbolically employed as a cultural possession that is "compartmentalized, bartered and thrust into a commercial marketplace of ideas" (108). Martyrs like Gonzalo de Tapia allowed the Society and the Church in

general to forge a clear relationship between what stood at this time for the "marketplace of ideas"—their global desire to circulate the image of the Jesuit as an embodiment of the values of religion, masculinity, and Christian empire. DeSoucey et al, drawing on Schudson, explain how the body of the martyr was memorialized and commemorated to "realize and reprocess the body's cultural power well beyond the moment of death, making martyrs physically present and cognitively memorable" (100). This group of scholars takes a transhistorical look at what they term "embodied martyrdom," contending that the martyr's cultural power transcends historical specificity. In the early modern period, the Jesuits invoked the figure of the martyr in both text and image to harness and deploy this cultural power.

In her essay on New Spanish Franciscan martyrs, "Dying for Christ," Asunción Lavrin explains that accounts of martyrdom did evoke those of the early Church but, at the same time, the world that these New Spanish Franciscans encountered bore little resemblance to the ancient world they had read about. In this new land, they met "people who were unlike any other" and who were to become "one of the most difficult adversaries Christianity had ever met" (132). Luke Clossey makes a similar point, explaining how "death at the hands of the uncivilized Indians of northern New Spain, who killed without allowing missionaries to choose death of their own will, conformed neither to the theology of martyrdom, nor to the literary tradition of martyrologies rooted in the persecutions of ancient Rome" (125). In order to compensate for this perceived lack of connection to the Christian past, it became supremely significant for hagiographers and chroniclers such as Pérez de Ribas to present the martyr's death in the most glorious of terms and the Jesuits produced vast amounts of texts in which they lauded the exploits of their own men, with martyrs' hagiographies the most celebrated of all. The most dramatic theatre of martyrdom in the early modern period was found in England; writings by luminaries of the Society such as Pedro de Ribadaneira offered detailed narratives of the English Jesuits' gruesome deaths. The New World Society had its own stories to tell, with hagiographies written about such martyrs as San Roque González, who died in the Paraguayan *reducciones* in 1628 along with two fellow members of the Society and whose story was told by various Jesuit chroniclers, most notably Juan Eusebio Nieremberg. These martyrs became powerful tools through which the Society's centralized apparatus drew on local histories for global purposes. Chronicles such as Pérez de Ribas's *Historia de los Triunfos de Nuestra Fé entre gentes las más bárbaras y fieras del nuevo orbe: conseguidos por los*

soldados y milicia de la Compañía de Jesús en las misiones de la Nueva España evoke comparisons with the martyrs of the early Church, but at the same time create a specifically local, New Spanish theatre of martyrdom. As Maureen Ahern explains, through Pérez de Ribas's text, the Jesuits created an "evangelizing epic" featuring their own "frontier martyrs" (15). In the case of Gonzalo de Tapia, the conversion of the indigenous peoples to whom he had ministered for many years finally came to pass owing to the events set in motion by his suffering and ultimate death. He thus attained the status of hero in this Jesuit epic:

> Más glorioso fue el triunfo que consiguió con su muerte el bendito Padre Tapia (...) pues lo que en la vida no pudo alcanzar del en un año entero de amonestaciones que le costaron su vida, exhortándole con amor de Padre, a que reconociese sus pecados y sus vicios, y no fuese tropiezo de las almas; todo eso lo alcanzó en el cielo en para la hora de la muerte de Nacabeba (Pérez de Ribas 242).

The male body in pain becomes the bearer of hegemonic masculinity, while Christian knowledge as death infuses it with the ultimate power.

Triumpho de los Sanctos

Triumpho de los Sanctos, produced early in the Jesuits' New Spanish tenure, lays a textual foundation upon which the chroniclers of the incipient local martyrs could build. The play can be viewed as a paradigmatic trans-historical and transnational account of universal early Christian martyrs whom the New Spanish missionaries could potentially emulate as they carried out their evangelical work in the dangerous frontier lands and that the chroniclers could reference as they told their stories. As with so many elements of their carefully constructed pedagogy, the role of theatre in the curriculum was codified in the *Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Iesu* (The Official Plan for Jesuit Education), first ratified in 1599. As Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. explains, the guidelines for theatre appear in Section IV, along with instructions on other topics such as Latin, rhetoric, and the humanities, and follow instructions issued in Ignatius of Loyola's letter of 1556. Although *Triumpho de los Sanctos* predates the *Ratio*, the procedures governing theatre were already in place and the play would have adhered to them. While early plays in Spain had often been written entirely in Latin, as the genre evolved the vernacular began to be used. Menéndez Peláez points out that the Jesuits, "como humanistas que son," wanted to conserve some measure of Latin in these plays to provide opportunities for their students to practice their com-

