## Variations on Martyrdom by José de Anchieta

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Martyrdom plays a central role in the dramatic and epistolary writings of Jesuit José de Anchieta.1 In his letters, the Jesuit not only frequently expressed his own, ultimately frustrated, desire to die a martyr's death, but also narrated the deaths of some of his Jesuit companions in terms that suggest their own candidacy for such recognition. Several of his dramatic works, meanwhile, revolve around early Christian martyrs whose lives and deaths had already become the stuff of legend and liturgical celebration. This article offers a comparative thematic analysis of ancient and contemporary acts of martyrdom in Anchieta's corpus. When it comes to the portrayal of early Christian saints, Anchieta is less interested in retelling their legends and the stories of their deaths than in cementing their roles as protectors of Brazil. As a consequence, the plays about martyrs end up having very little to do with martyrdom itself. In contrast, in his narrative and lyric descriptions of contemporary acts of martyrdom, Anchieta both details the suffering and deaths of new Jesuit martyrs and, at the same time, infuses these accounts with certain allusive and spectacular qualities that make their protagonists the successors of ancient models.

# Martyrdom in an Expanding World

The idea of martyrdom underwent a significant shift in the early modern Iberian world, both within and beyond the peninsula. While it had long played an important role in the religious imaginary, new instances of martyrdom had been relatively rare (Cañeque 30; Cymbalista 46; Lavrin 135). Medieval legends and liturgical celebrations of martyrdom, as well as early modern dramatic and visual portrayals, tended to take their inspiration from the first centuries of Christianity rather than from contemporary events (Cymbalista 46; Lavrin 135-36). One of the oft-cited sources in this regard is the *Legenda* 

Aurea, or Golden Legend, a thirteenth-century compilation of saints' lives attributed to the Dominican author Jacobus de Voragine (Reames 3). The Legenda was exceptionally popular in medieval Europe, circulating widely and expanding to include new volumes before the printing press came into existence (Reames 3).

In the course of the sixteenth century, however, the idea of martyrdom became a tantalizing and real prospect in the midst of fast-changing geopolitical and ideological realities (Lavrin 133-36). As confessional divides in Europe deepened, Protestant and Catholic accounts touted the bravery and righteousness of new martyrs killed in the conflict (Cañeque 31). Across the Atlantic, the cult of martyrdom left its imprint on the New World almost from the start: in the course of his second voyage, Columbus would impose the name "Saint Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins," a reference to the third-century virgin martyr slain together with her companions, on the archipelago that is now known as the British, Spanish, and US Virgin Islands (Colón 239). At the same time, the expanding global influence of Portugal and Spain (united under Philip II after 1580) went hand in hand with missionary desires to convert "pagan" populations, an endeavor reminiscent of that undertaken by early Christians and seemingly liable to similar perils. While the reception of Catholic missionaries differed from order to order and place to place, and changed over time, the potential for danger often figures into missionary rhetoric. Francisco de los Angeles Quiñones, Minister General of the Franciscan Order, invokes the example of Saint Francis in the Obediencia given to the famous first twelve members of that order who would begin to proselytize in New Spain. Quiñones reminds the twelve that Francis and his followers went out into the world to combat heresy and infidelity, wishing to spill their own blood in the service of Catholicism (Mendieta III.10, 204-05). He concludes by sending them forth armed with the shield of faith, the sword of the divine word, and so on (Mendieta III.10, 206).<sup>2</sup> Martyrdom and militancy are part of the missionary ideal, the faithful and valiant response to heretics, infidels, and pagans.3

The possibility of martyrdom was certainly on the minds of the Jesuits who established missions in Brazil from 1549 onwards. In April of that year, Manuel da Nóbrega would write to Simão Rodrigues in Lisbon about the need for more missionaries, not necessarily men of letters, but rather, those characterized by virtue and zeal (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 113-14). And in 1550, another contingent of Jesuit Brothers and Fathers departed Lisbon for Brazil, together with seven orphan children who seemed to embody the

zeal Nóbrega had called for, and whose pious determination to depart from Lisbon was, itself, seen as a willingness to embrace martyrdom (Cymbalista 64). Describing their departure in a 1550 letter, Pero Doménech affirms that "Nosso Senhor Jesu Cristo quis escolher destes órfãos sete para irem pregar o seu santíssimo nome aos gentios e infiéis" (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 171). He notes approvingly that, while many of the orphans were importuned not to undertake the journey by their relatives and friends, they were steadfast in their desire to participate in the enterprise, telling their interlocutors "que tudo era nada senão servir a Deus e morrer pela santa fé católica" (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 171).

The same attitude prevails in a 1553 quarterly report sent from Coimbra to Ignatius of Loyola in Rome. The report notes the recent departure of several Jesuit Fathers and Brothers for missions in Brazil and India. The fact that some of the party were seriously ill was not seen as a detriment to the mission, but rather, one more argument in its favor: rather than suffering and dying in Portugal, the sick wished to go and die for their faith abroad (in Anchieta, *Cartas* 54). One member of this party was Brother José de Anchieta, who had joined the order two years earlier in 1551, and whose illness, one of his biographers would later suggest, was caused by his excessive fervor in assisting with mass (Vasconcelos, *Vida* I.1, 5). Anchieta would go on to spend the remainder of his life in Brazil, dying in Espírito Santo in 1597.

Anchieta did not die a martyr; however, he did reflect on and even hope for this possibility a number of times in his epistolary and historical writings. This is especially clear in some of the letters he penned in relation to his voluntary captivity among the Tamoio in 1563. Together with Nóbrega, Anchieta set out to negotiate with the French-allied Tamoios in an attempt to quell tensions between them and the Portuguese, and even after Nóbrega returned to São Vicente, Anchieta stayed on as hostage for several months before a peace treaty was concluded.<sup>5</sup> In a letter written shortly before undertaking this diplomatic endeavor, Anchieta describes the hopes that he and Nóbrega will be able to bring some tranquility to the region and that their mission will lead to the saving of souls, adding a telling gesture toward the possibility of martyrdom:

Estamos ya de camino para esta jornada, entregándonos a la divina Providencia como hombres *morti destinatos*, no teniendo más cuenta con muerte ni vida, que cuanto fuere más gloria de Jesús Cristo N. Señor y provecho de las ánimas que él compró con su vida y muerte. (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 3: 565)

Anchieta's willingness and even hope to die a martyr in the course of his mission among the Tamoio did not come to fruition, a point he would later lament in a letter sent to Diego Laínez in 1565 (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 4: 171). And yet, Anchieta persisted in the belief that he might die for his faith. Even as late as 1595 he reflected on the fact that he had not been martyred, expressing the desire to perish "desamparado em algumas dessas montanhas" while looking for more potential converts (Anchieta, *Cartas* 422).