mand of this language along with honing their skills in public oratory. At the same time, they also understood that their duty was to teach Christian doctrine to a wider audience, what Menéndez Peláez describes as the "masas," and so they began to write plays in the vernacular (21).

Subject matter was, of course, carefully regulated, but also ranged surprisingly widely, including the Bible, history, classical mythology, and the lives of saints and martyrs, singular Jesuits, and enemies of the Society (Wetmore). The range and type of topics shows the Jesuits had a more diverse audience in mind than the Mendicant friars whose theatrical works Cabranes-Grant classifies as "catechistic experiments" (66). The Jesuits targeted a Spanish and creole audience but did not exclude native neophytes and engaged in many sophisticated dramatic techniques to entertain and instruct an audience of different backgrounds. They used passionate speeches to "atraer la voluntad del público a través de los sentidos, según la más pura voluntad ignaciana," often illustrating their message via the mechanism of spectacle (Mariscal Hay xxxiii). Mariscal Hay describes "El colorido y el lujo de los trajes, los bailes, las melodiosas recitaciones en metros populares al final de cada acto, la inclusión de vistosos personajes alegóricos que daban sustancia a ideas y conceptos abstractos [que] venían a constituir eficientes sistemas de recitación visual de los dogmas o prácticas religiosas que se quería propugnar por medio del espectáculo teatral" (xxxiii). These techniques, along with theatrical strategies in which "mensajes codificados" were reiterated and plainly communicated, would have rendered the content at least partly accessible to all members of an audience that included "lo mismo letrados que analfabetos, cortesanos que modestos ciudadanos de recursos y conocimientos limitados" (xxxiii).

As we can see, the topic fit perfectly within the subject matter of the Jesuit plays produced within their schools and colleges, dealing with the martyrdom of several saints of the Early Church. It also details a moment in time when Christians, a small minority in a pagan land, were under siege, and responds to the interest in martyrdom during this period. While the Jesuits actively promoted those who died as martyrs, they wanted to make sure that those who wished to be missionaries did not do so focusing solely on their desire to die in this way, but rather accepted it as a possibility in the enterprise of saving souls. Clossey identifies the interest in martyrdom as "disruptive" for the Society, citing the then General, Francisco de Borja, who, in a letter to the Provincial of Andalusia, explained that future missionaries be not only "eager to die, but counselled to safeguard their lives, to better use them in the

service of the Lord our God" (53). Although Clossey sees "mixed messages" in the Society's promotion of martyrdom and their call for caution, I would suggest that the Jesuits prized it as the ultimate sacrifice and manifestation of Jesuit masculinity, while at the same time making sure that those who died as martyrs did not fanatically seek out this death as an ultimate end that would detract from the carefully constructed meaning with which the Society had imbued these types of deaths and the central role they held in their mission.

All early modern accounts of martyrdom modeled those of the Early Church in the way they were framed and written. The authors of *Triumpho de los Sanctos* go one step further and use the story of four martyrs of early Christianity as the heroes of the play. In so doing, they were able to draw on the masculinity with which the early Christian chroniclers had framed their narratives and to refashion it for the early modern audience. E. Stephanie Cobb has studied the terms in which this masculinity emerged in these accounts, showing how the chroniclers appropriated Roman norms of masculine conduct for the representation of Christian martyrs to convey the belief that "to be a Christian was to embody masculinity" (3). She detects an urgent aspiration on the part of the Christians to frame their martyrs as masculine to counteract the way their willingness to die was often cast by their enemies as perverse or deviant (3). Through careful textual framing, Christian authors began, as Elizabeth Castelli has argued, to recast "suffering as salvation" and "powerlessness into power" (qtd. in Cobb 9). The trope of the body in pain became central to what Cobb, drawing on the work of Judith Perkins, identifies as "early Christian group identity" (9). The body in pain, however, was not left to stand alone, and other less physical but equally masculine attributes became part of the martyr's image. Further challenging the idea of the perversity involved in deliberately seeking out a painful death, the martyr's actions were placed within the traditionally masculine framework of rationality. Cobb references the appearance in "dozens" of early Christian texts that convey the "desires and actions" of the martyrs as "products of rational consideration" (5). To bolster this facet of masculine behavior their persecutors were drawn in radically opposite terms; the Romans who pursued Christians for their faith and sentenced them to painful deaths were characterized as "lacking masculine reason and self-control" (14).

As Cobb points out, the value of the early Church martyrologies is that "their moral exhortation transcends the period of persecution" and they provided an eternal comfort that assured the reader that "the adversary, the devil, the governor, proconsul, emperor or mob—however the opponent

is described—will not win" (15). The martyr's body—tortured, mangled, sometimes unrecognizable, but nonetheless masculine—presented Christian readers with a transhistorical sense of security, offering them "a claim to power that binds later Christian communities together in social opposition to their world and persecutors" (Cobb 16). This group identity came together by highlighting "Christian volition, mastery of the passions, devotion to justice, and imperviousness to persuasion" (80).

We see then the desire to capitalize on this transhistorical masculinity and group identity in the representation of the ancient martyrs for a New Spanish audience in *Triumpho de los Sanctos*. At time when the Jesuit mission was just beginning, the members of the Society sought to lay the foundations of their Church militant in the New World on the body of the martyr. The play presented the Society with the perfect opportunity to do so. While the shipment of relics came from a wide variety of holy personages, including female saints and virgins and male saints of many kinds, the focus on the male martyr sends a definitive message regarding the apostolic and activist goals of the New World Church.

In his brief analysis of *Triumpho de los Sanctos* and framed within his evocative study of the other elements of the festivities as depicted in Morales' *Carta*, Cabranes-Grant explains that the type of theatrical maneuvers the Jesuits undertook to make the play accessible for all—"the figurative conflation of historical coordinates into an enhanced dramatic experience"—could lead to the risk of "potentially disturbing fractures" (67).[10] The most salient of these risks, he believes, was the possibility that "the predicament of the early Christians in the play frequently resembles another religious crisis: the relatively recent conversion of the Indians to that same faith" (67). While Cabranes-Grant provides evidence to support this reading with the example of how the Roman character of Chromacio advocates torturing the Christians and burning their temples and their books, which must have struck "the chord of a different historical trauma" for the Mexican members of the audience, the question of reception and comprehension has to be considered here (67).[11] Given that, as Cabranes-Grant himself rightly points out, these were not catechistic Franciscan plays directed at new Christians, would the Mexicans have picked up on these resonances? Whatever the "inevitable ideological dangers" of the play's theme, the Jesuits intended, in my opinion, to make the connection between the early Christians and the Society's potential missionary martyrs: a small but united Christian band of men facing a large pagan majority, prepared to risk their lives in service

of the true faith. I do not believe the Jesuits intended to draw a comparison between the native Mexicans and the pagan Romans—the differences were too radical—but nonetheless the representation of a valiant and virile group of martyrs must have at least spoken to the Spanish members of the audience. The playwrights do gesture, however, to the specifics of their New Spanish environment, engaging in an interesting textual transference during speeches pronounced by the allegorical female character Gentilidad. While the name clearly marks her figure as pagan, she employs the language used in Christian texts to refer to pagan worshippers. Replying to Crueldad, who outlined her plans for exterminating Christian families, Gentilidad proclaims: "Confío que por ti seré vengada/de gente a mis costumbres tan adversa/y mi bandera firme y levantada/contra nación tan barbara y perversa" (l. 404, 132). Meanwhile, Ydolatría angrily rails against the Christians who disturb her 5000 years of "dulce acogimiento" (l.365, 131) and whom she describes as "unos hombres incultos, inhumanos,/que tiene nombre y secta de Christianos" (l.367-8, 131). This language would have been meaningful for some members of the audience since the indigenous of the Americas were often invoked in just these terms. This antiphrasis would have helped reinforce the connection between these early Church martyrs and those Jesuits just now embarking on their evangelical labor in the furthest reaches of the Spanish empire, where the most "inculto" of the King's new subjects resided.