In addition to his own unfulfilled hopes of martyrdom, Anchieta also narrated and dramatized acts of historical and contemporary martyrdom in a number of writings. In 1555, just a few years after arriving in Brazil, he would write a stirring account of the deaths of Pero Correia and João de Sousa, two Brothers killed in the course of a mission among the Guarani. Fifteen years later, in 1570, Father Inácio de Azevedo, together with nearly forty Jesuit companions, was killed at sea by the Huguenot Jacques Sourie (Soria). A second contingent led by Pero Dias met with a similar fate at the hands of Jean de Capdeville in 1571 (see Brito Díaz 17-18; Leite, *História* 242-66). Anchieta composed a cycle of lyric poems in Spanish to commemorate these two maritime martyrdoms. Finally, Anchieta authored a number of theatrical works in celebration of early Christian martyrs. His autos for Saint Maurice and Saint Ursula were performed in Espírito Santo, while his most famous drama, Na festa de S. Lourenço, was performed in the aldeia of the same name. 6 Throughout his life as a missionary in Brazil, then, Anchieta revisited the topic of martyrdom in writings of different genres and geared toward a variety of audiences.

From sober narrative reports on the deaths of his fellows in Brazil to lyrics composed in celebration of contemporaries martyred on the high seas, and multilingual spectacles performed in celebration of the feast days and relics of historical saints, the phenomenon of martyrdom cuts through the generic diversity of Anchieta's corpus. His writings on martyrdom, moreover, are directed toward several different audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. His letter on the deaths of Correia and Sousa was prepared in Latin and addressed to Ignatius of Loyola. This letter constitutes an official report on the progress of the global work of the Society of Jesus. His poems in honor of Azevedo, Dias, and their companions are written in Spanish in simple verse forms, and seem to have been prepared for public performance. The dramatic works for Saint Maurice (Portuguese and Spanish) and Saint Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins (Portuguese) were performed in Espírito Santo in the late sixteenth century. The multilingual *auto* for Saint Laurence, meanwhile, ad-

dresses a wider audience by incorporating a significant amount of Tupi. When examining the body of work Anchieta dedicated to the stories of martyrs, it is clear that he was writing not only for the "heterogeneous flock" (the term used by Cohen to describe Jesuit ministries in early colonial Brazil) comprised of Catholic Portuguese settlers and Tupi-speaking potential converts and catechumens (Budasz 10; Cohen 18); he was also writing works intended for devotional and official use within the Jesuit order in Brazil and beyond.

The variety of genres in which Anchieta wrote about martyrdom, and the range of audiences he reached with these works, also elude the division proposed by Bosi, who identified two distinct modes in Anchieta's work: a didactic and often Manichaean evangelical theater, on the one hand, and a more intense and contradictory lyricism, on the other (93). This division has already been called into question by Braga-Pinto, who has pointed out that both of these modes ultimately rest on an understanding of Christian subjectivity that derives, in particular, from the *Spiritual Exercises* by Loyola (88). The theme of martyrdom offers another counterpoint to Bosi's categorization, as it unites the personal aspirations of Anchieta with the programmatic aims of the Jesuit community, and draws parallels (though not equivalences) between ancient and modern martyrs.

While martyrdom is a consistent theme in Anchieta's corpus, only some of the works on this theme-most notably the multilingual drama on Saint Laurence, and, to a lesser extent, the *autos* for Saints Maurice and Ursula have received sustained critical attention. The poems dedicated to Azevedo, Dias, and those martyred with them, in contrast, have garnered less consideration, and—to my knowledge—have not been compared systematically to other dramatic and narrative accounts of martyrdom. Analyzing this corpus as a whole demonstrates that Anchieta consistently found poetic inspiration in martyrdom, but subjected the topic to variegated treatment in his works.<sup>7</sup> Looking first at instances of historical martyrdom, we notice an interesting pattern: that dramas dedicated to the lives of Saints Laurence, Maurice, and Ursula have very little to do with the act of martyrdom itself. Instead, these historic figures are monumentalized as patrons of Brazil, rendering the stories of their lives and deaths somehow incidental.8 In contrast, when it comes to memorializing the stories of his Jesuit fellows martyred in the sixteenth century, Anchieta focuses concertedly on the nature and circumstances of their deaths, laying the groundwork for future retellings and veneration.

#### Vengeance and Victory

Perhaps the most famous play by Anchieta is *Na festa de S. Lourenço*, performed in a village of the same name in 1587 (Cardoso in Anchieta, *Teatro* 142; Budasz 13). The reconstructed version of *Na festa* contains five acts: the martyrdom of the eponymous saint, written in Spanish (I), is followed by an act written predominantly in Tupi (II), in which three demons—Guaixará, Aimbirê, and Saravaia—threatening the village are defeated by Saint Laurence and Saint Sebastian; two of these defeated demons are then sent to punish Laurence's murderers, the Romans Decius and Valerian (III); and finally, Saint Laurence is interred (IV) before a closing processional dance, also in Tupi (V). 10

As related by Voragine in the Legenda Aurea (449-60), Laurence was a third-century native of Spain who went to Rome where he served as a deacon, possibly under Pope Sixtus. At that time, Decius, a general in the Roman army, overthrew the Christian emperor Philip and then began a broader campaign of persecution against Christians. In fear for his life, the late emperor's son, also named Philip, entrusted his wealth to Sixtus and Laurence. After Sixtus was taken away to be tortured and eventually executed, Laurence went about healing and distributing alms to Christians. Valerian, a prefect of Decius, was then charged with jailing Laurence and forcing him to produce the imperial wealth. Laurence refused to give up his faith or hand over the riches, and after numerous tortures, he died while being roasted on a gridiron. Before dying, he is supposed to have famously remarked to one of his executioners, "Look, wretch, you have me well done on one side, turn me over and eat!" (Voragine 453). In his retelling, Voragine emphasizes the exceptionally arduous and prolonged nature of the torture to which Laurence was subjected—not struck down by the sword or pushed into a furnace, but slowly roasted over the flames (Voragine 456).