The play opens with a prologue, as was customary, explaining that the work will take place in order to celebrate the relics' arrival and so that all spectators "mejor se entienda y vea/la gloria que a los Sanctos es devida" (116/l. 9-10). The prologue emphasizes that this glory comes not from the way the Saints lived their life, but rather in seeing that "por su amor dieron la vida" (116/l. 14). Among these Saints, and more specifically among those sacred personages whose relics now reside in New Spain, the authors have chosen to foreground the holy martyrs: "y assi entre todos emos escogido/los martyres sagrados, cuya historia/causa a los cuerpos sanctos summa gloria" (116, l. 22-4). The prologue offers a summary of the quite simple plot, which hinges on the moral triumph achieved by the saints on joyfully accepting martyrdom rather than abjuring their Christian faith. In discussing the individual martyrs who appear in the play, the playwrights endeavor to represent them in the masculine terms described by Cobb of virility and rationality.

Two sets of allegorical figures represent pagan Roman beliefs on the one hand and, on the other, the Christian Church and its values. Ydolatría and her supporters, Crueldad and Gentileza, stand in opposition to Ygle-

sia, "esposa de dios," who Mariscal Hay identifies as one of the principal characters (xxxvi). She is assisted by Charidad, Fee, and Esperanza in their battle against the pagan allegorical figures mentioned earlier. According to Mariscal Hay, the fate of the human characters Pedro, Doroteo, Gorgonio, and Juan is less interesting than that of the relics (xxxvi). While the fate of the relics is indeed central to the plot, their presence in the play, however, depends on the constant invocation of the very human, masculine, and alive bodies of the martyrs to allow the public to make the metonymic leap from the relic—ensconced in its lavish reliquary—to the embodied martyr on the brink of his deathly triumph. As DeSoucey et al explain, the "embodied martyr is a resource for interest groups that seek to provide concrete proof of the rightness and righteousness of a cause" (100). In this case, the cause was, of course, the evangelization of the natives and the plan to establish the purest and most orthodox version of the Tridentine Church in the Americas. The embodiment of the martyr becomes "a cultural tool" that can be "manipulated and reshaped" (113). In Catholicism, this is achieved through two key procedures that Morales clearly details in his text. First, the "relics of martyrs' bodies are preserved in ornate vessels and worshipped as objects of devotion," as we see in his description of the reliquaries in his letter (De Soucey et al 106). Secondly, the martyr's story is told in a way that frames his or her death by "invoking the body for powerful visual and rhetorical effect," as we see in his inclusion of the text of *Triumpho de los Sanctos* within his *Carta* (DeSoucey et al 106). Martyrs' bodies thus become "reverential and referential" models of "a communicable past" (DeSoucey et al 110). In these ways, then, the martyr's embodiment "shifts between an abstract concept and a material object" (DeSoucey et al 110).

The playwrights draw a very explicit connection between the relics and the martyrs' masculine bodies. Diocleciano and his associates discuss how the martyrs' bodies are to be disposed of and the importance of leaving no trace of them. This dialogue allows the spectators to make a connection between the relics transported from Europe and flesh and blood holy personages. The pronouncements made by the emperor and his acolytes also make it clear that the martyrs' remains are highly valued—and thus must be destroyed: "los niños, las mugeres, los varones/Viejas y moços han de ser buscados/ Los huesos, las cenizas, y la escoria/Hundida sin que quede ni memoria" (l.397-400, 132). Later in the play, Diocleciano threatens to submit to a similar death anyone who attempts to bury the martyrs and again reiterates "No quede huesso ya sin ser quemado/o echado en la marina en gran hondura"

(l. 1904-5, 179). The tormentors also make it clear that these bodies are to be made to endure extreme pain allowing, again, the public to make the connection between the relic and the figure of the valiant and steadfast martyr: "Para mayor victoria me sería/si fuessen tan terribles los tormentos/que los muda el temor de su porfía/y vivos cumplan nuestros mandamientos;/que si passan la muerte y agonía" (132, l. 409-13). Later in the play (Act 2, Scene 2), as the martyrs' death becomes imminent, the Romans' description of the death they plan to give to the Christians intensifies. After explaining how they are going to burn the Christians' temples and books "en la pública hoguera," Chromacio relays to Diocleciano the punishments he will mete out to them in excruciating detail: "Luego infinitos géneros de penas/açotes con plomadas y heridas,/prisión obscura, rígidas cadenas,/pez y resina ardiente derretidas,/las carnes y los huessos y las venas/con rastrillos y peynes son rompidas,/con cañas serán hechas mill roturas,/y todas cortarán las cointuras" (l.1040-47, 154). If this were not enough, he then goes on to list: "Equuleo, fuego vivo, aguas eladas/ossos, leones, tigres, onças fieras,/ésto se abrá de usar/que no de espadas./Y para que esto sientan más de veras,/sus carnes con vinagre y sal lavadas/serán sin mover quexas lastimeras/del niño tierno que ve muerto al padre,/ni que la hija llore por su madre" (l. 1498-1055, 154).

Despite the threat of terrible suffering, the martyrs remain calm and reasonable in their faith and brave in their resolve throughout the play. The martyrs appear for the first time in Act 2, where they are depicted as resolute in their willingness to die for their faith. Belief in the Christian god is in and of itself an act of valor, surrounded as they are by the pagan hordes. Dorotheo makes this clear, addressing himself to God: "Pues en tanta multitud/del pueblo ciego, pagano,/estendiste a mí tu mano/dándome fuerça y virtud/para que fuesse christiano" (l.721-5, 145). The men gather, drawing strength from their male bonds. Gorgonio says: "Tengo entrañable desseo/que mi coraçón se abrassa, de hablar a Dorotheo" and Dorotheo himself thanks God for access to other "cavalleros christianos/con quien vivo acompañado" (l. 774-5, 146). Their male bonding is based on friendship, knowledge, and rational discussion. They calmly discuss and debate the question of how best to serve God, deciding that, in the words of Gorgonio, "Que aunque es verdad que servimos/a nuestro Dios con la vida,/mayor merced recibimos/ymitando al que creímos/en la passión y la partida" (l. 856-60, 149). Pedro affirms the same: "Que la sangre derramada/con ánimo pío y recto/tendrá en esto mas effecto/que la vida conservada/con el recato y secreto" (l. 891-5, 150).

During the execution scene, the playwrights give voice to the martyrs as, enthusiastically and with great courage, they accept these terrible torments. Diocleciano is depicted as raving and unstable as he calls for more dreadful punishments, but the martyrs themselves remain calm and rational. Pedro has two long speeches in which he lays out the tenets of the Christian faith for Diocleciano through a description of the life and death of Jesus. Ironically, the emperor, riddled with emotion, challenges him by saying "¿Qué dizes loco, insano? ¿qué pregonas con osadía falta de razones?" (l.1733-4). This conversation has at its core the question of the masculine, framed in terms of moderation versus excess. Pedro explains that Christianity finds its strength through love and not through "armas, ni guerra, ni temores/pero con mansedumbre, la pobreza/de unos rudos, incultos pescadores/a confundido a toda humana alteza/" (l. 1805-8, 176). Diocleciano responds by saying that if his veneration of the death of Christ is so great, he, Pedro, can then die crucified, too. Gorgonio declares Pedro to be a "varón constante, sabio y fuerte" and someone whom they will follow "en la vida y en la muerte" (l.1827-8, 177).

Conclusion

As the play draws to a close, the action speeds up. In Act 4, scene 1, Diocleciano expresses dismay that he has not been able to expunge Christianity from the Roman empire, despite the campaign of torture and death he has waged against its followers. Claiming that their resistance has ended both his life and the empire, he abdicates his position (l.2218, 191). Furthermore, his lieutenant Daciano claims they have been unable to destroy and desecrate the bodies, which seem to be protected by some supernatural force: "Procure que no fuessen sepultados/y manjar de las aves los hazía;/ pero del cuervo mismo eran guardados, que nadie los tocava ni podía./Si con piedra en la mar eran lançados/o en fuego los quemava y deshazía,/a la piedra las aguas sustentavan/y las cenizas todas se juntavan" (l. 2172-9, 190). This allows, once again, for the audience to visualize the story behind the relics now in New Spain and to associate them with the impenetrable and victorious bodies of the martyrs. In Act 5, scene 2, Constantine makes an appearance and declares that he will give these bodies a Christian burial, thus properly sanctifying them. Finally, in the following scene, the very last of the play, the Christian allegorical figures return to the stage to ensure that the audience makes the connection between the story that was told and the reality they inhabit. Discounting the strictures of time and space, Charidad declares that the "sanctos huessos" will be collected and "por los pueblos