It has been suggested that Anchieta based his portrayal of Laurence in *Na festa* on his story as recorded in the *Legenda Aurea* (Cardoso in Anchieta, *Teatro* 142; Cymbalista 77). And certain details from the *Legenda* do appear in *Na festa*: Laurence's fiery death is one of the central motifs of the drama, and when Aimbirê is torturing Decius, for instance, the latter laments the fact that he dies as a traitor, and the demon echoes this point, reminding him "matasteis, traición armando, / Felipe, vuestro señor" (3.986-87). But other details recorded by Voragine do not appear in *Na festa*: the association of Laurence with Sixtus, for instance, or Laurence's distribution of alms to suffering Christians, or the anecdotes about any of those Laurence had supposedly

converted during his imprisonment and torture before his eventual death, or even his famous quip about being turned over by his torturers.

This is not to say that Anchieta did not draw on the *Legenda Aurea*, in one of its many editions or translations, for the basic story of the saint as dramatized in *Na festa*. But it does invite us to look more closely at what Anchieta chose to emphasize, and how, in his theatrical celebration of the saint. It is notable, for instance, that while fire is a central motif throughout the play, the role it has in Laurence's death is already heavily symbolic. It seems to borrow more from a mystic poetics than from the martyrological tradition.<sup>11</sup> The death of Laurence occurs in a short act in which he is meant to appear already stretched over the iron. The five stanzas of the act, a song in the first person, express the saint's desire to die for his faith just as Christ died in order to redeem humankind, and compare the fire that is consuming him with the stronger fire of God's love:

El fuego del fuerte amor ¡oh mi Dios!, con que me amas, más me quema que las flamas y brasas, con su calor. (1.13-16)

The symbolic importance of fire is clear here, and will be repeated elsewhere in the drama as well. The fact that Saint Laurence rejoices in his own suffering is a common point in contemporary retellings. But typically, that pleasure is all the more remarkable because of the extensive and repeated nature of the torments devised by Decius and Valerian. Voragine, for instance, remarked on the protracted nature of Laurence's suffering and death: the Legenda Aurea recounts how he is jailed, beaten, pressed with hot blades, and only then laid on the hot grill and at the same time tortured with heated pitchforks (452-53). The 1513 Portuguese translation of the Legenda, titled O flos sanctorum em linguagem português, similarly emphasizes the repeated tortures to which Laurence was subjected—lashed with metal and scorpions, pressed with hot blades, and threatened by Decius with "todos os tormentos que vinham aparelhados" (CXXIIr). In his continuation of the Crónica general de España, Ambrosio Morales writes that at one point, in response to a defiant Laurence, the emperor had the saint's mouth and teeth broken with stones (IX.46, 323r). Attentions like these to the violent suffering of martyrs were, in fact, common in sixteenth-century martyrologies (Cañeque 34-35). And yet, in what has survived of the play, Anchieta does not seem to make much of the prolonged and varied physical suffering endured by Laurence. Instead, he focuses on the symbolic importance of fire and passes over the other tortures to which Laurence was subjected.

Still, explicit physical suffering has an important place in *Na festa*. Instead of emphasizing the bodily torments endured by Laurence, the third act of the play pointedly describes the pains experienced by Decius and Valerian. An angel orders the demons Aimbirê and Saravaia to go and punish the Romans on behalf of the martyr, an enterprise they eagerly undertake (3.657-77). This multilingual act begins in Tupi, but when the demons approach Decius and Valerian, they find the two conversing in Spanish, glorying in the death of Laurence:

DEC. Amigo Valeriano, es cumplido mi deseo, pues ni por arte ni rodeo pudo escapar de mi mano el siervo del Galileo.

> Ni Pompeyo, ni Catón, ni César, ni el Africano, ningún griego ni troyano pudieron dar conclusión a hecho tan soberano.

VAL. El remate, gran señor, de esta tan grande hazaña, fue más que vencer España. Nunca rey, ni emperador hizo cosa tan extraña. (3.756-70)

Their gloating is interrupted by the approach of Aimbirê, initially presumed to be Jupiter by an arrogant Decius (3.776-85). But it soon becomes apparent that the approaching figure is not a satisfied Roman deity, but a terrifying demon. At this, we see first Valerian, and then Decius begin to exclaim over their fear, pain, and suffering. Unlike Laurence, whose legendary joy in his suffering had been treated only briefly in the first act, Decius and Valerian seem to feel every flame:

¡Ay! ¡Qué terribles dolores! ¡Ay! Qué hirvientes ardores, que me abrasan como fuego! ¡Oh pasión!

¡Ay de mí! que es el Plutón que viene del Aqueronte, ardiendo como tizón, a llevarnos, de rondón, al fuego del Flegetonte. (3.814-22)

The Acheron and Phlegethon are both underworld rivers in Classical mythology. They both appear, moreover, in Canto XIV of the *Inferno*. When Dante and his guide Virgil reach a red stream (14.76-78), Virgil explains that it is formed by the convergence of the Acheron, Phlegethon, and Styx, which in turn derive from tears dripping down from the Old Man of Crete (14.112-17).

Perhaps there is also something Dantean about the punishment to which Decius and Valerian are subjected: it chimes with the terrible forms of divine justice witnessed by the Florentine during his journey through hell, at one point described with the term *contrapasso*, "the law of counter-penalty" (trans. Mandelbaum) (28.142). In any case, Decius and Valerian are burned and savaged by their demon tormentors just as they had burned Laurence and persecuted Christians. Valerian, quicker to understand this than Decius, exclaims:

¡O Decio, cruel tirano! Ya pagas, y pagará contigo Valeriano, porque Lorenzo cristiano asado nos asará. (3.835-39)

The same point is later confirmed by Aimbirê, who tells the Romans that he is pleased to bleed them just as they bled the martyrs (3.914-18). In addition to bleeding and burning, Aimbirê and Saravaia threaten to stab and strangle the Romans. In short, while tradition held that Laurence had undergone numerous torments before his death, it is Decius and Valerian who suffer in *Na festa*. The symbolic flames of the first act give way to a range of agonies in the third, and the painless abstraction of Laurence's death is avenged in the intense and variegated sufferings of Decius and Valerian.

As elements of a spectacular didactic composition, there are clear implications in the different ways in which Laurence and Decius and Valerian experience torment and death. The good and saintly Laurence does not appear to suffer as he dies, while the cruel, pagan Romans are not only tormented by demons, but are finally pushed to give themselves up to Satan for eternal punishment. In an inversion of Luke 23:46, Decius cries: "Acaba, ya me ofrezco / en tus manos, Satanás, / y al tormento, que merezco..." (3.1023-

25). The didactic message in this contrast could not be plainer: the good and the faithful are rewarded, even in death, while the evil unbelievers will pass from fire to fire. Here we see on full display the "Manichaean world" described by Bosi (68).

The enactment of retribution through the demonic Aimbirê and Saravaia, meanwhile, might be seen as the metabolization of a facet of Tupi culture that worried Anchieta and other Jesuits: revenge. <sup>12</sup> In a number of their reports and letters, Jesuits in early Brazil remark on the significance that cyclical intertribal warfare and ceremonial cannibalism had for the Tupi. Nóbrega would point out early on that war was not a matter of material necessity or desire:

Y no tienen guerra por codicia [...] sino solamente por odio y venganza, en tanta manera que, si dan una topada, se arrojan con los dientes al palo o piedra donde la dieron, y comen piojos y pulgas y toda inmundicia solamente por vengarse del mal que les hicieron... (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 137)

The following year, João de Azpilcueta Navarro would lament the fact that this desire for vengeance seemed to persist even on the deathbed (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 182). These acts of revenge were tied to ritual cannibalism, a practice that Jesuit missionaries condemned and tried to stop. It is appealing, then, to think that Anchieta harnesses this practice and redirects it toward the more acceptable end of divinely sanctioned justice. And indeed, M. Kittiya Lee has suggested that Anchieta, like other Europeans who sought to convert the Tupinambá in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, did so in part by reconciling two pre-existing forms of "militant theology" and "combative devotion" (127-28). As Lee makes clear, this is not merely a question of missionary strategy, but also of selective interest and demands on the part of potential converts and catechumens (145).

Of course, the process of translating or transforming ritual vengeance into divine retribution is not a simple one, and it leaves us with a number of questions. We might ask, for instance, why the enactment of revenge takes place largely in Spanish. While Act III begins and ends in Tupi, Decius and Valerian experience their torments in Spanish, and their demons slip into that language as well. We might also note that there seems to be a level of cruelty in the demons that Anchieta, at least at this point in his life, did not associate with coastal indigenous populations. In his *Breve informação*, composed around 1584, just a few years before the performance of *Na festa*, he would write of coastal Tupi peoples:

Naturalmente são inclinados a matar, mas não são cruéis: porque ordinariamente nenhum tormento dão aos inimigos, porque se os não matam no conflito da guerra, depois tratam-nos muito bem, e contentam-se com lhes quebrar a cabeça com um pau, que é morte muito fácil [...]. Se de alguma crueldade usam, ainda que raramente, é com o exemplo dos portugueses e franceses. (*Textos históricos* 60)

The cruelty flaunted by Aimbirê and Saravaia, then, does not necessarily reflect Anchieta's views about the practice of intertribal revenge at the time the drama was performed. They may, on the one hand, reach back to the notoriety of the historical figures on which these demons were modeled. Or they may simply embody a didactically extreme sense of hell and its inhabitants.

And then we come back to the figure of Saint Laurence. His demise in Act I, as noted above, is quick and largely symbolic. Except for the gridiron and fire, the portrayal does not draw on significant aspects of his legend. In Act II of *Na festa*, he protects the village named after him from the approaching demons, saying he will not abandon São Lourenço where he is venerated (2.426-35). In this sense, it might be said that he embodies the warrior ideal within the broader framework of militant Christianity described by Lee. Even so, Laurence is a remarkably unimportant figure here, only voicing about twenty-four lines out of six hundred and fifty in this act, less than five percent. He does not appear at all in Act III or V, and only as a corpse in Act IV. Strangely enough, this play built on the celebration of a significant martyr ends up having very little to do with that martyr or his death.

In *Na vila de Vitória ou de S. Maurício*, in comparison, the titular saint has a slightly larger role to play, but once again, his martyrdom constitutes only a preliminary point, a necessary prelude to the work. Maurice was another early Christian martyr, the commander of a legion from Thebes that was sent to Gaul under third-century emperor Maximian (Voragine 575). At the time, Maximian and his co-emperor Diocletian were persecuting Christians, and Maximian demanded that all of the soldiers under him sacrifice to the Roman gods. When Maurice and his company refused to do this, they were threatened with decimation, and according to Voragine, all those in the company were eager to die for their faith. Eventually, the entire company was surrounded and killed. According to the 1513 Portuguese *Flos sanctorum*, "os cavaleiros do diabo cercaram os cavaleiros de Jesu Cristo em tal maneira que os açoitavam com as rédeas dos cavalos e com muitos tormentos" (CXLIIIr). Voragine also writes that they were trampled to death (Voragine 576).

As in the drama dedicated to Saint Laurence, the work on Saint Maurice is similarly understated when it comes to narrating the death of the saint. This work, as reconstructed by Cardoso, also contains five acts: children recite verses to greet relics of the saint (I); this is followed by a scene in which Lucifer and Satan try to tempt Maurice, who resists and defeats them (II); the *auto* then moves to two allegorical scenes that focus largely on the titular place of the drama, Vitória, and the morality of her inhabitants (III, IV); the drama ends with a song and dance as the relics of the saint are moved to the church (Cardoso in Anchieta, *Teatro* 286-87). While *Na festa* ends with the burial of Laurence, *Na vila de Vitória ou de S. Maurício* begins with its titular character already a relic. Ten children greet the arriving relic and sing in honor of the saint, making brief narrative work of his death and that of his companions:

Quando o imperador da terra a seus deuses quis honrar obrigou a sacrificar os soldados que na guerra com ele haviam d'entrar. Mas vós, para glória dar a Deus todo poderoso, vosso esquadrão animoso fizestes logo apartar de trato tão pernicioso.