fieles repartidos" (l.3274-3275, 223). Acknowledging that New Spain is one such "pueblo fiel," Charidad brings the work to a close, instructing the audience to draw their faith from the heroic actions of the martyrs. Thus we see how the play's authors frame New World Christianity in terms of holy suffering, autonomy, and masculinity, all of which the Jesuits will exemplify: "Amor hizo que tanto padeciessen/por su fee, por su Dios y por su gloria;/ amor les dio valor con que venciessen,/amor les dio en las manos la victoria; /amor también les hizo que viniessen/y en Mexico pusiessen su memoria" (l. 3316-21, 224-5). The theatrical spectacle has allowed the audience to connect the relics with the tortured but nonetheless virile body of the martyr and to imagine this role for the Society of Jesus in Christianity's new sacred space.

Washington University in St. Louis

Notes

[1] According to Mariscal Hay, the poetry was the "reina de la fiesta" (xxv). As she explains, four of the *octava*'s afternoons were dedicated to the poetic colloquies held in the four existing colleges of San Miguel, San Bernardo, San Gregorio, and San Pedro y San Pablo (xxx-vi).

[2] Mariscal Hay takes this information from José Rojas Garcidueñas.

[3] We gain a glimpse of this globalizing intent in the Jesuit historian and confidant of Ignatius, Pedro de Ribadeneyra, and his account of the travails of the English Catholic Church and its Jesuit martyrs: *Historia Ecclesiastica del scisma del Reyno de Inglaterra (1588-1594).* In a discussion of the martyrdom of Edmund Campion, Ribadeneyra writes: "Y yo he visto la imagen del aventurado Padre Edmundo Campiano de la Cia de Jesus, al qual vosotros con tanta rabia despedezasteis en Londres por la Fe Catholica, hecha subtilisamente de pluma, en Las Indias, al mismo Padre Campiano atado, estirado y desmembrado con vuestras ruedas, al tiempo que le atormenbades, siendo en aquellas partes (como lo es en estas) tenido y reverenciado por Martir de Jesus Christo y los que le atormentaron, odiados, aborrecidos, y escupidos como tyranos y enemigos de Dios y de su iglesia sin haber sido parte vuestros falsos Edictos y pregones para quitarle esta gloria y para hacerle traidor contra vuestra Reyna y vuestro reyno" (513).

[4] In her dissertation, Grayson examines a series of plays that feature the prodigal son whose redemption, facilitated through the figure of the counsellor, helped prescribe "a specific behavioral model for young men as they interact with their elders at home and in society" (7).

[5] Relics can be divided into different classes or types. Primary relics are fragments of the body of the saint or holy personage, while secondary relics are pieces of cloth or other materials worn by the saint or that which might have touched his or her body. A tertiary relic is an object that has been in contact with either a primary or a secondary relic.

[6] As Sanger points out, this belief "provides the justification for relic hoards, of which the Sancta Sanctorum in Rome is surely the ultimate model for all 'private' relic collections" (201).

[7] The construction of the Colegio Máximo began in 1576 and was completed in 1603.

[8] Felipe de Jesús was canonized in 1862.

[9] See Asunción Lavrin's "Dying for Christ."

[10] When discussing this "figurative conflation of historical coordinates," Cabranes-Grant is referencing Eric Auerbach's "figurative mode of thinking," which Cabranes-Grant describes as working thusly: "For Christianity, history is a cumulative experience of types that gradually discloses a divine archetype, God's definitive plan for the world. Every individualized *figura* is a partial fulfillment of the future yet to come and the reflection of the past already attained. To a certain extent, a *figure* channeled God's *ergon* forward and backwards" (67).

[11] Cabranes-Grant also offers evidence that the massacre of the natives of Cholula by Cortés and his men was comparable to the torments the authors of *Triumpho de los Santos* describe the Romans inflicting on Christian men, women and children in Act 4. He explains, "the mere possibility of this double reading of the play is already a sign of how permeable figurative encodings of history were to reversal and reinterpretations" (68).

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