[...]
Vossos [seis] mil e seiscentos
e sessenta e seis soldados
por vós foram animados,
para serem com tormentos
e com morte coroados.
Para serem degolados,
cada um queria ser
o primeiro, sem temer
os cutelos aguçados,
com fúria, de Lucifer. (1.11-20; 31-40)

This passage focuses on the moment in which Maximian threatened the Theban legion with decimation and the faithful soldiers vied for the sword. While this is certainly one of the more remarkable aspects of the legend, it is interesting to note that the eventual death of the legion is never described

in detail. Perhaps a full account seemed unnecessary or somehow redundant, since the composition celebrates the arrival of a relic. But the lack of more attention to the details of the martyrdom starts to seem like a pattern if we compare the dramas composed in honor of Laurence and Maurice. Specific aspects of their deaths are emphasized—the symbol of fire in the case of Laurence, and the fearlessness of Maurice and his companions—but more complete narratives of their martyrdoms are eschewed.<sup>14</sup>

In the second act, the actor portraying Maurice confronts demonic forces, Lucifer and Satan, who wish to subjugate Brazil. As in *Na festa*, the saint is a posthumous protector. Each of the demons in turn tries to tempt Maurice and entice him to disavow God, but to no avail. Once Maurice overcomes their provocations, we again see more emphasis on the present and ongoing suffering of evildoers than on the death of the martyr himself. Maurice does away with Satan in one stroke of his sword, after which the latter cries:

¡Tomáos con el tebeo! ¡Cómo tenía aguzada aquella terrible espada que, en el libro de Mateo, su Cristo dejó guardada!

Mas ¡qué fiero cuchillazo el Mauricio me arrojó! ¡Por poco que me llevó el pescuezo y espinazo! ¡Ox! ¡Y cómo me dolió! (2.357-66)

Once again, we see a play about a martyr in which the act of martyrdom itself is not the focus, but rather a long-gone point of departure, a necessary prelude for the intervention of Maurice as protector and patron in contemporary Brazil. The forces of good and evil, vice and virtue, punishment and redemption are very much present, but martyrdom itself is consigned to the past.

A comparison of *Na festa* and *Na vila de Vitória*, then, shows the following: both are celebrations of early Christian martyrdom, but the act of martyrdom itself is secondary to other concerns in the works, particularly to the role these martyrs now play as protectors of specific places in Brazil—a continuation of the cults to local saints that developed in Europe in the centuries following the spread of Christianity, as discussed by Cymbalista (71-73). We see a further instance of this in *Quando no Espírito Santo se recebeu uma relíquia das Onze Mil Virgens*, the *auto* written to celebrate the arrival

of relics related to Santa Ursula, again in Vitória in Espírito Santo. Another early Christian saint, Ursula was venerated as a virgin martyr together with eleven thousand companions. As told by Voragine, Ursula and her retinue were slain by Huns in the city of Cologne in the third century (Voragine 644-45). While initially spared because of her beauty, Ursula was shot and killed with an arrow when she refused to give up her virginity (Voragine 645). The presumed first piece of this *auto* describes a different sort of death:

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Virginal cabeça
pela fé cortada,
com vossa chegada,
já ninguém pereça. (1.21-24)
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This is not strictly a divergence from the legend. The poem was originally composed to celebrate the arrival of a relic of the head of one of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. In order to honor this specific relic, Anchieta selects an appropriate and by no means unlikely kind of death.

The choice, moreover, gains another kind of poetic importance in the second act. Here, as in the work for Saint Maurice, a devil attempts to impede the procession of the relic into the church where it is meant to be received. At this point, an angel announces that the devil will be defeated by a woman. He replies:

Ó que cruel estocada m'atiraste quando a mulher nomeaste! Porque mulher me matou, mulher meu poder tirou, dando comigo ao traste, a cabeça me quebrou. (2.58-64)

These lines associate Ursula and her companions with Mary, Lady of Victory and patron of Vitória (Cardoso in Anchieta, *Teatro* 281n65). Mary is the perfected Eve, treading on the serpent rather than falling prey to temptation. And again, we see Anchieta's interest in dramatizing the parallel structure of divine retribution; because the initial poem celebrates the relic as a "virginal head cut off for the faith," it somehow prefigures the later victory of that relic over the devil, whose head is crushed by a woman.

In his theatrical portrayal of historical instances of martyrdom, then, Anchieta privileges the contemporary role of martyrs, especially as victorious figures who protect Brazilian *aldeias* from demonic influences, over the retelling of their legends. This is especially noticeable when it comes to the

act of martyrdom itself in the plays, which tends to merit only brief or highly stylized treatment. It is not the suffering of the martyrs that comes through, but their power as saints.

#### A New Golden Legend

While his plays about the Old World martyrs of early Christendom tend to subsume narratives of the past into the poetic and occasional needs of the present, we see a different tendency in Anchieta's writings on the demise of his contemporary Jesuits. Conscious and even eager to seize upon new acts of martyrdom as they occurred, Anchieta wrote about these deaths with attention to minute details about the sufferings of his companions and an emphasis on any hint of the miraculous in their passing. At the same time, he also employs dramatic flourishes that enhance the narratives and give them the aura of legend. This tension between chronicling and mythmaking makes him, in some ways, the author of a New World *Legenda Aurea*, compiling the events of the present as though they belonged to another age.

A good example of this appears early on in Anchieta's writing, in his epistolary account of the deaths of Pero Correia and João de Sousa, the so-called "proto-martyrs" of Brazil. Sousa, a Portuguese soldier, had joined the Society of Jesus in 1550 (Leite, *História* 239). Correia, who joined the Jesuits around the same time, had previously made a living in Brazil as both a slave trader and an intermediary between indigenous and Portuguese communities, and his skills as a linguist were vital to the early work of the Jesuits (Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 1: 45; Metcalf 92-93). A few years later, in 1554, the two were killed at the hands of a group of Guaranis south of São Vicente (Metcalf 109). While their deaths were seen as an early instance of martyrdom by the Jesuits in Brazil, they would not ultimately receive formal recognition as martyrs; even though their deaths occurred in the course of their proselytization work, they were not killed because of their faith, but because of the treachery of a Spanish interpreter who urged the Guarani to make their attack (Leite, *História* 241).

But the fact that these two would not be confirmed as martyrs was not for a lack of narrative effort on the part of Anchieta, who described their deaths in a 1555 letter. Anchieta writes that Sousa died first, kneeling and praying to God as he was pierced by arrows (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 2: 202). Then Correia, seeing his fallen companion, began preaching to his attackers, but "[e]m lugar de resposta, foi varado pelas frechas dos Índios" (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 2: 202). Overcome by pain, Correia dropped

his staff and fell to the ground, looking away from his attackers as he died. After their deaths, the Brothers were stripped and their bodies left exposed to the wilderness.

In contrast to the brief, symbolic, or formulaic references to the saints' deaths that we saw in the theatrical works dedicated to Ursula, Maurice, and Laurence, there is a palpable attention to detail in this account. Anchieta carefully describes the order in which the Brothers died, acknowledging that there are certain points about which he does not have full knowledge. While stressing that Sousa died kneeling and praising God, and that Correia spoke to their attackers, he adds that he does not know exactly what Correia might have said in this moment, but that he likely pronounced on the glory of God (in Leite, Monumenta Brasiliae 2: 202). After narrating the deaths, Anchieta points out that the corpses were left out in the open to be consumed by birds and beasts. He adds, however, that the Jesuits will do all that they can to recover at least some of the bones ("alguns ossos") of the two men (in Leite, Monumenta Brasiliae 2: 203). The desire to find the bones of the deceased Brothers highlights their incorporation into a narrative of martyrdom—they are already sources of relics. It also parallels the fragmented attempt to construct the narrative after the fact. Like the bones of Correia and Sousa, some of the pieces of the story are missing and need to be found and reassembled by the diligent martyrologist.

The concern for writing a full, accurate, and credible account is also evident in the lines that precede the death scene, in which Anchieta tells the reader that his narrative comes directly from an eyewitness:

Tudo isto testemunhou o mesmo português ter ouvido e visto, e claramente o explicou ao Padre Manuel da Nóbrega e a mim, quando estava quase no último extremo da vida, depois de feita a confissão e recebida a Comunhão, ninguém duvida que não se apartava da verdade nesse termo da vida. (in Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 2: 201)

The narrative about the deaths of Sousa and Correia, in other words, came to Anchieta through the sanctified deathbed confession of a Portuguese man who witnessed the event. He becomes the *martyr* (in the etymological sense of the term, a witness) to the martyrdom of Sousa and Correia. In penning what could become the foundational text of a contemporary martyrological tradition, Anchieta is careful to differentiate the known from the unknown and to underline the credibility of his source.

This apparent desire for accuracy is also a mechanism for incorporating several actions of Correia and Sousa that have been identified by Lavrin, in

another context, as "expected 'gestures" in narratives of martyrdom (149): the image of Correia preaching with his dying breath, and of both Brothers yielding to their attackers, for instance. The role of language in the episode also seems subjected to subtle dramatic flourishes. Arrows punctuate the scene a significant three times, even presented as the only form of language used by the Guarani attackers ("Em lugar de resposta"). This last point seems particularly significant, given that both the culprit and one of the victims in this narrative are lenguas, tongues or interpreters. When describing the machinations of the unnamed Spaniard who incited the attack, Anchieta adds a general condemnation of his kind: "É costume destes intérpretes, agentes de iniquidade, precipitar na perdição os Índios com tais mentiras" (in Leite, Monumenta Brasiliae 2: 201). The second victim, Correia, was renowned as one of the foremost linguists in the early Jesuit community. This parallel would not have escaped Anchieta. The fact that Correia's final exhortations are met with arrows seems to reflect the broader point that this martyrdom means both the perversion of translation (in the interfering Spaniard) and the loss of a key translator (Correia). Overall, while stressing the credibility of his narrative, Anchieta also presents certain tantalizing details and parallels in this text that give it a theatrical quality. Perhaps he composed or intended to compose dramatic poetry on this highly significant event—his letter to Loyola could certainly have laid the groundwork.

While Sousa and Correia would not be accorded the status of martyrs, a group of missionaries killed at sea in 1570 and 1571 would gain that title. Inácio de Azevedo had acted as Visitor in the Brazilian missions from 1566-1568. He was then appointed Procurator to Rome in 1568, but soon sent back to Brazil in order to take up the charge of Provincial. He was crossing the Atlantic again to begin that appointment in 1570, when he and his companions were attacked by the French corsair Jacques Sourie near the Canary Islands (Leite, História 244-54; Osswald 163). In 1571, a second contingent led by Pero Dias met with a similar fate (Leite, História 254). Those killed in the course of these journeys were quickly venerated as martyrs on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, Osswald points out that the circumstances of their deaths—at the hands of a Calvinist on their way to missionize in Brazil—symbolically tie together confessional conflicts in Europe and global proselytization, the two main avenues for early modern martyrdom (165). In his seventeenth-century chronicle, Simão Vasconcelos would recount a line that appears frequently in narratives of the event: that Sourie had shouted to

his crew, "Lançai, lançai ao mar estes perros Jesuítas, que vão pregar falsa doutrina ao Brasil" (*Chronica* 100).

The martyrdom of Azevedo and his companions was celebrated in Bahia in July 1574, when they were declared patron saints of Brazil (Leite, *História* 264). By the 1580s, Cardim reports that such celebrations were regular for the Jesuits:

Ao dia seguinte se festejou dentro de casa, como cá é costume, o martírio do Padre Ignacio de Azevedo e seus companheiros com uma oração em verso no refeitório, outra em língua de Angola, que fez um irmão de 11 anos com tanta graça que a todos nos alegrou, e tornando-a em português com tanta devoção que não havia quem se tivesse com lagrimas (Cardim 327).

Along the same lines, Anchieta composed several poems on Azevedo, Dias, and their companions, intended for commemorative performance (*Lirica espanhola* 92-101). <sup>16</sup> In this cycle of poems, as in his narrative about Correia and Sousa, there is again a tension between providing details about the deaths of Azevedo, Dias, and their companions, on the one hand, and on the other, dramatically casting them as contemporary successors of early Christian saints like Laurence, Maurice, and Ursula.

One piece, "Quiso Dios que diese vida," begins with a reference to the important detail that Azevedo had died while holding a sacred image of Our Lady of Saint Luke:

Con la Virgen en tu mano, oh Ignacio, varón fuerte! peleaste de tal suerte, que del hereje tirano triunfaste con tu muerte. (4-8)

The significance of this image is clear in one of the earliest published accounts of the martyrdom, a letter by Pero Dias dated 17 August 1570. An extract of the letter, translated into Italian, was published in Rome in the same year. In it, Dias notes that Azevedo brought the sacred image from Rome and that Sourie and his men were unable to remove the image from his hands during their attack (43v; 44r). Azevedo is then killed and thrown into the sea "con l'immagine che non gli era mai uscita di mano" (44r).<sup>17</sup>

In the remainder of the poem, Anchieta praises Azevedo for praying for Sourie, his killer. This detail does not appear in the account by Dias, but for Anchieta, it serves to highlight the idea that Azevedo imitates Christ in his martyrdom. It is also interesting to note that Anchieta uses the term "hereje

tirano" to refer to Sourie. The former is a clear reference to his Calvinism and the confessional divide at the heart of the encounter. But labelled a "tyrant," Sourie also becomes the inheritor of Decius, Valerian, Maximian, Diocletian, and others—the rulers of old who subjected saints like Laurence and Maurice to torture and death. If Azevedo and his companions are to be revered as martyrs, then they require an antagonistic tyrant, so the Calvinist corsair fills this role.

Anchieta uses the term again in a *cantiga* ("Los que muertos veneramos"). Cardoso has suggested that this piece formed the final act of a three-act interlude in celebration of Pero Dias, who both reported the deaths of Azevedo and his companions and was also killed at the hands of pirates (in Anchieta, *Teatro* 193-94). But this specific poem, unlike those that (according to Cardoso) constitute the first two acts, makes no explicit reference to Dias or to any martyr in particular. It is, rather, a reflection on martyrs in general and a call to follow their example. The poem praises martyrs as fearless, victorious in death, imitators of Christ, and, at one point, the adversaries of tyrants:

Vivieron vida del cielo, continuamente muriendo, a sí mismos persiguiendo, sin querer ningún consuelo, de los que mueren viviendo.
Al tirano no temiendo, muy feroz, sufren muerte muy atroz, muy contentos, y con crueles tormentos, dan la vida *por su Dios*. (original emphasis) (16-26)

The "tyrant" in these lines, like the martyrs praised throughout the poem, is not a specific figure, but a type.

While "Quiso Dios que diese vida" emphasizes the fact that Azevedo had died while holding onto a sacred image, two other pieces focus on the manner in which he and his companions were wounded and killed by Sourie and his crew. In both, Anchieta elaborates on the ideal of the martyr as soldier—a soldier who, paradoxically, finds victory in death. This figure is also especially appropriate for the Jesuit order, who imagined themselves as soldiers of Christ. "Ahogólos en la mar" takes up this theme in conjunction with the maritime setting of the martyrdom. As Dias had reported, after the death of Azevedo, his Jesuit companions were dragged out, stripped, beaten,

and finally drowned: "gli gettavano mezzo vivi nel mare, tagliando ancora ad alcuno le braccia, per togli tutta la speranza di potere in alcun modo campare" (44r). The watery death of Azevedo and his companions is the central theme of "Ahogólos en la mar." In addition, throughout the poem, Anchieta repeatedly refers to the Jesuits in military terms: they are "[u]n ejército dichoso," "valientes caballeros," and a "terrible escuadrón" (6; 16; 46). But crucially, the victory of these soldiers comes in the fact that they do not resist the cruel deaths doled out to them by Sourie and his crew.

The same ideal is the focus of "Ovejero," a piece about Manuel Álvares, one of Azevedo's companions. This dialogic composition begins with an apostrophic address to Álvares, "de pastor hecho guerrero" (2). The poem revolves around the play between irenic innocence and soldierly valor, constantly transformed into one another. The poetic voice reminds Álvares, "Fuiste oveja, cuando entraste / mansamente en el corral" (17-18). But rather than being allowed to persist in this gentle existence,

Combatiste al infernal y cruento carnicero, con esfuerzo muy entero de la gracia divinal,

de pastor hecho guerrero. (original emphasis) (22-26)

As a warrior, then, Álvares takes up the drum and shouts, urging the Catholics on in the midst of the French attack. Midway through the poem, the poetic voice shifts to Álvares himself, who describes his decision to join the Jesuits, the Society or Company of Jesus, and his subsequent suffering as a martyr:

Tocado de Dios, toqué lo que el mundo dar podía, y tomando por mi guía mi pastor Jesús, entré en su santa Compañía. Padecí con alegría tormentos por mi Señor... (37-43)

In this stanza, Álvares does not return to his original role of shepherd, but rather, becomes a lamb in the flock of Christ. In the last stanza of the poem, Álvares finally becomes a sacrificial lamb, martyred at the hands of the Huguenots. Álvares details the sufferings he willingly endured in that role:

Con sus crueles espadas, mi cara despedazaron, Brazos y piernas quebraron,

con escopetas pesadas, ni con esto se hartaron. Medio muerto me dejaron para doblar su furor, mas yo salí vencedor, porque en nada me doblaron, con tal fuerza de dolor. (original emphasis) (57-66)

In the end, while offering a detailed description of the death of the martyr, the poem also ultimately reinforces the paradox of martyr-as-soldier. Álvares is a shepherd turned warrior, a warrior turned lamb, and finally, as a sacrificial lamb, a victorious warrior once again.

Overall, martyrdom seems to constitute an ever-receding horizon in the life and works of Anchieta. While he often wished to meet with such an end, this desire was never realized. As a missionary in Brazil, he heard about the deaths of his companions in the course of their work, and dramatically reimagined those deaths in prose and poetry, recording and amplifying important details that could lay the groundwork of future martyrologies. His approach to historical saints, meanwhile, was less concerned with their well-known legends than with strengthening their role as heavenly protectors of particular sites in colonial Brazil. The conjunction of past martyrdoms, present dangers, and future salvation, however, is a consistent trajectory in these works. We see this neatly reflected in one of the stanzas dedicated to Saint Maurice:

Mártires mui esforçados pois sois nossa defensão, defendei com vossa mão nossos filhos e soldados que são idos ao sertão. Pois vão com boa intenção a buscar gente perdida, que possa ser convertida a Jesus, de coração, e ganhar a eterna vida. (1.81-90)

The past was prologue, but the continuing influence of early Christian saints was vital for the spiritual future of Brazil under the care of the Jesuits, some of whom would also gain recognition as martyrs. Martyrdom, in Anchieta's strategically capacious work, does not have a single aim or structure. It is, instead, the coordination of different paradigms of martyrdom—classical and foundational, in the case of historical saints, and salvationist and institutional-

ized, in the case of contemporary missionaries. By grappling repeatedly with variations on martyrdom across his corpus, Anchieta positions the endeavors of the Jesuits in Brazil at the center of a larger history of missionizing and militance. Given that he failed to achieve the condition of martyr himself, perhaps his energetic and repeated approach to the theme provided a form of symbolic compensation for the strange frustration of his own survival.

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#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Anchieta was born in Tenerife in the Canary Islands in 1534. He was educated in Coimbra in Portugal and joined the Society of Jesus in 1551. Two years later, in 1553, he arrived in Brazil, where he would spend the rest of his life in Jesuit missions along the coast, serving as Provincial for a time. In addition to his dramatic and lyric works, some of which are discussed in this article, Anchieta authored numerous letters and reports about Jesuit proselytization efforts among indigenous Brazilians, as well as the first grammar of Tupi (published in Coimbra in 1595). Early biographical accounts of Anchieta include those by Quirício Caxa, Simão Rodrigues (see Abranches Viotti in the Works Cited list), and Simão de Vasconcelos.
  - <sup>2</sup> See also the study by Turley (29-42).
- <sup>3</sup> For more on Franciscan views of missionary work and martyrdom, particularly in relation to New Spain in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, see Lavrin, who also discusses the ways in which martyrdom is linked to warfare and soldierly valour through "martial metaphors" like the "shield of faith" (151). For an overview of the instrumentalization of martyrdom at the frontiers of the early modern Spanish empire, see Cañeque.
  - <sup>4</sup> I have modernized the spelling of citations.
  - <sup>5</sup> Hemming provides an overview of this episode (128-32).
- <sup>6</sup> Budasz gives the range 1585-1595 for the performance of the *auto* for Saint Ursula, while Cardoso notes that 1584 is also a possibility, but that 1595 is the most likely date (Budasz 379; Anchieta, *Teatro* 276). Budasz also suggests that the *auto* for Saint Maurice was first performed in 1586, while Cardoso dates his version to 1595 (Budasz 379; Anchieta, *Teatro* 286). Budasz and Cardoso both date the performance of *Na festa de S. Lourenço* to 1587 (Budasz 379; Anchieta, *Teatro* 141).
- <sup>7</sup> Both Brito Díaz and Cardoso have, however, anthologized these poems. In his introduction to *Poesías líricas castellanas*, Brito Díaz offers an overview of the marginalization of Anchieta within the history of Spanish letters (20).
- 8 In this sense, I follow the argument proposed by Cymbalista on the significance of martyrs as patrons and protectors. In their study of Jesuit missionary theater, Duarte and Luz argue that the dramas focused on Laurence, Maurice, Sebastian, and Ursula are primarily intended to exemplify the virtues of courage and chastity in the service of religious conversion and social control.
- <sup>9</sup> The names of these demons have historical significance: Guaixará and Aimbirê were important Tamoio leaders in the mid-century conflict of the French and the Tamoio against the Portuguese and the Tupiniquin (Cardoso in Anchieta, *Teatro* 145, 147n52; Lee 138).
- <sup>10</sup> This play, like many of Anchieta's dramatic works, has been reconstructed by Cardoso on the basis of dispersed lyrics that were posthumously gathered into the manuscript ARSI Opp. NN. 24. Budasz describes this process and warns that the codex includes a mixture of autograph and probably

apocryphal material, and that the reconstructed *Na festa* is likely quite different from its early modern precursor (Budasz 13). All citations from the dramas come from the versions edited by Cardoso (see Anchieta, *Teatro* in the Works Cited list).

- <sup>11</sup> Braga-Pinto has studied both the mystic associations and the ambivalence of the fire motif in depth, arguing that its changing association with the forces of good and evil throughout the work give it an fluctuating meaning that reflects the instability of conversion itself (101-07).
- 12 Cymbalista argues that Anchieta presents Saint Laurence as a vengeful saint in order to appeal to this aspect of indigenous Brazilian culture (77-78); however, this conclusion does not fully countenance the fact that that vengeance is carried out not by Laurence, but by Aimbirê and Saravaia. Grappling with the same question, Treece has suggested that the role of Aimbirê and Saravaia as demonic punishers gives their apparent vices a "legitimate object" (41). Wasserman has also noted that there is something unresolved (perhaps unresolvable) about the implications of the role of revenge in this work (82n12).
- <sup>13</sup> See previous note. Duarte and Luz make a similar argument about the portrayal of Maurice and Sebastian, who were not only martyrs but soldiers. These figures, they suggest, exemplify a form of moderate and properly directed courage meant to appeal to bellicose indigenous Brazilians (21).
- <sup>14</sup> While a full comparative analysis is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth considering that in the same period that Anchieta spent in Brazil (the latter half of the sixteenth century), Titian and El Greco produced famous—and fairly graphic—paintings of the martyrdoms of Saints Laurence and Maurice, respectively.
- <sup>15</sup> The original letter, written in Latin, has been lost, but it circulated in translation almost immediately (Leite, *Monumenta Brasiliae* 2: 173-174; Page 67). Here I cite the Portuguese version of the letter included by Leite in *Monumenta Brasiliae*. For an overview of early accounts and portrayals of Correia and Sousa, see Page.
- <sup>16</sup> On the distinction between dramatic and poetic works in Anchieta's corpus, in addition to approaching his reconstructed dramas with circumspection, it is helpful to recall the words of Julio García Morejón: "Many of the poems in Spanish, and in Portuguese as well, are embryonic plays, or the seed of plays" (147).
  - <sup>17</sup> I am grateful to Germán Campos-Muñoz for his assistance translating the Italian letter.
- <sup>18</sup> Brito Díaz refutes the idea of this interlude, arguing instead that the three pieces in question are all lyric poems (25). Still, Brito Díaz accedes that the lyric and the dramatic often overlap in Anchieta's work, especially in his predilection for forms like the *cantiga* (25-26).
  - <sup>19</sup>For more on this ideal, see Cañeque (52-53).

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